


### SITTING DAYS—2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>11, 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>3, 4, 5, 6, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>13, 14, 15, 26, 27, 28, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>14, 15, 16, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>26, 27, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 22, 23, 24, 25, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>1, 2, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>24, 25, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### RADIO BROADCASTS

Broadcasts of proceedings of the Parliament can be heard on ABC NewsRadio in the capital cities on:

- **ADELAIDE**: 972AM
- **BRISBANE**: 936AM
- **CANBERRA**: 103.9FM
- **DARWIN**: 102.5FM
- **HOBART**: 747AM
- **MELBOURNE**: 1026AM
- **PERTH**: 585AM
- **SYDNEY**: 630AM

For information regarding frequencies in other locations please visit [http://www.abc.net.au/newsradio/listen/frequencies.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/newsradio/listen/frequencies.htm)
FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SECOND PERIOD

Governor-General
Her Excellency the Hon. Quentin Bryce AC, CVO

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP,
Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP,
Mr Craig Kelly MP, Hon. Charles Christian Porter MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP,
Mr Brett David Whiteley 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. Anthony John Abbott MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Government Whip—Hon. Philip Maxwell Ruddock MP
Government Whips—Mr Scott Buchholz MP and Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino 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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbott, The Hon. Anthony John</td>
<td>Warringah, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albanese, The Hon. Anthony Norman</td>
<td>Grayndler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander, Mr John Gilbert OAM</td>
<td>Bennelong, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Mrs Karen Lesley</td>
<td>McPherson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, The Hon. Kevin James</td>
<td>Menzies, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin, The Hon. Robert Charles</td>
<td>Paterson, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandt, Mr Adam Paul</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
<td>AG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billson, The Hon. Bruce Fredrick</td>
<td>Dunkley, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird, The Hon. Sharon Leah</td>
<td>Cunningham, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop, The Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen</td>
<td>Mackellar, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop, The Hon. Julie Isabel</td>
<td>Curtin, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowen, The Hon. Chris Eyles</td>
<td>McMahon, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briggs, The Hon. Jamie Edward</td>
<td>Mayo, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad, Mr Andrew John</td>
<td>Mallee, VIC</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadbent, Mr Russell Evan</td>
<td>McMillan, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brodtmann, Ms Gai Marie</td>
<td>Canberra, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brough, The Hon. Malcolm Thomas</td>
<td>Fisher, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buchholz, Mr Scott</td>
<td>Wright, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke, Ms Anna Elizabeth</td>
<td>Chisholm, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke, The Hon. Anthony Stephen</td>
<td>Watson, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler, The Hon. Mark Christopher</td>
<td>Port Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler, Ms Terri Megan</td>
<td>Griffith, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byrne, The Hon. Anthony Michael</td>
<td>Holt, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalmers, Dr James Edward</td>
<td>Rankin, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion, Mr Nicholas David</td>
<td>Wakefield, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester, The Hon. Darren</td>
<td>Gippsland, VIC</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesters, Ms Lisa Marie</td>
<td>Bendigo, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christensen, Mr George Robert</td>
<td>Dawson, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciobo, The Hon. Steven Michele</td>
<td>Moncrieff, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare, The Hon. Jason Dean</td>
<td>Blaxland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claydon, Ms Sharon Catherine</td>
<td>Newcastle, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobb, The Hon. John Kenneth</td>
<td>Calare, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleman, Mr David Bernard</td>
<td>Banks, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins, The Hon. Julie Maree</td>
<td>Franklin, TAS</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conroy, Mr Patrick Martin</td>
<td>Charlton, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coulton, Mr Mark Maclean</td>
<td>Parkes, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danby, The Hon. Michael</td>
<td>Melbourne Ports, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreyfus, The Hon. Mark Alfred QC</td>
<td>Isaacs, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutton, The Hon. Peter Craig</td>
<td>Dickson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliott, The Hon. Maria Justine</td>
<td>Richmond, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellis, The Hon. Katherine Margaret</td>
<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entsch, The Hon. Warren George</td>
<td>Leichhardt, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeney, The Hon. David</td>
<td>Batman, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferguson, Mr Laurie Donald Thomas</td>
<td>Werriwa, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzgibbon, The Hon. Joel Andrew</td>
<td>Hunter, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher, The Hon. Paul William</td>
<td>Bradfield, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frydenberg, The Hon. Joshua Anthony</td>
<td>Kooyong, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambaro, The Hon. Teresa</td>
<td>Brisbane, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles, Mr Andrew James</td>
<td>Scullin, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillespie, Dr David Arthur</td>
<td>Lyne, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodenough, Mr Ian Reginald</td>
<td>Moore, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray, The Hon. Gary AO</td>
<td>Brand, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffin, The Hon. Alan Peter</td>
<td>Bruce, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griggs, Mrs Natasha Louise</td>
<td>Solomon, NT</td>
<td>CLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall, Ms Jill Griffiths</td>
<td>Shortland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartsuyker, The Hon. Luke</td>
<td>Cowper, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawke, Mr Alexander George</td>
<td>Mitchell, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes, Mr Christopher Patrick</td>
<td>Fowler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson, Ms Sarah Moya</td>
<td>Corangamite, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendy, Dr Peter William</td>
<td>Eden-Monaro, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey, The Hon. Joseph Benedict</td>
<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogan, Mr Kevin John</td>
<td>Page, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howarth, Mr Luke Ronald</td>
<td>Petrie, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunt, The Hon. Gregory Andrew</td>
<td>Flinders, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hussie, The Hon. Edham Nurreddin</td>
<td>Chifley, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutchinson, Mr Eric Russell</td>
<td>Lyons, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irons, Mr Stephen James</td>
<td>Swan, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jensen, Dr Dennis Geoffrey</td>
<td>Tangney, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Mr Ewen Thomas</td>
<td>Herbert, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Mr Stephen Patrick</td>
<td>Throsby, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katter, The Hon. Robert Carl</td>
<td>Kennedy, QLD</td>
<td>AUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keenan, The Hon. Michael</td>
<td>Stirling, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly, Mr Craig</td>
<td>Hughes, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King, The Hon. Catherine Fiona</td>
<td>Ballarat, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laming, Mr Andrew</td>
<td>Bowman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landry, Ms Michelle Leanne</td>
<td>Capricornia, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundy, Mr Craig</td>
<td>Reid, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh, The Hon. Dr Andrew Keith</td>
<td>Fraser, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ley, The Hon. Susan Penelope</td>
<td>Farrer, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macfarlane, The Hon. Ian Elgin</td>
<td>Groom, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macklin, The Hon. Jennifer Louise</td>
<td>Jagajaga, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacTierman, The Hon. Alannah Joan Geraldine Cecilia</td>
<td>Perth, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marino, Ms Nola Bethwyn</td>
<td>Forrest, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markus, Mrs Louise Elizabeth</td>
<td>Macquarie, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marles, The Hon. Richard Donald</td>
<td>Corio, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matheson, Mr Russell Glenn</td>
<td>Macarthur, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCormack, The Hon. Michael Francis</td>
<td>Riverina, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGowan, Ms Catherine AO</td>
<td>Indi, VIC</td>
<td>IND.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McNamara, Mrs Karen Jane</td>
<td>Dobell, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell, Mr Robert George</td>
<td>McEwen, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrison, The Hon. Scott John</td>
<td>Cook, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neumann, The Hon. Shayne Kenneth</td>
<td>Blair, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikolic, Mr Andrew Alexander AM, CSC</td>
<td>Bass, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Connor, The Hon. Brendan Patrick John</td>
<td>Gorton, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Dowd, Mr Kenneth Desmond</td>
<td>Flynn, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Dwyer, Ms Kelly Megan</td>
<td>Higgins, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Neil, Ms Clare Ellen</td>
<td>Hotham, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owens, Ms Julie</td>
<td>Parramatta, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer, Mr Clive Federick</td>
<td>Fairfax QLD</td>
<td>PUP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parke, The Hon. Melissa</td>
<td>Fremantle, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasin, Mr Antony</td>
<td>Barker, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perrett, Mr Graham Douglas</td>
<td>Moreton, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitt, Mr Keith John</td>
<td>Hinkler, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plibersek, The Hon. Tanya Joan</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter, The Hon. Charles Christian</td>
<td>Pearce, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prentice, Mrs Jane</td>
<td>Ryan, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price, Ms Melissa Lee</td>
<td>Durack, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyne, The Hon. Christopher Maurice</td>
<td>Sturt, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey, Mr Rowan Eric</td>
<td>Grey, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randall, Mr Don James</td>
<td>Canning, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ripoll, The Hon. Bernard Fernando</td>
<td>Oxley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rishworth, The Hon. Amanda Louise</td>
<td>Kingston, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robb, The Hon. Andrew John AO</td>
<td>Goldstein, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert, The Hon. Stuart Rowland</td>
<td>Fadden, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowland, Ms Michelle Anne</td>
<td>Greenway, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy, Mr Wyatt</td>
<td>Longman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruddock, The Hon. Philip Maxwell</td>
<td>Berowra, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan, Ms Joanne Catherine</td>
<td>Lalor, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, The Hon. Bruce Craig</td>
<td>Maranoa, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, Ms Fiona Meryl</td>
<td>Lindsay, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorten, The Hon. William Richard</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpkins, Mr Luke Xavier Linton</td>
<td>Cowan, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, The Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn</td>
<td>Lingiari, NT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowdon, The Hon. Warren Edward</td>
<td>Boothby, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southcott, Dr Andrew John</td>
<td>Murray, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone, The Hon. Dr Sharan Nancy</td>
<td>Gilmore, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudmalis, Ms Ann Elizabeth</td>
<td>Deakin, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukkar, Mr Michael</td>
<td>Lilley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan, The Hon. Wayne Maxwell</td>
<td>Hume, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor, Mr Angus James</td>
<td>Wannon, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tehan, Mr Daniel Thomas (Dan)</td>
<td>Kingsford Smith, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thistlethwaite, Mr Matthew James</td>
<td>Wills, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomson, The Hon. Kelvin John</td>
<td>Wide Bay, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truss, The Hon. Warren Errol</td>
<td>Aston, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tudge, The Hon. Alan Edward</td>
<td>Wentworth, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnbull, The Hon. Malcolm Bligh</td>
<td>Calwell, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vamvakinou, Ms Maria</td>
<td>Forde, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>van Manen, Mr Albertus Johannes</td>
<td>Barton, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varvaris, Mr Nickolas</td>
<td>Bonner, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasta, Mr Ross Xavier</td>
<td>Gellibrand, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watts, Mr Timothy Graham</td>
<td>Braddon, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteley, Mr Brett David</td>
<td>Robertson, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien</td>
<td>Denison, TAS</td>
<td>IND.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams, Mr Matthew</td>
<td>Hindmarsh, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
<td>O'Connor, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
<td>La Trobe, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyatt, Mr Kenneth George AM</td>
<td>Hasluck, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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—Katters 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
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
## ABBOTT MINISTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Tony Abbott MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Warren Truss MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Jamie Briggs MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Julie Bishop MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Trade and Investment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Brett Mason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Employment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Justice</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Michael Keenan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treasurer</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Small Business</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Bruce Bilson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Arthur Sinodinos AO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Agriculture</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Steven Ciobo MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Education</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Education</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Scott Ryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industry</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Bob Baldwin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Social Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Social Services</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Kevin Andrews MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mitch Fifield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Human Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Communications</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Health</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Sport</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Health</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Fiona Nash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. David Johnston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</em></td>
<td><em>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Stuart Robert MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence</td>
<td><em>The Hon. Darren Chester MP</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Environment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment</td>
<td><em>Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Scott Morrison MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Finance</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance</td>
<td><em>The Hon. Michael McCormack MP</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
# Shadow Ministry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Shadow Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Science</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Small Business</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business</strong></td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senaor the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Investment</td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</td>
<td>Gai Brodtmann MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</strong></td>
<td>Hon Anthony Albanese MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Tourism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Local Government</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Infrastructure</td>
<td>Stephen Jones MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for External Territories</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Competition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Ed Husic MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Finance</strong></td>
<td>Hon Tony Burke MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business (House)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water</strong></td>
<td>Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Water</td>
<td>Senator Louise Pratt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Industry</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Vocational Education</td>
<td>Hon Sharon Bird MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Manufacturing</td>
<td>Tony Zappia MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Communications</strong></td>
<td>Hon Jason Clare MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Communications</td>
<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Shadow Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Attorney General</td>
<td>Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Arts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Manager of Opposition Business (House)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Justice</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Attorney General</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Lisa Singh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts</td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Education</td>
<td>Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education</td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Agriculture</td>
<td>Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Northern Australia</td>
<td>Hon Gary Gray AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Special Minister of State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Health</td>
<td>Hon Catherine King MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Health</td>
<td>Hon Melissa Parke MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Mental Health</td>
<td>Senator Hon Jan McLucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Sport</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health</td>
<td>Hon Amanda Rishworth MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Families and Payments</td>
<td>Hon Jenny Macklin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Disability Reform</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Doug Cameron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Human Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jan McLucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Carers</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Payments</td>
<td>Senator Carol Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>Hon Richard Marles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multiculturalism</td>
<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Shayne Neumann MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Aged Care</td>
<td>Senator Helen Polley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
<td>Hon Brendan O’Connor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment Services</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TUESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2014

Chamber

GOVERNOR-GENERAL’S SPEECH—
   Address-in-Reply ................................................................. 733

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—
   Newcastle Electorate: Regal Cinema ........................................... 751
   Ryan Electorate: Toowong State School ....................................... 752
   Lalor Electorate: Wyndham Rotary Club Fun Run ............................ 752
   Antarctica: Mawson Station Anniversary ..................................... 752
   McEwen Electorate: Bushfires .................................................. 753
   Solomon Electorate: Housing .................................................... 753
   Kingsford Smith Electorate: Maroubra Saints Australian Football Club 754
   Eden Monaro Electorate: Centenary of Anzac ................................. 754
   Fremantle Electorate: Cochlear Implants .................................... 755
   Page Electorate: Australia Day Awards ....................................... 755
   Makin Electorate: Reality and Beyond Exhibition ......................... 756
   Hasluck Leadership Awards ...................................................... 756
   Edwards, Pastor Mark Llewellyn, OAM ........................................ 757
   Rural and Regional Australia ................................................... 757
   Calma, Dr Tom, AO ................................................................. 757
   Employment ............................................................................. 758
   Abbott Government ...................................................................... 758
   Robertson Electorate: Marine Rescue Central Coast ........................ 759
   La Trobe University .................................................................... 759
   Anzac Centenary ........................................................................ 760

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—
   Qantas ....................................................................................... 760
   Economy .................................................................................... 761
   Qantas ....................................................................................... 762
   Carbon Pricing ........................................................................... 762
   Health Funding ........................................................................... 763
   Budget ....................................................................................... 763
   Health Funding ........................................................................... 764
   National Heavy Vehicle Regulator ............................................... 764
   Canada ...................................................................................... 765
   General Practice ......................................................................... 766
   Carbon Pricing ........................................................................... 766
   Health Funding ........................................................................... 767
   Carbon Pricing ........................................................................... 767
   Paid Parental Leave .................................................................... 768
   Former Member for Dobell .......................................................... 768
   Donations to Political Parties ...................................................... 769
   Nauru ......................................................................................... 770
   Asylum Seekers ......................................................................... 770
## CONTENTS—continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Unemployment</td>
<td>771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asylum Seekers</td>
<td>773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asylum Seekers</td>
<td>774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Broadband Network</td>
<td>774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asylum Seekers</td>
<td>775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS—</td>
<td>777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Funding</td>
<td>777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS</td>
<td>777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER—</td>
<td>778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions in Writing</td>
<td>778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMITTEES—</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Accounts and Audit Committee—</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treaties Committee—</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOCUMENTS—</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE—</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Portfolio</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUSINESS—</td>
<td>795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rearrangement</td>
<td>795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTIONS—</td>
<td>795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Member for Dobell</td>
<td>795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTIONS—</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Member for Dobell</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BILLS—</td>
<td>813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014—</td>
<td>813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Reading</td>
<td>813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADJOURNMENT—</td>
<td>813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Pension</td>
<td>858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hume Electorate: Telecommunications</td>
<td>859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras</td>
<td>860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballarat Electorate</td>
<td>862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Practice</td>
<td>864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTICES</td>
<td>865</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tuesday, 25 February 2014

The SPEAKER (Hon. Bronwyn Bishop) took the chair at 12:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

The order of the day having been read for the resumption of the debate on the question—That the following Address in Reply to the speech of Her Excellency the Governor-General be agreed to:

May it please Your Excellency:

We, the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Australia, in Parliament assembled, desire to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the speech which you have been pleased to address to Parliament—Debate resumed.

Mrs MARKUS (Macquarie) (12:01): It is indeed an honour to rise and speak today as the member for Macquarie. It is an incredible privilege to be elected once again to serve the people of Macquarie and I do not take my responsibility lightly. The electorate of Macquarie encompasses all of the Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains, a little over 4,000 square kilometres. Both regions are unique and hold a special place in the history of this nation.

Both of these regions have also faced the tragedy and challenge of natural disaster. I often think that when Dorothea McKellar penned the words, 'I love a sunburnt country,' she was thinking of the electorate that I represent, the Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains. Both droughts and flooding rains have impacted these areas over the years and recently it has been bushfires that have left our community devastated.

I cannot speak today without acknowledging the courage and the determination shown by our community over the past four months since the bushfires hit on 17 October. The impact of the bushfires has been enormous. More than 200 homes were lost, more than 200 homes were damaged, and businesses and livelihoods were seriously affected—some destroyed and some experiencing significant challenges.

I acknowledge the Australian spirit that is so strong amongst all members of our community. Our people have risen to the task, they have faced the challenges and they are committed to rebuilding for the future. I have stood with people outside their homes which were in ruins and I have visited evacuation centres. I also spent time with business leaders who wanted to dive in and do whatever they could to rebuild. I acknowledge the incredible resilience and the sense of community.

I would like also to acknowledge a few people especially for their efforts during this challenging time. I want to give a special mention to the Rural Fire Service Blue Mountains Superintendent David Jones, Hawkesbury Rural Fire Service Superintendent Karen Hodges, and Winmalee Rural Fire Service Captain Anthony Black. These are just a few examples of the remarkable men and women whom I am honoured to serve our community alongside. My thanks particularly go to the New South Wales Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane...
Fitzsimons who showed incredible strength and character during this time. He is indeed well loved by those he leads.

I also thank everyone involved at the Recovery Centre and serving on the Recovery Committee of which I am honoured to be a part. I have never been more proud to represent such a strong and compassionate community. I know that we have only just begun the road to recovery but I am confident we will get there. Indeed, the first slabs have been laid and there are new homes beginning to be built as I speak.

As we look to the future, I am excited to begin work on delivering the commitments the coalition and I made during the last election. These are commitments I believe that will better the lives of families, individuals and businesses in both the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury. It is a wonderful position to now be in government, and I can assure the people of Macquarie that I will be delivering on all the promises made during the recent election period.

The environment is very important to my local community. Indeed, the people of the Blue Mountains City, as it is known by those who live within it, understand that it is nestled within the World Heritage listed area of the Greater Blue Mountains. The Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley is a significant river system that not only supplies water to Sydney but, indeed, also assists with all local agriculture.

During the election the Minister for the Environment, the honourable Greg Hunt, the member for Lindsay and I announced that the coalition would provide a total of $15 million towards a Cumberland conservation corridor in Greater Western Sydney. The funding is recognition of the importance of protecting the green areas within and around our cities particularly in Greater Western Sydney and the conservation value of the Cumberland Plain Woodlands. This will be a major boost for the conservation of the area and will provide a once-in-a-generation opportunity to establish a conservation corridor which will be preserved for future generations. As young families move into this region, they will be able to explore and enjoy our natural bush while also enjoying the lifestyle that the region offers.

Other initiatives which I am looking forward to rolling out in my electorate are the Green Army projects. The Blue Mountains Heritage Trail including the Prince Henry Cliff Walk will be one of the sites in our region to benefit under the coalition's Green Army. These projects will assist to provide young people with employment opportunities and will not only provide opportunities for training and a wage but will take direct action to improve the environment in local parklands and reserves. I just acknowledge all the Bushcare groups that work across the electorate on a weekly basis, many of them cleaning up creeks and waterways behind their homes, clearing land and, indeed, in the bushfire affected areas they are now working on restoration of the bush.

CCTV coverage for hotspots in both the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury is another commitment that will make a tangible difference to small business and residents in my area. I announced, with the Minister for Justice, $360,000 in funding to have CCTV cameras installed at a number of locations in the Blue Mountains which experience safety issues and graffiti: Blaxland, Wentworth Falls, Leura and Hazelbrook. The Hawkesbury region will also receive funding of $150,000 for CCTV cameras in Richmond. This is an area that is well known to police and locals, particularly around the park area and some of the shopping centre precinct, where they have had significant vandalism.
The coalition understands that the best way to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour is, wherever possible, to prevent it occurring in the first place. Our plan for safer streets will boost the efforts of the local community to address crime and antisocial behaviour by helping them to implement crime-fighting measures such as the installation of CCTV and, of course, better lighting.

I also had the privilege of working very closely with Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Oberon Tourism, and was able to announce $255,000 in funding, which will give this important regional tourism operator a critical boost after the recent fires that have hurt the industry. We recognise that tourism plays a huge role in the economy of the community of the Blue Mountains, and as the local member I am committed supporting operators like the BMLOT however I can. They provide significant employment for families, for individuals and particularly for our young people.

I also acknowledge the recent work of the Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise. They have contributed significantly towards the recovery after the bushfires. In fact, on Saturday, they held a building expo where at the point when I had visited—mid-afternoon—over 500 people from our community who were either impacted by fire or wanting to do refurbishment to their homes had walked through. BMEE are hoping to establish this as an annual event, with particular information given about fire protection, about protecting lives and about protecting people's homes and livelihoods into the future.

Although Macquarie sits on the doorstep of urban Sydney, there are many parts of the electorate that experience the same challenges as rural and regional Australia. One of these challenges is mobile phone coverage. I was pleased to host the Parliamentary Secretary for Communications, Mr Paul Fletcher—and I notice him sitting in the chamber today—in my electorate recently. Mr Fletcher and I convened a roundtable with community groups, stakeholders, local councillors, emergency service organisations and mobile service providers to discuss the coalition's $100 million Mobile Coverage Program.

This important initiative will address an area of need that was long neglected by the former government. Two important criteria will be considered in identifying priority spots and, while the $100 million will go some way to tackling the black spots that we have, it will not go all the way at first—places that fall particularly along major transport routes and areas prone to natural disaster. My electorate faces both these challenges, and Mr Fletcher and I were also able to meet with Colo Heights Rural Fire Service volunteers about the issues that emergency services face as a result of lack of mobile coverage. While this was not necessarily promoted significantly in the recent bushfires, the Howes Swamp fire posed significant challenges to the Rural Fire Service of Colo Heights. It is imperative that we address the need for mobile phone coverage in communicating both to those potentially affected and to those volunteers who need to respond quickly. As I mentioned, although we are well aware that the Mobile Coverage Program will not be able to address all areas of need, I do look forward to working with my community to try to identify the key priority areas and to work towards solutions.

I also want to thank most sincerely all the people who have supported me over the years and, of course, leading up to the last election: the people of Macquarie and, throughout the campaign last year, my dedicated team. They all know who they are—if I listed everyone today we would be here for a very long time—but I want to thank each and every one of them.
Leading up to the election in September last year there was a sense in the community of the need for the mess to be cleaned up. People were deeply concerned about the growing debt and recently Labor's legacy to Australians has become very apparent: 200,000 more unemployed, a gross debt projected to rise to $667 billion, $123 billion in cumulative deficits, more than 50,000 illegal arrivals by boat and a crippling carbon tax. Leading up to that election people in my community and businesses in my community were saying to me consistently that they recognised we needed to take hold of the reins of government; we needed to reel in the debt, we needed to make some of the tough decisions that would remove the barriers to businesses and families prospering and we needed to position Australia for a future where we could grow.

I want to thank every one of the loyal and hard-working volunteers and my ministerial colleagues who visited and offered their support during that time and since. Altogether there was a volunteer base of around 500 people, which is an outstanding effort. There is a lot of ground to cover between the top of the Blue Mountains at Mount Victoria and the Hawkesbury. I am very grateful to each and every person who was involved, but they did that because they are committed to the future of our nation.

I especially want to thank the people of Macquarie for giving me this opportunity and placing their trust in me to represent them, to give voice to their concerns and to raise in this national parliament what is important to them. I will ensure that the people of Macquarie have a strong voice. Individuals, families and small business owners have dreams, aspirations and goals for their lives, for their communities, for the people they employ, for the people they work with, for their children and for their grandchildren.

Labor's legacy is as I have mentioned: 200,000 more unemployed, gross debt projected to rise, cumulative deficits and more than 50,000 illegal arrivals. As a coalition government we are getting on with the job of building a stronger economy so that everyone can get ahead. We are abolishing the carbon tax and ending the waste. I would like to repeat something I stated in my speech on election night: I believe now with the coalition government that people will be able to dream again, invest again, have confidence again and see their hopes and dreams become reality.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (12:16): I want to uncharacteristically spend a significant part of my contribution to this address-in-reply debate on the last campaign in Werriwa. I do that on a number of bases. In high probability it was probably my last campaign. I had the most difficulty holding my seat. It was certainly my last campaign. It was the only time I nearly lost my job in my whole career. It was certainly a very spirited campaign.

I want to thank particularly my siblings and their families; my wife, Maureen; my immediate family; and state colleagues Andrew McDonald and Paul Lynch. I have never been beholden to institutions. I have received a minimal amount of money over my political career from the trade unions, but I want to thank the individuals from the CFMEU and the Finance Sector Union who worked for me in the campaign. I want to thank local councillors Anne Stanley and Anoulack Chanthivong. I have no doubt whatsoever that they have political careers in their immediate future. I want to thank Chris Gambian, the early campaign director;
Paul Drayton from my old electorate who in 2007 lost his big toe through an accident on the campaign but was out there again this time; and John Sutton, a former official of the construction union. Then there are other people from my old electorate I would like to thank such as Ian Pandilovski, Alex Petrov and Mark Phillips. These people are representative of groups, so I will not go through every individual. There was tremendous support from a significant part of the Young Labor organisation and from those who identify with the struggle for democracy within the Labor Party.

My electorate has nowhere near as many people who were born overseas and from non-English-speaking backgrounds as my former electorate of Reid. There has been significant Bangladeshi population movement from their traditional suburbs of Malabar, Botany and Eastlakes out to my electorate. I want to thank Selima Begum and her husband Tariq and Masud Chowdry for their efforts on that. Selima has learned a lot in politics. Her father is a member of the Bangladeshi parliament. She certainly had experiences that were worthwhile to my campaign. Then there is Mal Fruean from the New Zealand Maori community and Seumanu Toailoa from the Samoan community.

Speaking of the local campaign, the Minister for Health yesterday said in an attempt at humour he was old style. Well, I am old style about my feeling about the separation of state, municipal and federal politics in elections. A few decades ago I went to the village of Kolsass near Innsbruck, where my stepson lives. I was appalled to find the use of council facilities to promote a single political party. The furniture of the village, its municipal band and other institutions were used to further one political party. I was also surprised to see political signs in the local Catholic Church. I have always believed in old-style politics and that you should not use public facilities for the purposes of campaigning. I have to say that the performance of the Liverpool City Council in this last campaign was appalling.

I will use the phrase the member for Berowra uses at many events to describe me, 'My friend and colleague.' In a conversation the member for Berowra said the last time that he had heard in Australian politics of federal members of parliament being denied the right to speak at citizen ceremonies was when the Labor-controlled Parramatta City Council did it 30 or 40 years ago. It is wrong if Labor does it and it is wrong if the Liberals do it. There is a role for federal members of parliament at citizenship ceremonies. I want to say that that typifies the way in which that council operated during the campaign, denying me and the member for Fowler the right to speak at those ceremonies. They constructed so-called rosters for who would speak so that we were equal to their local councillors.

I found it deplorable that a paid employee of the council was putting up party signs in work time. Also of concern was the Indian film night that was paid for by the public, the ratepayers. That was utilised as a political rally, with my colleague the member for Hughes speaking and promoting my opponent.

The council conducted a series of so-called anti-intermodal rallies. The intermodal near Liverpool was a decision of the Howard government that was supported by later Labor governments. The council pretended that they were going to somehow stop the intermodal and with ratepayers’ money they organised rallies and said that there would be no politicians speaking there; yet the member for Hughes was allowed to address the rally as was my political opponent. They also falsely claimed that the arts centre, which they have long
condemned as being a waste of money, was threatened by this intermodal and said that they should get compensation for it.

The same council has had a series of embarrassments since election day with their association with Matt Daniel, a council officer. It turns out he was bankrupt and was legally employed. He was a Liberal Party apparatchik and a close associate of my opponent. He was sacked by the council later because he was a bankrupt who had not declared it. This situation typifies the interference by these councillors in the campaign—that is, the use of council facilities, the use of ratepayers' money for political purposes.

During the campaign I did have a large number of anonymous and identified allegations against my opponent from Liberal Party members in Sutherland, and from nonparty sources. I chose not to utilise them, but I am pleased to say that the *Sydney Morning Herald* has been very assiduous in its exposes of my opponent and the council in Sutherland since election day. We had an ICAC investigation which, for lack of evidence, found them innocent. The situation is extremely disturbing. I hope the new minister for immigration does something about making sure that councils around this country respect the role of members of parliament at these ceremonies, which are people's introduction to this country, their enmeshment with our society and our values.

I also want to say it was pleasing to win against great odds. Both the Labor Party and the Liberal Party were fairly sure that I would lose Werriwa. As I said, the betting on election day was three to one. My opponent had enormous resources. I have never seen so much money spent in a campaign in that region. I was also quite amused to find, looking at some of my Labor colleagues’ websites, the amount of money that they were able to have committed by the Labor Party to holding their seats. In Werriwa we held the seat despite minimal election promises; minimal millions of dollars were poured into that electorate. I am also pleased that not only did we succeed, despite the analysis of political pundits, but we also overcame an analysis of our campaign by anonymous critics within the Labor Party. They thought that by going to *Crikey* they could somehow affect election day results by saying that I was running an idiosyncratic, unscripted campaign and that therefore I would lose. We won because we had a locally based campaign, we were connected with the people and we were assiduous in our commitments in the electorate office. We very much appreciate the ethnic composition of the electorate and we are very much inclined to be involved with those people.

I want to turn to one aspect that is very important in our society—that is, the question of climate change and the need for governments to do something. In a recent article in the *Guardian Weekly*, Suzanne Goldenberg, on 3 January this year, exposed the manner in which large corporations—some of them pretending to believe in climate change, pretending to do something about it—have been funding an international campaign based in the United States to try to dispute the science. Suzanne Goldenberg, in that article, repeated the analysis of Robert Brulle of Drexel University in the magazine *Climate Change*. He went through the stated contributions to organisations that had been putting out material against the scientific world, against all evidence with regard to climate change, and determined that the amount of money expended was $1 billion. He said that was not the full extent of it. He said:

This is how wealthy individuals or corporations translate their economic power into political and cultural power.
The analysis was of 91 groups that put out material against climate change. Seventy-nine per cent were determined as charitable. They have a tax definition that they have a charitable purpose, but their whole exercise is to go out there and convince the public that this climate change is a big dream, all the scientists in the world are wrong, all the evidence is irrelevant, it is not happening—‘don't believe your eyes’—and they are able to get tax deductions for this.

He determined that over the eight-year period 2003 to 2010, the amount of money devoted to this was $7 billion. Despite what those opposite say, this situation means I would put more stress on the remarks of Nicholas Stern, Chair of the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics, and President of the British Academy. He said recently:

… without triggering dangerous climate change—as without radical policies to cut emissions humanity will exceed the limit within 15 to 25 years …

He has estimated that 3.7 per cent centigrade extra global surface warming is likely by 2081 to 2100; a 63 centimetre sea rise, a 40 per cent rise in atmospheric CO₂ has happened between 1750 and 2011. And 275 billion tonnes have been lost from the world's glaciers from 1993 to 1999. I repeat that: 275 billion tonnes lost from those glaciers from 1993 to 2009. The IPCC—the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—has noted a 50 per cent chance of keeping to less to two degrees centigrade of warming. The International Atomic Energy Agency, an organisation that we cite with regard to examination of the threat of nuclear weapon development around the world, an internationally respected organisation, in the New Scientist of 6 July 2013 was quoted as saying that within three years electricity from solar and hydro will be greater than natural gas and will outstrip all by 2016. These are the things we should be emphasising. This is the direction in which we should be going. But we have a government that are in denial. Sometimes they say that they believe the science. Sometimes they say that we do not have to do anything. But when it comes to a debate between doing something and appealing to an electorate that is concerned about cost, they go for the easy line.

Going back to Nicholas Stern, in another article in the British Guardian Weekly on 21 February this year, he said:

Four of the five wettest years recorded in the UK have occurred from the year 2000 onwards. Over that same period, we have also had the seven warmest years.

That is not a coincidence.

He noted:

The lack of vision and political will from the leaders of many developed countries is not just harming their long-term competitiveness, but is also endangering efforts to create international co-operation and reach a new agreement that should be signed in Paris in December 2015.

If we look around the world, the evidence is manifest. Canadian Prime Minister Harper might want to exploit the mineral sands of Alberta; he might line up with our Prime Minister as a small minority in the world who partially deny. However, in the real practical policies of Canada, what do we see? We see Canada arguing with the United States about borders. These are two countries that have had no conflict between them since 1812, and yet they see the gradual disappearance of the Arctic ice shelf. That is the reality, despite the rhetoric from the Canadian government.
Talking of Canada, I have heard it said on occasion that the last Canadian elections were supposedly an endorsement of the same kinds of policies we have in Australia. In actual fact, in the last Canadian elections—it is a first-past-the-post system—four of the five political parties went to that election demanding climate change; but, because of the first-past-the-post system, a minority of the electorate voted for the current government and they got a massive majority in the parliament.

Look around the world. Look at Greenland, for example. The government changed because the previous Prime Minister was putting the emphasis on protection of the environment and not going down the road of exploitation of oil and gas. He was replaced by a woman who feels that Greenland's future lies with exploitation of these resources. However, the important point to note is that it is happening in Greenland. A decade ago, there would have been no speculation; no talk about gas and oil exploration. Greenland is where Viking settlements disappeared in the 11th or 12th century because of climate change. Now, that same country is able to be a major future force in regard to these energy sources.

We have a situation where the Chinese are sending boats around Russia for a quicker link to Europe, exactly because they know it will become possible. That is the reality of what we see. Around the world you see changes in habitat; you see conjecture about the movement of diseases into areas where they were not before; you see discussion of sea rise on the islands in our Pacific region. People talk about refugees; we have seen nothing yet compared to what can possibly happen in the Pacific region with some of these low-lying islands. Yet we have a situation, in this country, where the government has basically said: 'It is going to cost people too much money. Let's appeal to the hip-pocket nerve. Let's not act. Let's pretend that we do not have to worry about our children and grandchildren. It is all going to disappear. It is not going to happen.' But the evidence is manifest.

Finally I want to turn to the question of the previous government's performance in regard to the economy and the denial of the international reality by those opposite. We had a situation—caused by speculation in the US housing market in particular—we had an international crisis. They would pretend that it did not happen. They would pretend there was no need for action. They would seek to say that, because there were a few wrong alignments in some schools and some suburbs of this country, we should not have had a massive school construction project which kept apprentices in employment, which kept the building materials sector going, which made sure that troubled building companies could survive. Let's look at the reality of what is happening around the world in regard to the alternatives they put forward.

They wanted austerity; they wanted inaction. I quote from an article by Susan Watkins in the London Review of Books to give an example of what their alternative would have given to Australia:

The Troika’s record of economic management has been abysmal. Greek GDP was forecast to fall by 5 per cent from 2009 to 2012; it dropped by 17 per cent and is still falling. Unemployment was supposed to peak at 15 per cent in 2012; it passed 25 per cent and is still rising. A V-shaped recovery was forecast for 2012, with Greek debt falling to sustainable levels; instead, the debt burden is larger than ever and the programme has been renewed.

… … …
The Greek economy has shrunk by a fifth, wages have fallen by 50 per cent and two-thirds of the young are out of work. In Spain, it is now commonplace for three generations to survive on a single salary or a grandparent’s pension; unemployment is running at 26 per cent, wages go unpaid and the rate for casual labour is down to €2 an hour. Italy has been in recession for the past two years, after a decade of economic stagnation, and 42 per cent of the young are without a job. In Portugal, tens of thousands of small family businesses, the backbone of the economy, have shut down; more than half of those out of work are not entitled to unemployment benefits. As in Ireland, the twentysomethings are looking for work abroad, a return to the patterns of emigration that helped lock their countries into conservatism and underdevelopment for so long.

That is the alternative that they would have us believe. They would say that it did not happen, that the government should not have gone into debt, that there should have been inaction, that we should not have worried about people lining up at Centrelink, that we should not have worried about young people's future, that we should not have worried about the possibility of them being attracted to drugs and antisocial practices through long-term unemployment.

This is a government that has opposed trade training centres in my electorate. This is a government that has sought to decry the previous government's emphasis on training youth and training people who are unemployed. This is an opposition that campaigned continuously for three years on the question of debt alone. What we see around the world, what we see in Europe, is the result of the alternatives that they put forward. I conclude there.

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications) (12:35): It is a privilege to rise and speak in this address-in-reply debate, which of course follows the speech of the Governor-General upon the opening of the 44th Parliament. At the outset I want to express my thanks to the voters of Bradfield for returning me to this place in the 44th Parliament.

I have now represented the electorate of Bradfield for a little over four years. In that time, I have contested three elections: a by-election and two general elections. And it is pleasing indeed to now be in government, after the challenging years of opposition, because government brings with it the opportunity to deliver some material outcomes to the people who elected me to this place.

In the time available to me, I want to talk about some of the key areas of impact that I believe the Abbott government will have for the people of Bradfield. I want to speak about our commitment to provide $405 million to help build the F3-M2 missing link, a vitally needed piece of infrastructure in Bradfield. I want to speak about our commitment to ensuring that private hospitals play a bigger role in delivering health services to local communities, and highlight the shining example of this in the Sydney Adventist Hospital located in my electorate of Bradfield. I want to speak about our commitment that there will be no unexpected detrimental changes to superannuation within the first term of the Abbott government, an issue of considerable concern to my constituents in Bradfield. I would also like to speak about our small business agenda, including reducing the red tape and compliance burden for small business and reducing the cost of doing business—matters which I know are of considerable concern to the businesspeople of Bradfield because they are raised with me on a regular basis.

Let me turn first to the F3-M2 missing link and the work of the Abbott government, in conjunction with the New South Wales Liberal-National government, to deliver this vitally needed piece of infrastructure. The F3 might have recently been renamed the M1 by the New...
South Wales government but this project continues to be widely described as the F3-M2 missing link. Whatever its name, it is a project that is vital for my electorate of Bradfield, to relieve the severely overloaded Pennant Hills Road and the overloaded Pacific Highway, to improve journey times for those travelling between Sydney and the Central Coast and, very importantly, to deliver safety and amenity benefits to local residents of Bradfield, particularly in suburbs that are affected by the extremely heavily trafficked Pennant Hills Road.

The F3-M2 missing link project builds on a considerable legacy of public policy work, including work initiated by the Howard government. The 2004 study by Sinclair Knight Merz identified air quality, alternative transport options and noise impacts as areas the community wanted to have scrutinised as the project was developed. Importantly, that study found that the F3-M2 missing link project, by removing stop-start conditions, is capable of delivering positive benefits, including reduced noise for 94 per cent of residents and improvements in air quality.

The Sinclair Knight Merz study was followed by the Pearlman review, commissioned by the Howard government, which recommended the route which is now largely to be followed should this project proceed. In 2013, a proposal developed by the private motorway operator Transurban Group, using the route recommended in the 2007 Pearlman review, was received by the New South Wales government under that government's unsolicited proposal process. I am pleased to say that the New South Wales government took that project seriously and moved to have it considered within its unsolicited proposal process. The project has now moved to an advanced stage, with community consultation now underway and final proposals by interested construction companies having been lodged with Transurban.

The project to date has been an outstanding example of cooperation between the New South Wales and federal governments and the private sector. I have mentioned that the federal government, the Abbott government, has committed to spend $405 million on this project. A similar amount has been committed by the New South Wales government. The total project budget is around $2.65 billion, with the balance to be contributed by Transurban and, of course, recovered through toll charges for those who use this roadway.

I am eager to see the F3-M2 missing link built because I believe it will deliver profound benefits to the communities that I represent. On the latest information available to me—and I emphasise that the project has still not reached a stage where these matters have been definitively finalised—the project is likely to involve two separate tunnels running under Pennant Hills Road, each wide enough to take three lanes, although initially the road will be configured as two lanes each way. This will give sufficient capacity for 100,000 vehicles per year. As a reference point, today Pennant Hills Road carries 60,000 vehicles per year—so, significant additional capacity will be available through the F3-M2 missing link. The other expected benefit of this two-lane configuration, notwithstanding the width of the tunnels, is that it will allow the road to have an 80-kilometre-per-hour speed limit. Again, that remains to be finally determined, but that is the latest information available to me.

A point I wish to emphasise is that, even if residents of affected suburbs like Thornleigh, Normanhurst and Wahroonga do not wish to use this road themselves but wish to continue using Pennant Hills Road, they will have the capacity to do that. Unlike the poorly conceived approach taken by the New South Wales Labor government when it came to, for example, the...
Lane Cove Tunnel, there is not going to be a contract which will mandate the reduction of lanes on Pennant Hills Road. That is the first important point.

The second important point is that, even if local residents choose not to use this road, it is very clear from the stated position of, amongst other things, peak bodies for the trucking industry that the B-doubles and other trucks which today are very heavy users of Pennant Hills Road can be expected to use the new expressway, the new tunnels and to pay the toll for doing so. The reason they will do that is enlightened commercial self-interest. This road will save many minutes of journey time. For people running a commercial trucking business, saved time is worth money. The toll will be a good deal for them because, through paying it, they will receive a materially reduced journey time. In turn, that will be good news for the people of Wahroonga, Normanhurst and Thornleigh, because the extremely busy Pennant Hills Road, today carrying large numbers of B-doubles and other trucks, is likely to become considerably less busy. That will materially improve the amenity of residents in those areas, it will materially improve the sense of community in those areas and it will be a lifestyle improvement for these important areas of my electorate of Bradfield.

I am pleased that the New South Wales government and the Abbott government are coming together on this important project. I look forward to further stages of the approval process being worked through so that construction can get underway. I want to particularly acknowledge the work of the Deputy Prime Minister, who in opposition made the time to come to visit Pennant Hills Road. He joined with me and the member for Berowra to make a visit to Pennant Hills Road to understand the nature of the congestion and the impact on community amenity there. The support that he has shown on this very important project is something that I want to acknowledge and express my gratitude for.

Let me turn next to the question of health policy and the role that the coalition sees for private hospitals in the provision of health services. In that context, I want to refer specifically to the Sydney Adventist Hospital. This is one of the largest, most successful and most important private hospitals in Australia. It has a range of facilities and capabilities in every respect similar to a major public teaching hospital. Indeed, it is a teaching hospital, as I will go on to talk about. It is also a hospital with an emergency room. It is a hospital with specialised facilities in a whole range of areas. There is a major new cancer facility being built. The San, as the Sydney Adventist Hospital is affectionately known, is a major institution in the electorate of Bradfield and a major provider of health care to the people not just of Bradfield but of the entire surrounding northern and north-western areas of Sydney.

I am pleased to note that the Minister for Health has visited this hospital twice within the last 12 months. In March last year, when we were in opposition and he was the shadow minister, Peter Dutton joined with me in a visit to the San to meet with the management, to tour the hospital's facilities and to discuss key issues of importance in relation to the hospital's activities and the major growth program that the hospital is now on, including, as I have mentioned, the very substantial cancer centre which is in the process of being constructed. As health minister later last year, in November, he came to the San again, to officially open its state-of-the-art clinical education centre, a joint project with funding not just from the San itself but also from both federal and state governments. It is a major centre which will provide integrated teaching not just for medical students but also for nursing students and a whole range of allied health professions, including physiotherapy and many other areas. This centre
is a powerful demonstration of the very important role that private hospitals can play in the training and education of our medical professionals. It is also a demonstration of the nature of the services that a major private hospital can provide to its local community and to the broader community. Minister Dutton said in his speech at the opening of the clinical training centre:

Australia is facing a critical shortage of doctors, nurses and other health professions and attracting new people into the health system is crucial. To do this we must continue to find new and innovative ways to train and retain health care professionals and this Centre at Adventist Hospital is a great example of best practice.

I think there is a broader point which could be made. The previous Labor government had an ideological hostility to the private healthcare system. By contrast, the Abbott government wants to work with the private hospital system to deliver more choice and greater access to health services across Australia. In my view, the San at Wahroonga, in my electorate of Bradfield, is a fine example of the very deep and rich contribution which a private hospital can make in serving the community. It is a contribution which has been of profound benefit to the people of Bradfield and of northern Sydney and is a model deserving of replication around Australia.

I would like to turn to a third area of interest to my constituents in Bradfield, which is the commitment made by the coalition at the 2013 election that there would be no unexpected detrimental changes to superannuation within our first term of government. The previous Labor government generated continuing change and uncertainty in Australia's superannuation system, which produced many complaints to me by my constituents in Bradfield. Let me remind the House of just some of Labor's series of tax increases in superannuation. Over the five-year period, Labor increased taxes on superannuation by more than $8 million, predominantly targeting low- and middle-income earners. These changes included a $3.3 billion cut to super co-contribution benefits for low-income earners, reducing the co-contribution benefit from $1,500 to $500. At the same time, Labor steadily reduced contribution caps for those over age 50, from $100,000 to $50,000 and then $25,000. That hits people just at the stage of life when—having, hopefully, paid off the house and got the kids either totally or largely off their hands—they are turning their minds to maximising their savings for their retirement years. Labor's changes to the contribution cap hit hard at just the time when people are looking to maximise their contributions. We had many claims that this problem was going to be fixed, and indeed the previous Labor government promised it would reintroduce or increase concessional caps up to a level of $50,000. In fact, it managed to get only as high as $35,000 and only for those aged over 60.

Another promise which Labor made was never to tax super payments for the over 60s, but then Labor last year sought to introduce precisely such a tax, which I am pleased to say the Abbott government has moved quickly to cancel. The key point is this: times have changed. We are in a new era of stability for the superannuation sector, and that will be very welcome indeed to my constituents in Bradfield. The coalition is committed to Australia's three-pillar retirement system: an age pension as a safety net, a compulsory system of retirement savings through superannuation and incentives for voluntary saving.

Let me turn, in the final part of my remarks today, to the area of small business, which is vital in my electorate of Bradfield, as it is to the entire Australian economy. There is no policy
area, I venture to suggest, where the difference between the Liberal and the Labor parties is more profound than small business. To the extent that Labor politicians have any experience of business, it typically comes from negotiating as union officials with larger businesses. More broadly, our political opponents regard business with suspicion—they want to tax and regulate business rather than encourage it. To the extent that they have any familiarity at all with business, as I have mentioned, it is from negotiating with large business rather than any experience at all of carrying out the activities of a small business. You could count on the fingers of one hand the number of Labor parliamentarians who have actual business experience.

By contrast, the coalition believes that business is critical to our nation's prosperity. We believe business people should be congratulated and not harassed for what they do. That is why a major priority for the Abbott government will be to improve the business environment to make it easier for all types of businesses, but particularly small business, to get on with serving customers and generating a fair return. In my electorate of Bradfield there is a broad range of small businesses—according to recent data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics there are some 16,765 businesses. Interestingly, just over 10,000 of these are non-employing businesses—that is, in the main they are sole traders. At the other end of the spectrum, 2.2 per cent of businesses employ more than 20 people in the electorate of Bradfield. These statistics show just how important small businesses are to our economy in the electorate of Bradfield.

Last year as part of the Shop Small campaign I was pleased to join with my state colleague the member for Hornsby, Matt Kean, Peter Vickers of the Ku-ring-gai Chamber of Commerce and the Mayor of Hornsby, Steve Russell, to visit Flower Infusion in Wahroonga, just one of the many fine small businesses serving important community needs in the electorate of Bradfield. The Abbott government knows that small business is the engine room of our economy. We want to double the growth rate and create an additional 30,000 new businesses across Australia each year. To achieve this we have a multistranded agenda, led by our energetic Minister for Small Business, Bruce Billson, that includes scrapping the carbon tax, cutting red tape by $1 billion a year and establishing a root-and-branch review of competition laws.

Let me conclude by reminding the House that the Abbott government has come to office with a strong, positive agenda for the nation. I can say that it is an agenda which is also strongly positive for the people of Bradfield. It is an agenda I am proud of. I am confident we will deliver significant benefits for my constituents and I look forward to working as part of the Abbott government to deliver on this agenda.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (12:55): I would like to commence my contribution to this debate by thanking the people of Shortland for placing their trust in me and re-electing me to this parliament. I wake up every morning and consider the great responsibility they have placed on me. I take that responsibility very seriously and my decisions are very much motivated by what is best for the people I represent. I would also like to thank the people who worked for me in the election; they worked tirelessly. I would particularly like to thank my campaign director, Chad Griffith, for his organisation of my campaign and for the work he put in. My family were very supportive, as were my wonderful electorate staff, who have to put up with me every time I walk in and say, 'I have an idea, a
new plan for something we can do!' I would like to thank each and every one of those people who have contributed to me being in this place and I say to them that I will do everything in my power to represent the electorate of Shortland very strongly. Unfortunately, since the last election I have moved from being a member of the government to being a member of the opposition.

Mr Baldwin: Well deserved!

Ms Hall: I notice the member for Paterson does not share my feelings there. I believe the current government was elected on a platform of 'Vote for us simply because we're not the ALP.' That means that the people of Australia now have a government that has the agenda of an opposition, that we have two opposition leaders in this country and that we do not have a Prime Minister. We are in a situation where we have a government in power which has no policy, no vision and no plan for Australia. That is very sad, because it will have enormous implications for our nation in future. It is vital that when a government comes to power it has a plan, a direction, a goal that it wants to achieve. This government has none of those.

I am standing in this parliament today speaking in the address-in-reply debate. There is virtually no legislation waiting to be debated in this House. It is an absolute disgrace. The newly elected government should have a plethora of legislation which it wants to introduce, be debated and be made law, but unfortunately we have a government which has the appropriations legislation waiting to be debated, the address-in-reply and one other piece of legislation on primary industry. At the end of the previous government's time, we still had over 650 pieces of legislation that we had not got through and that was in a really difficult hung parliament. Here we are today with a newly elected government that is bereft of ideas, bereft of policies and bereft of legislation. It is very sad because of the implications this has for Australia, for us as a nation and for the people we represent in this parliament.

Since the election, probably the most notable feature of the Abbott government has been the enormous numbers of job losses. We no longer have a car industry in this country. There are the job losses at Holden and Toyota, job losses in Western Australia and job losses last week in the aluminium industry. The response of the Abbott government has been to do nothing. It would not act when issues came up about SPC Ardmona, despite the fact that the local member implored the Prime Minister to step in and help. It was left to the Victorian government to step up to the mark, because our Australian government did not have the vision to protect Australian jobs. There has not been one act by this government that will give the people of Australia any confidence that their jobs will be protected. Australian jobs are going overseas and we have a government that are not prepared to stand up for Australian workers in this place. They have no plan when it comes to jobs. They have no plan when it comes to any aspect of their legislative program.

But if they have any plan at all to address job losses, it is to cut the pay and conditions of workers. This government really do not have much time for workers. There have been job losses in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and in other areas. I must put on the record that I am very worried about what will happen this week in relation to Qantas. I will be interested to see the response from the government of this country, because every day we see job losses and they have no answer, no solution and no plan. If they have any response whatsoever, it will be to attack the conditions of workers. We constantly hear Minister Abetz talking about how workers in Australia are overpaid. The Prime Minister tried to blame the
pay and conditions of the workers at SPC Ardmona, saying that the decision to seek assistance from government was based on the pay and conditions of workers. That was disproved, and the Prime Minister should hang his head in shame. He should have come up with a solution to protect the jobs of those workers. Instead, he tried to blame the workers and blame them for their penalty rates because they get paid a decent wage. It seems to me that those on the other side of this House would like to see a situation where average Australian workers are paid a subsistence income. I do not know if they realise this, but that will have a detrimental effect on all sectors of the economy.

Now I turn to their broken promises. It has only been six months since the election and there is a plethora of broken promises. Before the election the Prime Minister said that there will be no Work Choices legislation, but all we have heard about since the election are ways to implement Work Choices type reforms to the industrial relations system. It is obvious that this government are being mean and tricky and are looking at alternative ways to bring in changes to the pay and conditions of workers. I am afraid they have no commitment whatsoever to ensuring that Work Choices type legislation does not re-enter this parliament, perhaps in a different form but with exactly the same results. I have news for those on the government benches: people in the community understand the hidden agenda. I go out to shopping centres with my mobile offices and I talk to people. They constantly come up to me and express their fear about exactly that—the fact that the pay and conditions of workers are being eroded. I have had workers say to me that they do not know how they will survive if their penalty rates are taken away. It is the penalty rates that allow them to make the payments on their houses. But those on the other side of this House do not understand how difficult it is for some people to actually make ends meet.

One of the issues I discussed freely and frequently in the lead-up to the last election was the cost of living. The candidate that ran against me at the election talked about the cost of living, as did I. But the thing is that he did not really understand how the cost of living impacts on people's lives. He did not really understand, as the members opposite do not understand, that people have to make decisions about whether they get the medicine for their child or put food on the table. It is like that in the real world, and people are making those types of decisions each and every day.

Another broken promise is in relation to education. The Minister for Education said, 'We have a unity ticket with the Labor Party on Gonski.' You only have to look at his tricky little sidesteps since the last election to see just how much of a unity ticket actually existed at the time of the last election. And there is the ABC: 'There will be no cuts to the ABC.' There is a review into the ABC taking place at the moment looking at how efficient and effective it is. There has been a chorus line of members on the other side of this parliament making statements outside this parliament on how the ABC's funding needs to be cut and the ABC needs to have its editorial comments curtailed. One of the strengths of the ABC is that it is critical of both sides of politics. It is an independent voice and it is important that both sides of politics can take criticism. We do not want media controlled by one person giving out one message. Freedom of the press is a right and the press have the right to criticise the government and the opposition. I implore the government not to interfere in the independence of the ABC and not to cut its funding, because the ABC is vitally important to democracy.
Health is an area of great concern to me, a particular interest of mine. The Shortland electorate is an older electorate, and the provision of affordable health care is important to the people I represent. It is also not a wealthy electorate. A significant number of people rely on a pension for the basics of life. It is important to them that they can go to a doctor and be covered by Medicare. When the Prime Minister was the Minister for Health and Ageing, bulk-billing rates in the Shortland electorate were around 60 per cent. Now they are over 80 per cent and the Prime Minister is talking about introducing a GP tax, a tax on people when they see a GP. It is not good enough and it will not benefit the overall health of the Australian population.

Currently, people of this generation are dying when they are about 85, and each generation is living longer than the previous generation did. But we are approaching a stage where the next generation may live for a shorter time than their parents did. If we erode the health system, that will contribute to this scenario. There are also issues around diabetes, obesity and lifestyle that play an important part in that. When we have the Assistant Minister for Health, Senator Nash, and her staff removing from the internet the five-star health rating information, a tool to inform people about the food they are eating, we can see that this government has no real commitment to the good health of Australian people.

Much is said about the economy. When this government came to power, Australia had a AAA rating from every rating agency. That was only enjoyed by a handful of other countries and never came to fruition under a coalition government. We have been bombarded by the current Treasurer talking about the age of entitlement and how the age of entitlement has finished. However, that does not appear to apply to members and supporters of the Liberal Party. For instance, those appointed to conduct government reviews have strong connections to the Liberal Party. If you look at the terms of reference of the reviews, you will see that they are designed to deliver a certain outcome.

Returning to the age of entitlement, if you are a Liberal Party who formerly sat in this House or the Senate, it seems you have a special entitlement to represent Australia in the United States, as Senator Minchin is, or in the UK, as Mr Downer is. However, if you are a pensioner, you do not have much of an entitlement. Yesterday, the Prime Minister refused to rule out making cuts to the pension. I thought that was very interesting.

Mr McCormack: What about Kim Beazley?

Ms Hall: Yes, Kim Beazley did get an overseas appointment. But during Labor's time in government 18 members of the Liberal and National parties were appointed to overseas positions, whereas this government is pulling people back from overseas and getting involved in partisan politics. That is not the way to deal with these appointments.

It looks like pensioners are under attack and Medicare is under attack. Families have lost the Schoolkids Bonus. We are having the Commission of Audit, which is really a commission of cuts. There is talk of attacks on welfare, attacks on basic health services, attacks on education and attacks on families. Of course, there are attacks on unions—spin and cover-up. Australia's international reputation has been significantly affected by our relationship with Indonesia and some of the overseas appearances by the Prime Minister. Add to that Manus Island. What has happened on Manus Island and the cover-up of it are absolutely appalling. I think it is time for the minister to stand up and take some responsibility instead of covering up and just trying to spin his way out of trouble. It is not what a government should be doing.
This is a government of ideologues that is driven by a desire to implement an ultraconservative agenda which will lead to social and economic inequities. It wants to cut taxes and cut welfare. It is going to have an enormous impact on Australia as a nation. We need to be a globally competitive nation with an educated workforce. We are a country that can share the wealth with everybody. It does not have to be a country where one group of people have everything and another group of people do not. We need in Australia an inclusive society. Everybody should enjoy the wealth of this country. I call on the government to pursue that.

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (13:15): I rise to speak in this address-in-reply, the first item of business for the 44th Parliament, and in doing so thank the people of Casey for their support and endorsement at the election on 7 September last year. The electorate of Casey underwent a redistribution between the 43rd and 44th parliaments. In political terms that reduced the Liberal margin in Casey from a little over four per cent to about 1.9 per cent. The electorate increased in size basically threefold, taking in all of the Yarra Valley—the towns of Steels Creek, Yarra Glen, Healesville—and all of the towns along the Warburton Highway, just to name a few. It meant that the campaign was a very different campaign to previous campaigns in the smaller electorate of Casey.

The result that we received on election day saw a swing of more than five per cent to the Liberal Party in the electorate of Casey. I was humbled by that result. It represented a strong level of support for the policies that we enunciated prior to the election at a national level and some of the local commitments to build a stronger and safer community in the electorate of Casey. I thank all those people who voted for the coalition in the 2013 election, some of them for the very first time after witnessing what had been obviously the most dysfunctional and chaotic government in their lifetime.

As you well know, Deputy Speaker Kelly, all of us come to this place having had unbelievable levels of support from people within our electorates. I want to particularly thank those members of the Liberal Party of Australia in Casey who have always done so much to support me and to support our cause. They were led by Fran Henderson, the chair of the Casey FEC; vice-presidents Bryan McCarthy and Annette Stone; the secretary, Fiona Ogilvy-O'Donnell; the treasurer, Jill Hutchison; Rex McConachy; and the extended campaign team of Jim and Gwen Dixon, Peter Manders, Matt Mills, Steve McArthur, Mark Verschuur, and Ian Wood. All of these people did so much in the lead-up and throughout the election campaign to get the Liberal message out.

There is so much that has to be done in an election campaign. All of us in this House rely on the support of people who believe in the democratic process and who believe in our respective causes. I want to particularly mention Rex McConachy who looked after the campaign rooms and who, together with Jim Dixon and Peter Manders, had the unenviable task of erecting signs over the 2½ thousand square kilometres of the Yarra Valley throughout the campaign. We were joined on regular weekend campaign runs by another large group of volunteers: Byron Hodkinson; Brent Crockford; Liam Barry; Sam Campbell; Daniel Harrison; Josh Reimer; Andrew Hallam; Jodie Twidale; Max Lamb; Andrew Ermel; Scott and Stephanie Marshall; and last but certainly not least a former member for Casey—and, I know, an old friend of the Chief Government Whip—Peter Falconer, the member for Casey between 1975 and 1983, who still to this day, despite a very active business life, takes time off to help
in the election. He has the difficult job, as the Chief Government Whip would appreciate, of
driving me around the polling booths on election day. It is something that he likes to do and
something that he has done at every one of my elections since 2001. So a particular thanks to
the former member for Casey, Peter Falconer.

Mr Ruddock: I introduced him to Laurie Bennett. He has been doing it for 40 years.

Mr TONY SMITH: There we go. The election, of course, was about a number of key
national issues. In Casey the message I got consistently—and this was reflected in the
result—was that the carbon tax had to go. This is a message that the people of Casey
endorsed. It is a message that those opposite refuse to hear. But, like all members on this side
of the House, we were elected with a mandate to axe Labor's tax. It is a tax that is doing so
much damage to so many businesses and households in the Casey electorate.

The Casey electorate is a mixture of outer suburban and rural areas. It has some of the best
and most innovative food producers, but food producers are paying higher and higher
electricity bills that put them at a cost and competition disadvantage with their competitors
overseas. Time and time again this message was delivered by us and endorsed by the
electorate. The electorate also want to see the budget repaired. They know this is difficult but
intuitively they know that Labor's way of debt and deficit cannot go on forever. They want to
see red tape reduced—red tape that is strangling the small and medium businesses our
community depends so much on for jobs and for the local economy.

During the period before the election I took the then Leader of the Opposition and now
Prime Minister to Garden City Plastics, which is a great example of a business hurt by Labor's
carbon tax and still feeling that pain today. They are Australia's premium plastic pot
manufacturer. The carbon tax adds massively to their electricity bill. They do not sell
individual plastic pots. By the nature of their business they sell by the thousand, by the
10,000, so they tender for contracts and their main competition is foreign. The carbon tax is
making them less competitive. It is upping their cost structure and acting as a reverse tariff,
but that is something that Labor refuses to see. They are waiting to see the tax axed. Two days
before the election I took the now Prime Minister to Aussie Growers Fruits in Silvan, an
innovative food production firm that has a number of labels in our superma

Before polling day, Labor acknowledged that the carbon tax was a big campaign issue.
Having seen the result, they are determined to ignore it. The businesses and the households of
Casey want to see the carbon tax axed. They want to see their electricity bills come down.
They want to see their businesses become more competitive so they can provide greater
opportunity to people wanting jobs, wanting to expand, wanting to do more in the local
community.

During the election campaign I also advocated policies for a stronger local economy and a
stronger and safer community. I announced: four practical Green Army projects to restore the
local environment; a number of sporting projects to strengthen our sporting clubs, who play
such a great role in the community and for the community; and, for a safer community, more
closed circuit television cameras. Many years ago during the Howard government I was
pleased to see some of the first federally funded CCTV cameras in the electorate of Casey—
in Croydon, in Lilydale and in Mount Evelyn—and with the community I have seen firsthand
the great effect they have in cutting down on crime. So I was pleased to announce that if our government were elected we would extend the camera network at Lilydale and we would introduce one in Healesville and in Yarra Junction. I was also pleased to be able to pledge funding to the Metec Driver Training Centre—a not-for-profit driver training centre right in the heart of the Yarra Valley—to upgrade their facilities so that they can more effectively teach young drivers safe driving before they get their licence.

I was very pleased to be able to announce that an Abbott government would fund a key tourism project in the Yarra Valley: the restoration of a historic railway between Yarra Glen and Healesville. This had been identified by the community and all of the small business community as a vital project to build the local economy and to build tourism in that region. Indeed, in June the former government, under the former minister for regional Australia, the member for Ballarat, announced that it was going to fund this project. It announced that on 7 June. On that day it announced two other projects to be funded, one in the electorate of McEwen and the other in the electorate of Deakin. But by the time the election was called, amazingly for those in the Yarra Valley, both of the contracts in McEwen and Deakin had been signed off but the project in the Yarra Valley had been left on the minister's desk—clearly, a decision by Labor to forget its promise and to betray the people of the Yarra Valley.

I was very pleased to be able to make the pledge that if we were elected we would honour the full amount of money for that railway, and indeed we will. I am very much looking forward to that project proceeding. It will build jobs and build tourism in the heart of the Yarra Valley, an area that was so affected by the Black Saturday fires five years ago. Lives were affected, as we know, and the local economy was also affected. This is a project that, once up and running, people will look back on as a key driver of the local economy.

Let me conclude by again thanking all of the electors of the electorate of Casey. To those who supported me nearly six months ago at the election on 7 September I say thank you and I will not let you down. For those who did not support me I say I will do my very best for all the electors of Casey to represent them here in the parliament and to represent policies that will build the strongest community there in the Yarra Valley.

**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**

**Newcastle Electorate: Regal Cinema**

**Ms CLAYDON** (Newcastle) (13:29): I rise today to celebrate a milestone event in my electorate that I had the pleasure of attending last week and to recognise the hard work of the Newcastle community. Last Friday the Regal Cinema in Birmingham Gardens reopened after a tireless six-year community campaign for the retention, renovation and eventual reopening of this wonderful heritage listed community cinema.

The Regal Cinema was first opened in 1950 and had a loyal patronage of more than 34,000 a year. Former Labor Lord Mayor of Newcastle, the late Greg Heys, set up Friends of the Regal in the 1990s and the cinema was classified by the National Trust in October 2006. Despite the Friends' initial work to save the cinema, it sadly shut in 2006 in need of extensive refurbishment and repairs. The building was earmarked for sale and destined for demolition, but was fortunately saved by a last-minute change of heart by the elected council, following
years of hard work by the Friends of the Regal and the heartfelt pleas from the film sector. The Labor state member for Wallsend, Sonia Hornery MP, secured a grant of nearly $150,000 for the refurbishment. Newcastle City Council handed over the building to a community and industry trust. The cinema underwent significant upgrades and is now open again to the public.

I would like to congratulate Jo Smith, David Horkan, Christopher Saunders, the Friends of the Regal, Newcastle City Council and the wider community who supported the fundraisers and came out in force to ensure that every seat in the cinema was sponsored. Thank you for believing in this project and thank you for never giving up.

Ryan Electorate: Toowong State School

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (13:31): Last year I went to the Toowong State School Deaf Festival. The school offers the only bicultural and bilingual program in Queensland using Auslan and English. Auslan is taught to every child. Congratulations to Toowong State School P&C and the Queensland Association of the Deaf for a successful event.

Mrs Prentice also delivered this speech in Auslan—

Lalor Electorate: Wyndham Rotary Club Fun Run

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:32): Today I would like to commend the efforts and hard work of the organisers of the annual Wyndham Rotary Club Fun Run. The run, a fantastic community event, raises vital funds for the Good Friday Appeal, a tremendous cause. The event this year will be held this Sunday, 2 March, and kicks off at Chirnside Park Oval, home of the Werribee Tigers footy club and cricket club. Participants have the option to run five kilometres or 10 kilometres, or walk for eight kilometres around our beautiful Werribee River. The run also coincides with our local Weerama Festival, which I know will add to the atmosphere of the event, and I urge local residents to sign up or come along and support a family member or friend.

I will be participating in the run—probably more of a run, walk, run in my case—as will my state colleagues, the member for Tarneit, Tim Pallas, and the member for Derrimut, Telmo Languiller. We do this because we want to help the important work of the Royal Children's Hospital as well as supporting this community-led and organised event. I would like to expressly thank Eddie Szatkowski, David Lane, Gary Wilson, Julie Mason and the entire Wyndham Rotary Club for their efforts in running this event. I am looking forward to getting my running shoes on and supporting this important community event.

Antarctica: Mawson Station Anniversary

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (13:33): Sixty years ago the Australian flag was raised for the first time on the icy shore of Antarctica. It was Thursday, 11 February 1954, and among the party that established Australia's permanent Antarctic settlement, the Mawson Station, was Mr John Russell. Recently I had the pleasure of meeting John who is 93 years old and lives in my electorate at Deception Bay.

John's passion for the Antarctic began at school when he got to see the very ship that explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton sailed in on one of Britain's first polar expeditions. Then and there, at just eight years of age, he made the vow to be an Antarctic explorer. John described to me the thrill he felt when the Australian ship, the Kista Dan, was steered into Antarctica's Horseshoe Harbour. It was the beginning of a significant adventure.
I believe we can learn so much by speaking to our seniors about their lives and experiences. They have shaped us and our history in ways we can only understand if we take a moment to listen. I would especially encourage our youth to take a moment to sit with, listen to and appreciate the experiences and wisdom of their grandparents. Congratulations to Mr Russell on such a momentous achievement.

**McEwen Electorate: Bushfires**

**Mr MITCHELL** (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (13:35): On Sunday, 9 February this year, the people of McEwen suffered through their worst fire threat since Black Saturday. Almost cruelly, the fire began nearly five years to the day since the Black Saturday bushfires devastated our state. High temperatures and strong winds fanned the intense and fast-moving blazes which fire experts and authorities warned were the worst fire conditions this state had seen in five years. The fires ravaged thousands of acres of land, particularly the communities of Riddells Creek, Gisborne, Mickleham, Darraweit Guim, Wallan and Kilmore, Pyalong, Romsey and Lancefield. While many properties were destroyed we were so grateful that no lives were lost.

It is this point as well as the fact that dozens, if not hundreds, more properties were saved due to the bravery, selflessness and expertise of our emergency services particularly the Country Fire Authority. We were also lucky enough to have CFA teams come in from all across Victoria—from Ocean Grove to Stawell through to local teams in our electorate. How great are our local brigades! They choose to put their own lives at risk to serve the greater community. I would like to also thank the interstate emergency services such as the New South Wales Rural Fire Service who rallied to help their comrades down south.

Throughout this frightening week I visited the fire-affected areas and witnessed firsthand the genuine community spirit alive and well in McEwen. I am always in awe of our volunteers and the strength of our emergency services in times like these. I would like to commend our local communities and the vital support roles they have played. In times like this we must do all we can to support each another and stay safe. To all emergency services, government agencies and volunteers who helped throughout the fires, on behalf of the people of McEwen, I say thank you.

**Solomon Electorate: Housing**

**Mrs GRIGGS** (Solomon) (13:37): Last week the Assistant Minister for Defence and I made an announcement for an additional 2,300 houses in the Top End. Under this plan we will deliver an additional 800 houses for Defence members and over 1,500 houses for non-Defence personnel in my electorate of Solomon.

As a long-time advocate for reducing the housing squeeze in Darwin and Palmerston I was delighted to be able to make the announcement with the Assistant Minister for Defence. He confirmed that the Abbott government is listening to my requests for additional housing in my electorate. Unlike the previous Labor government, which took houses away from my electorate, this government is actually putting houses into the electorate.

This decision by the Abbott government is a significant milestone in my attempts to bring relief to the Darwin housing market, and shows how Defence, DHA and the Abbott government are working together to relieve the housing pressure on the people of Darwin and Palmerston. Additionally, an announcement at Defence’s former 2 Control and Reporting
Unit—the 2CRU—represents the first phase of the government's Top End Defence housing strategy. The proposed sale of 2CRU to DHA is the first step in delivering more quality housing for Defence members and easing the housing pressure on Darwin and Palmerston.

This particular development will provide 400 additional homes, and 200 of these will be available to Defence and the other 200 will be available to the private sector. (Time expired)

**Kingsford Smith Electorate: Maroubra Saints Australian Football Club**

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:38): On 21 February I had the great honour of attending the mighty Maroubra Saints AFL Club season launch.

This wonderful community club formed only 14 years ago and has grown to one of the biggest sporting and community clubs in our community. It was formed in 2000 with just 25 players, and it has now grown to 600 registered players in the 2014 season. In 2005 it won its first premiership in the Sydney junior AFL league, and in 2007 had its first player drafted into an AFL club. Last year they won four premierships, and they have two girls teams playing in the under 14s and the under 17s competitions.

It is a remarkable achievement in just 14 years—growing from 25 players to over 600 registered players. The senior club is known as the Randwick Saints and has had many players drafted and selected for New South Wales. It is a wonderful community club for players of all ages, with 450 families involved. They even have an 'old and bold' team called the 'Sinners', with over 40s teams in men's and women's competitions.

It is wonderful to see their home ground of Pioneer Park in Malabar full on weekends, with kids enjoying a healthy lifestyle and promoting community work. I thank the nearly 100 volunteers of the Maroubra Saints and wish them all the best for the 2014 AFL season.

**Eden Monaro Electorate: Centenary of Anzac**

Dr HENDY (Eden-Monaro) (13:40): I am pleased to inform the House that preparations for the centenary of the Anzac Cove landings are proceeding apace in my electorate of Eden Monaro.

We have received a number of very worthy applications for the Anzac Centenary Local Grants program. A committee has been established to review those bids and to submit them to the Department of Veterans' Affairs by the end of May this year. I want to congratulate the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator Ronaldson. One of his earliest decisions as minister was to increase the grant level to each electorate from $100,000 to $125,000. That was a significant boost to the program. In my view, the good senator would have to be the finest Minister for Veterans' Affairs since, well, since you, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott!

I also want to note a visit I made to the Eden subbranch of the RSL recently, and the great work of Steve Mahoney and his team. I also had the pleasure of formally launching the third volume of the book, *We Will Remember Them*, by local resident Peter Lacey, recording the biography of the soldiers from the far South Coast who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War I. Voluntary work such as this is a huge service to the community. I am sure that the centenary grants program will assist in many more worthy projects of this type.

Finally, can I say that the 90-second statement in sign language by the member for Ryan was extremely well done!
The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank you for the compliment to me. You will get more 90-second statements!

**Fremantle Electorate: Cochlear Implants**

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (13:41): I rise today to share the inspiring story of 10-year-old, Izaac Coubrough, who lives in the suburb of Munster in my electorate of Fremantle. Born with profound hearing loss, Izaac was, at eight months old, the youngest Western Australian to receive a Cochlear implant.

On 6 March this year, Izaac, his mum, Rachel, and grandmother, Amy Sloan, will travel to Canberra, where Izaac will address the National Press Club with his speech about the inventor of the Cochlear implant, Graeme Wood AC.

A student of the Telethon Speech and Hearing Outpost at Mel Maria Catholic Primary School in Attadale, Izaac is mad keen on water sports. He is a member of the Coogee Beach Surf Life Saving Club, where he loves to compete in carnivals. He is also into his third year of playing water polo with the Melville Water Polo Club in Bicton.

It is just fantastic to see the positive and liberating impact that the Cochlear implant has had on Izaac and his family. This is a reminder of the crucial role played by public screening and early intervention programs, which exist to ensure the early detection and treatment of deafness so that people affected are not left isolated, and can fulfil their potential.

The inaugural Power of Speech event to be held at the National Press Club next Thursday, 6 March 2014, is sponsored by Cochlear. Celebrating the gift of speech and sound, the event will feature Izaac and 11 other children from around Australia and New Zealand—to challenge the common perceptions of what hearing-impaired children can achieve.

**Page Electorate: Australia Day Awards**

Mr HOGAN (Page) (13:43): I would like today to acknowledge some leading figures in my community, and the wonderful way they were acknowledged in the Australia Day awards this year.

I would first like to make mention of Jacqueline Freney, who I have previously mentioned in the chamber, and her award as Young Australian of the Year for her efforts at the Paralympics. I would also like to mention Colin Lee of Ballina for an OAM in the general division for service to the community; Jim Dougherty of Grafton in the general division of services to surf life saving and to the community; to Margaret Ellis of Kyogle, also an OAM in the general division of service to the community of Kyogle; and to Dr Jurriaan Beek of Casino, also an OAM in the general division for services to medicine and to the committee.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge those from the Clarence Valley Council area: Jack Lumley, who was Citizen of the Year and Natalie Campbell, who was the Young Citizen of the Year. I acknowledge the Grafton Senior Citizens for their community achievement award and Fred Weller, awarded a Local Hero award, which was a great tribute to him.

From the Kyogle Council I acknowledge Ruth Haig, who was Citizen of the Year; Jasmyne Carr, who was Young Citizen of the Year; Olive Burton and Jim and Clair Hurley for their lifetime achievement awards; Noelle Lynden-Way for her contribution to community programs and activities award; Jim and Kay Crawter for their contribution to the business...
community award; and Ian Judd for his contribution to enhancing children's participation in the community award.

From Lismore City Council I acknowledge: Cec Harris—a great guy, Cec—who was Lismore Citizen of the Year; Angela Matthews for her citizen and services in the community award; Cindy Castella, who was Aboriginal Citizen of the year; and David McWhirter, who was sportsperson of the year.

Makin Electorate: Reality and Beyond Exhibition

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (13:44): Earlier this month I had the privilege of opening an art exhibition entitled Reality and Beyond at Gallery 1855 in Tea Tree Gully. The exhibition displays the works of Alan Ramachandran, Gerhard Ritter, Rebecca Cooke, Pauline Miller, Diana Mitchell and It Hao Pheh. All are accomplished artists, each with their unique style, who have had their artwork extensively exhibited and recognised. Indeed, they were six of 13 artists nationally selected for the production of the National Cancer Research Foundation's 2014 calendar.

Gallery 1855 is a Tea Tree Gully Council owned and managed art gallery. It is in a heritage building that was restored with the support of local community infrastructure funding provided to the Tea Tree Gully Council by the previous Labor government. I congratulate and commend each of the artists for the quality of their artwork and for their contribution to the arts more broadly, as they all have, in addition to being artists, become advocates, teachers and promoters of artists.

I also commend Gallery 1855 coordinator, Niki Vouis, and her team for their work in displaying and promoting the exhibition Reality and Beyond and the work of other artists throughout the year. The exhibition will continue until 29 March. I encourage anyone with the opportunity to do so to visit the works.

Hasluck Leadership Awards

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (13:46): I rise to talk about the Hasluck leadership award program in which I invite all high schools to nominate a candidate from their school to be considered to spend a week in Canberra. There are two young students with me this week. Stephen Beerksens is a 17-year-old and attends La Salle College in Midland, Western Australia. Stephen is an all-rounder. While maintaining good grades in his academic studies, he is participating in various school bands, school sporting teams and extracurricular activities as well as volunteering in the community. Jade Gurney is a 16-year-old and attends Lesmurdie Senior High School in Lesmurdie, Western Australia. She is part of the Lesmurdie Senior High School Council and is proud of her many achievements at school.

Both of them in their meeting with the Prime Minister yesterday indicated that their future and careers were in the arts. Both are hoping to attend the WA Academy of Performing Arts. Jade wants to focus on acting and Stephen wants to focus on being a composer. He hopes in the future to write scores for films he has a passion for. Both have enjoyed meeting members of the House of Representatives and the Senate and asking politicians why they see leadership as being important, what influenced them to become leaders within their electorates and communities and the role they will play in the future. They have gained substantially from it.
Edwards, Pastor Mark Llewellyn, OAM

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (13:47): Few in the electorate of Blair have been surprised by the contribution of Pastor Mark Edwards of the Cityhope Church in Ipswich and the things he has done for the whole city. In January this year Mark Edwards was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to the church and the community of Ipswich. He thoroughly deserved it. On behalf of the residents of Blair I warmly congratulate him. I am proud to call him my friend. Well done, Mark.

Mark was working as a successful lawyer in Ipswich before answering God's call in 1991. He changed his life—selling his private practice and becoming senior minister at his church. Under his leadership the Cityhope Church has grown into a vibrant and significant church in the region. When the 2011 floods hit Ipswich, Mark Edwards led Cityhope's tremendous response, looking after senior citizens at the church flood evacuation and recovery centre. Mark is a life member of the Ipswich region's chamber of commerce and has chaired the ethics and advisory boards of numerous local health and educational authorities. He has served his religious denomination at the state and national levels.

The contribution of the Edwards family to Ipswich has been significant. His grandfather Roy started RT Edwards and served as a councillor on the Ipswich City Council. I know his cousin Gary. I played football with him and attended church gatherings with him as a young fellow. I also know his uncle Tom. His father is Sir Llew Edwards, the former Treasurer and Deputy Premier of Queensland. He is a thoroughly good bloke. His only small failing is that he represented the Liberal Party! (Time expired)

Rural and Regional Australia

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (13:49): I want to bring to the House meetings I have been having across my electorate recently about daring to dream and the future of regional Australia. We have a challenge in this country. We can make the choice between building more congestion across our cities on the edges or having a real jobs vision and a plan for our inland cities. We have a great quality of life in our inland cities. You can go for a swim in the Murray River in my electorate and you will not get eaten by a shark or a crocodile. We have some great affordable housing. A four-bedroom house will cost you $350,000 and you will get a pizza oven and a pool out the back.

We want people to live in regional Australia. We want people to put their roots down, get educated there, have their children there and work there. We need to grow regional Australia. In our strategy we have been talking about two things. The first is building the capacity of people. If we can get one small business to put on one extra person or one extra apprentice, that is one more job that builds capacity. The other thing we have been talking about is getting people together. You only build communities when you interconnect people. We need to get people out of their house, playing some sport and going to community events. If we can do those two things—build capacity and build communities—regional Australia will continue to be the powerhouse of Australia.

Calma, Dr Tom, AO

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:50): It is with great pleasure that I rise today to congratulate my friend and former colleague Dr Tom Calma AO, who last week took up his
appointment as Chancellor of the University of Canberra. He is the first Indigenous man to
hold such a position at any Australian university.

I had the pleasure of working with Tom many years ago at the Australian High
Commission in New Delhi. We were both posted to India, where I was cultural attache and he
was education counsellor. Since then I have taken great joy in following his impressive
career, highlights of which have included serving as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Social Justice Commissioner, the Race Discrimination Commissioner and last year being
recognised as the ACT Australian of the Year.

Tom has always been an advocate for empowerment, for education and for reconciliation.
His landmark 2005 report calling for the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-
Indigenous people to be closed within a generation laid the groundwork for the bipartisan
commitment to the closing the gap targets we have today.

Tom has previously served as the Deputy Chancellor of the University of Canberra. I know
he will do a wonderful job as chancellor. I would also like to pay tribute to the outgoing
chancellor, Professor John Mackay, who has had a long relationship with the UC and has
served as chancellor with energy and commitment since 2011. I wish him well in his
retirement.

Employment

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (13:52): I rise in relation to a disturbing report yesterday on youth
unemployment—disturbing because of the lack of opportunity that many young people will
have in their transition from school to work, but disturbing most of all because my home state
of Tasmania performs worst of all the states and territories. One in five young people in
Tasmania aged 15 to 24 are without work—a situation that heightens the risk of generational
disadvantage, poor health outcomes and homelessness.

Tasmania is, sadly, also at the bottom of national benchmarks for adult unemployment,
reinforcing what a poor return we have had from 16 years of Labor government in
Tasmania—the last four years with a Labor-Green government in Hobart. Yet just before
Christmas last year, the Labor Premier stated:
There will be jobs for your children. There are jobs for your children today.
I am not sure which parallel universe the Premier lives in, but the ABS monthly
unemployment reports and the youth unemployment update yesterday tells the true story. On
15 March, Tasmanians have an important choice to make: whether to reward Labor for its
continuing failures in relation to jobs, education, health and frontline service delivery or
whether to vote for a majority Liberal government with new ideas and new vitality to finally
get Tasmania off the bottom of national unemployment tables.

Abbott Government

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (13:53): If they say imitation is the greatest form of flattery,
then the current government are indeed very flattering about the former Labor government’s
record. They have been running around the country re-announcing projects as if they were
their own. These include the $210 million infrastructure package for Cape York, the Midland
Highway project in Tasmania, the $500 million upgrade of Western Australia’s Great
Northern Highway and North West Coastal Highway, Brisbane Legacy Way project, the
upgrade of that city’s Gateway Motorway north of the Brisbane River. In all of this they
pretend that this has just occurred. Indeed, the Deputy Prime Minister pretends that roads have just appeared in a short period of time when he opens them.

There are also projects that they have previously opposed, such as the Huon Aquaculture project, re-announced by Minister Jamie Briggs just last month. When we announced it, Tasmanian senator Richard Colbeck described it as ‘a disgusting display of pork barrelling of the highest order’. And yet, just six months later, they are re-announcing these projects—pretending that the money is new, pretending that the ideas are theirs. While it is flattering that they support the former government's infrastructure record, it is not surprising because we finished first in the OECD for investment in infrastructure. (Time expired)

Robertson Electorate: Marine Rescue Central Coast

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (13:55): I rise to honour the work of Marine Rescue Central Coast in upholding the safety of people out and about on the water in my electorate of Robertson. Being out on the water is a regular and popular pastime for many of us on the coast, so the work of organisations like the marine rescue association is vital. There are over 100 volunteers working from the Point Clare and Terrigal bases. They provide radio monitoring 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Last year, these tireless volunteers together spent 71,000 hours on duty. There is hardly any rest. Last year alone, more than 130 vessels got into trouble. Working in teams, marine rescue crews were presented with difficult, risky and sometimes dangerous situations to assist nearly 400 people in strife on our waterways. Alongside our hard-working water police, these volunteers are heroes on the water.

So, it seems entirely appropriate to recognise Unit Commander Marine Rescue Central Coast, Pat Fayers. Earlier this month in my electorate office, Pat was honoured with a National Medal. The National Medal is awarded by the Governor-General to recognise long-serving and dedicated volunteers in Australian communities. It highlights people who put their own safety at risk to protect others. For more than 15 years of faithful service, Pat completely deserves to receive this distinguished civilian medal. As a coalition government, we believe in the importance of voluntary organisations and voluntary effort. So, thank you to the hard-working team at Marine Rescue Central Coast. We are all safer on the water because of your tireless and selfless work.

La Trobe University

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:57): Today I rise to inform the House that it is O Week at the La Trobe University. Today we welcome 1,385 new undergraduate students to the La Trobe University campus in Bendigo. These new undergraduates will join approximately 4,000 students at the campus and will undertake a broad range of courses from the Tertiary Enabling Program through to a doctorate of philosophy.

We like to think that the Bendigo campus is the jewel in the crown of La Trobe. Each facility at the campus caters for a wide number of courses: from visual arts to outdoor and environment education; civil engineering to our amazing rural school of health; dentistry, oral health, paramedics, pharmacy and planning. In 2014 we will see the commencement of new courses at the campus, including paramedic practice, public health promotion, exercise science and exercise physiology, as well as a number of business courses in sports development and management. The Tertiary Enabling Program is a great success story, enabling students would not have otherwise been able to undertake the chance to go to

CHAMBER
university. This was a Labor government initiative, and I am proud to say that it continues today at the campus.

The campus plays an important role in our local economy, for Bendigo and for Central Victoria, by employing more than 400 people in the

Anzac Centenary

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (13:58): Between 2014 and 2018 Australia will commemorate the Anzac Centenary. We will remember the sacrifice of Australians who fought to protect our rights and freedoms, and honour those who gave their tomorrow for our today. The First World War remains the most costly conflict in terms of casualties. Between 1914 and 1918 more than 60,000 Australians were lost to the war.

As we near the centenary of Anzac in April 2015, many communities are planning how we will mark the special occasion and pay our respects. In Dobell, several projects have been proposed by local RSL sub-branches and community organisations that will commemorate the involvement, service and sacrifice of Australia's servicemen and women in the First World War. I am fortunate to have a strong local committee assisting with the assessment of events and programs under the Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program. I would like to share with the House some of the initiatives proposed to mark this special occasion in Dobell.

The Toukley RSL sub-branch will develop and install commemorative plaques marking the occasion at local schools. The Entrance-Long Jetty RSL sub-branch will encourage students to participate in activities commemorating the Centenary of Anzac and award over 1,000 specially made medallions. The Wyong Family History Group will develop a series of pull-up banners honouring local World War I servicemen and women. I have encouraged members of the Dobell community—

The SPEAKER: It being 2 pm, in accordance with standing order 43 the time for members' statements has concluded.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Qantas

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:00): My question is to the Prime Minister. The government has today announced that it will lift ownership restrictions on Australia's national carrier, Qantas. How will selling the nation's airline stop Australian jobs from going overseas, and what is the government's plan for jobs at Qantas?

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, the question is out of order because the government has announced no such thing.

Mr Burke: I am not sure what standing order the Leader of the House was referring to then; but, if the Deputy Prime Minister gave a speech that he should not have given, that is not for the Leader of the House to defend.

The SPEAKER: I think the question will stand. I call the Prime Minister.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:01): Thank you. I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition, because obviously Qantas is an iconic Australian business and all of us want to ensure that Qantas flourishes forever. It is a great Australian airline. It is a great Australian icon. We want it to flourish. For that to happen, two things are necessary:
first, it needs to be able to compete on a level playing field with its rivals; and, second, it needs to put its own house in order.

Qantas is doing its best to put its own house in order, and this government will do what it can to ensure that Qantas has a level playing field on which to compete, because that is the best thing that we can do for Qantas. I have to say to members opposite that, if they are fair dinkum about wanting Qantas to flourish, one thing they can do is scrap the carbon tax.

**Mr Hockey:** $106 million a year!

**Mr ABBOTT:** $106 million a year in just the last year; that is Qantas's carbon tax bill. We want to help Qantas. And we can start helping Qantas by helping the carbon tax.

**Economy**

**Mrs MARKUS** (Macquarie) (14:02): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister explain to the House how the government is cutting taxes to boost growth and create jobs?

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:02): I thank the member for Macquarie for her question. I can inform her that this government has a strong, clear and consistent plan for Australia. We are stopping the boats; we are fixing the budget; and we are building the future, a future where every Australian can expect a fair go and every Australian is encouraged to have a go. We have a plan.

We will build a strong and prosperous economy for a safe and secure Australia. A prosperous economy is obviously an economy that creates jobs. And, if you want to create jobs, you have to cut taxes. I will say that again for the benefit of the members opposite: if you want to create jobs, you have to cut taxes. The carbon tax is a tax on jobs; it is a tax on every Australian family's cost of living; and the mining tax is a tax on investment and also a tax on jobs.

As I have been saying repeatedly for years now, the carbon tax is a $9 billion a year hit on jobs, as well as being a $550 a year hit on every household's cost of living. They are terrible taxes. The carbon tax will reduce the aluminium industry by over 60 per cent; it will reduce the steel industry by 20 per cent. That is what the Leader of the Opposition wants to do, it seems.

But I think that members opposite are having second thoughts about the high-taxing agenda of the Leader of the Opposition. We had the member for Fremantle stand up in caucus today and say 'get rid of the mining tax'. Well, she is right. Good on the member for Fremantle. She is speaking up for Western Australia. Is the Leader of the Opposition listening?

**Mr Perrett interjecting—**

**Mr ABBOTT:** This government will do whatever is needed to stop the carbon tax. We have legislation before the parliament, and just this week the relevant minister introduced a determination to stop the carbon tax auction, to stop the auction of permits. He is a very influential man, because it seems that members opposite agree with him. They are actually dismantling the mechanism to collect the carbon tax. Bill, make up your mind. Go the whole hog; stop the strike in the Senate and scrap this job-destroying tax.
Qantas

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:06): My question is to the Prime Minister. In light of the Prime Minister's previous answer about Qantas, is the government's help for Qantas dependent on a reduction of thousands of jobs at Qantas?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:06): We want Qantas to be able to compete on a level playing field. We want Qantas to be able to compete in a low-tax, low-cost environment. We want Qantas to be able to manage the business in the best interests of customers, of shareholders and of workers. That is what we want. We want Qantas to survive. We want Qantas to flourish. We want it to maximise employment. That is what we want and the best thing that members opposite can do, if they are fair dinkum about helping Qantas, is scrap the carbon tax. It is a $106 million hit on Qantas. It is a $106 million hit on the jobs of Qantas workers—

Mr Perrett: One-trick Tony.

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton will remove himself under 94(a)

The member for Moreton then left the chamber.

Mr ABBOTT: You know what the workers of Qantas and the workers right around Australia want? They do not want a tourist; they want a leader. They do not want someone who just feels their pain; they want someone who works for them. This government is working for the workers of Australia by scrapping the taxes that are hurting their jobs.

Carbon Pricing

Mr BROUGH (Fisher) (14:07): My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Minister, many Sunshine Coast businesses, including trawler operators, dairy farmers and grocers, have expressed to me their real concern about the impost of the carbon tax. Minister, can you inform the House of the progress being made to repeal the carbon tax?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (14:08): I am delighted to receive this question from the new member for Fisher, who brings a certain decency, diligence and dignity back to the parliament. Long may he reign.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left.

Mr HUNT: He asked me: what progress are we making on repealing the carbon tax? We are making progress. We made a very important first step today, when the opposition finally began the crab walk away from the long held belief in the carbon tax. What occurred was this. In the last few days I signed a determination to scrap the carbon tax auctions. These auctions were a critical part of the floating price period of the carbon tax. It does not work without the auctions, and they know it. What we saw was that, instead of standing up for their beloved carbon tax, they did the right thing. They stood back. They allowed the auctions to be revoked.

The significance of this moment in this parliament should not be underestimated in any way. We see that overnight the ALP has begun the journey to allowing full repeal of the carbon tax. By allowing the auctions to be axed, they know that, through the life of this parliament, you cannot have the floating price period operating in any effective way. What does this mean? It means that they have taken the first step, but we still have to finish the job.
At this moment in the Senate the Leader of the Opposition has his senators out on strike. They are on an industrial go-slow in the Senate. We have the bills backed up, and everything they can do to delay repeal of the carbon tax is being done. This is the moment when, if you take the first step, you have to finish the job and repeal the carbon tax.

Why do we need to do that? It is a multibillion dollar tax—$4.1 billion on electricity alone and $1.1 billion on Australian manufacturing alone. Whether it is a food maker such as Simplot or an airline such as Qantas, who has a $106 million carbon tax, the costs are mounting for each and every Australian. If you want to repeal the carbon tax lock, stock and barrel, the message to the Leader of the Opposition is: listen to what the Australian people voted for, bring your senators back to work—end the industrial go-slow, end the strike, in the Senate—call them in on Monday and get them to vote for repeal of the carbon tax. Get them to honour the election mandate and vote for lower electricity prices.

**Health Funding**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister's speech last night, where he flagged cuts to health spending. Why is the Prime Minister breaking his election promise that there would be no cuts to health spending?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:11): I am pleased that the Leader of the Opposition is interested in the speech, because it was a good speech, and if he was to study it closely he would learn something. No such measures were proposed in the speech. The Leader of the Opposition should be honest with this parliament. What I did say was that over time, in the longer term, the rate of growth of expenditure has to be restrained. Of course, it has to be restrained. You know why? Because of the fiscal mess that members opposite left. Thanks to members opposite, over the next four years this country is facing prospective deficits totalling $123 billion. It is facing cumulative debt of $667 billion. That is the burden that members opposite have left on future generations of Australians. We will repair the budget, but we will do so in ways which are entirely consistent with our election commitments.

**Budget**

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (14:13): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer please outline the importance of fiscal repair to the budget? What was the state of the budget inherited by the coalition?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:13): I thank the member for Petrie. He is right. We were left a mess—$123 billion of deficits, $667 billion of debt and 200,000 more Australians unemployed than when Labor was elected just six years ago. And the budget is in a structural mess as a result of Labor's failure to meet its commitments. They said, they promised—the member for Lilley, the member for McMahon and the whole lot of them promised—that they would get the budget back to surplus. That is what they promised. They said: 'Don't worry. Expenditure will not increase in real terms by more than two per cent.' What have they left us? They have left us with education expenditure rising at three per cent above inflation for the next 10 years; they have left us with health expenditure rising at four per cent per annum above inflation every year for the next 10 years; and they have left us with a pension bill that is increasing by three per cent more than inflation every year for the next
10 years—and they promised it would not be more than two—because they did not have the courage to make the decisions that needed to be made to fix up the budget and make sure that those most vulnerable in the community were cared for. Labor talk about caring for vulnerable people but they do not give a damn, because the net result of all their largesse, the net result of their incompetence, is that the debt per head of population—every man, woman and child—in Australia will double over the next 10 years, to $23,000 per man, woman and child, unless we can address the structural problem left by Labor.

We take intergenerational responsibility seriously. Of course, they did not just mislead the Australian people about the state of the budget. Oh, no; they went further. They retrospectively misled the Australian people about the budget, because Wayne Swan, in his own newsletter, says: 'We're back in surplus, on time, as promised.' So he is retrospectively fiddling the facts! Well, the truth is: they have left us with a legacy of debt and deficit that is unsustainable. If we want to have jobs, if we want to create new jobs, the only way to do that is through more growth, and the only way to get more growth in place is to get rid of the taxes like the carbon tax and the mining tax, to get the budget back on track, to invest in productive infrastructure, not to waste taxpayers' money and to get on with the job of responsible government.

Health Funding

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:16): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the government's decision to cut $10 million funding for a life-saving cancer workforce program in Western Australia. Why has the Prime Minister already broken his election promise that there would be no cuts to health care?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:16): We will entirely keep our pre-election commitments. I have no knowledge of the claim that you have made. I will look into it and, if there is more to be said, I will say it.

National Heavy Vehicle Regulator

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (14:17): My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Transport business operators in Indi have told me they are having problems with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and its ability to issue permits. I am told that, since 9 February, waiting times for permits have grown from two or three days, when VicRoads was handling applications, to 23 days. Minister, can you please tell me what the government is doing to rectify this situation?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:17): I thank the honourable member for Indi for her question. I certainly share her concerns about the delays that people in the trucking industry have been experiencing since the beginning of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator's supervision and issuing of heavy vehicle and wide vehicle permits. It is particularly disappointing because I think members on both sides of the House have been enthusiastically supporting the development of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. It is an important piece of economic reform that is potentially going to save billions of dollars in the trucking industry over the years ahead. This regulator has been a long time in the making. It was due to start on 1 January 2013. Its start-up time in relation to the issuing of permits was delayed on at least four occasions, and finally there was a view that it was ready to start up. It provides a one-
stop shop for the issuing of permits, so, instead of vehicles having to get new permits every time they cross the border, they are able to just get a single permit that deals with all the issues. It is clear that the systems that were in place were inadequate to do the job. In spite of an audit conducted by one of the country's leading auditing companies which said it was ready, the reality was it was not ready. There are deficiencies even in the legislation, which allows 28 days for there to be a permit issued. That is clearly unsatisfactory.

This morning I met with transport ministers from around Australia to talk about what further response there needs to be to deal with this issue and to try and get the regulator working properly. New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria have taken back the process of issuing licences within their state and negotiating with local government to get the local permits, which have been a significant part of the delays in bringing this to fruition. South Australia is going to take back the management of its permits later this week. From the point of view of ministers, we are not going to allow a return to the national regulator distributing these permits until we are satisfied the systems are fixed and are going to work. We clearly inherited, as a government, an arrangement which was unsatisfactory. A lot of repair work will need to be done, and I would expect that these interim arrangements we have with the states will be in place for several months until everyone has got the confidence that the new system will work well. It is an important reform. We need to get it right. This government is not going to walk away from it, and we will be working with the states to achieve satisfactory permit-issuing systems. But in the interim the states will take back that role so the industry can get its permits issued quickly and on time.

Canada

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (14:21): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Can the minister update the House on her discussions with the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the steps the Canadian government has taken to increase economic growth and job opportunities and any lessons that holds for the Australian government?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:21): I thank the member for Cowan for his question. I know that he is concerned about job opportunities in his electorate of Cowan. Yesterday I had the opportunity to meet with Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird, and this evening Foreign Minister Baird and I will be addressing the Australia-Canada Economic Leadership Forum, which I know the Prime Minister addressed last evening. We have a strong bilateral relationship with Canada, based on our common values, our shared experiences. But in many ways our economies are competitive. We are both export oriented, open trading economies. Our strengths are in mining and resources and agriculture.

It is interesting to note that the Harper government, like the Abbott government, has a strong focus on economic growth and job opportunities through a plan to pay off debt, to get their budget back into surplus, to have smaller government and lower taxes and to cut out wasteful spending. And like the Abbott government they are also pursuing a very ambitious free trade agenda for job opportunities for businesses in Canada. One of the most critical steps undertaken by the Canadian government was to reject a carbon tax. As Prime Minister Harper's Parliamentary Secretary Calandra said last year:

Our government knows that carbon taxes raise the price of everything, including gas, groceries, and electricity.

Parliamentary Secretary Calandra went on to say that the Canadian government:
… has reduced greenhouse gas emissions while protecting and creating Canadians jobs—greenhouse gas emissions are down since 2006, and we've created 1 million net new jobs since the recession—and we have done this without penalising Canadian families with a carbon tax.

This was the election promise of the Abbott government. When those opposite shed crocodile tears over job losses, they should remember the words of their own climate change adviser, Ross Garnaut. He warned the opposition, when in government, when he said:

… regions that are vulnerable to large-scale loss of livelihood as a result of the implementation of a carbon price.

Their own adviser warned them that there would be large-scale loss of livelihood as a result of the implementation of a carbon price. So not only are emissions set to go up under Labor's carbon tax; they have also been warned about large-scale loss of livelihood. The lesson from our great friends in Canada, the lesson from the Canadian government, is that this opposition should support the repeal of the carbon tax, support the will of the Australian people and support our plan to give business an opportunity to create more jobs.

General Practice

Ms KING (Ballarat) (14:24): My question is to the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister believe there is overservicing in general practice and that Australians are going to their GP too often?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:24): I think that the average Australian GP does a very good job, often under difficult circumstances, and we want to support general practice. I have had a bit of experience in this area of health. I have to say that the general practitioners of this country are absolutely the backbone of our system, because, apart from the individual himself or herself, the one person in the whole of the system who invests the time, energy and effort in managing an individual's health is that person's GP. I have nothing but admiration and respect for the GPs of Australia and we will do what we can to make their job easier, not harder.

The only people who really made life hard for the GPs of Australia in recent times, funnily enough, were members opposite. Let us not forget that the former minister for health, sitting over there as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, looking a little bit embarrassed, is the person who let the MYEFO at the end of 2012 cut $1.6 billion out of health. Shame, shame, shame!

Carbon Pricing

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (14:26): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister. Will the minister inform the House what the impact of the carbon tax is on diesel, petrol and aviation fuels? Is there a way to reduce this burden, particularly in Calare?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:26): I thank the member for Calare for his very important question. The reality is that the carbon tax is adding to the cost of fuel right across the country and it is adding therefore to the cost of doing business wherever we are. There is carbon tax on the diesel used by trains to move products to the port. There is carbon tax on the trains that carry people to work. If you travel to work on a train, whether it be diesel or electric, you pay a carbon tax. If you drive your car to work there is no carbon tax directly applied to the fuel. If the Greens really believe in public transport, as they say, if members opposite really believe
in the importance of encouraging use of public transport, they will vote against the carbon tax. Get rid of the carbon tax. It will make public transport cheaper and therefore a more competitive way for people to travel to work. If you are worried about wanting to build more infrastructure or you want to build more roads, there is carbon tax applying to the diesel used in graders and trucks building roads across the country. If you want better investment in infrastructure and better value for money, vote against the carbon tax.

Yesterday I referred to the carbon tax on aviation fuel. If you want a more competitive airline, if you want our Australian airlines to be more competitive than airlines in other parts of the world, vote out the carbon tax. Get rid of the carbon tax. The reality is that the carbon tax is adding to the cost of everything we do. I know the member for Calare is well and truly aware of the fact that, if Labor had its way, the carbon tax would be added to all transport fuel from 1 July this year. Their intention was to extend the carbon tax—6½ cents a litre, 7½ cents a litre—to every truck operating in this nation. That was Labor's plan. If they had been re-elected we would be getting a carbon tax on the entire transport industry. We do not want it on the transport industry. We do not want it at all. The people have voted to get rid of it and it is time this parliament responds to the demands of the Australian people and abolished the carbon tax.

**Health Funding**

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (14:29): My question is to the Prime Minister. Modelling shows that the government's proposed GP tax will put additional costs on hospitals and will increase waiting times in emergency departments. Is the Prime Minister aware that the proposed tax could triple waiting times in emergency departments? Prime Minister, will you guarantee that the GP tax will not increase emergency waiting time in WA hospitals?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:30): It is good to get a question from the member for Perth. I apologise because I actually misled the House earlier, inadvertently, when I referred to the member for Fremantle wanting to get rid of the mining tax. I suspect she does want to get rid of the mining tax, but only the member for Perth was brave enough today to say to the caucus, 'The mining tax is an anti-Western Australian tax and it should be repealed.' She is right. I am pleased that the member for Perth is against harmful taxes. So am I, and there is no such tax planned.

**Carbon Pricing**

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Small Business. Will the minister outline the impact of the carbon tax on small business? What is the government doing to ensure prices fall for electricity and gas, particularly in my home state of Tasmania?

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley—Minister for Small Business) (14:31): For the benefit of the member for Lyons, the carbon tax is an absolutely cruel tax on small business. This is something that was reinforced when I recently visited New Norfolk with the member for Lyons for a small business forum. Time and time again, they talked about the impediments to small business, that great driver of growth, economic activity and employment. They said, 'Why is it that a government that has been voted out wants to hang on to a carbon tax that actually impedes our ability to create opportunities in our community?' In Tasmania, small business and family enterprises are the economy. They are so crucial to livelihoods for those
citizens. What stands in their way? It is excess red tape, excessive taxes, particularly the carbon tax, and a disinterested Labor Party that has not heard the election result and wants to hang on to a tax that is a job destroyer. You can imagine the conversations we had when the member for Lyons outlined how a local IGA was paying some four times the amount for refrigerant gases on top of all the other carbon tax related price increases for energy—natural gas and electricity—in the whole supply chain and how hard it is for that small business to compete.

If the opposition leader is interested in jobs, I will help him with a plan for jobs. Under the former Labor government 412,000 jobs were lost in small business. Why? Their policy settings were hostile to small business. Small businesses understands that. The electorate understands that. The citizens in the member for Lyons electorate understand that. I just met with the Ai Group and they understand it. This government understand it. Why are those opposite standing in the road of giving small business the chance to recover its contribution to the economy and its opportunity to provide jobs and livelihoods? We are getting on with the work of getting rid of this job-destroying carbon tax.

The ACCC has been given a direction to start monitoring electricity and natural and synthetic gas prices so we have a baseline for costs that have resulted from the carbon tax. Why is that important? When we get to actually axe the tax, which is what the electorate wants and what small business are crying out for, we can make sure that those price increases that were a result of Labor's carbon tax are taken out of business and taken out of households, that the spending power of households in Lyons and right across the continent is restored, and that cost pressures are taken out of small business. We have a plan for jobs. It is about putting the business back into small business. One great impediment is the carbon tax. If you are slightly interested in jobs, Leader of the Opposition, why don't you join us to axe this tax and let small business get back to that powerhouse of employment they were before Labor cruelled the sector over six years?

Paid Parental Leave

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (14:34): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister's refusal in question time yesterday to rule out making cuts to the age pension. Does the Prime Minister think that it is fair to cut the age pension while at the same time paying $75,000 to wealthy women to have a baby under the Prime Minister's Paid Parental Leave Scheme?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:34): I want to do the right thing by the women of Australia. That is what I want to do. I want the women of Australia to have a fair go to have a career and to have a family. That is what a fair dinkum, paid parental leave scheme is about. It is giving women of Australia the fair go that they have been denied for too long. It is a historic reform and it will happen under this coalition government. That is what will happen. As everyone knows, the coalition's fair dinkum Paid Parental Leave Scheme will be fully funded and headroom will be made for it through a 1.5 per cent company tax cut.

Former Member for Dobell

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (14:35): My question is to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for Employment and the Leader of the Government in the Senate.
Why is it important that the House express its regret for the statements made to this House on 21 May 2012 by the former member for Dobell?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:36): I thank the member for McPherson for her question. It is very important that this House express its regret and apologise for the statement the former member for Dobell made in 2012. Why is it so? It is so because the privilege that attaches to members of parliament to be free to be able to raise matters in this place without the fear of defamation proceedings is a privilege that should only ever be used in defence of our constituents and because we are trying to do good in this place. It should never be a weapon to be wielded to attack opponents who cannot fight back, which is what the former member for Dobell did in 2012.

The former member for Dobell used parliamentary privilege to defame individual members of this House and also individuals outside the parliament and to mislead the parliament with a fantastic story that he then did not repeat in court when he had the opportunity to stand by it. In fact, not only did he not repeat it but he did not dispute the facts in the case as put by the prosecution. He simply said that the facts were as agreed by the prosecution and defence but that he had the authority to use Health Services Union members' funds for the purposes that he has been found guilty of.

This presents the Leader of the Opposition with an opportunity. This afternoon's debate presents him with an opportunity because he said to Neil Mitchell in 2011 in answer to the question:
You've run a union, you understand these things, do you support him?
Oh, yeah, I believe him—
the Leader of the Opposition said.

You got complete confidence in him?

Neil Mitchell asked him and he said yes. He made it absolutely clear in 2011 that he utterly supported and had full confidence in the former member for Dobell. I expect this afternoon that the member for Maribyrnong, the Leader of the Opposition, will be on his feet not only to apologise for the mistakes he made in supporting the former member for Dobell but also to apologise for providing $350,000 of ALP members' money to the former member for Dobell to defend his actions in the courts.

I assume that the Leader of the Opposition will announce today that he is going to pay back the $267,000 that the former member for Dobell stole from Health Services Union members, some of the poorest-paid workers in Australia, from the $1.2 million that those union members provided to the Labor Party over six years. It is the very least that the Leader of the Opposition can do.

Donations to Political Parties

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:39): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to Steve Nolan Constructions, which donated $200,000 to the Liberal Party last year and recently went into administration owing subcontractors millions of dollars. Will the Prime Minister direct the LNP to repay this donation to the workers whose entitlements are now at risk?
The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister is not responsible for the administration of the LNP and I rule the question out of order.

Opposition members interjecting—

Nauru

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (14:40): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Will the minister update the House on the findings of the independent review into the Nauru riots?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:40): I thank the member for Herbert and am pleased to be asked this question about the report that was released on Saturday evening. I notice that I have had no questions from those opposite about the Nauru riots that occurred on their watch. I have not heard any calls for the report to be released any earlier. They seem to want to whitewash the history of the time they were in government. Their border protection record was 50,000-plus arrivals, more than 800 vessels and the tragedy of more than 1,100 deaths.

On one particular night, 19 July, there was a riot on Nauru. When you read the findings in the independent report, which was commissioned by the previous minister a week or so after the event, you find the report outlines what happens when a government is dragged kicking and screaming to implement a policy it does not believe in. That was the record of the previous government when it came to offshore processing. Year after year after year in opposition the coalition said, 'You need to restore offshore processing,' and year after year after year the then government denied it. They said: 'You shouldn't do it; it won't have an outcome; it won't help.' They also said you could not turn back boats and temporary protection visas should not be implemented. They still believe the latter two despite the success of our operations, particularly those at sea. They said that could never work, but clearly it is working because it is now 68 days since there has been a successful people-smuggling venture to this country.

The report says $60 million in damage to taxpayer-funded services and facilities occurred on that evening. It finds that the planning of those centres was poorly conceived by the previous government to the point of failing a duty of care. It says there was hands-off oversight and that the intelligence response failed up the chain, so when intelligence existed there was no ability to respond to it up the chain. It says there was a lack of clarity relating to the powers of police and security officers on that evening. It says there was no pre-emptive exercise of authority undertaken to prevent those sorts of incidents from emerging. It says staffing levels were inadequate to deal with large-scale non-compliant behaviour.

We are now dealing with the results of another very serious incident, and many of the design flaws present on Nauru were present in putting together the facility on Manus Island. When you are dragged kicking and screaming to implement a policy, as the previous government was, then accidents will happen.

Asylum Seekers

Mr MARLES (Corio) (14:43): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. I refer to the minister's previous answer relating to Australian government responsibility for offshore detention facilities. Yesterday the minister reported to the House that he had not personally spoken with the official on Manus Island in charge of the detention
facility since September last year. Why does the minister run from responsibility for the Manus Island detention facility?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:44): I thank the member for his question. I outlined yesterday to this House when I had the personal meeting with the operations manager appointed by the Chief Migration Officer from Papua New Guinea—

**Mr Marles:** In September.

**Mr MORRISON:** That was in September, that is right—that is when it was. And on a daily basis my department and agencies work with that operations manager. I know those opposite like to meddle in the operational affairs of their agencies and give them all sorts of directions, but is the opposition seriously suggesting that on a day-to-day basis ministers should direct the operations of those centres?

I have a highly competent secretary, the same secretary that serviced the three ministers previously on that side of the House, and that secretary together with my department works together with the service providers at that centre. One of the things that we did do when we came to government was this: on that visit that I made in September of last year with General Molan it became absolutely crystal clear that the situation was not right on Manus Island—that the security situation on Manus Island was deficient—and, as a result, the first thing I did was to instruct Lieutenant General Campbell to do a force protection assessment review on Manus Island. Over the last five months we have been filling the $1.2-billion black hole of inadequate funding and support for an under-resourced, understaffed, undercapitalised centre that was put in place by the previous government—the previous government that appointed all the service providers and all of the arrangements for those service providers who were on watch that night.

The review into the Manus Island incident will take its course. It will look at all of these matters. It will review all of these matters. It will review the decisions taken by the previous government as well as the decisions taken by this government. In February that included sending 130 additional security officers to Manus Island to deal with the brewing incident. I know this: as terrible as the events of that night last week were, without the actions taken by this government over the last five months to clean up the mess on Manus Island that was left by the previous government—for a policy they were dragged kicking and screaming to implement—if it were not for those actions, the situation would have been far worse.

**Youth Unemployment**

**Mr WILLIAMS** (Hindmarsh) (14:47): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Employment. What is the minister's response to comments by the Premier of South Australia that youth unemployment in northern Adelaide is a 'tiny number' and that Australian Bureau of Statistics data are 'nonsense'? What is the government doing to support young job seekers in northern Adelaide and elsewhere?

**Mr HARTSUYKER** (Cowper—Deputy Leader of the House and Assistant Minister for Employment) (14:47): I thank the member for his question. The issue of youth unemployment is a very important issue and I was stunned by the comments of the Labor Premier of South Australia in today's *Australian*.

*Mr Champion interjecting—*
Mr HARTSUYKER: I was stunned by the Labor Premier in today's *Australian*. Unemployed young people in northern Adelaide—

Mr Champion interjecting—

Mr CHAMPION: The member for Wakefield is warned!

Mr HARTSUYKER: should be disturbed and disgusted that their Labor Premier—

Mr CONROY: The member for Charlton is warned!

Mr HARTSUYKER: That their Labor Premier would describe their plight as—

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield will remove himself under 94(a). He is a very slow learner. The minister will continue.

Mr HARTSUYKER: We believe every young Australian should have the opportunity to have a job. This government believes that youth unemployment needs to be addressed. The Leader of the Opposition in South Australia, Steven Marshall, clearly takes this issue seriously and it is about time the Labor Premier of South Australia did the same. Federal Labor created this problem. Youth unemployment increased by almost three per cent when they were in office—55,000 more young people are unemployed as a result of their failed policies. By contrast, this government has a comprehensive plan to address the issue of youth unemployment.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Those on my left will desist!

Mr HARTSUYKER: We will introduce legislation to give effect to our Job Commitment Bonus, which encourages young people to get and keep a job. We will introduce a new relocation assistance program which will help young people move to where the jobs are. But the most important thing that a government can do to help young people is to develop a strong economy, and we have the plan to do that. It is just unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition in this place sees fit to stand in the way of creating opportunities for young people through the repeal of the carbon tax, standing in the way of the repeal of the mining tax and the opportunities that that would create for young people, and standing in the way of implementation of the ABCC that has the potential to create so many jobs in the construction industry for which young people could be eligible. One thing that the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier of South Australia have in common is that they care little for the jobs of young people. It is about time that the Leader of the Opposition got out of the way.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, could the minister please table the extraordinary document he was reading from.

The SPEAKER: Was the member reading from a document?

Mr Hartsuyker: No.

The SPEAKER: The minister was not reading from a document.
Asylum Seekers

Mr MARLES (Corio) (14:51): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Yesterday the minister reported to the House about the events surrounding the death of Mr Berati that:

… on Saturday I received information that made it clear that it was essential to correct the record …

Can the minister confirm he or his office received this information before 1 pm on Saturday?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:51): I received the information on Saturday.

Health

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (14:51): My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the minister update the House on the importance of reducing waste in the Health portfolio? Can the minister give any examples of waste in this vital sector?

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (14:52): This is a very, very important question. The previous government presided over an enormous amount of waste in the Health portfolio—the former minister looks away, looking for some help from fuelwatch and GroceryWatch man beside her. She presided over the $650 million. You won't get any tips from him, I can tell you that much! You'll get no tips or good advice from that man. He was not only the Treasurer but the failed immigration minister. He was a disgrace.

Ms King: Always, Madam Speaker! My point of order is on relevance, obviously. The minister was asked a question about health, not about immigration.

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat. I think the member for Ballarat won the collision at the dispatch box!

Mr DUTTON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was asked about different approaches to the way in which we can eliminate some of the waste from not just the Health portfolio but within the health sector as well. I want to recognise the efforts of the current member for Dobell because she has a very different approach to the health workers within her electorate—a very, very different approach, I might say. There are about 4,000 health workers in the electorate of Dobell. Those workers toil away in public hospitals on minimum wages, in difficult circumstances, and they are the backbone of the health system in this country. The current member for Dobell of course wants to represent them, to work hard for them. She wants to make a better situation in our health system across the country. She is a great champion of health workers, not just in her electorate but across the country.

Of course, the contrasting approach is very, very interesting. I notice the Leader of the Opposition has picked up a pen and he is writing furiously. 'Union Bill' needs to listen to this response because this is very important. It is about workers you pretend to represent, Mr Shorten.

Mr Burke: I raise a point of order, Madam Speaker: on addressing members by their title, this minister plays a different game to anyone else in the chamber. Can he please be brought to order?
The SPEAKER: The minister will refer to members by their correct title.

Mr DUTTON: Certainly, and thank you very much for the compliment from the member opposite. Thank you very much, Member for Watson.

The problem is that the former member for Dobell, who was sanctioned by the Leader of the Opposition, who was protected by each and every union official sitting opposite, and there are many union bosses sitting opposite who pretend to put the workers as their priority—the former member for Dobell's great approach to health workers was to take the money out of the pocket of health workers but to put it into the pocket of other workers, just not health workers. I can tell you that not only did it extend to those 4,000 workers, but the HSU was ripped off by not only the member for Dobell but other union officials, of course. All of that was known to members opposite but they did nothing about it. And in actual fact they paid $350,000 of legal expenses for the previous member, to protect the former member for Dobell. There is a very different approach that Labor takes to workers. We will protect the workers. They pretend to.

Asylum Seekers

Mr MARLES (Corio) (14:56): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. The minister has stated that information of conflicting versions of events was presented to him last Tuesday, yet that afternoon the minister stated:

When people engage in violent acts and in disorderly behaviour and breach fences and get involved in that sort of behaviour and go to the other side of the fence, well they will be subject to law enforcement as applies in Papua New Guinea.

If there was the slightest bit of doubt about where Mr Berati's death occurred, why did the minister say these words?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:56): It is true that if people engage in riotous behaviour inside the fence or outside the fence then there will need to be actions taken by the appropriate authorities whether they are outside the fence or inside the fence to restore order, but at all times those persons in restoring order must act lawfully. And it is important that, when you select service providers to provide security in places like this, you select service providers that have the appropriate briefs and arrangements in place to ensure that they act appropriately in those situations. Where they breach those conditions, if they were to breach those conditions, then obviously they would be matters that would be subject to review and subject to appropriate sanctions, should that have taken place.

In my earlier answer to an earlier question I talked about some of the things that we decided to change after we came to office, as we know it was the previous government who set the facility up, it was the previous government who selected the contractors. One of the things we changed last December is we chose not to renew the contract of the security provider at the completion of their term.

National Broadband Network

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (14:58): My question is to the Minister for Communications. Will the minister please update the House on the government's plans to ensure taxpayers are fully informed about the progress of the National Broadband Network? Minister, what has been the reaction to these plans?
Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (14:58): I thank the member for both her question and her continuing, enthusiastic and knowledgeable contribution to our broadband policy. In December the strategic review told us the melancholy truth about the current state of the project we inherited from Labor and what our realistic options were to fix it. The rollout statistics since December are now accurate and meaningful, and published not when it suits the minister's convenience but every single week. Last Thursday, for the first time, the Department of Communications published a detailed analysis of broadband availability and quality across Australia. On Friday the NBN management held a results briefing on its last six months. The chairman, CFO and chief operating officer gave a detailed presentation and then took questions from the media and industry analysts, all streamed live over the web, and this will be repeated every three months.

I note that today in The Australian David Frith has said that since the election the project has come to a standstill. In fact, since the election active fibre premises have nearly doubled to 95,000, total fibre premises passed have increased by 120,000, and serviceable brownfield premises are up by 74,000. The truth is: the fibre build is proceeding faster than ever.

But probably the most extreme reaction to the NBN Co's new transparency and honesty—openness about both past mistakes and current operations, and realism about future plans—has come from Senator Conroy. His rage against the truth is now so intemperate that today the Senate estimates committee had to be temporarily adjourned by the chairman after his abuse of witnesses reached new lows as he waged his solitary war of denial, continuing to claim that the project was in perfect shape when he left office. This is all the more puzzling because Senator Conroy is the shadow defence minister. But there is a connection—tenuous, I grant you—between Senator Conroy's denialism and the military, because he has become the Lieutenant Onoda of the Australian parliament—the Japanese officer who, refusing to accept that the war had ended, fought on in the jungles of the Philippines for 28 years after the end of hostilities. When Lieutenant Onoda finally surrendered, he still had his sword, his rifle and 500 rounds of ammunition. Will it be 28 years before Senator Conroy too, clutching his dog-eared bundle of reckless forecasts, finally surrenders to the truth: that he presided over the most wasteful infrastructure debacle in our history?

Asylum Seekers

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:01): My question is to the Prime Minister. On 29 June 2013, the Prime Minister said:

… I believe that once people have come into Australia's care and control, we are obliged to look after them and to treat them in accordance with our standards, not other country's standards.

Prime Minister, does this obligation apply to the actions of the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:02): I do thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question because he is effectively inviting me to state my full confidence in the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, and I am very happy to state my full confidence in the minister. What we need in this particular job is a minister who is strong and decent. We know that this minister is strong because we have now gone almost 70 days without an illegal people smuggling—
Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order which relates to direct relevance. It is not a question of confidence; it is a question of words that were said by the Prime Minister with respect to the Malaysia debate that happened here and whether the responsibility of Australia here referred to then applies now to people on Manus Island.

The SPEAKER: The question involved a question as to what the Prime Minister would do about the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: Thank you—

The SPEAKER: Before the Prime Minister continues: once you add bits which you have considered that you wish to do to your question, they become part of the whole and are there to be answered. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: So we have got a Minister for Immigration and Border Protection who has, through his policy, through his strength, ensured that, for almost 70 days, there has been no illegal people-smuggling venture arrive in this country. I think in the last 3½ years there have been five ministers for immigration. Four have failed; one has succeeded: the current Minister for Immigration and Border Protection.

We all deeply regret the events in and around the Manus camp last week. We deeply regret that. What we are determined to do and what the minister is now doing is ensuring that we have the full facts—that the matter is fully investigated so that everything that is necessary to ensure that this camp is properly run can be done.

The interesting thing is: despite a very, very serious riot—a serious riot involving, we think, some hundreds of people—by the next morning the camp was operating; people were being fed, clothed and housed. That is as it should be.

We deeply regret—of course we do—the fact that Mr Reza Berati lost his life. We will do everything we can to ensure that never again does anyone lose his or her life because of illegal people smuggling. That is why it is so important to stop the boats and, thanks to this minister, the boats are stopping.

Defence

Ms PRICE (Durack) (15:05): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Defence. Will the minister update the House on the government's decision to acquire eight Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft? How will these new aircraft improve our maritime surveillance capabilities, and are there any benefits for Australian industry?

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Minister for Defence) (15:05): Let me thank the member for Durack for her question and her ongoing interest in maritime surveillance. Considering she has the largest electorate in the country—the second largest in the world—and over 6,000 kilometres of coastline making up her area, including huge oil and gas assets, the question is most appropriate. As the House would recall, a few days ago the Prime Minister announced that the government will acquire eight P-8 Poseidon aircraft and consider four additional such aircraft, pending the defence white paper process. This is the manned component of the AIR 7000 program that began under the Howard government, continued through numerous governments and will continue with numerous more governments. It will provide essential maritime surveillance capability. Be under no doubt: it is a potent and highly versatile aircraft. As well as patrolling Australia's maritime approaches, it will conduct search
and rescue missions, and antisubmarine and maritime strike missions by using torpedoes and indeed harpoon missiles.

Together with our high altitude unmanned aerial vehicles, these will replace the current Air Force P3C Orions that have served us so well for over four decades. It is appropriate at this juncture that the House actually thank those who have flown and do fly these aircraft over these 40 years. They have been the most heavily deployed assets from the Air Force that the ADF has used over so many decades for not only Operation Relex in the past through Border Protection Command and Operation Resolute but numerous operations to the Middle East and the Middle East area of operations.

These state-of-the-art aircraft will massively boost our ability to patrol the maritime approaches, something like 2.5 million square kilometres of our maritime jurisdiction, an area which is four per cent of the entire earth's oceans. The first aircraft will arrive in about 2017, with all eight operational by 2021. The project will offer significant opportunity for industry and local job creation. Australian businesses have already won well over $8 million of work associated with our participation in this P-8 program and stand by to enjoy in the order of $1 billion more through construction of facilities at RAAF Base Edinburgh as well as other work in maintenance and through-life support right across the country.

We are absolutely committed to ensuring Australian industry benefits, including small business, to the highest degree possible. We are committed to ensuring Australian industry has every opportunity to be involved in this project not only in South Australia, where they will be housed, but right around the country. I would encourage all of Australia's small businesses to get informed and get involved.

Mr Abbott: Madam Speaker, after 25 questions, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Health Funding

Mr Abbott (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:09): I wish to add briefly to an answer that I gave earlier. I was asked a question by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition about a $10 million cancer program in Western Australia. I have looked into this and the program in question was a Labor Party election commitment. The pledge that we made pre-election was that we would honour our commitments; we would not honour Labor ones. That was a Labor election commitment.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr Hockey (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (15:09): Madam Speaker, I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

The Speaker: Does the member believe he has been misrepresented?

Mr Hockey: I have, grievously and predictably. Last night in the House the member for Lilley said the following:

In Sunday's newspapers, for example, he—

meaning me, the Treasurer—
claimed the IMF had recommended in its suite of structural reforms to reinvigorate growth that Australia should further deregulate the labour market. It must have been in the IMF report in invisible ink because it cannot be found. He is simply making it up as he goes along.

I table the IMF report page 9, which says:

Product and labor market reforms are also needed across the membership to lay the foundations—

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: We will have quiet on my right and my left.

Mr Shorten interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: Bill, come on. Then in the annex to the report on page 7, I put a little yellow tab that says:

Labor market reforms can also boost output substantially by increasing employment.

It goes on to refer to ageing population and the challenges associated with that and how you have got to undertake—

Mr Swan interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: Don't go, Swanny. We want you to stay in parliament, at least for the next three years.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will resume his seat. The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. Despite addition of colourful language, shall we say, in that explanation, it was nonetheless correct. He showed where he had been misrepresented and tabled a document showing where it was wrong.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

Questions in Writing

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (15:11): Madam Speaker, my question to you is under standing order 105, which stipulates that if a reply has not been received within 60 days to a question appearing on the Notice Paper the member may ask you to write to the relevant minister asking for an explanation. In accordance with this standing order, I ask you to write to the Treasurer seeking an explanation as to why he has not answered the following questions: 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37 and 38.

The SPEAKER (15:10): I thank the member for his advice and I will so write.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (15:12): Madam Speaker, I also have a question to you pursuant to standing order 105(b) in relation to replies not being received within 60 days after the question appearing on the Notice Paper. I ask you to write to the Treasurer seeking reasons for the delay in answering question No. 6 concerning foreign investors in property, question No. 7 concerning non-Australian students being permitted to buy Australian properties, and question No. 9 concerning action the government might take to combat multinational tax avoidance.

The SPEAKER (15:13): I take note of the member's question and will deal with it in accordance with standing order 105.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (15:13): My question to you, Madam Speaker, is also under standing order 105. I would ask you to write to the Minister for Health asking for the
reason that he has not answered my question on the Notice Paper for more than 60 days, that being question No. 16 about whether or not he has met with Health Workforce Australia.

The SPEAKER (15:13): I reply to the member in similar terms as previously.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:13): Madam Speaker, I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER: Does she believe she has been misrepresented?

Ms PLIBERSEK: I do, Madam Speaker. During question time the Prime Minister claimed that public hospital funding was cut during my time as health minister. In fact, the 2013-14 hospital budget was $14.9 billion, an $871 million increase on the 2012-13 budget and a $5 billion increase on 2007.

COMMITTEES

Public Accounts and Audit Committee

Treaties Committee

Membership

The SPEAKER (15:14): I have received advice from the Chief Government Whip nominating members to be members of certain committees.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:14): I move:

(1) Dr Stone be discharged from the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit and that, in her place, Mrs Prentice be appointed a member of the committee; and
(2) Mrs Prentice be discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties and that, in her place, Dr Stone be appointed a member of the committee.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr PYNE: It is usual to wait until the end of the motion before you start interjecting!

Question agreed to.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:15): A document is tabled in accordance with the list circulated to honourable members earlier today. Full details of the document will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Health Portfolio

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

The impact of the Government's failure to implement preventative health measures and properly manage conflicts of interest within the Health portfolio.
I call upon those honourable members who approve of the proposed discussion to rise in their places.

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

Ms KING (Ballarat) (15:15): It is with some reluctance that I bring on this matter of public importance—reluctance because I am someone who has worked almost their entire life in the public health and preventative health portfolios. It is probably one of the most important areas in health to try and prevent diseases, to work with public health organisations on what works in prevention and to try and manage those conditions. But never before have I seen a circumstance where almost every public health organisation in the country is coming to me to express its concern about the Assistant Minister for Health, who has responsibility in this government for prevention. Never before have I seen public health officers across the country from a breadth of organisations show this level of concern about a minister this early, for a start, and certainly about a minister who has responsibility for—

Mr Fletcher interjecting—

Ms KING: one of the most important areas for health.

We all know that the greatest challenges we are facing in health today are those conditions that are preventable. Clearly the member opposite does not understand this or care about preventive health or what his assistant minister has done. We all know that the greatest challenges are in the area of prevention. We know that some of the greatest gains that we can have in the health space are in prevention, particularly to reduce obesity, to reduce diabetes and to reduce risk factors of cardiovascular disease and stroke—a very important area.

Let us have a look at what has happened recently in this space. When we were in government, we engaged Neal Blewett to undertake a comprehensive look at food labelling and, in particular, at what you could do in the space of food labelling to look at health promotion and prevention. One of the recommendations that Neal Blewett came up with was that there should be a traffic-light labelling system on the front of all packaged foods.

In government, Labor did not agree with this. We took the decision that we would not accept that recommendation. But we did understand that there was a clear demand from the Australian public for better information about the foods that they consume, particularly as we were starting to see a substantial increase in processed foods and packaged foods in our supermarkets. We knew that consumers did not understand the daily intake guide, the thumbnail sketch that you currently see on the front of all of the packages. So we agreed that there was a need to establish an interpretive front-of-pack labelling system but that it would not be traffic-light labelling or the daily intake guide.

When the government proposed this, many public health groups were hardly willing to participate in the process. They were unhappy with our decision not to back traffic-light labelling. They did not want to sit down with the food industry at all, but we managed to get them to the table. They said at the time that there was no possibility of getting any agreement with industry and no possibility of developing an interpretive system that had not already been explored that would provide consumers with accurate, truthful and clear information.

Instead, we saw two years of cooperation, two years of detailed work led, quite deliberately, by the Secretary of the Department of Health, Jane Halton, to bring industry
together and to bring public health officials together to come up with such an interpretive system. That interpretive system is the star-rating system, a very good system. I encourage people, if you can actually find out any information about it, to look at it—and I am happy to share it with you. This was a very important piece of work. The system continued to be developed, and it was agreed to by all states and territories in June last year. The substantive system was agreed to in June. The system continued to be finalised after June. Communications material was developed. The website was developed. A steering group continued that work to develop the website. It was not just Labor on a frolic; in fact, most of the state governments which endorsed the system—an important system—were not Labor governments.

Subsequently, there was a meeting in December of the food regulatory ministers. At that meeting there was no substantive decision required about the health star-rating system. There were some technical details. The calculator had to be agreed to. But what we know from that meeting’s communique is that Senator Nash, the Assistant Minister for Health, attempted to get that food star-rating system stopped. We see from the communique that what she did was to instruct her department to develop a cost-benefit analysis—not something that had any bearing on the system's further development, because it was a system agreed to by all state and territory ministers.

What is the reason that Senator Nash has not supported this system? Why on earth would she instruct her chief of staff, someone who we now know—and we now know she was aware—was the owner of a company that lobbied for the junk food industry, to take down a website providing information about this voluntary, agreed system? Why would she do such a thing?

Information about this has only come into the public domain because it was first reported by Amy Corderoy, the Health Editor in *The Sydney Morning Herald*. We have seen reports today that at least one of the companies that would receive a less favourable rating under the new system than its competitor products is one of the very companies that Senator Nash's former chief of staff represented.

Senator Nash is the minister who is supposed to represent the preventative health sector. In the words of *The Sydney Morning Herald* political editor, Peter Hartcher, Senator Nash 'is the Assistant Minister for Health but behaved like the minister for big sugar and alcohol'. That is a damning, damming indictment of a minister and it is certainly a damming indictment of a minister responsible for health promotion and prevention.

The minister's big achievements in her portfolio to date have been to rip down a website promoting an agreed, voluntary food labelling system and to shut down the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council. ADCA had been providing advice to government since Menzies was Prime Minister. But the government did not agree with what they had to say, so what did they do? They got rid of them. Why did Senator Nash insist that the website be taken down? We have heard three excuses. The first was that it was a draft and it was not ready. I can tell you: that is absolutely and simply not true and it has not been repeated by the Department of Health. The only person who, unfortunately, has repeated that was the Prime Minister, yesterday, and he was incorrect. The second excuse was that the system was not in place, so it would be confusing. The reason the system was not in place was that the website was actually required to be placed up so that industry could have access to the technical material, so that they could
start using the system and so that consumers could be provided with information about the system.

The third excuse for the website being removed was that there was, apparently, unanimous agreement at the December meeting to do a cost-benefit analysis. A simple look at the communique will tell you that that is wrong. We have now got the South Australian and the Tasmanian health ministers confirming that this is absolutely incorrect. Senator Nash's decision to instruct her department to undertake a cost-benefit analysis is a matter entirely for her. That information may help to inform evaluation of the system; it had absolutely no bearing on the establishment of the system—already agreed in June. The minister has continued to allow that statement to be on record in the Senate and she has continued to refuse to back down from that misleading statement.

The whole point of the website was to provide information to consumers and information to industry to develop the system. We know from further information that has continued to come out—it is well documented—that the minister's former chief of staff was a director of a company that lobbied for the junk food industry. Indeed, he appears to have retained his directorship in the company right up until his resignation a fortnight ago—a resignation which, he claimed, had been done with a clear conscience. Contrary to what the Prime Minister said, that he had done something wrong, the chief of staff resigned with a completely clear conscience. It says a lot about the minister's priorities when it comes to preventive health that she should employ a junk food lobbyist as her chief of staff in the first place, let alone that she should allow that chief of staff to influence a decision as important as the front-of-pack health star-rating system.

I finish where I started. This is the minister in the government who is responsible for health promotion and prevention. I have never seen a circumstance where public health organisations from across the country, en masse, are calling on the government to reinstate the health food star-rating system and have no confidence in this government's minister. (Time expired)

**Mr DUTTON** (Dickson—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (15:25): We need to first understand why the opposition has brought forward this MPI today. It is very important to understand that it has nothing at all to do with preventive health. This is all about a distraction mechanism away from the issue of the day, which is the protection racket that Bill Shorten has been running to protect Craig Thomson and those officials within the HSU that sought to divert money away from people who work hard in public hospitals across the health system to put money into the pockets of these crooks.

**Ms Macklin:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I draw the minister's attention to the matter of public importance, which is about preventive health.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott):** I note the point of order. The minister is aware of the matter before the chamber. I call the minister.

**Mr DUTTON:** It is important to realise that the motivation behind this MPI is not about preventive health. It is not about some allegation that the Labor Party has trotted out to try to impugn the reputation of Minister Nash, who I think is doing an outstanding job in her portfolio. There is no allegation against Senator Nash which goes to inappropriate behaviour. The opposition has put forward nothing other than to say that a website was pulled down off
the internet. No further allegation has been made against Senator Nash and yet this matter has continued on for a week. Why? Because the opposition want to distract attention away from the issues relating to Craig Thomson. There is no more motivation than that, and that is a shameful reflection on the shadow health minister and on those opposite. Let me tell members opposite: this government is determined to improve the health system. We are absolutely determined to clean up the mess that we inherited from the Labor Party, and there is a mess—not just in the area of preventive health but right across the portfolio and right across government.

Let me tell you some of the priorities that the Labor Party had in this particular area when they were in government. They contributed $463,000 to a study. It was a study on a fat tax. I said at the time that if the coalition were elected to government we would not under any circumstances implement a fat tax. I asked the then health minister, Minister Plibersek, to say whether or not the Labor Party would introduce a fat tax if re-elected. If it was her desire to have the matter properly examined for consideration after the election, then she should have been up-front about it and provided that assurance so that there was some guarantee that this study was going to some purpose. The former minister was not able to provide that guarantee. She was not able to provide the guarantee; so, regardless of the election outcome, this tax was never going to proceed. But did that stop the former government from saving this $463 million? No, it did not. They went ahead because they have absolute disregard for taxpayers' money. That is the reason we find ourselves with $123 billion of cumulative deficits. It is why we face a deficit, which will continue to rise, and an overall debt position of $667 billion. Yet we come into this place and hear from those opposite that we should be spending money here, there and everywhere else. I say to those members opposite: the waste under Labor did not stop there.

There was a fake smokescreen music festival. They decided to spend $236,000, not on patients in hospitals that wanted elective surgery, not on pensioners that needed to get to the emergency department or to see a specialist more quickly but on a fake music festival designed to use fake musical festival posters and a Facebook page to deliver their message. In true Labor fashion, they trumpeted this as a great success. There were 244 'likes' across the country on Facebook. My maths is not too bad, but I will give you round figures of $1,000 a like. If Julia Gillard or Kevin Rudd could have paid $1,000 for a friend, they would have taken that option in the leadership ballot before the election campaign. But they did not.

What else did Labor spend money on? They are so pious, as they come in here to talk to us about the preventative health space. They spent almost $50,000 on the Summernats burnouts. Somehow that was going to provide an improvement to our health system. But not having learnt their lesson for wasting $50,000, they spent $80,000 in 2014—$130,000 on burning rubber over two years. But when you compare that to the $650 million that they wasted in the so-called superclinics program then, I suppose, it is not a bad investment by Labor's standards.

This is a very serious issue because not only do we have to clean up Labor's mess but we also have to provide for the future. We have to recognise the fact that Alzheimer's numbers have increased by 170 per cent over the last 10 years, so I do not want to be wasting money in the health portfolio. I want to be putting it into medical research. I want to help us find a cure for dementia. I want us to put money into research for type I diabetes. I do not want to spend
it on websites and 'likes' costing $1,000 a hit. I want to spend the money on patients and I want to spend it in areas that are productive in the health system. I say to members opposite that this clean-up has only just commenced. I want to make sure that we are getting efficiency for taxpayers' money that we spend in this portfolio.

We now spend over $60 billion a year in health. It is a very important spend which has continued to grow under both Liberal and Labor but it must grow at a sustainable rate. We cannot afford the waste that Labor presided over. We cannot afford to spend money on frivolous pursuits. I want to make sure that we can spend money on GPs so that people can get in to see a GP, can have a meaningful relationship with that GP or can get in to see a specialist and get off a waiting list as quickly as possible. I want to make sure we can address the diabetes rates. I want to make sure that, when we look at the statistics of two in three Australians now obese or overweight, we can help those people into the future. But we cannot do that if we are presiding over tens of millions or hundreds of millions of dollars of waste as Labor would have us do. I want to make sure that we can afford to pay for the medical services into the future. Ten years ago we spent just over $8 billion on MBS items—the doctors, pathology, diagnostic services otherwise. Today we are spending $18 billion. It is continuing to grow and grow.

If we want to deliver those health services into the future we have to clean up Labor's wasted mess. That is the theme of this government. We were elected to clean up the mess that Labor left behind in the economy. We will clean up the mess that they left in the area of health and preventive health. We will make sure that we can deliver good value to taxpayers and deliver better health outcomes to all Australians.

If the Labor Party is so interested in what we are specifically doing in the area of preventative health, apart from providing extra support to GPs and rebuilding the primary healthcare network across the country, we promised additional money for bowel screening, which is an incredibly important investment for us to make because bowel cancer kills over 4,000 Australians each year. The reason we want to make it easier to get in to see a GP—we do not want people waiting weeks—is that early detection can make the difference between life and death. If we can get those people to see their GP, to be screened, to talk about the risks, to make sure they can look at their health needs, then we have to make tough decisions. We have made tough decisions because we have taken money away from Labor's waste in health and put it into productive areas like bowel screening.

We have put money into diabetes, as I say, not just in type 1 diabetes research but into the national diabetes strategy. We promised $200 million of research into dementia at the last election. We said, despite the fact that we have been left over $100 billion of accumulated deficits and $667 billion of debt from the Labor Party, that we would quarantine cuts from medical research in this country and that is absolutely vital to the way in which we address all of these health needs going forward.

I want to make sure that we can continue the investment that we make into water safety programs, an incredibly important area of prevention in this portfolio. There is an additional $15 million in water safety programs that we committed to as a federal government. We are putting record amounts of money into mental health, into headspace sites, into the comprehensive e-mental health platform, into dementia research and much more that I have
not got time to address today. But, be assured, we will clean up Labor's mess and we will get
the health system back on track.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (15:36): I am very pleased to speak on this matter of
public importance. I do find it disappointing that the Minister for Health could only find about
one minute to talk about preventative health measures, because he talks a lot about the cost of
health and about why people need to pay $6 when they go to the GP. Every time, we here him
talking about how costs are blowing out. He is softening the electorate up for big cuts.

What all the health professionals out there will tell you is that investing in prevention is
critically important, ensuring that people are prevented from getting sick in the first place.
One of the critical things about preventative health is preventing obesity. That is one of the
key things that a lot of health professionals will say is so important when it comes to
preventing things like diabetes, cancer, heart disease and the like.

One of those important things is helping people with their daily intake. In fact, I was a
member of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing that
reported on and undertook a critically important inquiry into obesity in Australia. One of the
things that really came out from the evidence we heard is that people would like to easily be
able to determine what is in their food in the packets on the supermarket shelves. We heard
from mums and dads who said they would like to know whether or not they were buying a
healthy alternative. That was really critical for them.

Indeed, it can be very confusing, because packets of food look very similar. We have seen
today from Choice—they actually use the star-rating system which we are debating—that
they found, for example, under the algorithm, that Bega's Stringers cheese would receive a 4½
star, whereas the Kraft Strip cheese would only receive two stars. They are very similar
products with very different nutritional value. According to Choice, the Nabisco Ritz crackers
would get half a star and the Arnott's Jatz Originals would get two stars. So we can see that
products that look very similar can actually have very different nutritional value. Parents and
people who visit the supermarket in their busy lives would love to look at the front of the pack
and be able to see how much nutritional value is in the product rather than trying to work out
what the sodium content is, what the fat content is, what the saturated fat content is and what
the trans fat content is. A simple front of package is really important.

Public health experts, mums and dads and a whole range of public advocates are saying
that this is the way to go: 'Let's have front-of-pack labelling that is simple to understand and
can easily be seen.' What is more, this system is voluntary, and food manufacturers can work
out whether or not they want to apply this system. So it seems very confusing that, when the
states and territories have been working on this, when public advocates have got to the point
where they believe that it is ready to go and when even the food industry, while they might
not like it, have come to the position where they do understand it and some are willing to
endorse it because it is voluntary, the new Assistant Minister for Health pulls this website.

We have heard differing versions about why this was. First it was a draft. She said that it
was a draft and should never have been put up. Michael Moore, from the Public Health
Association, said that it was 'inconceivable' that the website was only a draft. He said:
I looked at it very carefully, and there was nothing that struck me about it as being a draft. It just doesn't
make sense.
Then we got Senator Nash's second excuse: that it was premature and it was not ready to go. That is not the view of state health ministers, who believe that it was finalised and ready to go in December. I have a letter here from the Hon. Jack Snelling saying that he has extreme concerns that the healthy star-rating website that went live on 5 February has apparently been withdrawn without discussion through the Front-of-Pack Labelling Steering Committee. The only evidence we have is Senator Nash saying that it was premature, but of course that has been debunked.

The third excuse was that it needed a cost-benefit analysis. As a lot of people have made very clear in this debate and previous, there was no evidence in the communique of the health ministers that any cost-benefit analysis—(Time expired)

**Mr McCormack** (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (15:41): Never before in this place have I heard such rank hypocrisy from those opposite—never. Here they are with their mock outrage, having themselves when in government been associated with the most desperate dysfunctional and scandal-plagued administration in living memory; in fact, in history. Senator Fiona Nash is a palpably good person who, in her role as Assistant Minister for Health, is getting on with the difficult task of helping to repair Labor's mess. She is particularly getting out and about in regional and rural areas asking questions and, more importantly, hearing what country people have to say and providing hope for a better, brighter and healthier future.

All we have heard from those opposite in this matter of public importance debate today is an attack on Senator Nash. All we have heard is members opposite feigning indignation. They know that this is nothing more than a storm in a teacup—confected outrage to an absurd extreme. There has been no failure by the government to implement preventative health measures or to properly manage any aspects of the health portfolio. This is a smear campaign—nothing more, nothing less. It is a desperate move by a desperate opposition seeking a scalp. That is all this is.

This opposition left the nation with a legacy of debt and deficit. It is unsustainable. Labor in government was racked with controversy, in-fighting and scandal. There was daily disorder in the house of Labor. But don't just take my word for it; ask Mr and Mrs Average in any main street in any town in Australia, particularly any regional centre. Venture along, for example, Hoskins Street in Temora and ask anybody you come across about the former government and ask anybody about Senator Nash. They will give you two different responses. They will have anger and bewilderment about what Labor did to this country, particularly in the health space. In reply to how they perceive the Assistant Minister for Health, they will tell you about what a good person she is, how dedicated she is and the good outcomes she is trying to achieve on behalf of all Australians, particularly those who live far away from the bright city lights. Senator Nash is a familiar face in Temora. She headed up a health forum on 5 February where she informed, listened to, engaged with and provided hope for the good local people there who want and need better health outcomes, and better health measures and services.

The Prime Minister said in question time today that the former health minister, now the shadow deputy opposition leader, slashed $1.6 billion from the health budget in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook in 2012. This included tens of millions of dollars of cuts to the
Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne and the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in the same city.

Those opposite talk about pulling down websites. Need I mention Fuelwatch and GroceryWatch—broken Labor promises. The shadow health minister, the member for Ballarat, spoke of a cost-benefit analysis—and I am surprised that she even knew what a cost-benefit analysis was—and pulling down a draft health star rating website which was not ready to go online, and Senator Nash has explained that fully.

If Labor were serious about preventive health measures, which it is not—but just imagine for a second that the once great ALP actually cared about preventive health—then it would congratulate us. The coalition has a long and proud record on preventive health both under the former coalition government under then health minister Tony Abbott, and very much under this current government under Mr Abbott's prime ministership. If Labor truly cared, then it would acknowledge that under Tony Abbott's term as health minister in the Howard government, Australia experienced: the sharpest decline in smoking rates; the largest increase in childhood immunisation rates; more than doubled the number of medical graduates; and championed research and funding for the human papillomavirus vaccination to eliminate cervical cancer. That is not funny; it is a serious women's health issue and I am surprised that once again those opposite are out there with their conected outrage, knocking something that we did to help women's health. I am surprised that they are even smiling about it.

Our record stands in stark contrast to those opposite. In government Labor implemented some of the worst health policy decisions imaginable. In the six long years Labor was in government it created: 12 new bureaucracies; created a $650 million GP Super Clinics program, where 26 promised clinics are still not open; introduced a $1 billion e-health record system that commenced in 2012 that GPs still do not use and which only has 31,000 users with a clinical record upload. This MPI is a joke. Senator Nash is doing a fine job and getting on with it. (Time expired)

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (15:46): I take up the last words of the previous speaker in terms of saying that Minister Nash is doing a 'fine job'. Surely, that sums up those opposite—

Mr Dutton: Stop there!

Mr PERRETT: in terms of their approach to preventive health. We heard from the member for Dickson all about derision and division—there was no vision at all!

A government member interjecting—

Mr PERRETT: Then we hear from a National Party member—and there is no plan for the bush. I speak as a Queenslander, the most decentralised state. What do we have happening in Queensland? As I am sure you are well aware, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott, the reality is that they have dropped the ball when it comes to health. We have doctors about to go on strike up and down the eastern seaboard. Up where the giant mango went missing, we have got doctors about to go on strike. Why? Because the LNP have deserted doctors.

Last week I went to the Pineapple Hotel to hear from 536 VMOs talking about the way that Campbell Newman and Lawrence Springborg have come hunting for doctors. They have handed out an amazing approach to preventive health. Their approach to preventive health is to get rid of doctors. They have handed them a take-it-or-leave-it approach, basically, to welfare and medical health by saying, 'Here is the contract. We have done all the negotiating
possible’—and of course the head of the AMA in Queensland Christian Rowan, the LNP candidate—

Mr Dutton: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. The motion before the House, the MPI, is tightly defined by the mover of the MPI, the shadow health minister. She has put the MPI forward in relation to preventive health, and it is absolutely ridiculous to suggest that the member for Moreton could be within the confines of that MPI. I would ask you, please and quite sincerely, to bring the member for Moreton back to the MPI to be relevant to what is going on in this debate, not what is happening in Queensland. At the moment he is completely out of order.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): I thank the minister for his point of order. The member for Moreton will observe that the MPI before the House is that the government’s failure to implement refers to this government, not another government in Australia. I call the member for Moreton.

Mr Perrett: Obviously, the health minister is aware that this is a Federation. This government does not run many hospitals. Actually the Queensland hospitals are run by the Queensland government. But I do take his point. I listened with much interest to his point about the union health dollars. I went to meet with the union, represented—

Mr Dutton: By the HSU—

Mr Perrett: No, we do not have an HSU in Queensland. I met with the AMA, a very powerful union. Christian Rowan is the head of the AMA in Queensland, and he had an interesting approach to this. Because the minister started speaking about unions in his response to the MPI, I assumed it was the topic that we should address.

Obviously preventive health is very important—we all know that. In fact I encourage every member here tomorrow to come up to the Richard Baker Room to have a diabetes health check so that we can all do our little bit to give a personal example to our electorates about how we can be healthy. All day tomorrow, I will be up there with Ken Wyatt—and maybe after the book launch tonight, you might need to go, I say to the parliamentary secretary. So it is important that we focus on preventive health, and having a healthy workforce that is well treated is an important part of that. Getting rid of thousands of doctors, many of them specialists in Queensland, who are going to withdraw their labour because of this incredible industrial relations approach of those opposite, is an interesting approach.

The minister did talk about unions and the role they play and so it was interesting to hear these doctors in Queensland last week say that they have been told by Lawrence Springborg that they should be able to work any shift that they are directed to work by their boss—without consultation and irrespective of parental duties. In fact they would get rid of a no-disadvantage clause in their work contracts. They would also possibly have arbitrary dismissal with no recourse back to the doctor and no binding arbitration process for dispute resolution.

This is a recipe for disaster being delivered in Queensland at the moment. It is going to mean that there will be longer waiting lists and more people turning up to emergency departments especially when the minister brings in his tax on GP visits that they flagged in the Griffith by-election and which they are hiding in Western Australia as we go to an election over there. (Time expired)
Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (15:51): I am pleased to speak on this MPI which relates to preventive health. When we think about preventive health, there are lots of different elements, but the three really big ones are: tobacco, alcohol and obesity. I want to talk a little bit about Australia’s record in tobacco control and the Liberal Party’s record in tobacco control. When you look at those three, our results in tobacco control have been outstanding—we really lead the world—and there have largely been bipartisan efforts in that.

In 1966 Sir Robert Menzies introduced a voluntary tobacco advertising code. In 1976 the Fraser government introduced the first ban on advertising tobacco products on TV and radio. In 1992, in opposition, the Liberal Party supported a ban on tobacco advertising, and in 1997, Michael Wooldridge, as health minister, introduced the first ever national advertising campaign against smoking and spent, at that time, $7 million. It was well researched, it was a comprehensive strategy and it has been a large part of why we have seen such dramatic results in this area.

When we moved to the new tax system we reformed tobacco excise, moving away from a weight basis to a per stick excise—something which was welcomed by all the health groups. The Prime Minister, as then health minister, introduced the first graphic health warnings on tobacco in 2006. In opposition, it was the current health minister, the member for Dickson, who proposed an increase in tobacco excise in the 2009 budget reply speech. When we had the debate about plain paper packaging and increasing the size of graphic health warnings, those changes were supported by the then opposition.

And what have we seen? We have seen a fall in smoking rates from 21.8 per cent in 1998 down to 16.6 per cent by 2007. What we have seen over the almost 20 years from 1989 to 2007 were declines in smoking rates in Australia of 40 per cent for men and 44 per cent for women. These were amongst the biggest falls anywhere in the world, and for women were the biggest falls in the OECD.

There are lots of other parts of preventative health that we could talk about. Immunisation: one of the proud achievements of the Howard government was getting immunisation rates back up to where they should be—seeing immunisation rates for one-, two- and five-year-olds of over 90 per cent. We did it with incentives for GPs and we did it working with the divisions of general practice.

Prior to the election we made a number of commitments which relate to this area. The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, a program which was first established by Minister Michael Wooldridge in 1996, is coming up for its 20th anniversary. We made a commitment at the election to expand the program, with increased screening for people aged 50 to 74. Diabetes: over the last 20 years we have seen the incidence of diabetes double in Australia. We have announced the National Diabetes Strategy and we also have the work which is being done by McKinsey and some of the Medicare Locals, looking at better coordinated care and how we can get better results for people with diabetes. As the Minister for Health said, medical research is an important issue for us. We have said that this will be quarantined from any inefficiencies found in government, and we have also announced $200 million in dementia related research.

When you look at the area of alcohol, the government had reports going back to 2009 which actually identified brief interventions by primary-care physicians to reduce hazardous alcohol consumption as something which was still an untapped opportunity in Australia. It is
not something that they have addressed, and that is actually something which I think does show great promise—just one, two or three sessions with a GP costs little but leads to good results.

But then we come to the area where we are not doing well, the area of obesity and overweight. Sixty-three per cent of adults are now obese or overweight, and that is well up. But we had Kevin Rudd's 'war on obesity' and we had national partnership agreements which measured the amount of fruit and vegetables eaten and the amount of exercise et cetera and, actually, we have gone backwards. (Time expired)

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (15:56): I rise today on an issue close to the heart of my predecessor in Gellibrand, and to voice my concern that such an important issue has been so abused by the current government.

The advocacy of preventative health measures was a cornerstone of the previous Labor government's health policy. In fact, my predecessor in the seat of Gellibrand, Nicola Roxon, was an internationally recognised champion of preventative health measures. As health minister, she championed the National Preventative Health Taskforce in 2008, a source of information and evidence about the best way to address the preventable obesity and alcohol and tobacco related illnesses that affect our community.

This was followed in 2009 by the National Preventative Health Strategy, which articulated a government plan for tackling these and other preventable illnesses head on. These actions were taken because we all know that reaching out to people before they are ill is far more effective than addressing illness when it is too late. This can be seen throughout Australia, but particularly in my electorate, where preventable diseases cause untold damage to the lives of constituents in Gellibrand.

In Gellibrand over five per cent of the population currently suffers from diabetes, with just as many people again suffering from undiagnosed or pre-diabetes. These preventable chronic diseases have an enormous impact on the lives of sufferers and their families. These diseases increase the cost of our healthcare system, reduce the productivity of our workers and lower the workforce participation rate in our community.

There are simple steps that government can take to manage the impact of preventable chronic disease by making consumers more aware of the risks and giving them control over their own health. The Health Star Rating System was one way of giving Australian people that control. It was a key part of a food-labelling initiative aimed at ensuring that people knew the health impacts of what they were eating. And yet, all it took was one phone call from the office of a National Party senator to have the program pulled by the department.

Senator Nash claimed that this decision was a unanimous decision by the Legislative and Governance Forum on Food Regulation, in order to conduct an 'extensive cost-benefit analysis'. But there was no unanimous decision by the legislative governance forum. Senator Nash's office made this call itself, and it is hard to believe that this was not done in the presence of her then chief of staff, Mr Furnival, a 50 per cent shareholder in one of the biggest lobbying firms for food and drink interests on the hill. Relying on the advice of the owner of a lobbying business with clients in the food and beverage industry when considering whether to publish a healthy food website is a textbook example of conflict of interest. But, apparently,
the Abbott government feels that this clear breach of the ministerial code of conduct is all right.

This government is more extreme and more out of touch than the Howard government ever was. It took John Howard 15 months before he binned his ministerial code of conduct, but the Abbott government has got there in just six months. The Prime Minister's failure to act against Senator Nash represents a betrayal of his commitment to the Australian public that:

We will be a no surprises, no excuses government, ...

Unfortunately, this slogan has not made the transition from opposition to government.

The coalition promised that they would have a plan for governing if elected to office. Indeed, they made it the title of their election manifesto. And yet, we see in their administration of government no plan whatsoever. All we have seen is a government that lurches from administrative catastrophe to administrative catastrophe. Therein lies the rub.

The Prime Minister could have acknowledged this failure. The Prime Minister could have asked Senator Nash to resign. He could have led a grown-up government that he promised and not simply passed the buck. But we see in this instance that the children are in charge of the candy store. The PM stubbornly—in fact, childishly—refused to acknowledge that the existence of this conflict of interest was a problem. Indeed, he asserted yesterday that this behaviour was within the guidelines of the ministerial code of conduct. If the ministerial code of conduct has not been breached in a case like this, then it is not worth the paper it is written on. If the ministerial code of conduct does not discipline this sort of behaviour, we have a problem not just with the minister but with the entire government.

This breach is symptomatic of a government that does not think of the interests of the Australian people. It is symptomatic of a government that is out of touch and out of control. The government must stop playing games with preventative health. The government must recognise a conflict of interests when they see one and ask Senator Nash to resign. It is time for the former Leader of the Opposition to become a Prime Minister, show some leadership and start governing. The time for three-word slogans and one-sentence rhetoric has passed. It is time to start governing. It is time to start doing some of the work of government. The empty rhetoric has gone on for too long. It is time we saw some accountability.

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (16:01): I think this matter of public importance is quite astonishing. The amazing hypocrisy and the amazing chutzpah are too hard to swallow. How can the other side be criticising a hardworking minister when they have such a prodigious record of waste and incompetence when they were in charge of the health portfolio?

When we talk about preventative health we are expecting things that will lead to some change in behaviour but, as anyone knows, looking at a website is not going to change a shopper's behaviour. Can you imagine a busy mum walking down the aisles with her children saying, 'Can we get this?' and the mum saying: 'Stop, kids. I will just look up the website and see whether we will get it?' No. It is broad education about the virtues of good, healthy food. It is going to the greengrocer instead of buying packaged products. It is knowing that something that runs, eats grass, hops, flies or swims—natural animal protein—is good for you. Anything you pull out of the ground or pick off a tree is probably going to be healthy. Processed foods are not as nutritious as natural foods. It is fairly basic. A website is not going
to do anything because the only people who will go to the website will be people who are already motivated and thinking like that. There is a profusion of websites.

The other side is the team who brought us the $650 million superclinics fiasco. I have one in my electorate. There was a contract for over $7 million. They knocked down half of a nursing home and it is still a construction site three years later. I have been working in hospitals for over 30 years. In the last few years I saw the fiasco of the e-health records. They managed to spend $1 billion on that, but only 31,000 people have actually had any of their records uploaded to the site. I might add that 1.3 million people have asked to go on it but they have managed to get just over 31,000 people onto it.

We also have 12 new health bureaucracies. I am sure bureaucrats will not be able to deliver preventative health outcomes except by a very long bow, particularly since none of these health bureaucracies existed before. What about the chronic disease dental program? That was binned. Bad dental health can lead to so many other complications with cardiovascular health and general nutrition. How can you chew healthy food if you do not have teeth? So many common-sense things were thrown out the window, yet they have the temerity to criticise a hardworking health ministry.

What about medical research? In 2011 the Labor Party had the hide to take away $400 million from the NHMRC. You only have to look at the record of the coalition government. The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, a coalition initiative, is being rolled out to people up to 74 years of age on a biennial basis. Talk about prevention and early intervention—that will save lives.

What about the diabesity epidemic and diabetes in particular? The national diabetes plan coordinates all levels of government and health delivery into a single plan. Getting immunisation rates up from a very low level to over 90 per cent is prevention. Immunisation is one of the greatest public health initiatives but it only works if there are enough people so you get herd immunity. If your percentage drops, the system is very fruitless. Getting the immunisation rate in young children above 90 per cent delivered huge outcomes, and that was a coalition initiative.

The current commitment to medical research is $859 million at its peak. That is a great increase. The coalition is committed to increasing GP training, particularly in rural and remote areas, areas that our Assistant Minister for Health has visited on many occasions. She has been doing a great job. This is a simple distraction from their own problems. (Time expired)

Mr GILES (Scullin) (16:06): I am pleased to be able to make a contribution to this matter of public importance debate that deals with two very pressing matters: firstly, our response to issues of preventative health and, secondly, the way in which this government is conducted. I echo the comments of the member for Ballarat at the outset when she highlighted the importance of preventative health. I know from my own electorate that issues like obesity and diabetes are pressing and real concerns that cause untold costs to individuals who are affected and their families. There are also the much greater social and economic costs of these chronic conditions.

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the many and very significant bipartisan achievements in the area of preventative health, as were outlined in the contribution of the
member for Boothby. I think it is also important that we acknowledge here that many of these achievements appear to be under significant threat because there are some fundamental differences between Labor and the members opposite in the area of health.

This month we mark 30 years of Medicare, after it was re-established by the Hawke Labor government. Medicare is under threat, along with its core principle—our core principle—that access to health care should be based on need and not an individual's capacity to pay. The Prime Minister, a former minister for health, has described himself as Medicare's best friend in much the same way he has described himself as the best friend of Australian workers; I think in foreign policy he is best friends with lots and lots of people. There is a common thread across all of these 'friendships': they do not turn out very well for the other party, whether its foreign policy, health or, most grievously and most apparently, workers in Australia—particularly those who have lost their jobs over the life of this government.

Mr Ewen Jones: Have you met one?

Mr GILES: I have met plenty; I am not sure about you. The tragedy is there are nearly 70,000 people who are no longer working since your government was elected. One million jobs is a long way away.

We have the ongoing spectre of the GP tax—this ostensible savings measure. It looks like a savings measure, but we are possibly looking at a $2 billion impact, as well as the prospect of tripling waiting times in emergency departments. This is the antithesis of Labor's emphasis on preventative health. Preventative health is no longer a priority, despite impressive bipartisan achievements in the past.

I am deeply concerned that Medicare Locals are under threat under this government. They remain under threat, despite some weasel words in the lead-up to the election and more particularly despite the great record of achievement in linking people to primary health services and making a huge difference—certainly in the communities of north Melbourne and, I understand, right across this country. It is really telling, when we think about this government's commitment to preventative health, that of the 10 minutes available to the minister he might have spent at least one minute talking about his responsibilities. I am guessing, and I think I am being generous, but he spent 20 seconds on preventative health. This is in stark contrast to some of the later contributions, in particular that of the member for Boothby, who dealt with the serious and substantive matter that is before us today.

Public health professionals are making it very clear: the assistant minister is not capable of doing her job. Public health groups have made it very clear, and they are right to do so, that they have no confidence in the minister. There is no doubt that the health star-rating system should be reinstated. The two years of collaborative work—the sort of detailed, deep, bipartisan work involving states and territories, involving industry, consumer groups and public health groups—should be supported. It should be reinstated. Two years of work cannot be lost or buried under this unconvincing sophistry. These are extraordinary events from the point at which the website was made live on 6 February, prompting an immediate reaction by the former chief of staff and then, when that was not enough, by the minister herself. And what did we see by way of outcomes? We did see some consequences visited on the chief of staff, but only after a public servant, doing their job, was effectively punished. And it is important, despite what was said by the previous speaker. We have already seen Choice's...
work in using this system to inform consumers as to what can be deceptive assessments of products in the marketplace.

When this government was initiated, there was some debate about the titles adopted by ministers. But when we see the Assistant Minister for Health, the minister responsible for health promotion, we see a minister being anything but an advocate for those causes.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (16:11): The Labor Party have the arrogance and the absolute gall to come into this chamber and attack the government for our handling of the health portfolio. Well, we should take a look at their record. Labor have a track record for generating huge funding uncertainty in health by making gung-ho decisions and breaking promises.

The Labor health minister slashed $1.6 billion from public hospital services without notice and without consultation. She tore funding from health retrospectively for services that had already been provided, forcing hospitals to cancel surgeries and close beds. Shameful behaviour! The previous health minister consistently proved to be a traitor to the medical profession and the Australian people when it came to health funding. My constituents are outraged by Labor pulling $4 billion out of private health insurance rebates, despite promising never to do so. This decision is still forcing up premiums for Australians struggling to pay their cover and putting more pressure on Australia's public hospitals.

For another example of Labor's waste we need look no further than the GP superclinics program. It was heralded as one of the great Labor programs under the previous health minister, where now, instead of promised GP superclinics, we have taxpayer funded—debt funded—vacant paddocks. Of the 64 clinics that were promised since 2007, 26 are still not open. The previous health minister triumphed this as one of Labor's great successes. It seems as though the previous health minister thought it was April Fools' Day when announcing this $650 million program as a success—$650 million which was borrowed by the Labor government to set up 12 new bureaucracies and put money into superclinics, none of which makes any difference to actual patients. As the member for Lyons said before: $7 million and still a construction site in his electorate. Obviously, Labor think having actual GPs in GP superclinics is not as important as a newspaper headline, no matter the cost.

While the Labor government may not have known much, they sure knew how to waste money. Labor beat their chest, claiming that they created more jobs in health, and yet thousands of these 'new jobs' were for backroom administrative staff. Obviously the previous Labor government were more interested in jobs for bureaucrats than front-line staff, doctors and nurses for sick patients. Throughout the previous six years, Labor trawled through the budget with Jack the Ripper style ambitions. Labor's butchering of the health portfolio pales into insignificance in comparison to the fiscal holocaust left in their wake. What kind of incompetence runs through the veins of the Labor Party to turn $50 billion in the bank into a projected net debt well over $200 billion? Labor arrogantly hold the record of the fastest deterioration in debt, in dollar terms and as a share of GDP, in modern Australian history. Yet, they are still content to stand on the opposition benches, grinning like children who stole all the cookies from the cookie jar. Even after the Australian people threw Labor out, the legacy of Labor's debt remains, the debt which they so proudly claim saved jobs. We have seen jobless queues grow under Labor, but they still seem to have selective hearing when it comes to the facts. Even when the jobless queues grow, even when their policies—born in...
debt—failed, they still hold their heads high and are proud of this monumental mountain of debt.

This debt is costing the Australian people $10 billion a year in interest. That is five new hospitals a year, or two million hospital beds a year. It is thousands of new doctors and medical staff in rural and regional areas. Ten billion dollars a year is free preventative screening treatment for every Australian man. Ten billion dollars a year is Medicare rebates for constant glucose monitoring sensors for every sufferer of diabetes in this country. Ten billion dollars a year is billions of dollars for innovation in medical and scientific research. It has all gone.

It has gone as a result of Labor's constant and unadulterated abuse of the nation's finances. It has gone as a result of members opposite treating Australia's hard-earned money as their own plaything, acting time after time with no responsibility and no respect. The fact that Labor has the audacity to stand in this place today and accuse the government of any failure at all shows their complete excommunication from reality.

The SPEAKER: The discussion has concluded.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (16:16): I move:

That business intervening before notice No. 1, government business, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

MOTIONS

Former Member for Dobell

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (16:16): I move:

That this House, in relation to the statement made on 21 May 2012 by Mr Craig Thomson, the then Member for Dobell:

(1) expresses its regret for the statement and its contents, much of which has been proven as false by the findings of the Melbourne Magistrates Court on 18 February 2014 in relation to Mr Thomson; and

(2) apologises to:

(a) those individuals named in the speech against which egregious falsehoods were made; and

(b) the members of the Health Services Union, some of the lowest paid workers in Australia, for the spending by Mr Craig Thomson of $267,721.65 of Union members’ funds on his re-election campaign and further private expenditure not authorised by the Union.

This motion gives us the opportunity to do two things in this House this afternoon. Apart from the opportunity to apologise to the individuals named in the former member for Dobell's statement on 21 May, it gives us the opportunity to, firstly, indicate that privilege should never be used in the way that we say it was used by the former member for Dobell again; secondly, that it will not be used by any member of this House in the future.

Those members of the parliament who have been in the parliament for a lengthy period of time and those new members all know that it is a standing part of this House that telling the truth in the parliament is one of the most pre-eminent responsibilities of any member of
parliament, particularly ministers in answering questions at the dispatch box. They are under a strict dictum not to mislead the House; and, if they do mislead the House, particularly deliberately, their tenure as a minister comes to an end.

For the rest of the House, the attachment of parliamentary privilege is a privilege—hence its name. It gives members of parliament the opportunity to make statements in this place which might otherwise—if made outside the House—expose the member to be sued for defamation. It is a particular right of members of parliament which no-one else enjoys in our society, because it is a privilege that needs to be protected and nurtured and only used to ensure that we are protecting the constituents that we seek to represent and to do what is right in this place, and not for any other purpose.

It is the government's contention that the former member for Dobell deliberately appeared in the House and used the parliamentary privilege to defame individuals in the parliament who he knew could not defend themselves, and under parliamentary privilege created a fantastic story, a fantastic alibi, designed to protect and save his own political skin at the expense of the reputations of others. That is why it is a very serious matter. That is why I am glad that the Leader of the Opposition is in the House and clearly intends to speak on the motion, because I am sure that most decent minded members of the Labor Party were just as horrified—and still are—with the statements that the member for Dobell made in this place and just as horrified by the fact that he used them in the way that he did.

I notice also the former Speaker of the House is in the chamber, the member for Chisholm. I remind her of something she said, at the end of the debate on 21 May, at the end of the statement by the former member for Dobell:

I want to thank everyone for their graciousness in listening to the member for Dobell.

It reminded me, when I read that, that we had listened with grace to the member for Dobell. He was not cat-called upon by the members of the opposition at the time; he was listened to in eerie silence in some respects. We gave him that grace, and he returned the favour by misleading the parliament and by defaming individuals who could not defend themselves under parliamentary privilege. For that reason, we take this motion very seriously today.

The Manager of Opposition Business said today in the media: 'Of course we vote for a resolution, because we are deeply, particularly, offended by what happened and in the way union members were cheated of their funds and everything that has been found out in court.' I am grateful that the opposition is supporting this motion; I am very grateful that they are. But I wonder if, by supporting this motion, they are indicating, they are admitting, that they got it wrong for three years while they defended the member for Dobell. They defended the member for Dobell very strongly. The phrase 'running a protection racket for a protection racket' has been bandied about in this place and in the media.

I will use the words of the ministers at the time. On The 7.30 Report, Anthony Albanese, the member for Grayndler and the then Leader of the House, was asked: Do you have complete confidence in Mr Thomson?

He answered, 'I do.' On ABC News 24, on 17 August 2011, Craig Emerson, then a cabinet minister, was asked:

So you think Julia Gillard is right to express her full confidence, as she has done in the Parliament, about Mr Thomson?
Mr Emerson replied, 'Yes, I do.' On the same channel, the minister at the time was asked:

Does Craig Thomson have your full confidence?

He said, 'Yes, he does.' The current Leader of the Opposition himself has been asked these questions over a period of time. On 24 August 2011, he was asked on Radio 3AW, by Neil Mitchell:

You've run a union, you understand these things, do you support him?

He replied:

Oh, yeah, I believe him.

He was asked:

… you got complete confidence in him?

He answered, 'Yeah'. That was the then minister, now Leader of the Opposition. Only as recently as 19 February, the Leader of the Opposition was asked at a doorstop in Melbourne:

Will you or the Party apologise for how much you stuck by Craig Thomson given what has happened in the court this week?

The Leader of the Opposition's statement was:

As I said yesterday, no-one is above the law.

But we are still waiting for the statement from the Leader of the Opposition where he does not continue to express full confidence in the member for Dobell but, in fact, apologises for a number of things, including the lies that were told in this place by the former member for Dobell. In particular, we are expecting him to apologise to the thousands of Health Services Union members, the workers, who handed over their hard-earned dollars to their union representatives, secretaries, national secretaries and organisers only to find that money funnelled into what the Melbourne Magistrates' Court has found were fraudulent and illegal purposes.

In particular, $267,000 that was used by the former member for Dobell to fund his election campaign in 2007. To all of us who have been elected to this place—I have been elected eight times—$267,000 is a tremendous amount of money. As most of the marginal seat members in this place would know, pulling together the resources for an election campaign is very difficult. A lot of raffle tickets need to be sold and a lot of lunches need to be attended. On our side of the House, a lot of businesspeople are asked for donations. On the Labor side, of course, they have the union movement to support them.

In this case, where, in 2007, $267,000 of union members' funds was used by the former member for Dobell for his election campaign, the very least the Leader of the Opposition could do would be to pay that money back to the Health Services Union. Until he does pay it back to the Health Services Union the stain will continue to on the Labor Party—they are effectively accepting a benefit from the Health Services Union members. They elected Craig Thomson to this parliament and he served in it on the Labor side for six years—three of those in a hung parliament.

If the Labor Party really wanted to put behind them the last three years, they would pay that money back. If the Leader of the Opposition wanted to show that he was a statesman, not just a union official protecting union officials—that he wanted to rise above his background—he would do that, just as Bob Hawke had to do. Bob Hawke was a union official, and he had
to rise above his background to become Prime Minister for the whole country. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to be taken seriously, the thing he could do today that would most demonstrate that, apart from apologising to the Health Services Union workers, would be to announce that the Labor Party would pay back that $267,000—especially when you put it in the context that Labor received $1.2 million from Health Services Union members between 2007 and 2013. This is a mere fraction—I think it is about 22 per cent—of what the government could pay back to the Health Services Union if they wanted to show good faith with the workers.

This is where the Leader of the Opposition's rhetoric needs to start matching his actions. He talks relentlessly about being a friend of the worker, but when he gets the opportunities to act he does not take them. When he gets the opportunity to protect the workers' interests by supporting the Registered Organisations Commission, the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption and the Australian Building and Construction Commission, and the opportunity to pay money back to the Health Services Union workers to demonstrate that he is on their side, he does not take those opportunities. Australians can sniff out insincerity. With this Leader of the Opposition, they can sniff out that he talks a big game but, when he gets the opportunity to deliver, he does not deliver.

In the last few minutes of this contribution, I would like to talk about a couple of the other aspects of the motion. The motion apologises to those people named by the member for Dobell on 21 May 2012. Michael Lawler, Kathy Jackson, Terry Nassios and Marco Bolano were all named in a very negative way by the former member for Dobell. In fact, they were defamed. The current Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, was also named and defamed by the former member for Dobell. We do extend our apologies to all those individuals, and I am glad that the opposition intends to extend its apology to all of those individuals, particularly to the now Prime Minister, who, of course, stood up for the Health Services Union throughout those last three years.

The person I particularly want to comment on is Kathy Jackson. Kathy Jackson is a revolutionary, and revolutionaries—

**Opposition members interjecting**—

**Mr PYNE:** See—they are already laughing. Come in spinner. Revolutionaries are not always perfect. Revolutionaries sometimes have to cut corners and do things in order to bring about a result. But she will be remembered as a transforming union leader. I note the opposition laughing and mocking Kathy Jackson. I wonder if they will laugh after they hear this quotation. In an interview on radio 2GB on 16 October last year, Kathy Jackson recalled a meeting in 2011 of the HSU council at Darling Harbour, after these matters were publicly aired. She is quoted as saying:

There would have been 900 delegates … I kid you not … This is after I went to the police … (Michael) Williamson got a standing ovation … they played the Rocky theme when he walked in … there were people heckling me and screaming at me and (fellow HSU whistleblower) Marco Bolano … that I was a traitor to the movement … people were calling out ‘Judas’ from the crowd … this went for four hours.

I do not hear you laughing now, Members of the opposition. What this points to is that in the HSU there was a cultural problem, where ripping off money from workers was regarded as the norm. The former leader of the Labor Party Mark Latham indicated that himself. Craig Thomson was not an embarrassment to the Labor Party; he was the gold standard in how to
behave. And yet you are laughing today at Kathy Jackson. You should hang your heads in
shame. Kathy Jackson is a revolutionary, and Kathy Jackson will be remembered as a lion of
the union movement. As was written by Gary Johns, a former Labor member of this House, a
former Labor minister, the royal commission:
… may change the nature of union-employer relations; it may change the ability of trade union leaders
to remain in positions for years and hand power to a chosen candidate.
Jackson, Athena, toppled two union leaders … In her wisdom, and in deciding to wage war with the
HSU, she may well have strangled the union-ALP umbilical (ac)cord.
More strength to her arm. I look forward to hearing the contribution of members of the
opposition.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (16:31): For health workers
who were members of the Health Services Union, Craig Thomson's actions are a deep and
unforgivable betrayal. For all of us in the Labor Party, Craig Thomson's actions, as outlined
by the Melbourne Magistrates' Court on 18 February this year, are a deep and unforgivable
betrayal. These actions were contrary to the fundamental principles of Australia's trade union
movement and everything it stands for. These actions were contrary to everything that the
Australian Labor Party stands for. I have spoken to people who had the privilege to know Bill
Dobell, after whom the seat of Dobell is named. Bill Dobell was a staunch Labor man. He
would have been horrified. These actions are a violation of the standards that Australians
expect of their parliamentary representatives. But, worse than that, as I said at the opening,
Craig Thomson's actions are a betrayal of hardworking Australians whose rights he was duty-
bound to protect. There is no question that the members of the Health Services Union suffered
as a result of Craig Thomson's actions, and he owes the members of the union and all those
involved with the union that he falsely attacked a deep and heartfelt apology. Mr Thomson
abused the trust of this place, his constituents, his colleagues and thousands of hardworking
Australians in the health services sector.

Today this parliament expresses our regret for the contents of Mr Thomson's speech in this
place. I hope that this motion can assist the members of the Health Services Union, who have
been let down and betrayed by Mr Thomson. We support this motion without qualification or
reservation. We support this motion without equivocation, because we on this side of the
parliament take our responsibilities as parliamentarians seriously. It is a privilege to represent
Australians in this place. Parliamentary privilege is an important, ancient right that must not
be abused. Misleading the House is a grave and serious matter. It is incumbent on all of us
who stand in this place to uphold the highest traditions of respect and the highest levels of
respect for those that we represent, for those who rely upon this institution, and the highest
traditions of respect and the highest levels of respect for each other and for this institution,
which is fundamental in the exercise of Australian democracy. Mr Thomson failed this most
fundamental test and, in doing so, he failed all of those who placed their trust in him.

Australia's trade unions are overwhelmingly member focused and professional
organisations. It is a terrible shame that Craig Thomson's reprehensible behaviour has
besmirched the reputation and cast doubt on the motives of a movement that is dedicated to
providing safe workplaces; productive, profitable and competitive enterprises; and decent
conditions for so many hardworking Australians. No institution in Australia outside of the
parliament has done more to lift the standard of living for working people than unions. As a
former union representative and as a member of parliament, I have always supported measures that fight corruption. Two years ago, as workplace relations minister, I supported placing the HSU East Branch into administration. That step was extremely serious and unprecedented. The court agreed that the level of dysfunction within the union meant that it should be put into administration. The court did so because the members of some branches of the HSU were victims of a poisonous culture of dysfunction and corruption among their leadership and it needed to stop. Many HSU members do not earn a lot of money, but they pay their union dues. The end of this torrid chapter in the history of the Health Services Union has come.

Just as Labor will always stand up for low-paid workers and competitive businesses and fight for job security, we will always cooperate with the agencies that are responsible for uncovering the truth and fighting corruption. We supported the reference to the Privileges Committee on these matters previously, just as we supported the reference to the Privileges Committee yesterday. I have committed publicly that the Labor Party will cooperate with the royal commission. Two weeks ago I proposed a police task force led by the Australian Federal Police, working with state police agencies, to tackle criminal behaviour and corruption, including in the building and construction industry. Today I welcome the government's new indications of support for our proposal. We are pleased that they are adopting our proposal and will now be allowing our police officers and the Australian Crime Commission to do what they do best: catch and prosecute criminals. We are pleased that, as a result of the work of this task force, those engaging in criminal behaviour, whosoever they may be, will feel the full force of the law. We are pleased that justice will be done.

All of us in the Labor Party have no tolerance for corruption wherever it occurs. It is a profound insult to everything we believe in and everything we stand for. Corruption cannot go unpunished. No-one is above the law, not union representatives, not business people, not politicians. It is a clear message and a strong lesson for all of us. Labor will be supporting this resolution without equivocation, without reservation. We will support this resolution because what happened in May 2012 was in our opinion an abuse of the privilege of parliament.

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (16:38): I commend the leader of the Labor Party, the Leader of the Opposition, for his speech. It was great. Every article of it was great. It was perfect. It missed just one thing: it was two years late. To think we were thought to be somehow naive, to believe a story that was so incredible, a story which had people pulling their hair out and people outside the parliament denying it. I said on the record and I went outside the parliament and said, 'I think this is a load of rubbish.'

In this game, there is a range of things. We are not saints in here, but we are not naive either. You would have to have had the height of naivety to believe the story Mr Thomson gave that someone was impersonating him. He said that somehow, on a remarkable day, someone had broken into his house, found the keys and found his mobile phone, and they were a genius because they had the code to his mobile phone. Then they took his keys and drove his car. They must have been lonely as they drove his car because they wanted to call all his friends. So they called all his friends and then found their way to an establishment in Surry Hills where, after a certain event occurred, they had to pay the bill. The person they paid the bill to said, 'I'd better see your drivers licence.' And guess who was on the drivers
licence? A person who looked exactly like Craig Thomson. But they had the art of a calligrapher. Not only did they have the face of Craig Thomson but also they could sign his name. Then this person was full of remorse, full of guilt. So do you know what they did? They drove back to the Central Coast, broke back into the house and put everything back where they found it. That was the story you had to believe.

Do you know what the Labor Party believed this person should be? They believed he should be on the Privileges Committee. You would think a person worth their salt, the Prime Minister at the time, would have said, 'Mr Thomson, I have to have a fireside chat with you—I really do—because you are supposed to represent the people who work in hospitals, who scrub the tiles, who clean up the defecation on sheets, who clean the urinals, who do the jobs nobody else wants to do.'

These people have other things to do with their money. They have children they wish to spend their money on. They have things they would like to do to their house. They might like to go on a holiday but because they believed in the purpose of the union movement they paid their union fees. They paid their fees because they trusted the Labor Party to do the right thing. They trusted this individual to do the right thing.

I am sure there is a whole range of people, predominantly women, who would like to say, 'I want my money back, because I could use that money to fix my children's teeth. I could use that money to go on the holiday I never went on. I could use that money to do so many things in my life because I'm on $660 a week.' They are not on much. But, no, the Labor Party did not stand by those ladies; they stood by Craig Thomson, as incredible as that might seem.

After that, we had the miraculous position that Craig Thomson became an Independent and, miraculously, except for maybe on one occasion, he always voted for the Labor Party. Incredible! And now we find out that hundreds of thousands of dollars of bills have been paid by the New South Wales Division of the Labor Party and we find that the person who was on the Privileges Committee for the Labor Party forgot, when he was up for $200,000, to declare them. We can all forget about $200,000. You drop that on the floor of the parliament every Friday night! It is also fascinating that the New South Wales police fraud squad detective superintendent John Watson, sent an email to then General Manager Lee of Fair Work Australia. He said:

I've left messages throughout the day requesting that you contact me.

Mr Watson wanted to discuss Craig Thomson but Fair Work Australia did not want to call him back. They did not want to talk to him. Then we find out that Lee responded:

Neither I nor Fair Work Australia has the power to neither inquire or investigate, nor reach any conclusions about whether a reporting unit or anybody have been contravened by New South Wales criminal law. Accordingly, I regret to advise that I do not consider it would be appropriate for me or for any of my staff to meet with you to discuss Fair Work Australia's investigation into the HSU.

Mr Watson, the policeman, was trying to investigate a crime. On 12 June 2012, it was revealed under freedom of information that Fair Work Australia had also refused to cooperate with the Victorian Fraud and Extortion Squad. The story goes on and it just does not stack up. I was in the Senate when we moved a motion to try to get some transparency on this and the Labor Party and the Greens got together and defeated it. So we could not get transparency.
Either you believe that they believed Craig Thomson or you believe that there was something else afoot. I am just not that naive. I think that the time had come. The evidence was there and any person with a gut instinct had it and understood what was going on.

Now we have the final conclusion to this. It was a great speech by the Leader of the Opposition. It was incredible. I agree with every word of it, except it would have been handy to hear it back in 2012. The members of the HSU would have liked to have heard it then. What happens about their money? Instead of paying for Mr Thomson's legal fees, maybe you would like to pay back the fees of the members of the HSU. Of course they will not get your money, because you are not out to protect them; you are out to look after Mr Thomson. Now Mr Thomson has been convicted and I imagine he will go for a plea deal. If anybody thinks that this story has finished then I feel that they are as naive as Craig.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (16:46): I rise today to speak on a very serious issue. As the Leader of the Opposition has said more than once, for us in the Labor Party, Craig Thomson's actions are an unforgivable betrayal. They are contrary to every principle of Australia's trade union movement and everything it stands for, and they are contrary to everything the Australian Labor Party stands for. Of course, like any Australian, the former member for Dobell was entitled to the presumption of innocence. I was disappointed to hear the member for New England's contribution that suggested that any Australian should be prejudged. But, Craig Thomson has had his day in court and he has been found guilty. His actions were wrong and his use of parliamentary privilege was wrong too, and that is why the opposition have twice supported a reference of this matter to the Privileges Committee. It is up to this House now to apologise to the people who were wronged. It is absolutely right that people who are sent here by their constituents are held to the very highest standards. The people who elect us expect us to act with honesty and integrity at all times. If you do not, it is quite right that you suffer the consequences.

We should not forget that the former member for Dobell let down the people who placed their trust in him as their member of parliament, but we should also remember those from whom he has effectively stolen hundreds of thousands of dollars. They are the members of the Health Services Union—hospital cleaners, orderlies, aged-care staff, radiographers and admin and clerical staff. I have heard a number of members opposite talking about the difficult work that these workers do. As health minister, I met many of them and I admired them a great deal. They are the people who keep our hospitals running. They are the same people who are being attacked by state governments around the country slashing hospital budgets and sacking these very workers. These people, hardworking as they are, pay the wages of their union leaders. Union leaders are there to represent them, to win them a better deal in their workplaces. It is 100 per cent wrong that someone whose salary and benefits are paid by union dues would abuse the trust of the members of that union and his colleagues of that union. I believe that every union member and every union leader would feel the same way, and certainly we feel the same way on this side. As well as betraying his HSU members and his constituents, Craig Thomson has betrayed the union movement itself. His actions have provided an excuse for some to attack the union movement as a whole, to suggest that this behaviour is somehow common or acceptable or the norm. It is absolutely not and there is no-one who has been more betrayed by this behaviour than the union movement—the members of the HSU—and Craig Thomson's constituents.
The Labor movement has been so important to the history of workplace relations in Australia. Historically, it has won some of the features of our industrial relations system that I think everybody in this chamber would hold dear—the eight-hour day, sick leave, holiday pay, job security and decent and safe conditions to work in. I hope that all members of parliament would see these things as important and acknowledge the role of the union movement in winning these great battles over time. But you do not have to go so far back into history. You do not have to go back to the struggles of the Hungry Mile to know how important the union movement has been in Australia. More recently, the Australian Services Union has campaigned to win equal pay and fair pay for community service workers across the country, most of whom are women, many of whom are in that same low-pay bracket that members opposite have described for the Health Services Union workers. These are people who work in very difficult circumstances. They work in drug and alcohol rehab. They work with victims of domestic violence. They work with children who are victims of sexual abuse. They work in some of the most difficult and most underpaid jobs in this country. The Australian Services Union was able to win a much deserved pay increase for their workforce because of changes that the previous government made to allow work of equal value to be remunerated equally. The Australian Services Union campaigned with its members and encouraged its members to make submissions to pay cases, and to stand up and speak up on the value of the work that they do every day in our communities. That is a recent and most important win for a union, showing exactly the sort of campaign that unions around Australia are engaged in.

Another very important campaign right at the moment is a similar pay claim for childcare workers. Childcare workers do some of the most important work in our community. They are early educators. They are carers for our children. Before the election, the minister at the table told those childcare workers that the government would support their claim for better pay and conditions. She has betrayed that commitment to childcare workers who do phenomenally important work for Australia's children.

Ms Ley: Have you read the submission?
Ms PLIBERSEK: Are you saying you do support the pay claim?
Mr Pyne: A point of order, Madam Speaker; this is a motion about the matters to do with the Health Services Union and the statement that Craig Thomson made to the parliament. I can understand that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has run out of material, given her silence on this matter over the last three or four years, but this has nothing whatsoever to do with the motion before the House. She should be asked to come back to the matter before us.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs will withdraw.

Mr Dreyfus: I withdraw.

Mr Burke: In his speech, the Leader of the House went a long way around and the concept of relevance to this motion was accepted to have a very broad brief. He was not interrupted once. The discretion the chair observed during that first speech should appropriately be observed for the remainder of the debate.

The SPEAKER: I have been tolerant in the breadth of material being covered, but the Leader of the House does have a point when asking that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition
return to the substance of the motion in that it is a pretty far stretch to say that an application for a raise for childcare workers is relevant to the current debate. Please return to the subject of the motion.

**Ms PLIBERSEK:** As I have said very clearly and as the Leader of the Opposition has said very clearly on a number of occasions, we condemn Craig Thomson’s actions, but without the union movement victims of asbestos would never have got the justice they deserve. They would have had high-paid lawyers sitting in courtrooms dragging out their cases. These are just a few examples in very recent times of the importance of the union movement.

When we offer our apology to the people Craig Thomson has wronged we say also that under this government 63,000 jobs have been lost since its election and pay and conditions are being attacked. No imputation should be attached to the union movement as a whole through the appalling behaviour of Craig Thomson. With those job losses has come a meticulous and deliberate attack on the pay and conditions of Australian workers. We will not allow the reputation of the whole union movement to be dragged through the mud by one person who has absolutely done the wrong thing. He has done the wrong thing by his members, done the wrong thing by his electorate, done the wrong thing by his colleagues here, done the wrong thing by his family and his community. He has clearly done the wrong thing, but he is not representative of the Labor Party, the labour movement, his constituents or our members.

**Mrs McNAMARA** (Dobell) (16:55): I stand here in the federal parliament representing the people of Dobell. My electorate is made up of decent, hardworking Australians with strong goals and aspirations. The people of Dobell have much to be proud of. Over the past few years my local community has been the centre of a national scandal—a scandal that has exposed some of the darkest elements of the trade union movement and corrupt trade union officials.

Mr Thomson put Dobell on the national map for all the wrong reasons. He let down the people of Dobell, its families, seniors and businesses. After six years of lack of formal representation in Dobell, the people of Dobell became the forgotten people. He let down some of the lowest paid workers in Australia, members of the Health Services Union, as he spent $267,721 of union members' funds on his election campaign and for other private expenditure. Perhaps most disturbingly he stood before this parliament and defended his name, in the process telling falsehoods that have now been exposed by the Melbourne Magistrates’ Court. Most importantly, he showed no regard for the victims of his immoral and illegal behaviour during his time as secretary of the Health Services Union.

The motion before the House seeks to address these wrongs. We acknowledge that not only did Mr Thomson deceive the people of Dobell but he showed complete disregard and contempt for the members of the Health Services Union who were misled by Mr Thomson. The Fair Work Commission found that Mr Thomson spent more than $260,000 on his election to the federal parliament, using the funds to pay for staffing costs and other electoral expenses; made cash withdrawals of more than $100,000 on his Health Services Union credit card; and made claims for more than $73,800 in dining and entertainment expenses. This much has become evident through the findings of the Melbourne Magistrates’ Court.

On 18 February 2014 the Melbourne Magistrates’ Court found Mr Thomson guilty of fraud and deception relating to the misuse of his union credit card while national secretary of the
Health Services Union. This finding was welcomed by members of the Health Services Union, who through no fault of their own found themselves thrust into this scandal. Like the residents of Dobell, members of the Health Services Union spent years listening to Mr Thomson's claims of innocence. He claimed that he had been set up and betrayed by those who were envious of his political career. On 21 May 2012 Mr Thomson stood in this parliament and delivered a speech which is now truly seen for what it was: a betrayal of the members of the Health Services Union and a betrayal of the people of Dobell.

When attempting to excuse the evidence before him Mr Thomson said in this place: One of the things that I have difficulties in making an explanation about—and I am certainly not going to use parliamentary privilege to lie or change that—is in relation to phones and how records were on my phones.

This is just one of many statements made by Mr Thomson in his address to the parliament that have now been exposed in the findings of the Melbourne Magistrates' Court. That is why we, this parliament, should support this motion and apologise to those impacted by Mr Thomson. It is appropriate that this House apologise to the individuals named during Mr Thomson's statement of 21 May 2012. In speaking about Mr Marco Bolano, Mr Thomson claimed Mr Bolano threatened him by saying: … he would seek to ruin any political career that I sought and would set me up with a bunch of hookers. Mr Thomson concocted a grand conspiracy and sought to shift the blame to his colleagues.

When members of the Health Services Union spoke out against his actions he went before national media and attacked their character.

While these actions in themselves warrant an apology, it is the membership of the Health Services Union that has truly been betrayed by Mr Thomson, who was in a position where he should have been looking out for and protecting their interests. As I have mentioned, the Health Services Union represent some of the lowest paid workers in Australia, health workers including kitchen staff, porters, cleaners and clerical and security officers who work in the aged-care, community and disability-care sectors—those caring for the most vulnerable members of our community. While the Health Services Union seeks to improve outcomes for health workers across Australia, Mr Thomson took it upon himself to spend $267,721 of funds collected through union membership fees to finance his election campaign. Mr Thomson put his interests ahead of the interests of the union and the interests of the union's membership.

While I have spoken of the members of the Health Services Union, we must not forget the people of Dobell and how they have been impacted by Mr Thomson's actions. Mr Thomson won the 2007 election as the Labor candidate for Dobell. Whilst Mr Thomson should have been grateful to the Health Services Union for promising and delivering him a seat in parliament he showed complete disregard to those who put him there.

Mr Thomson was parachuted into Dobell from Melbourne, with the explicit purpose of contesting the seat of Dobell. Mr Thomson had no understanding of the Central Coast and the aspirations of its hardworking residents. Unfortunately for the people of Dobell, Mr Thomson's role as their local member charged with the responsibility of representing their interests in the federal parliament became a sideshow in the quest to clear his name. Mr Thomson's treatment of his electorate was not lost on the people of Dobell.
I would like to take a moment to share with the parliament some of the reasons why the people of Dobell should feel entitled to an apology for Mr Thomson's actions. I will never forget door-knocking a house in Hamlyn Terrace. The gentlemen who answered the door told me of his disgust in Mr Thomson as his local representative and that, as a Health Services Union member, he would never vote Labor again. In our shopping centres, the disgust of shoppers was clear. They would talk to me desperate for the opportunity to rid Dobell of this misrepresentation and eager to see our region promoted for our achievements. Unfortunately, Mr Thomson didn't have a strong record of local achievements to take to the people of Dobell. The people of Dobell were all too aware of the betrayal by Mr Thomson. The people of Dobell were all too aware of the fact that Mr Thomson's tainted vote was being used to prop up the then government. The people of Dobell were aware that $350,000 of Mr Thomson's legal fees were paid for by the New South Wales branch of the Labor Party while he was a member of the Labor Party.

Mr Thomson was so convinced of his innocence that he had a strong desire to continue as the member for Dobell. In order to do so, he sought to distract the people of Dobell from his record as the secretary of the Health Services Union and his record as the member for Dobell. In his desperate attempt to win votes he sought to deceive the good people of Dobell with his claims that he would stop the potential development of a coal mine. Mr Thomson knew full well that on two occasions his government had refused to have his private member's bill be debated by the parliament. Mr Thomson knew full well that the matter lies in the jurisdiction of the New South Wales state government. Mr Thomson could not promote his record as a local MP; instead, he had to defend his record as secretary of the Health Services Union. And, as he did before this parliament, he stood before the people of Dobell and attempted to distract from the truth.

The reality is that long before the Melbourne Magistrates' Court found Mr Thomson guilty, the people of Dobell had made up their mind. The people of Dobell no longer wanted Mr Thomson to represent them in the federal parliament. This was evidenced during the 2013 federal election. Mr Thomson cut a lonely figure on the ABC's 7.30 as he walked through Tuggerah Westfield shopping centre. The people of Dobell had heard enough and wanted to move on with their lives.

This parliament now has an opportunity to right some of Mr Thomson's wrongs. Although we are unable to pay back the hard-earned money contributed by honest workers of the Health Services Union, we can tell them, loud and clear, that this parliament is on the side of decent, hardworking Australians and not on the side of dodgy union officials. We can apologise to the people of Dobell, who for six years have been dragged through a national scandal on the sordid dealings of corrupt trade union officials. Let us not forget the $267,721 of union fees collected from the honest workers of the Health Services Union that was spent on Mr Thomson's self-interest and on Mr Thomson's election campaign on behalf of the Labor Party.

Senator Abetz was right in saying that this ordeal demonstrates the need for a royal commission into alleged financial irregularities associated with the affairs of trade unions and the establishment of a registered organisations commission to introduce more effective governance for trade unions to help prevent such conduct occurring in the future. I wholeheartedly support the motion before the parliament—for the people of Dobell, the members of the Health Services Union and those misrepresented by Mr Thomson's statement.
in this parliament. I want to see Dobell prosper. I hope we can put this disgraceful episode in our history behind us and get on with the real task at hand.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (17:05): I figured so prominently in the contribution from the Leader of the House it is almost like providing a second speech in this debate. I will get to what I think is the appropriate process for dealing with these matters, but I want to deal first with the substance of what is before us. As I made clear in an interview this morning, Labor agrees with every word of the resolution in front of us. Once the resolution was seen and we knew the precise wording of it there was no problem whatsoever in making clear to the Australian people this morning and now in the parliament that we will vote for it.

The actions of Craig Thomson, as they have been found by the court, are indeed a betrayal of everybody who was paying their union fees to the HSU. They are indeed a betrayal of the union movement itself. Speaking as a member of the Labor Party, they are a betrayal of our party. They are actions that represent the exact opposite of what our party is about. And they are also a betrayal of the institution of the House of Representatives.

The House of Representatives carries parliamentary privilege. Parliamentary privilege is something that has extraordinary power and that is extraordinarily important to maintain democratic debate, but it must not be abused. Now that we have the findings of the court, it is clear that information which was presented as fact has been found by a court to be wrong. An apology is therefore being given to those affected by it.

I think it is important that our defence of people who are members of the HSU, our defence of people who are low paid, working in hospitals and research facilities, does not only find itself to be limited to this motion. I think it is important if we are going to speak up for the members of the HSU in this debate that we also speak up for them when state governments are taking their jobs, that we also speak up for them when industrial relations changes are being proposed that are about harming their conditions. I believe it is important that we do not pick and choose, that we only be on the side of HSU members when it might be seen to be politically convenient.

Yesterday, and for some days leading up to it, there was a discussion publicly as to whether the Privileges Committee was the appropriate way to deal with this issue. The Leader of the House in that debate yesterday made this comment:

… but that is a far cry from standing up in the parliament and making statements which are deliberately misleading, which are lies, to the chamber. It is the role of the Privileges Committee to determine whether that was done in a deliberate way and, if so, to recommend to the parliament what sanction might apply to the former member for Dobell.

He later said:

But I will leave the deliberations on those matters to the Privileges Committee. That is their purpose. And he said later:

… I hope the Privileges Committee will deal with the issue in speed and also in an entirely nonpartisan way, in order to protect the reputation of the parliament.

I agreed with every word that the Leader of the House gave yesterday that I just read out.

I find it odd that at that point in time there was no mention of this motion we are debating. Indeed we had days, leading up, where allegedly there was going to be a 'great political
wedge’ against the Labor Party as to whether or not we would support a reference to the Privileges Committee—notwithstanding that in the last parliament we had supported a reference to the Privileges Committee. There was no mention of this motion at all. And only when they discovered that it was not a wedge issue did we find that this motion was placed on the Notice Paper.

I think it is important as well to deal directly with issues that were raised in part by the Leader of the House and in a very direct fashion by the member for New England, the Minister for Agriculture. In his contribution the Minister for Agriculture went to some lengths to say, ‘Well, why weren't these statements being made two years ago?’ Can I make very clear, in response to that, that we make no apology for defending the rule of law. We make no apology, when a matter is before the court, for saying that we will wait for the court to determine the facts. This week has been the first time we have been able to debate this issue after a court has determined the facts. With that in mind, we are willing to debate these issues, as we have yesterday and today.

I should also add, Madam Speaker, that we are consistent in that and do not play politics with that principle. It was the case during the last term that at exactly the same time we were arguing that the member for Dobell’s issues should be determined first by a court there was a senator who was herself under charges, and subsequently was found guilty. At no stage did we drag her name through political debate, the way the member for Dobell was dragged through political debate, for one simple reason: we were waiting for the finding to be made by a court. Similarly, the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption currently is investigating matters that are related to the new member for Dobell. We have not been playing the game in this chamber of drawing out conclusions before those issues are dealt with by ICAC or drawing out conclusions before those issues, as they may, find their way into a court.

We have not been a party that will pick and choose when these sorts of principles will apply. The new member for Dobell is a beneficiary of the fact that we are not handling the issues related to her the way the previous opposition handled issues relating to the member for Dobell, in the same way that we—

The SPEAKER: I would interrupt the Manager of Opposition Business, in that what he is attempting to do is to smear another member while sounding pious. I would warn him against that course of action.

Mr BURKE: Madam Speaker, by saying repeatedly that I am not doing that, and making clear that we will not do that—

The SPEAKER: I would—

Mr BURKE: I am not returning to the issue, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Good.

Mr BURKE: I am not returning to the issue—

Mr Randall: Why raise it?

Mr BURKE: because the Speaker has just asked me not to.

Mr Randall: Why did you raise it in the first place?

The SPEAKER: The member will cease interjecting!
Mr BURKE: Our principle here has been one that I believe every member of this parliament should reflect on because it will have a bearing on the nature of debate in this parliament for some time to come. It is appropriate to deal with this issue today because the findings of a court have been made. Those findings mean that we have a decision of a court that says what was presented as fact to this parliament was not true. It was not true in a way that has caused offence to people who were named in that speech and not true in a way that is deeply offensive to the members of the Health Services Union, to the union movement generally and to the Labor Party.

With that in mind, I hope in the first instance that we do not find ourselves with a new motion in a couple of days time as a further attempt to say, 'Maybe we'll find something that Labor won't vote for.' I hope that at this point we can leave the Privileges Committee to deal with the remaining issues related to this matter.

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (17:15): I rise to speak in support of this motion: that the House expresses its regret at the statement and its contents made on 21 May 2012 by Craig Thomson, the former member for Dobell, much of which has been proven false by the findings of the Melbourne Magistrates Court on 18 February 2014. This motion also provides for the House to apologise to individuals named in the statement against whom falsehoods were made and to members of the Health Services Union for the spending of $267,721.65 by Craig Thomson.

This is an unusual motion. Most would argue that it is entirely Craig Thomson's duty to make an apology for his actions. However, it is fitting that the parliament has the opportunity to make amends for the way in which one disgraceful member of the House used the devices of parliament, in particular parliamentary privilege, to mislead and to slander. In doing so, Craig Thomson undoubtedly damaged the reputation and standing of this House, so it is appropriate that we take time today to recognise the damage and apologise to those Craig Thomson made false allegations against.

There are a number of individuals who bore the brunt of the falsehoods uttered by Craig Thomson in his statement to the House on 21 May 2012 but, in my opinion, none more so than Kathy Jackson. I particularly note the opinion piece in today's Australian by Gary Johns, the former Labor member for Petrie, where he said:

She withstood the pressure of a culture of corruption in the Health Services Union. She deserves the respect and support of the entire labour movement. Instead, many revile her.

Kathy Jackson is a veteran of the union movement. She has been part of the union movement for many years. In a speech she gave in 2012, she acknowledged that and said:

I am not Joan of Arc. I am not a political virgin. I have been an activist in the labor movement all my adult life, played the political game and have the bruises to prove it.

Kathy Jackson was well aware of the likely implications for her in blowing the whistle on Craig Thomson. In that same speech she said:

Things rarely work out well for whistle-blowers and I didn’t enter into my current endeavour in the expectation of arriving at glory days for me. My expectations are a lot more modest. I want to see wrongdoing exposed. I’d like to see my union put in a position of strength and with the confidence of the membership restored, and I’d like to see reforms made to make union leadership more accountable to members and which would protect against possible future financial and political corruption.
It is a sad indictment of the Labor Party and the union movement that funds and supports it that a woman who has shown such courage as to call out corruption when she sees it is treated with such disdain. The vile acts of threat that were made against Kathy Jackson at the time—like the dirt-covered shovel left on the doorstep of her Melbourne home—are really a window into the culture and attitude within parts of the union movement. There is a growing list of incidents that point to thuggery, intimidation, corruption and, recently, links to illegal activities through bikie gangs. The Craig Thomson fraud is but one example, one very good example, why the royal commission into union governance is both appropriate and necessary.

So why has Labor not welcomed the royal commission? Why would members opposite not support a process that will lead to more transparency and accountability? Why did they continue to accept the vote of the former member for Dobell despite the disrepute he had brought to the parliament with his actions? Why did Labor fund the legal costs for Craig Thomson? These are questions that cast a pall over the Labor Party and the opposition leader who, at the time, expressed his support for the then member for Dobell.

The House should note that Craig Thomson remained a member of the Labor Party right up until April 2012, less than a month before he made his statement to the House. He remained a member of the Labor Party in this place in April 2009 after Fair Work Australia commenced an inquiry into the Health Services Union sparked by the action taken by Kathy Jackson in bringing irregularities to light. He remained a Labor member of this place after March 2010 when Fair Work Australia advised that its inquiry had been made an investigation. He remained a Labor member of this House when Fair Work Australia announced its investigation was complete and that 181 contraventions of workplace laws and union rules were found. He remained a Labor member as the ACTU suspended the Health Services Union. It was only shortly afterwards that the then Prime Minister Gillard announced Craig Thomson's intention to sit on the crossbenches. She said he had finally crossed a line but could not explain what that was. He sure had crossed a line, and Labor had preselected him and supported him.

On the day that the guilty verdict was brought down on Craig Thomson, Kathy Jackson warned that the royal commission would have its work cut out. She said: The minute that I became aware of what was going on and tried to bring it forward, I was stymied at every point by the executive of that union.

We see the same attitude of blocking and trying to cover up what is going on in a number of high-profile unions, and we see the same attitude of not wanting to reveal the extent of the problem in Labor's reluctance to support the royal commission.

I just want to say to Kathy Jackson that I am sincerely sorry for what Craig Thomson put her and her family through. I am sorry that he used parliamentary privilege in such a dreadful way. The public expect that members will come to this place to earnestly argue differing points of view, to express opinions and to inform the parliament about issues relevant to their electorate and their actions. They expect statements made by members will be what they believe to be the honest truth. It is crucial to the integrity of this House that they are. The member that stands in this place and professes innocence is heard by their peers in silence and with an open mind. To question the integrity of a member of parliament is a most serious matter. But to abuse the privilege afforded a member of parliament is an affront to decency of the highest order.
When a court determines that the evidence proves a statement made to the parliament to be utterly false, then the integrity of the parliament is compromised. But we know that Craig Thomson did not just make accusations against unionists. He also made accusations against other people in his statement, including the then opposition leader, now the Prime Minister. That he has been proved wrong in that regard also is very self-evident and the Prime Minister remains a man of integrity and insight for having argued very strongly at the time that Mr Thomson ought to be removed from the service of the parliament due to the weight of allegations against him and the ill-repute it brought to the parliament.

But there is no doubt that the biggest victims of the fraud Craig Thomson committed are the hard-working members of the Health Services Union, some of whom are amongst the lowest-paid workers in this country. These carers, orderlies and cleaners all work hard, and should rightly be proud of the work that they do. They keep our hospitals running, they offer quality care and they provide comfort to the ill. They do not deserve to be linked with corruption, dishonesty and misuse of union fees.

Their union subscriptions should not be used to support the desires of dishonest officials; their union fees should only ever be used to protect them and their rights. To the members of the Health Services Union, I apologise that a member of this House used your funds to campaign for his own re-election and to meet his own desires. It was not appropriate, and it was certainly not appropriate that Craig Thomson then used this parliament to try and mount a case for his defence, when in truth his actions were indefensible.

The Craig Thomson saga was a sad chapter in the life of this House. I support this motion today and in addition I call on all members of this House to further support the royal commission into union governance so that we can ensure that never again can a union official abuse members' funds in this way.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (17:24): Madam Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

Mrs McNAMARA: Yes.

The SPEAKER: Please proceed.

Mrs McNAMARA: The Manager of Opposition Business in his speech made claims in relation to me that are untrue. I am not under investigation by the ICAC, nor am I a person of interest.

MOTIONS

Former Member for Dobell

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this House, in relation to the statement made on 21 May 2012 by Mr Craig Thomson, the then Member for Dobell:

(1) expresses its regret for the statement and its contents, much of which has been proven as false by the findings of the Melbourne Magistrates Court on 18 February 2014 in relation to Mr Thomson; and

(2) apologises to:
(a) those individuals named in the speech against which egregious falsehoods were made; and
(b) the members of the Health Services Union, some of the lowest paid workers in Australia, for the spending by Mr Craig Thomson of $267,721.65 of Union members’ funds on his re-election campaign and further private expenditure not authorised by the Union.

Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR (Gorton) (17:24): I rise to support the motion, and I do so for many of the reasons that have already been outlined to the House. There is no doubt, in light of the decision by the court last week, that the former member for Dobell gravely misused his privileges as a member of this place. As a result of that conviction, I think it is also very important for the opposition, in supporting this motion, to conclude that he betrayed the members of the Health Services Union.

As a former union official I think that working for, defending and advancing the interests of working people, particularly low-paid workers, is a noble pursuit. It is a decent role to play in a society where you want to see people given opportunities. The union movement is there to help those who need help, and union delegates and representatives, when they are doing their job, are looking after those people who are possibly losing their wages, possibly being dismissed unfairly, possibly not being paid their superannuation entitlements and possibly are being endangered in their workplaces.

That is the role of union delegates and representatives, and I believe it is, as I said, when properly undertaken, a noble pursuit. It pains me all the more in relation to this motion, to see the manner in which former member for Dobell has betrayed the members of the Health Services Union. And, of course, he has gravely misused the privileges of this place.

As the Leader of the Opposition has said, the opposition supports the motion unreservedly. But we do so, and we do so now, because it was not possible to do so before, although, of course, we did support the procedure of this being referred to the Privileges Committee earlier. That was forestalled until the matter was dealt with by the courts. We could not deal with this motion earlier than today, or certainly this week, because we on this side support the presumption of innocence; we support the rule of law. We believe that it is now appropriate to respond to the matter arising from the decision by the Magistrates Court.

I would also like to reflect upon some of the comments made by others in this debate. I do hear concern amongst those contributing to this debate about the members of the Health Services Union. I think that is a reasonable thing, given the way in which they have been slighted and betrayed. I only hope that that sympathy and empathy for those workers continues when they confront other challenges dealing with all sorts of issues that they may have to deal with in the future. It is true to say that low-paid workers in this country are looking after those in hospitals and those who need our care, and they do a great job. They deserve the support of parliamentarians, not just those of the Labor Party. I welcome those opposite in rising more often to talk about support for members of a union that represents low-paid workers.

I also note the comments made by the Manager of Opposition Business in this debate about the way in which we handled a similar matter—not the same—insofar as allegations and then charges of a senator of the Liberal Party. The way in which we handled that, I think was somewhat different—
The SPEAKER: I will interrupt the member for Gorton. There was an attempt by the Manager of Opposition Business to equate Mr Thomson with what happened to a particular senator, who had a mental illness. I do think that is an unfair comparison to make and are therefore I would ask you to desist from doing so.

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR: Madam Speaker, I go to the issue about the presumption of innocence and, certainly I believe that that senator did, quite deservedly, get our presumption of innocence. She was afforded that presumption quite rightly, and I just say that we should be very mindful of denying that presumption in any future matters, given that it is part of the legal system and is certainly a convention. It should be something that we think seriously about and not trash if, indeed, something like this may arise again.

There have also been some comments about the royal commission. The Leader of the Opposition made very clear that we will cooperate with the royal commission—of course, we will—but we support another approach that we think will be more effective. People have to understand the history of the Australian Crime Commission. If they do, they would understand why that would be the better approach. The Australian Crime Commission is the body that arose out of the National Crime Authority. The National Crime Authority was established by the recommendations of a royal commission so that we would not have to continue to create royal commissions investigating crime. It is a standing royal commission. It has the powers to investigate serious and organised crime. It, along with the Federal Police, other Commonwealth agencies and state police, is well placed to investigate crime. We believe that any serious allegations of crime in any part of our society against anyone should be fully investigated. That is why it is important for the government to certainly contemplate accepting the recommendations of the Leader of the Opposition to support that task force.

The SPEAKER: I bring the member back to the substance of the motion.

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR: This is an important motion. It is unanimously supported. It is supported without qualification. It is now supported because we are in a position to do so after the decision of the court last week. It is unfortunate that the former member for Dobell chose to use this place in the manner in which he did. As a result, the opposition supports the motion moved by the government.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014
Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (17:32): The Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014 will amend the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Act 1999 to enable the dairy industry to continue to meet its obligations in relation to animal health and welfare and its membership of Animal Health Australia. The amendments increase the maximum rate—that is, the caps—of the Australian Animal Health Council levies on dairy produce from 0.058 to 0.145 of a cent per kilogram of milk fat and from 0.13850 to 0.34625
of a cent per kilogram of protein. The current operative levies are equivalent to the current caps.

The bill will not increase the operative rate paid by industry members and does not impose a financial burden on dairy farmers. Any increase to the operative rate requires a case to be put forward by industry, a case which would demonstrate widespread industry consultation and strong industry support. This bill will allow the dairy industry, led by Australian Dairy Farmers Ltd, to meet its requirements as a signatory to the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement and to meet its obligations in any event of an emergency response, including any expenses that may be incurred in dealing with those events.

The opposition very strongly support this bill. It has been requested by the industry and will give the industry far more flexibility if the need arises and a case can be made for an increase in the levy in the future. A second reading amendment has been circulated in my name. I move:

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

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

(1) failure of the Government to act urgently in response to the effect of the drought on the dairy and other agricultural sectors; and

(2) omission of 'resource sustainability' in the terms of reference for the Government's agriculture white paper."

I believe the member for Perth will be seconding my amendment.

I have moved this second reading amendment not in any way to politicise what is an important bill and a bill with bipartisan support but because I think it is timely to have a discussion about a number of issues that affect agriculture. There are many reasons that cause me to do so, but a few stand out. The first is the ongoing challenge of climate change and drought. Another is the current focus on the increasing demand for food globally, particularly the increasing demand for food in Asia and what that might mean for Australia in terms of opportunities to take up a slice of that increasing demand in the future. Third is the government's decision to produce an agricultural white paper, hopefully, in the not too distant future. That is going to create a vacuum in the public policy space for at least 12 months.

I will start with drought and climate change. Australian farmers are currently facing a very severe drought. It is time the government responded to that drought. The opposition have been extending bipartisan support on this matter for well more than a month now. We have indicated we will extend any cooperation required to pass any legislation required. We have indicated that we acknowledge that money needs to be spent and we will, therefore, support any appropriate measures. There are some caveats on these things, but I said 'any appropriate measures'.

I have put forward three things the government could do almost immediately. Firstly, it could do something with the farm household support payment. It is currently a transitional payment, but it is going to be an allowance after 1 July this year. I note that the Prime Minister announced two days before the Griffith by-election that he was going to do something on that. He said he would bring it forward, but bringing it forward is more difficult than it sounds. It requires legislation; it would require an additional commitment to further relax the means testing of that payment. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister missed the
opportunity to do that when the House last sat. The Senate is not sitting this week, and the opportunity has now passed to get that legislation through this place effectively any earlier than 1 July. That should have been done, and it should have been done with some urgency.

Secondly, I have invited the Prime Minister to do something with Labor’s Farm Finance package. This is the $420 million package that extends debt relief to farmers facing difficulty with their debts, whether it be caused by drought or market conditions or whatever it might be. Obviously, that program is very heavily in demand given the severity of the drought. It would appear to me that a very sensible and quick way would be to further enhance that package. Curiously, on being elected, Minister Joyce changed that package by denying money to some of the states with smaller populations—South Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory and Western Australia—and only distributing part of the money he took from those states to the larger states of New South Wales and Queensland. In doing so, he effectively withheld $40 million of the Farm Finance package—a package that I note is now fully taken up by those on the land in New South Wales. So, why the minister continues to hold back that $40 million is a mystery to me. At the same time, I am calling upon him to put more money in. He is holding money out of that package, effectively reducing it from a $420 million package to a $380 million package.

Thirdly, it is past time that the government further progressed the drought reform process. This is a reform process which was begun by the former Labor government, and which enjoyed bipartisan support in this place and the support of the states. It removed all of the old EC programs, which a whole range of expert bodies, including the Productivity Commission, declared not to be good public policy—the retention of a welfare payment, if you like, for those who need it. The next step was to progress something to replace the old EC arrangements, something which is more in keeping with good public policy—probably and possibly, for example, a payment that acknowledges drought situations that are the equivalent of natural disasters. Sadly, not only has the government not progressed that reform in its first six months in office, it has also abolished the very COAG vehicle responsible for progressing that further, and I refer there to the Standing Council on Primary Industry.

There is speculation that tomorrow, if my intelligence serves me well, the government might finally announce a drought package. I see some members on the government benches smiling, which indicates to me that my intelligence is correct. That would be very welcome. It is a number of weeks too late, in my view, and certainly in the view of the National Farmers Federation and other leading farm organisations; it is certainly a few weeks late in the eyes of those who are suffering so badly on land and have been doing so not for weeks now, but a number of months.

Mr McCormack: Years.

Mr FITZGIBBON: I hear the interjection ‘years’. That is, in effect, true, but the severity of the drought has grown worse week on week in recent months, and it is past time the government acted.

This brings me back to climate change. There is still a lot of debate around this country about climate change and appropriate government responses to it. I recall very vividly being out with Bruce Tyrrell in his vineyard, in June last year, I think. Bruce Tyrrell pointed me in the direction of his vines and he said to me, ‘You see those leaves on those vines?’ I said that I did. He said: ‘They shouldn't be there. They shouldn't be there at this time of the year. That's
climate change.’ He was quick—I am sure he would not mind me sharing this story—to make the point that he did not necessarily believe that climate change was the result of human activity, but he was very certain in his view that the climate is changing in Australia. The climate is changing in Australia. We can have our arguments about what is causing it—whether it is cyclical or whether it has been going on for hundreds of years—but whatever the case might be, the climate is changing. Droughts are becoming more regular and more severe, and that trend, unfortunately, is likely to continue. It is time we all acknowledged that collectively. We can still have our debates about what to do about it, but one thing is certain: we will not fulfil our ambitions in our quest to take our share of that massive growth and demand in food in the coming decades that I spoke about earlier if we do not more efficiently manage our natural resources, the resources that allow us to produce food in such a plentiful way in this country. As a parliament, we need to recognise that and get more serious about that.

And that takes me to the third point I made—that is, the failure of the government in this coming white paper to include in the terms of reference resource sustainability. I would have thought that resource sustainability would be right at the top of that white paper and its ambitions, because we cannot produce a lot more food in this country with the same or depleting land, water and even human resources in many senses—workforce issues are a huge challenge for agriculture in Australia. It is very disappointing that regional sustainability is not in the terms of reference, and I suspect, sadly, it is because we have not gone that step further and collectively announced that we all believe the climate is changing and that this is posing a big challenge for those on the land, because that might be an admission that the current government is wrong to be taking such a 19th-century approach to the issue of climate change.

It is a shame, because they have consistently said—and in doing so in a sense recognised the size of the challenge—that they have committed themselves to the same greenhouse gas emissions targets as has the now opposition. What remains unclear to us is how they expect and hope to meet those targets. We hear a lot about Direct Action but at the same time we hear a lot about what might be the future of the renewable energy target, and, of course, we have not seen any detail of where the money is going to be coming from or where it is going to be spent. Is it going to be a big tax on all of us and distributed to rent seekers? We do not know. After six months in the life of this government, we simply do not know what Direct Action is really going to look like.

We support this bill, but we would like to see more debate in this place about these massive challenges facing not only those on the land in rural and regional Australia but those who work on the land and those who work in small businesses and other pursuits who rely so heavily on the health of our agricultural sector. We cannot allow a policy vacuum to exist for another 12 months while Minister Joyce develops his white paper—or, should I say, while the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet develops the white paper, which is my understanding of the process. Why the white paper is being written by PM&C, I do not know. I do not know that it is something which would give a lot of encouragement to those in this place who hold hopes of a positive white paper, a white paper that is active and useful and that really does something for those who work on the land. They may prove me wrong, but
again it is a great shame that they have been given inadequate terms of reference from which to work.

So the derivative is important but so too are all these issues. I made a point about the white paper in a recent article I wrote for the Farm Institute. I listed a number of research papers that have been done on agriculture in recent times. This is just some of them: *Greener Pastures, Farming Smarter Not Harder, the NFF Blueprint, Feeding the Future, Infrastructure and Australia's Food Industry*, the National Food Plan, the Rural Research and Development Statement, and many Farm Institute papers, to name a few. I put it to the House that there is a wealth of information and research out there. I think we know what the questions are. I think a range of reports, including those I have mentioned, have answered the questions. I believe we know what needs to be done in agriculture to make it more productive, more profitable and—I underline—more sustainable.

I do not know whether we can afford to wait another year for the white paper to determine what those responses should be. I suppose we have to, because that is the government's intention. The opposition will do its best to participate in that white paper process in any way it can and in a positive way, but I think it is a great shame that the government has decided to put everything on ice and create such a policy vacuum and so much inertia in agriculture policy while we are waiting for that white paper process to be completed. I believe the member for Perth will second my second reading amendment.

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

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (17:48): I second the amendment.

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

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (17:49): I rise to speak on this important motion. As I do, I would like to answer some of the claims put forward by the member for Hunter, the shadow agriculture minister, who is a good man; I know he has good intent. When he took over the difficult role of agriculture minister, from Senator Ludwig, he did his best to correspond with me as the member for Riverina. The member for Hunter would know what an important food bowl the Riverina is. In fact it is one of Australia's one of the most important food bowls in Australia—if not the most important food bowl in Australia. I do acknowledge that I am biased in saying that.

I invited the member for Hunter to come to the Riverina. I know in good faith he would have come, but then we went into caretaker mode and we had an election and the government changed, thankfully. I say 'thankfully' because when the manmade drought that the previous government, under Labor, enforced upon Australia—and certainly upon the Riverina irrigators—was put forward, it certainly left my people in a very difficult situation. And it certainly was not any fault of the member for Hunter because he did not have the agriculture portfolio back then.

He talked about droughts. I know that the Prime Minister and the Minister for Agriculture made a very important tour of the electorates of Farrer and Parkes in New South Wales, and
Maranoa in Queensland, which have been very badly affected by drought going on 18 months now. In fact, in one part of Parkes—the member there, Mark Coulton, told me—the last time it rained, it came down in an absolute deluge overnight, inches upon inches of rain, but they have not seen any since. It is a dust bowl. Or it was, until the Prime Minister arrived. But that is not to say that the drought is over, not by a long stretch. Just because it rains for a day or a week—even if it drizzled on and off for a month—it does not mean the drought is over. These people are hurting, as the member for Hunter quite rightly pointed out. I welcomed the latest farm finance package when it was announced last year, but it did not go far enough and it was very difficult to access for those farmers who were doing it so tough.

The member for Hunter talked about dairy farmers. I would like to quote from a dairy farmer in my electorate. Neil Jolliffe and his wife Simone have a farm at Euberta. It is a generational dairy farm in the Riverina electorate near Wagga Wagga. Back in July 2012, when the price of milk came down to 40c a litre—that is the price that the farmers get at the farm gate—the Jolliffes were very shocked. Simone said:

“A drop doesn’t come as a surprise - we would have been happy with a stable milk price or even a 5 per cent drop—
which she described as:
… more understandable …
She went on:
“Morale is low and from the people who were asking questions and commenting—
at the meeting they attended—
you could hear the emotion in their voices.
“There’s not enough for the older guys to keep going.”

Neil is by no means an older farmer. He is in fact younger than me. But he is a good farmer. He wants to get on with the job, and he wants to get on with the job—not with a handout but with a hand up.

He and so many other farmers in this country, whether they are dairy, wheat, rice or whatever else—and they grow everything in the Riverina, bar, maybe, mangoes, pineapples and bananas—need a hand up and good government policy. They are getting it from this side. The new agriculture minister is putting a white paper out and calling for submissions, and I know that there is going to be a forum at Griffith, in the heart of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. I welcome people making submissions to that meeting so that their feelings can be known on this important subject.

Australia has one of the most productive and sustainable dairy industries in the world. The amendments in this bill—that is, the original amendments—are aimed at supporting the industry's ongoing productivity. Dairying is a vital industry to many regional communities and to the nation as a whole. Australia's dairy industry is worth $13 billion a year in production, manufacturing and exports, with a farm gate value of $4 billion annually. We exported $2.27 billion worth of dairy products in 2012-13. Dairy is our third largest agricultural commodity behind beef and wheat. I am proud to say that the Riverina produces all three. Australian dairy exports account for 10 per cent of the world's entire dairy trade. That is a lot—10 per cent.

Mr Hartsuyker: It is a lot.
Mr McCormack: The member for Cowper fully understands how important it is. Our 6,700 dairy farmers produce 9½ billion litres of milk every year. The industry employs over 43,000 people directly and a further 100,000 indirectly in associated services. That is from Dairy Australia's website under 'Dairy at a Glance' 2012-13. It is critical that Australia's dairy industry remains at the forefront of technology and innovation through investment in appropriate research and development. R&D is something that our government, this side of the House, really recognises, particularly in the agricultural space. It is something that was certainly ignored by Senator Ludwig and others in the previous government. R&D funding will ensure that our dairy industry remains profitable, competitive and sustainable over the longer term.

We heard the member for Hunter talk about climate change, and he quoted Chris Tyrrell. We appreciate that there are difficulties with unseasonable weather. We also appreciate the fact that Chris Tyrrell, a fifth generation winemaker, would receive so much benefit if Labor just got on board with us and repealed the carbon tax. I am sure that Mr Tyrrell and other winemakers would appreciate the boost.

Mr Hartsuyker: Money in their pocket.

Mr McCormack: And the money in their pocket. The boost to what are in many cases electricity driven industries would really help them.

In my own electorate, Riverina Fresh manufactures roughly 22 billion litres worth of fresh and processed dairy products, including milk, yoghurt, cream cheese, thickened cream and other boutique products. We actually had them at a parliamentary secretary's breakfast this morning. My colleagues were very appreciative and commented on the wonderful products out of the Riverina, particularly the milk. The company sources milk from 21 local dairy farmers.

This bill amends the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Act 1999 so that Australia's world-class dairy industry can continue to fulfill its obligations in relation to animal health and welfare through membership of Animal Health Australia as well as via other initiatives. It is important to really stress that they are world-class because I think sometimes we forget. Farmers have been maligned. They were certainly maligned during the six years of Labor. But they are the best people in their industry, in their roles, working the land. I say that as the proud son of generations—I do not know how many generations—of farmers in Australia and elsewhere. Our farmers are the very best in the world.

Levies such as those made possible by these amendments enable industry bodies to pool their resources in a more effective way to provide a range of essential services on behalf of dairy producers, manufacturers and exporters. This amendment increases the maximum rate of the Australian Animal Health Council levy payable by dairy producers from 0.058 to 0.145 of a cent per kilogram of milk fat and from 0.13850 to 0.34625 of a cent per kilogram of protein. Those might not sound like big numbers, but they certainly mean a lot to the industry.

Mr Hartsuyker: It all adds up.

Mr McCormack: It all adds up. The Australian Animal Health Council levy is currently set at the maximum rate. The rate cap increase has been requested by Australian Dairy Farmers Ltd as the current maximum rate has been in place for the past 15 years. As outlined by the agriculture minister in his second reading speech, the increase in the cap is
significant, but it is important to note that this bill does not increase the actual rates currently paid by industry. The process for determining actual levy rates has not changed. It remains incumbent on the relevant industry body—in this case, Australian Dairy Farmers Ltd—to consult with members and seek their support via ballot before putting the case to government for a rate increase. This process is consistent with our commitment to competent and consultative government—'consultative' being a word we did not hear in the last six years. That word is really important.

Levies raised for the Australian Animal Health Council remain by far the smallest of the four different levies provided for under the act, even after taking into account the proposed increase in the maximum levy rate. The services funded by this levy are recognised as being essential to the very survival of the dairy industry. If we do not have a healthy dairy herd, then we will not have a dairy industry in this country. It is as simple as that, and I know the member for Fraser would agree with me on that point. Australian dairy cows operate in quite different conditions to their American and Canadian sisters, often walking longer distances and experiencing greater variability in weather conditions.

Member levies fund Australian Dairy Farmers Ltd and Animal Health Australia. Through levies and direct government funding, these two bodies promote and support the industry through myriad ways along the entire production value chain, which makes dairy farming and manufacturing in Australia as profitable and sustainable as possible. We have to make sure that it is sustainable. We have to make sure that it is there for the future. A particular focus of their work is on animal health and welfare, on disease monitoring and prevention, and, importantly, on emergency disease management. Some of the work funded by this levy includes: coordination of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network, Australian biosecurity planning and implementation, and emergency animal disease preparedness. It is critical that Australia continues to pursue the quality and excellence which our industry is renowned for and which is one of our natural strengths.

Opportunities presented in the recently agreed Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement mean Australian farmers will have improved access to a major foreign market. Under this agreement, tariffs of 36 per cent on cheese and 89 per cent on butter will be eliminated over the next 13 to 20 years. I commend the Minister for Trade and Investment, Andrew Robb, for his work in this regard. Duty-free quotas on cheese, butter and infant formula will also be expanded, conferring further benefits for our exporters. They are Australian farmers, world's best-practice farmers, being benefited by the good work of Mr Robb. I again commend the trade minister for his hard work and his ongoing diligence in pursuing this historic agreement that will deliver so much for our local industry over the years to come.

Looking beyond Korea, Australia has even more opportunities presented by growing demand from China, India and other growing Asian economies for high-quality dairy products from, I say it again, Australia's world's best-practice farmers. Australia is well positioned to meet this growing demand. I well recall the former Prime Minister Julia Gillard talking about how we needed to feed the burgeoning population in the Asian century, and she was right. I agreed with her on every point. She made that wonderful landmark Melbourne speech where she talked up Australia as a food bowl. Unfortunately, we did not see the policies flowing on from that. Enabling our industry to maintain and protect the health of our
and ensures that Australian dairy farming will continue to be around for a long, long time, which will ultimately deliver benefits for everybody. We need it to continue into the future.

May I also take this opportunity to thank our dairy farmers, not only in my own electorate of Riverina but right across the country. They do a remarkable job producing some of the best, if not the best, dairy in the world, and they do it with little government assistance. Each of them has in their own way contributed to the development of one of the most enviable dairy industries in the world.

I commend the bill to the House. I further add that Australian farmers are not as heavily subsidised as their international competitors. They are at the moment being slugged with a carbon tax, unlike many of their international competitors. The member for Hunter in his speech talked about some of the practices of the coalition being back in the 19th century and called on us to get into the 21st century. I just wish some of the previous Labor government’s practices had been in the 19th century when it came to irrigation thinking. I refer to one of the great pioneers of the Riverina—in fact, one of the great pioneers of Australian farming—Sir Samuel McCaughey, of whom there is a wonderful bronze statue now situated in a special park in a town called Yanco in my electorate, which is very much the heartland of the Riverina. It is halfway between Mt Kosciuszko and Hillston, which is about the breadth of my electorate. Sir Samuel pioneered those irrigation channels which gave life to what was described by the early explorers as an arid wasteland. He brought a veritable garden of Eden through his waterways, his channels and his vision for the Riverina. He brought hope, he brought life, he brought economies—

Mr Frydenberg: Hope, reward and opportunity!

Mr McCormack: Hope, reward and opportunity—certainly, because it was not there before. It was just an arid wasteland. But you can drive through Griffith, Leeton, Narrandera, Hillston and all those wonderful areas in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area or the Coleambally Irrigation Area and, whilst they were not helped by Labor, they certainly will be helped by us. We have stepped into that space by capping water buyback. The Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, is putting forward a white paper. Whereas under the previous government there was a man-made drought, we are getting on with the job of helping farmers, world's best-practice farmers; we are getting on with the job of helping agriculture; and we are getting on with helping those communities which rely so heavily on the agriculture industry. We all like to eat, and we need to do our very best to help regional Australia in this regard.

Ms Chesters (Bendigo) (18:04): I rise to speak in favour of the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014. While the amendments in this bill may appear to some to be minor, they will have an important impact on the industry, and I support them.

Farm animal health is important to the productivity and sustainability of the Australian dairy industry, and in the Bendigo electorate we still have a stake in the dairy industry. This bill will allow for levy cap rates to be adjusted to enable the dairy industry to meet its obligations in relation to its Animal Health Australia annual membership and other animal health and welfare initiatives.
Australia's reputation for clean, green safe products is its greatest competitive advantage. This reputation is maintained by the work undertaken by Animal Health Australia. This work will ensure that the dairy sector is able to capitalise on the world's demand for safe milk products, particularly in Asia.

This bill is important to my electorate. Agriculture and the food and beverage manufacturing sector are important and employ thousands of people in the Bendigo electorate, making them major employers. There are roughly 2,000 people employed in agriculture and an additional 4,000 people working in food manufacturing, so securing the supply chain is important, and this proposal goes to the heart of that. For example, food and beverage manufacturing contributes an estimated annual output of roughly $550 million to the local economy and employs just over 1,200 people. That is just within the City of Greater Bendigo, not to mention the rest of the region. That is why it is important to ensure Australia's reputation for clean and green safe products, which is its greatest competitive advantage overseas. This will help ensure that people within my electorate continue to be employed.

I want to talk about the levies in this bill and the way in which this bill has been structured. It is important to the dairy producers that the levies be collected by the Commonwealth for disbursement to Animal Health Australia. This will ensure that there is accountability and efficiency within the system.

The levy system will enable industries to maintain competitive advantage not just in world markets but in our own. As I have mentioned already, Bendigo, in central Victoria, has a stake in the dairy industry. I wish to highlight Parmalat Australia, who has taken ownership of the oldest dairy farm in Bendigo. The Symons Dairy is an independent franchised distributor for Parmalat Australia Ltd. It is Bendigo's oldest locally owned dairy and has been servicing the area since 1919. Symons Dairy has been owned by three generations. Today it produces various products which all of us enjoy, whether it be here in parliament, in our restaurants or in our kitchens. The site employs 150 local people, demonstrating why a strong dairy manufacturing sector is important.

Bendigo's becoming home to more dairy and food beverage manufacturers is a key priority for our region. In a recent meeting with the Bendigo Manufacturing Group we talked about establishing an alliance of our food manufacturers. We see the opportunity in this industry. The levy will also support other small and emerging industries which may benefit from cooperation and resource sharing. Bendigo and northern Victoria are home to some fantastic local producers which, with the right industry support, could become stronger not just in our region but in Australia.

An example is Jonesy's Dairy Fresh. Their farm, just north-west of Bendigo, has a significant number of suppliers of their product in the electorate. Jonesy's Dairy Fresh want to make sure that farmers get a fair price for their milk and that consumers get a great product. They enshrine the 'Buy local, produce local' motto. Jonesy's milk does not contain added permeate. Whilst the debate on added permeate has not yet been resolved, there is a market for milk that does not contain added permeate. Jonesy's have stepped in to make sure they have a product consumers want.

Another example are Holy Goat Cheese, which you may know of if you attend regular farmers markets. The farm is 30 minutes south of Bendigo towards Castlemaine. Their goats have free range access to a wide variety of native grasses, herbs and shrubbery. Their cheese
is a hit. It is sold out at every local market and in Melbourne and Sydney delicatessens and it is used in restaurants. There is not one piece of cheese that they produce which is not sold—again, another outstanding local producer doing well in our region. Their philosophy is simple:

Our farm is small, producing high quality and desirable cheeses. We don't get side tracked by others agendas. The heart of a business started years ago. We are ethical, idealistic and can stay in business.

That is a wonderful motto from a dairy producer in our region. Both producers are part of the growing farmers market and foodie scene in central Victoria—another opportunity for industry development. We often hear of the dining boom in Australia and the overseas growth that will come with it. We need to extend that dining boom to talk about the entire supply chain, from the paddock to the plate. In Bendigo and central Victoria, we are embracing this philosophy with gusto, quickly becoming a foodie destination as well as a producer of products to be sent overseas. With continued support from farm to plate this industry will continue to grow.

I also understand the importance of supporting Animal Health Australia and the proposals this bill puts forward to ensure that this not-for-profit public company can react if there is a disease outbreak. Its role is to facilitate improvements in Australia's animal health policy and practice in partnership with the livestock industries, governments and other stakeholders.

Another Bendigo manufacture active in this space is MSD Animal Health. MSD is a global, research-driven company that develops, manufactures and markets a broad range of veterinary medicines and services. Their modern production plant in Bendigo, Victoria, produces high-quality vaccines for most of Australia's domestic and farm animals and gives employment to over 100 people, including 40 scientists. I was very pleased to be at the site a few months ago when they officially celebrated and launched their solar energy. They were able to install a number of solar panels through the former Labor government's clean technology grant program. They are now the largest producer of solar energy in the Bendigo electorate. This is another way in which governments can partner successfully with industry, whether it be through levies to support the development of the industry, as we see in this bill, or through clean technology grants. MSD research, develop and market vaccines not just for our local market but also for overseas markets. This fantastic local manufacturer demonstrates our region's potential. Whether it be producing food or vaccines, there is an opportunity here not just in the Bendigo electorate but for Australia.

While I support the bill, we need to start addressing what we are doing in relation to drought. It is disappointing that the government has failed to act urgently in response to the effects of drought not necessarily in my electorate but in electorates further north. As I have mentioned, jobs will be put at risk. In my own electorate, if drought were to hit, there would be concern. As I have mentioned, there are 2,000-plus people employed in agriculture and 4,000-plus people employed in food manufacturing. Those supply chains are linked back to the farms. This sector is a big employer even within my own electorate.

Food and beverages manufacturing was the largest manufacturing sector in Australia in 2012-13. It will continue to grow and innovate, but we have to get the support right at the farm gate. At the moment, this sector employs 1.7 million people in Australia, including many in my electorate. Over time, demand for high-quality produce should see employment in the sector increase. But jobs in this area of manufacturing will only increase if we continue to
have a strong and healthy agricultural sector. That is why the government needs to act urgently in response to the drought effect in the agricultural sector in Queensland and New South Wales. The agricultural sector comprises a large share of our export revenues. So, economically, this sector matters. These industries must be supported to adapt to climate change, so that they are ready and able to react to the droughts that are increasing in our time in history.

It is disappointing that the government's failure to react quickly could see a slowdown in production not just in what we see driven out of the farm gate but also in the manufacturing sector. It is disappointing because there was a plan in place. In government, Labor delivered Australia's first ever National Food Plan, a blueprint that aimed to increase Australia's food production by 45 per cent by 2025. Those opposite fail to appreciate that Labor is in the business of securing and creating jobs, and that means working within this sector. Food and beverage production is such an opportunity for us and we need to make sure we are assisting the first step of the supply chain: our farmers. Work is needed to be done by government and industry across the supply chain, from the paddock to the plate, to use the science and the research to put farming and food production at the cutting edge of industry worldwide. We know we have the expertise in the science area. We continue to put funding in that area and it is the right thing to do, but it is all for nothing if we do not act quickly to support our farmers, particularly those in drought affected areas.

Australia needs to seize the trade opportunities, especially those offered by the Asian dining boom. Australia's farmers are great innovators and that is why we need to partner with them to ensure that more of the food we grow ends up on the consumer plate. The Labor Party in government had a plan and that plan aimed to tackle the droughts in New South Wales. It is an easy one for the government today to pick up on. The government could immediately assist drought affected farming families by restoring the $40 million that the minister withheld from the farm finance low-interest scheme. The minister could continue to publicly call on the cabinet and his colleagues to act. But this one simple decision could see an additional $40 million being made available now. Further, a quick and effective response to the growing drought emergency would be to enhance farm finance by further lowering the interest rates to 4.5 per cent and adjusting the guidelines to improve access for drought affected farmers. Given that the farm finance scheme is already in operation, the additional money could flow quickly, thus getting to the farmers now. Every day counts. It is not just about farmers and their families; it is also about the supply chain and jobs, from the paddock to the plate. We need to act quickly to ensure that we continue to have a viable agricultural sector because so many other sectors can be built on it and we can secure those jobs.

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (18:19): I rise to speak in support of the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014, the aim of which is to future-proof Australia's dairy industry. The bill is about building financial capacity to prepare for and manage emergency disease outbreaks. Watered down, it is about dairy farmers taking greater responsibility for their future prosperity, something which the farmers in my electorate of Hume know is critical to their future. We need to support this legislation, but first we need to look at it in the broader context of Australian agriculture and the dairy industry. As I have said before in this chamber, there is an extraordinary opportunity for Australian agriculture as we see rapid growth in markets to our north, both in terms of volume and in terms of value.
This applies particularly to our dairy industry and it applies to the agriculture sectors right across my electorate of Hume.

The shift in economic growth from the developed world to the developing world is driving an enormous opportunity for agriculture. To put this in perspective, in the five years to 2010 the developing world accounted for almost three-quarters of global growth and most of that growth happened in Asia. We all know that the result has been a surge in demand for the basic materials necessary to support industrialisation and urbanisation. Much less well understood is the fact that the new-found wealth and incomes of the developing world are leading to increased calorie consumption and higher protein diets, both of which demand greater agricultural production, particularly dairy production. This combined with population growth should see world agriculture demand double by 2050. And it will not be due to a five-year plan like Labor's Food Plan.

Little or no new land and water is coming into production and some is being withdrawn, with supply unbalanced across the world. The relative scarcity of agricultural land and water, particularly in Asia, given the size of the population and the demand growth, is central to our opportunity. Demand for many agricultural products has already begun to outstrip supply, resulting in periods of high global food prices in recent years, particularly once we account for our inflated currency.

As incomes go up, so does consumption of dairy products. Last year Chinese imports of dairy products grew by about 300,000 tonnes, a little less than the entire volume of Australia's dairy exports. In the face of these shifts some are predicting that Australia could become a food bowl for a fast-developing Asia and that our dairy industry could be central to this. After all, commodity based economies are logical sources of food and fibre for increasingly affluent markets in our region. However, it is clear that we are not seeing these opportunities translate into higher farm-gate prices, growth or investment.

Success depends on addressing the key issues that are hindering our performance and have hindered our performance for a number of years. Moreover, the race to make this opportunity a reality is a global one and the competition is intense. We have to remember that international competitiveness in agriculture is about more than just having access to good land and rainfall; it is about getting access to large and fast-growing markets and having extremely efficient supply chains to get product to the markets. We need world-class research and development capability, innovative financing including, as our amendment sets out, future-proofing against disease. We need productive farms with the necessary scale, organisation, funding and skills. These are the platforms that have seen Brazil sweep aside global competition to capture the market for soybeans, Malaysia and Indonesia dominate the production and marketing of palm oil and New Zealand lead the global dairy industry. Australia is doing well but we have not been at the forefront.

The example set by New Zealand is illustrative of what the Australian dairy industry could achieve. I was privileged to be part of the extraordinary reforms the New Zealand dairy industry pursued in the 1990s and early 2000s. I will quote from a paper, which the member for Hunter so kindly referred to and I co-authored in late 2012 called Greener Pastures: The Global Soft Commodity Opportunity for Australia and New Zealand. In this paper I spell out that New Zealand dairy farmers took their destiny into their own hands. I would like to summarise how they did that. Their industry has been completely transformed, with milk
production more than doubling in the past two decades. They have created Fonterra, the greatest export focused dairy company owned by farmers in the world. Central to the reform is a farmer driven deregulation agenda—farmers taking their destiny into their own hands—with a strong focus on Asian markets, particularly China.

Above all else, the Kiwis were willing to adapt. In the mid-1980s, the New Zealand government removed agricultural subsidies as part of its response to systemic economic problems. This gave impetus to the diversification of products and markets in the dairy industry. In the decades since deregulation, there has been a wave of conversions of land use, as beef and sheep farmers have moved over to dairy and other higher value products. Significant investment in irrigation infrastructure allowed dairy production to extend to the South Island, which now accounts for about a third of New Zealand dairy cattle. New Zealand was among the main proponents of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in the mid-1990s. In recent years New Zealand established a very close trading relationship with China, much closer than Australia has managed to achieve. Significant industry consolidation at the farm and processor levels also enabled efficiencies of scale to be realised.

Meanwhile, the industry established an extraordinarily sophisticated benchmarking and incentive system for manufacturing and logistics. In the year 2000, in response to changing world markets, farmers asked the government to remove the single-desk marketer, the New Zealand Dairy Board. This resulted in the formation of the vertically integrated farmer-owned cooperative called Fonterra. While Fonterra remains the dominant player in the industry, thoughtful competition measures included in the act fostered the emergence of a competitive fringe of processors and marketers. In 2011 Fonterra not only accounted for more than 90 per cent of the New Zealand dairy market but was the largest processor of raw milk in the world. It currently has around 11,000 farm shareholders and an impressive global supply chain. Today, New Zealand dairy accounts for more than a third of all global dairy exports, while we sit on about 10 per cent. In 2011 New Zealand dairy produced about 50 per cent of the country's gross value of agricultural production.

Australia can learn a lot from the New Zealand example. We need to realise, however, that our starting point is different. We have a different market structure and a stronger domestic focus, but the kind of success seen in the New Zealand dairy industry has not emerged in Australian agriculture in recent years or in our dairy industry in any substantial way, despite the fact we have some of the best farmers and best agricultural land in the world. Agriculture in Australia has been understandably preoccupied with surviving recent drought. However, with a new government sympathetic to agriculture there is an urgent need for Australian farmers and agriculture to overcome a series of growth-limiting hurdles.

Most importantly, we need to open up new markets, just as we have in the recently negotiated free trade agreement with Korea We need to extend that to other countries like India, China and Japan. We need to better protect access to land and water, as we have recognised in our approach to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. We need to help our farmers to be more competitive with lower energy costs, less red tape and a lower currency, aided by governments living within their means. All these things are a focus of this government. We need to help farmers to rebuild their balance sheets as farm debt levels are already too high and are stretched by succession problems and farm consolidation as many farmers age.
Widespread skill shortages need to be addressed by boosting the image of agriculture, attracting new workers and enhancing education services. We need a stronger focus on research and development, which we recognised in our election commitments.

It is a sizeable list and one which is critical to my electorate of Hume. I have no doubt that our agricultural white paper will add to the list, but the key to the success of New Zealand's dairy industry is its recognition that it needed to define its own future. With this bill before the House, the Australian dairy industry can take a small step down the same path in taking control of its own destiny. This legislation to increase the cap on levies for milk products and to future-proof the sector against potential major revenue loss is a keen example of the forward thinking Australian dairy needs. If passed, it does not mean farmers will be paying a higher levy to the Australian Animal Health Council; it simply increases the cap on the rate of the levy which may be charged. This is simple, safe economics. While the broader issues for the industry are challenging, the sector has overcome significant obstacles in the past.

Australian dairy needs to grab, quite literally, the bull by the horns. It needs to stand up, shape its own destiny and be ready with appropriate funding in the event of unforeseen circumstances. This is the kind of amendment bill which will build confidence within the sector and encourage badly needed investment and growth. I wholeheartedly support the bill.

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (18:30): I wish to support the bill that is before us and the second reading amendment that has been proposed by the opposition's shadow minister. I think it is very heartening that we have seen here at least some recognition by the government that not all regulation is bad. I am very pleased to see that the proposal to abolish the Australian Animal Health Council levy is not on the basis that it constitutes red tape. The presentations by the minister, by the parliamentary secretary and by others who have spoken here are recognising that this is actually a very effective and important piece of legislation that allows the dairy industry to act collectively, to come together and to ensure that there are funds provided for these important tasks of biosecurity and research and also to ensure that we have suitable animal welfare practices in place. I would urge the minister in future, as he is ranting and raving about the abolition of red tape and that regulation is all bad, to consider the very positive role that is played by this legislation.

I want to make a few comments on the West Australian dairy industry. We do not have the biggest dairy industry but we do have a very strong and very innovative industry, albeit with some problems. We produce about four per cent of the national milk supply but we consume about 11.5 per cent of the nation's milk dairy products. Certainly our industry has a couple of challenges. One is associated with soil fertility and acidification of land. Under the federal government's Landcare policies there has been considerable investment over the last few years in trying to deal with those issues. Another challenge which has not been mentioned yet—which I am surprised about given people are talking about the dairy industry—is the problem with prices and the use of a very market dominant position that we have seen in the first instance by Coles and then in response by Woolworths, who said they had to go there because Coles were going there. Certainly the dairy farmers in WA point to the fact that, whilst their production is increasing, their farm gate prices have been decreasing.

I really admire the dairy industry in Western Australia and its very active marketing techniques. Harvey Fresh have been very innovative in the range of products that they are putting on the market and the way that they sell their products and encourage people to
purchase them. We have seen not just dairy farmers but the processing industry in WA create
an incredibly interesting array of treats that greet us at our supermarkets and produce stores.
We are seeing fantastic innovation. Indeed, there is product differentiation that we are seeing
happening just with milk as drinkable milk, if that is the term to use, and the ways in which
individual companies have been trying to rise to the challenge presented by the Coles-
Woolworths milk wars. There are signs, obviously, that we can bring that market back to the
differentiated product and ensure that our dairy farmers get a decent price at the farm gate.
This is another area where we have to look at regulation. I know that in other debates
members of the National Party have raised their concerns about the power of this duopoly. It
is not something that we can go on ignoring forever. As I said, it has had a very critical
impact on dairy farming Western Australia.

That having been said, I quite rejoiced a couple of months ago when I was down in
Busselton and met a couple in their 30s who were dairy farmers. They were having
a weekend off, saying how much they enjoyed their life as dairy farmers and how they were making a
good return and they deserved their fabulous weekend at Bunker Bay. So while it is certainly
not all doom and gloom, I think that of all farming tasks this is one of the hardest, with its
requirement to be there day and night, to ensure that you have always got someone on the
property, that you are there with that very labour-intensive process of bringing in the cows
and ensuring they are milked each day. It does really mark this out as a very hard task.

I like to think that I have some other personal basis for being interested in the dairy
industry. Some of my ancestors were very much involved in opening up Gippsland as a
farming area. One strand of my family, the Bolands, came over to Gippsland from Ireland in
the 1860s and proceeded between them to open up four or five dairy farms. I note that the
names of the towns or townlands they were from in Tipperary are still marked in some of the
names of those properties in Killeen and Nenagh, around the Tinamba-Maffra area, and that
my great-great-grandmother, a dairy pioneer, is buried in the Maffra Cemetery. I would like
to just make that little reference. Certainly we knew the stories of how hard the dairy farming
life was and of my father's refusal to be part of it because it was, indeed, too hard. Some of us
actually regretted him taking that attitude when he was young and losing that contact with that
area.

Perhaps I can use that as a small segue into commenting on something that the minister
said during his speech which I found truly extraordinary. The minister was commenting that
his family had also come from Ireland and he spoke, quite rightly, of the famine in Ireland
and how shocking it was and that there were millions of people—I am not sure he actually
said millions, but there were in fact millions of people—who either starved or died of
pestilence, I am sorry, pestilence.

Mr Frydenberg: Your side's known for its petulance!

Ms MacTIERNAN: The pestilence, as they used to call it then, which was a form of
plague. The minister was quite right and he went on to acknowledge that at the same time
there was in fact a surfeit of food being produced in Ireland—of course, also totally correct.
But what I found really extraordinary was the conclusion that he drew from this. The
conclusion was that this is the deadly hand of bureaucracy, as defined by politics beyond your
domestic control, and the reality of where power truly lies when it comes to food. The
bureaucracy? It was, somehow or other, a group of public servants or bureaucrats that decided
that this food was not going to be consumed in Ireland and it was going to be shipped off overseas. That is totally wrong—and this is an important thing that we need to recognise. This is a Tea Party mantra, that we are constantly surrounded with this evil bureaucracy that is doing in our country. It has got nothing to do with bureaucracy. This was a deliberate policy at the time of the British government and the British landed gentry, who believed that Ireland was overpopulated and that the best thing that could happen for Ireland, and particularly for their interests in Ireland, was for there to be a significant reduction in their population. And, indeed, there was a genocide that occurred at that time, with probably not 400,000 but closer to a million people starving to death and another two million or so people being forced overseas—although I am one of those people who say I am glad my ancestors had the get up and go to get up and go, because I think we have a great land of opportunity here in Australia.

Coming back to my first comment, we have a strange conundrum with the minister. On the one hand, notwithstanding all his ranting and raving against 'regulation' and 'red tape' and 'just get out of the way', a la the Tea Party, he is very sensibly supporting an amendment through this piece of legislation to ensure that the Australian Animal Health Council can provide a proper emergency response when there is a requirement to do so. Then contrast that with the completely ill-informed idea that the Irish famine and the fact that so many people died was somehow or other the fault of a bureaucracy, rather than a conscious and deliberate policy on the part of people who had a lot of vested interests. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I commend the bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): I thank the member for Perth for the tour around Ireland and Maffra and I call the honourable member for Calare.

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (18:42): Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker. I am speaking on the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014. As far as the amendments in this legislation go, like most of my colleagues I have always taken the view that if the bulk of the industry agree with these things then it is not our job to stand in their way. In this case it is somewhat forced on them by the actions of all governments back in the late 1990s, when they brought the act into being when state and federal governments stopped funding for the sorts of pestilences that might be visited on the various industries. So they really do not have a lot of choice and we are not going to stand in their way on this.

The dairy industry in general has had some tough times. Drought, whether it is down in Victoria or in Queensland or wherever it may be, has played the most recent part in all that, not to mention the high dollar and most certainly the high cost of production. Then we have a few man-made problems as well, and I am sure I am not the first one to mention the carbon tax. I do not have a lot of dairy in my electorate—we are more into high-level dryland farming of one type or another, although I do have dairies—but I have been to an awful lot of dairies in my time, whether it be down in Gippsland and south-eastern Victoria, or the Murray, Tasmania, Western Australia or whoever it might be. But, in all that, the biggest single whack that the dairy industry has copped, in my experience, was a totally deliberate one by an Australian government. It was called a carbon tax. I will never forget hearing the previous Prime Minister of Australia, Julia Gillard, saying that that agriculture will just pass these things on, like everyone else.
It is quite incredible, because agriculture are price-takers; they were very seldom price-setters. The only time agriculture is a price-setter is, for example, when there is a cyclone in Northern Queensland and there are no bananas except for the few that survive. Then the boys have their day and they deserve it!

However, let us just talk about the effect, the very serious effect, that the carbon tax has had on the dairy industry. We did the figures and we found it is somewhere over $7,000 a farm. It cost Murray-Goulburn, for example, one of the big ones, a great deal. They figured well on that list that came out this month on what people had to pay by way of the carbon tax. We worked out the cost of processing is about $7,000 for every one of the dairy farms that supply them. On top of that, of course, it is somewhere between $3,000 or $5,000 or more at least. It can be a lot more for a big farm like Lexington Farm in Western Sydney where the carbon tax is costing in the order of $80,000 a year—though that is not a small farm. So we are talking around $10,000 a farm.

I actually did the figures on a 200-cow herd once. It was about a week's production that they are doing for the government of the day now—though it was the Labor government that then existed. It was costing the farm a week's work for nothing and they still had the cost of that production for that week. It is a huge issue. There are a lot of things that agriculture needs, and dairy is not very different from the rest. I have mentioned the carbon tax. The government can help dairy in the same way they can help most of agriculture. Agriculture makes no money out of a press conference. What they will make money out of is us saving them money.

What we need to do is not to take the bureaucrats' word when they say, 'We cannot help you with chemicals. There are certain laws and it is also bigger and more involved and you have just got to wear whatever the APVMA comes up with.' That is rubbish. If we do our work and individually deal with every chemical that comes through, when one is banned simply because that seems to be the thing to do at the time, we should sit down and work out whether it is really necessary. Do not listen to the bureaucrats saying, 'There is a procedure whereby this all happens and we cannot do anything about it.' That is rubbish. It is gutless and we are not doing our job.

Let me tell you that the dairy industry in particular has been built by the supermarkets and by Wesfarmers in particular. Coles have no board. They are owned lock, stock and barrel by Wesfarmers, who do have a board. Wesfarmers is a company that started off as an agricultural supply company. That is what they were. Wesfarmers employed people and told them to just increase their market share and it did not matter how they did it.

I do agree with those who say that the dollar for milk thing—and all the other supermarkets obviously followed suit—has been a disaster for those who actually produce milk. The supermarkets have brought this review of the Trade Practices Act on themselves. They may not break the law, but they employ very, very good barristers to tell them how close they can go to the Trade Practices Act and not break it. So probably they have not broken it—and maybe they have not—but, by heavens, they go close.

The best way to handle them is for us to make sure the bureaucracy in trade and the bureaucracy in agriculture do every damn thing they can to help producers get markets. Do bilateral trade deals and do them well. The best way to make the supermarkets pay for milk or any other agricultural product—be it horticulture or whatever—is simply not to have to
supply them. The greatest thing that agriculture in Australia can have is a viable export market for everything we produce. Make the supermarkets No. 2, not the best or the first place to sell your product. We have to do our job to absolutely ensure that every possible thing that can be done will be done. The red tape and the procedures are mind-boggling for a small producer. A small horticulturalist, or a niche market area that wants to sell their product overseas, needs every bit of help that we can give them. It is hard work. It is not stuff to do on TV. It is minute and piece by piece, but it needs to be done. That is the best way for Australian agriculture to free itself of the shackles of the duopoly—and it is soon going to be a 'fouropoly' or whatever you call it! But let me tell you, competition outside Australia is the greatest thing that can happen to all Australian agriculture, and dairy is no different.

I am happy to say that dairy has had a lift in recent times. Rain will help that a lot, and certainly the world price of milk products has gone up. Queensland, more than any other state, is totally dependent upon the domestic market and does need somebody to put a processing plant up there. If they did, I believe they would get a very high proportion of the milk in that state.

Tasmania and Victoria, which are centres for milk processing and the milk product market, have certainly in recent times been in a much better state than the other states. New South Wales has some processing but is still mainly locked into the domestic milk market. I was over in WA not long after Wesfarmers pulled their dollar-a-throw: we will sell you water which is much more expensive than milk you want to buy it individually. The previous speaker mentioned Harvey Fresh. I remember going there. At that time they were not sourcing either of the supermarkets and I asked why not. 'We are not going to cripple ourselves by tendering for that. In fact we are looking at expanding various products into Asia,' was their answer. I said, 'How good is this? The more you do that and the more others do that, finally, when they run short—and they will run short of fresh milk in WA—they will have to pay more to the locals to get them expanding their industry instead of contracting it.' I had barely got back to eastern Australia when I heard that Harvey Fresh had just taken a contract with one of the two duopolies, which was a pity because it really took away the power of not having to supply them. That is why exports have to be what our future is.

Food security in Australia, be it dairy or any other industry, is not about having enough to eat. This is not Somalia; it probably is there and in Ethiopia from time to time, but it is not about food security in Australia. It is about having the best product in the world for our own consumers. But we actually set a standard around the world for what agricultural products should be. Our greatest marketing tool in the world is our clean, excellent image of product. It is the greatest marketing thing we have. People will pay more because of it.

It is no accident that the Chinese people with money would rather buy ours than their own. That is because they know ours is pretty much guaranteed and theirs—well, you know, make your own mind up about that. But be in these markets, whether you are a middling-sized company or a small one. I have spoken to horticulturalists, for example, and niche dairy producers around Mildura and the Sunraysia, and they are nearly driven berserk by having to meet all these different criteria because we do not always have a straight-out situation determined with China, India and other countries. So, it is a big job we have to do to get those little trade things sorted out.
We need to remember that the bureaucracy will not change anything that it does not have to, whether it is about chemicals, AQIS or whatever it is. Has it ever crossed government's mind to make AQIS inspections contestable and local? Having someone trained locally who can charge a local fee instead of having someone come from Melbourne or Brisbane would reduce the cost of exports one heck of a lot.

There is a lot we can do. It is hard work; it is not all stuff to get you in front of TV cameras. It does not make you a hero but, by God, it relieves the pressure and the cost of doing business for the first industry that ever existed in Australia and one that is thought well of around the world. Thank you.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (18:55): I rise to speak in support of the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014 and the amendment to this legislation moved by the member for Hunter. This bill will amend the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Act 1999 to enable an increase in the maximum rates of the Australian Animal Health Council levies on dairy produce from 0.058 cents to 0.145 cents per kilogram of milk fat and from 0.1385 to 0.34625 cents per kilogram of protein. I have to say that I pity the people who have to work out the real dollar figures relating to those figures!

The bill will not increase the operative rate paid by industry members and does not impose a financial burden on the dairy farmers at this point in time. That is a matter for the industry itself, and it will be a matter that they will have to put to their members if they want to increase the actual levy being paid. But what it does do is to lift the cap which, in turn, enables the industry to lift the levy if it so desires. In doing so, that will enable Australian dairy farmers to meet their requirements as a signatory through the dairy industries to the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement and also to meet any obligations in the event of an emergency response, including costs that may be incurred as a result of that emergency response.

As other speakers have pointed out, dairy is an important industry to this country. It generates around $13 million a year in farming, manufacturing and exports. I understand that it is the third-largest rural industry in the country. I also understand that about 40 per cent of Australian milk is exported, and that in turn generates something in the order of just under $3 billion per annum. It represents about seven per cent of the world dairy trade; it is not insignificant. By any measure it is indeed an important industry sector for Australia because of its economic value and, just as importantly, because milk is an essential food commodity. I cannot imagine life in any country without milk and dairy products. It is in our national interest, therefore, to ensure that our dairy industry remains viable and continues to grow.

Central to that viability is the industry's ability to maintain its disease-free, safe and healthy product standard. Quite properly, other speakers have talked about the clean, green image of the dairy industry in Australia. It is an image, I must say, that applies to most of the food that is produced in this country. I agree with the member for Calare that it would have to be one of the biggest selling points of Australian produced food to the rest of the world. I am sure it is.

The Australian Animal Health Council levies are used to allow the dairy industry to meet its requirements as a signatory to the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement and to be able to respond to that in the event of an emergency. I made that point in my opening remarks. That is an important element of ensuring that we maintain and retain that clean, green image that we have spoken about.
Of course, it is also in the national interest from the point of view of health to ensure that Australian dairy products remain both nutritious and disease free. Australian dairy farmers are the backbone of the Australian dairy industry, and I make the point that most of the dairy industry in this country is the collective work of individual dairy farmers. Only a small amount of dairy farming is carried out by corporations in this country or by share farmers. Most of the farming is done by owners of those farms—in many cases second, third and fourth generation farmers.

We have seen in the last three decades a real decline in the number of dairy farmers in this country. The numbers have fallen from around 22,000 in 1980 to just over 6,000 today. In my home state of South Australia, where dairying was once a fairly important industry, we had something like 1,700-plus dairy farmers and are now down to about 268 dairy farmers. I know the local dairy farmers there have for some time been struggling to make ends meet. We saw at the turn of the century—I think in July 2000—the introduction of the dairy industry adjustment levy as a way of rationalising the industry. Along with that we saw the exodus of many dairy farmers from the industry. The adjustment levy ended in February 2009 because it had served its useful purpose. We did see a huge transition and adjustment throughout the industry.

We also saw dairy farmers being hit by falling milk prices, milk price wars, droughts, a deregulated Australian market and free trade agreements—all of which added additional pressures to our dairy farmers. Added to that was the high Australian dollar. A high Australian dollar never helps our exports. Around 40 per cent of our dairy products are exported so, undoubtedly, the high Australian dollar has had an effect on exports and in turn on the income of the farmers who rely on those exports.

Yet despite all of that the Australian dairy industry does have a strong future and the international players know it, as evidenced by the recent fight over Warrnambool Cheese & Butter that included Saputo, the Canadian company that ultimately took a controlling interest in Warrnambool Cheese & Butter. We saw how hard that was fought between Saputo and other industry players. We saw today reports in the media that Chinese entities, some of which are owned by the Chinese government, want to invest in plants in Australia to manufacture milk powder to be shipped directly to China. I understand those discussions are taking place now. That interest is real. They want to invest in several plants around the country. Furthermore, we see companies like Fonterra, Kirin and Lactalis showing no signs whatsoever of exiting Australia. That tells me that the people who best understand the industry see a future in the Australian dairy industry and are optimistic about that future.

We should, nevertheless, be prepared to respond to any emerging risks and threats. In particular I want to talk about the risks associated with climate change and changing weather patterns. I notice that the member for Hunter also referred to those risks. Changing weather patterns present two critical risks. The first is to the production of food and water that is required by the cows. According to some figures, it is estimated that you need up to about 1,000 litres of water to produce one litre of milk and that each cow requires around 1.6 tonnes of feed per year. If those figures are correct—and I assume that they are, or are at least somewhere near the mark—then clearly if the climate changes, as it has done in recent times, it will impact on our ability to provide water for the cows and water to produce the feed that is required by the cattle. It is a real risk that we need to address. We have already seen many
parts of Australia in drought and right now we are seeing drought affecting dairy farmers in New South Wales. It is a matter that we simply cannot continue to ignore. By doing so, we are turning our back on the dairy farmers.

The second risk with climate change is associated with diseases because, as the climate changes, our ability to manage different, new and emerging diseases also has to change. We have to be ready for those kinds of changes because climatic changes do more than just affect rainfall patterns. Yet many government members in this place continue to deny the reality of climate change and in turn the threats that those changes pose to Australia's dairy industry. In doing so, members opposite are doing the dairy farmers, who happen to be mainly their constituents, no favours whatsoever.

Even if members opposite do not accept that the climate is changing, the drought that New South Wales farmers are experiencing right now is real, their struggles are real, the effects on their health are real and their pleas for government assistance are real. Yet what we have seen over recent weeks from the Abbott government, from the Prime Minister and from the Minister for Agriculture is procrastination. I heard the member for Hunter saying earlier that he has picked up that there might be an announcement tomorrow with respect to drought assistance for those farmers. I hope he is right because, quite frankly, every day assistance is delayed I am sure adds to their stress and to their woes.

One thing the government could do is reinstate the $40 million that has been withheld from the farm finance low interest loan scheme and lower the interest rate associated with that scheme. As I said, farmers need that assistance now, not when it is too late. What they do not need is talk and platitudes; what they need is real assistance.

The animal health and welfare body is a not-for-profit public company established by the federal and state governments with membership from a cross-section of livestock industry bodies. Dairy Australia is one of the five associate members of animal health and welfare. It has a stake in the operations of that organisation. The organisation plays a critical role in ensuring that we as a nation are always one step ahead of the risks and threats to that particular industry, and I believe it plays a critical role in that regard. Of course, it needs to be properly funded if it is going to do its work and do it properly. This bill enables the industry to raise its contribution to the work of animal health and welfare and, in turn, do the work that is necessary and in the interests of the dairy industry of Australia. I therefore support the broad principle of this bill, albeit I support the amendment moved by the shadow minister for agriculture.

Mr WHITELEY (Braddon) (19:08): I am so pleased to rise this evening to speak on the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014. It will amend the primary industries levies act to increase the maximum rates of the Australian animal health council levies on dairy produce. It will amend the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Act 1999 to enable the dairy industry to continue to meet its obligations in relation to its Animal Health Australia annual membership and other animal health and welfare initiatives. The levies are payable by the producer of the relevant dairy produce and are collected by the Commonwealth for disbursement to Animal Health Australia. Australian Dairy Farmers Ltd, as the national representative body for the dairy industry, has requested the amendments. Australian Dairy Farmers Ltd is also party to the emergency animal disease response agreement, so this bill will allow the dairy industry to meet requirements of being a signatory
to that agreement, including the ability to meet its obligations in the event of an emergency response and where a nationally costed share response has been agreed.

This bill gives me the opportunity to highlight the importance of the dairy industry in Tasmania, and more particularly Braddon. I enjoyed the contributions of both the member for Hume and the member for Calare, and I look forward to the contribution shortly of my colleague from Lyons, whose also shares a passion for the dairy industry in Tasmania. It not only gives me the opportunity to get excited about future prospects for the industry, but to also warn of the challenges that are being faced. The dairy industry is the largest agricultural sector in Tasmania: 1,500 people are employed on farms and over 3,000 are employed in the industry; 160,385 cows—I am not sure when that count took place, but maybe this afternoon—on 437 farms produce around 770 million litres of milk. Dairying accounts for about 38 per cent of all agricultural gross products, second only to the salmon sector. But when downstream products including confectionery are included, the dairy industry is in fact the largest agriculture sector—valued at more than $1 billion. My electorate in north-west Tasmania and King Island is the largest dairying region in Tasmania, with more than 54 per cent of the total number of farms and about 58 per cent of the cows. My region employs about 800 people in the industry; 145 farms and 67,523 cows are to be found in one particular region—that is, the Circular Head region. As we say in my electorate, it is the land of milk and honey.

It is an honour to be able to stand here today and declare to all members present, and to those hopefully listening, that your electorates, wherever they are across this great nation, do not do cheese or butter as well as my electorate in Braddon.

Mr WHITELEY: You may cough as you wish, Mr Deputy Speaker Broadbent, but the proof is in the pudding—or should I say that in this case the proof is in the multiple gold and silver medals awarded to north-west Tasmanian producers at the most recent Royal Sydney Cheese and Dairy Produce Show. So I am not making this up!

For the benefit of members, and particularly you, Mr Deputy Speaker, it was never a fair contest. I mean how could the mainland ever compete with the cleanest air in the world, the healthiest and happiest dairy cows in the country, the greenest and most nutritious grass, and some of the most skilful cheese makers in the world? In the case of King Island Dairy, farm manager Mr Scott Clark—a good friend of mine, in fact—takes great pride in his work. He manages to get the highest quality milk from his cows, which is then handed over to master cheese maker Ueli Berger. Mr Berger is one of Australia's leading cheese makers, with awards from a host of international and local shows, including the New York Fancy Food

Mr WHITELEY: That is true! Over 800 cheeses and butters were submitted for judging recently, but only a few were worthy of being named winners or awarded gold and silver medals. There just is not enough time to list all the winners here, but special mention must go to Fonterra, and to Lion-owned King Island Dairy and Heidi Farm—both their cheese makers won cheese categories and managed to take home more than a dozen gold and silver medals.

For the benefit of members, and particularly you, Mr Deputy Speaker, it was never a fair contest. I mean how could the mainland ever compete with the cleanest air in the world, the healthiest and happiest dairy cows in the country, the greenest and most nutritious grass, and some of the most skilful cheese makers in the world? In the case of King Island Dairy, farm manager Mr Scott Clark—a good friend of mine, in fact—takes great pride in his work. He manages to get the highest quality milk from his cows, which is then handed over to master cheese maker Ueli Berger. Mr Berger is one of Australia's leading cheese makers, with awards from a host of international and local shows, including the New York Fancy Food
Show and the World Championship Cheese Contest in Wisconsin. Congratulations to Ueli; he has done it yet again.

If there are members of parliament yet to taste the world’s best cheeses from the electorate of Braddon, I suggest you get down to your local supermarket and pick up one of the many Tasmanian cheeses there. Or, even better, book yourself a ticket to the north-west coast and King Island! I will be happy to take anyone from either side of the House on a tour—except for the minister at the table, the member for Paterson. Mr Baldwin has been before, and I cannot keep the food up to him. Maybe I could put on a few platters one evening and invite you all to my parliamentary office—or maybe not!

As I said in my first speech, I have a vision for a better Braddon that can build on its Tasmanian brand by increasing dairy production by the targeted 40 per cent over the next five years. Reaching this target will require tens of thousands more cows, more sustainable farms and new farms. Most importantly—particularly given the results of the Brotherhood of St Lawrence research results yesterday showing my electorate, unfortunately, disappointingly, sadly, at the top of the pile when it comes to youth unemployment—this target, if it is to be reached, will provide hundreds and hundreds of new jobs in the industry.

To reach this target we need innovative dairy farmers, and my electorate, Mr Deputy Speaker Broadbent, you will not be surprised to learn, has many. Fifth and sixth generation farmers Norm, Lesley and Rob Frampton were named the 2013 Australian Dairy Farmers of the Year. In the Tasmanian Dairy Business of the Year Award in March 2013, the Framptons achieved a return on investment of 12.9 per cent through a focus on low-cost productivity, including labour, fertiliser and weed control, and through attention, importantly, to animal health. So not only do we produce the best cheese and butter and win those awards at the royal show, we also knock over the best in the country when it comes to the dairy farmer of the year awards.

There are exciting opportunities for us in dairy farming, not only in Tasmania but certainly in my electorate. The $66 million upgrade to the Cadbury factory in Hobart, to which the government contributed $16 million to reopen the world-famous Cadbury chocolate tours, will create the biggest difficulty facing the industry, believe it or not. The dairy industry will need, on this initiative alone, to increase its herd by 6,000 cows and produce an additional 80 million litres of fresh milk in order to accommodate the Cadbury upgrade alone. No wonder this is such an important investment, and most of this increase will need to come from my electorate in north-west Tasmania.

In addition to Cadbury, Lion Dairy and Drinks has just completed a $140 million upgrade to its Burnie facility, which will lift cheese production of 11,000 tonnes to 18,000 tonnes by 2016. Tasmanian Dairy Products invested $80 million in a processing plant in Smithton, which opened in March 2013. It processes raw milk from Tasmanian farmers into a range of dried dairy products for export to overseas markets. The Van Diemen’s Land or VDL Company proposes to develop 11 new dairy farms on its Woolnorth property in Circular Head, which will create 58 immediate, direct, ongoing roles, and add 14,000 milking cows to its herd and an additional $100 million to the local economy in north-west Tasmania. In September last year, Tasmanian Dairy Products started operation of a powdered-milk processing facility at Smithton. The project will employ another 50 people and process up to 480,000 litres of milk each day.
The export opportunities for dairy related products are opening up before our very eyes. The Asian market in particular, as alluded to by the member for Hume, wants our stuff. I cannot put it any more bluntly than that: they want our stuff. Those in the growing middle class of Asia are seeking quality products, especially for their children. They want the best for their children.

Markets will continue to open up as a result of the very good work being done by Minister Andrew Robb in the area of trade, with exciting developments on free trade agreements with Korea and the work being done with Japan. Those two markets alone will open up many opportunities for us.

As I try to wrap up in time, I will say that there are some challenges facing the dairy industry. Like every farming region, Tasmanian dairy farmers face a host of difficulties: red tape, regulation, the questionable market practices of large supermarkets, fluctuating milk prices and poor weather. But perhaps the biggest issue facing dairy farmers in Tasmania is demand—meeting the demand, not the lack of it.

Let us talk about the carbon tax. Analysis undertaken—and I will not take exception to the member for Calare, but I am not sure that he had the most recent data as he alluded to this topic—would indicate to me that the impact of the carbon tax on the average dairy farm is approaching approximately $20,000 per average farm. That is right: $20,000.

The carbon tax leaves its toxic footprint everywhere. It finds its way into the cost of transport and the cost of energy and water. It finds its way into the cost of machinery and asset repairs, and even finds its way into the cost of fertiliser. A 2011 ABARES report of research into the impact of the carbon tax on agriculture highlights that:

... dairy farms are expected to be more affected by the carbon price than any other sector considered. Unlike most businesses, dairy farmers cannot simply pass on the carbon tax impost. As you would all be aware, they are price takers and are mostly at the mercy of multinationals. Farmers generally work their butts off. They toil in inclement weather, they wake every morning to uncertain economic factors and the price of the dollar, and they risk much year on year.

As this industry grows, there is a need for more flexible working arrangements on dairy farms, and in agriculture in general, given the vagaries of the agriculture sector. It is imperative that we all understand the cost implications of labour. Workforce shortages are very much real, and—unbelievably, given the data released yesterday, as I said, about youth unemployment—dairy farms are still struggling to attract and keep workers. Unbelievable!

At this point I need to put paid to the idea that the basic skills of literacy and numeracy do not matter in a job on a dairy farm, because they do matter. We have a great deal of work still to do on this front—making sure that our young people in particular are job ready. So it was pleasing to have the Assistant Minister for Education, Sussan Ley, with me in my electorate last Friday discussing this very challenge.

There are good jobs to be had and working on a dairy farm is more than placing cups on cows and sloshing around, dare I say it, in cow shit. It is also about animal husbandry and developing a business. Farming is not just farming—it is in most cases a small business and far too often this fact is forgotten by too many. In Braddon most dairy farms are multimillion-dollar revenue businesses.
I do not want to give the impression that increased dairy production is the economic panacea for the electorate of Braddon—it is not. But it does represent one significant piece of the ‘repair jigsaw’ and the benefits to jobs, growth, farm sustainability and profitability, state GDP and flow-on dollars to small businesses in my regional communities who desperately need it should not for one minute be underestimated. I thank the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent):** Member for Braddon, just for clarification, did I hear you say cow manure before?

**Mr Whiteley:** I think that is correct.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Braddon for his erudite explanation. I call the honourable member for Blair.

**Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (19:23):** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. You can be assured that I will not be numbering the cows in the electorate of Blair! I do speak in support of the amendment to the legislation and I speak in support of the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014. I thank the member for Hunter, the shadow minister, for his amendment, which I think is important in terms of the failure of the government to act in the sector, particularly with the effects of the drought on the dairy and other agricultural sectors in the farming industry. I also support his reference to the omission of resource sustainability in the government's agricultural white paper.

Briefly, the legislation is supported by the industry. It enables the dairy industry to continue to fulfil its obligations, as many people have talked about, in terms of animal health and in relation to its membership of Animal Health Australia. There are increases to the maximum rates, known as the caps, of the Australian Animal Health Council levies on dairy produce in relation to milk and protein. I will not go through the details. It will not increase the operative rate paid by industry members and does not significantly add to any financial burdens on dairy farmers. The industry and its peak bodies support it. I do note with some irony that it is an area of regulation that those opposite support, having heard many speeches from them in relation to regulation over the years. We agree with them in relation to this form of regulation. It does allow the industry and Australian Dairy Farmers Ltd to meet requirements in relation to being a signatory to the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement to meet its obligations in the event of an emergency in the sector. So I speak in support of the bill.

Travelling through Asia on numerous occasions, I have been in grocery stores, supermarkets and delicatessens and places like that in parts of Asia only to think that I was in Woolworths in the Brassall shopping centre directly opposite my electorate office, with so much yoghurt, so much cheese and butter as well as milk being on display, recognising brands that are produced here in Australia. Obviously it is an industry that adds considerably to our national wealth. ABARES have in fact underestimated the benefit in terms of export. They thought $2.5 billion this year but it is about $2.7 billion. So the dairy industry is tremendously important in terms of export. Some people say it is a two-speed or two-tier industry. States like Queensland and New South Wales have more domestic focus; other states have more of an export focus as well. This is an important industry and our projections into Asia are particularly important as the middle class continues to grow. Milk products which are safe are really crucial for the health of this country and many country towns are most dependent on the dairy industry.
In my electorate of Blair country towns like Esk and Toogoolawah, Lowood, Minden, even rural Ipswich, and country towns like Rosewood and Walloon are very much dependent historically on the dairy industry and farming. As I say, the levies are payable by the producer of the relevant dairy produce and collected by the Commonwealth for disbursement to Animal Health Australia.

This is an important industry for my home state of Queensland. I read recently that the Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation, on about 24 February, talked about a survey they conducted in relation to the industry, saying that almost nine in every 10 Queensland dairy farms lacked confidence in the future. Most of those have negative cash flow situations. They are concerned about farm gate milk prices, which will need to rise by about 12c before confidence can be renewed in the sector and fresh milk restored for Queensland consumers. That was a key finding. The survey was conducted around January. We have about 500 dairy farmers in Queensland. There was a time when that would have been a small part of the total even in my electorate of Blair.

I note the comments made by the Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation president, Brian Tessmann, who said that the survey confirmed the ongoing impacts of the confidence crisis hitting Queensland dairy farmers, who have been rocked by floods, cyclones, the milk price war and now severe drought. Those dairy farms in my electorate have very much been impacted by floods, as has the whole farming sector. I have in my electorate the Wivenhoe Dam and the Somerset Dam, the Brisbane River and the Bremer River, Lockyer Creek and other areas that are notorious in terms of flooding. So the farming industry has been particularly hard hit. Indeed, the Somerset region was even worse hit in the 2013 flood, which did not impact as adversely on Ipswich as the 2011 flood that really devastated Ipswich and Brisbane.

Eighty-seven per cent of those surveyed, according to the QDO, said they were uncertain about or not confident in the future, and 79 per cent were either uncertain about or not confident in their own dairying business. I have spoken to many dairy farmers over the years, and they have always said that this is an industry that they were born into. They work hard. Often their children perform a great deal of work before school and after school. Many of them would love to hand on their farms to their progeny, but in fact the truth is that many of them are concerned about their future.

I saw that firsthand during the 2013 federal election campaign when I attended, in my electorate, the forum that was held in Esk at the Somerset Civic Centre on 25 August 2013. The then Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the member for Hunter, was not able to be there, nor was the parliamentary secretary, but, as the local federal member and a parliamentary secretary in the former federal Labor government, I was asked to be there. I was pleased to be there to hear what dairy farmers had to say. There were a number of candidates. There was someone from the Greens and someone from Katter's Australian Party, and the now member for New England, now the Minister for Agriculture in the Abbott government, was there to speak. He and I were, of course, the people who spoke the most on that particular day.

I spoke to important farmers in the region as well as other locals. I caught up with John Cochrane, who is a Gympie rural industry figure and a very well-known figure in Queensland. He really impressed upon me the plight of the dairy farming industry as I sat down and ate
with him and talked to him about what was happening. He has been in the industry for such a long time and has been involved in the representative bodies, and he has a really good knowledge of the industry.

After hearing about the plight of the farmers, I am pleased that progress has been made on the voluntary code. Many in the industry want a mandatory code, but in fact this government had the same policy that Labor had with respect to a voluntary code, and I am glad that there has been progress in that area.

When we were in government, we made a big impact to try and assist farmers in this area. We know that there is competition in the domestic retail sector. We know that there have been low farm gate milk prices. There has been a fluctuating Australian dollar. There have been variable climate conditions, and we know also that climate change has an impact on this industry. In Queensland there has been work done by the National Farmers' Federation. In fact, they got me to launch a report, when the Lockyer Valley was in my electorate, in relation to climate change and the impact in Queensland. So we made a big impact to assist people in this sector.

We developed the Farm Finance package—short-term assistance in the form of concessional loans for productivity enhancement projects or debt reconstruction. We funded 17 additional full-time counsellors with the Rural Financial Counselling Service. We increased the non-primary-production income threshold for farm management deposits from $65,000 to $100,000 and allowed consolidation of existing FMDs. We established a national, consistent approach to farm debt mediation.

We also assisted the farming sector by pushing hard in relation to the voluntary code I referred to before. We assisted with initiatives such as 'Tactics for Tight Times'—workshops to help farmers to better understand their business position and cash flow options and to develop management plans to reduce operating costs and improve their incomes. That gave them the opportunity of one-on-one sessions to discuss those issues. There was also the Carbon Farming Initiative and other energy efficiency grants which we provided, such as $1 million to Dairy Australia to undertake farm energy assessments for a number of dairy farmers nationally.

There was lots to be done, but there is still more to be done. I noticed recently the comments that have been made by the National Farmers' Federation. The President of the National Farmers' Federation, Brent Finlay, said that basically the procrastination of the Abbott government across this space meant that there was some increased anxiety from farmers who were hoping for some support and help from the government.

We have been critical of the failure of the Abbott government in terms of their progress on drought policy in the six months they have been in office, and I think that is justified. Also, I cannot believe they scrapped the Standing Council on Primary Industries. I think that was a very bad mistake. We know that the money that was provided in debt relief and other assistance to New South Wales has all been taken up. We saw the New South Wales regional assistance authority receive 138 applications, administering $30 million in debt relief for eligible farmers.

I think this government should really restore the $40 million it withheld from the farm finance low-interest loans scheme. I think that was a very bad move by this government upon
coming to office. It sent a very bad signal to the industry as well. I think the government should restore that. There should be a quick response to the growing drought emergency. So far we have seen photo opportunities. It has been across the national media, but not enough is being done. The government could take steps by further lowering the 4.5 per cent interest rate and adjusting the guidelines to improve access for those farmers as well.

As I said, I think this government should never have abolished the COAG Standing Council on Primary Industries, which dealt with drought reform, because that was the place where you went to the table with people from all of the sector. It meant that people in New South Wales and Queensland and federally could get together and talk about the issues at a peak level and response could take place. It meant that people had to be engaged and thinking about what needed to be done.

So there are things that the government could do. It is time to end the photo opportunities opposite. It is time to take steps to provide the help that this sector needs.

In closing, I just want to mention a couple of things pertinent to my electorate. I think it is really sad that National Foods closed the butter factory which had been operational in my electorate since 18 May 1901. They closed it about three years ago. My father worked in the butter factory there. It was at Booval, in Jacaranda Street. Jacaranda iced coffee was pretty legendary, to be honest with you. In 1962 the factory produced 9.5 million pounds of butter and three million gallons of milk and provided 10,000 bottles of milk to 82 schools in and around Ipswich. It was an important part of Ipswich. Actually, Jacaranda iced coffee had a cult following on Facebook and even has its own Facebook page.

I also want to mention what we have done in terms of regional development in Australia. We put in half a million dollars to resuscitate the old condensery which Nestle used to have and which employed a couple of hundred people. They closed that factory in 1929 and many families left the district. At its height, Toogoolawah had about 3,000 people up in the top part of the Somerset region. That half a million dollars is being leveraged with $1 million from the Somerset Regional Council to create the new Toogoolawah Cultural Precinct, and around 47 people will use that cultural precinct every day. I have spoken with people from the McConnel family, who were the first owners of the milk factory, and I have also spoken to the council and many people in that region. They are looking forward to the project being completed later this year. It goes to show that it is a Labor government that invests in regional Australia. It has always been a Labor government which has been a friend to the farmers, and it has always been a National Party government in Queensland that has let down the farmers.

**Dr HENDY (Eden-Monaro) (19:38):** I rise in support of the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014. I have an interest in the dairy industry not simply because of the importance of the industry to my electorate but because there have been dairy farmers in my ancestry. My mother's family, the Hardy family, were the first of my ancestors to come to Australia, in the 1850s. They came to try their luck on the Victorian goldfields; unfortunately they did not find any gold. They ended up moving to coastal New South Wales and some of them became dairy farmers in the Manly area of Sydney. The second unfortunate thing in my family is that they did not retain their properties. It would have been very nice to own a few acres today in Manly.

As the minister said in his second reading speech, the bill will amend the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Act 1999 to enable the dairy industry to continue to meet its
obligations in relation to its Animal Health Australia annual membership, and other animal health and welfare initiatives. The bill is important to ensure that Australian dairy farmers are able to be partners in the biosecurity system and maintain the health of Australia's dairy herd.

The amendments primarily increase the maximum rates or caps of the Australian Animal Health Council levies on dairy produce from 0.058 to 0.145 of a cent per kilogram of milk fat and from 0.13850 to 0.34625 of a cent per kilogram of protein. I note that the current operative levies are equivalent to the current cap rates. As the minister noted, the levy system enables industries to remain highly competitive in world markets. The Australian Animal Health Council levy on dairy produce under the act was introduced to provide funding for animal health programs carried out by Animal Health Australia. The funding also provides for the dairy industry's annual membership rates to Animal Health Australia. For the dairy industry, the levy is payable by producers who deliver or supply dairy produce for the manufacturing of dairy produce, such as whole milk or whole milk products. The amount paid by producers is based on the milk fat and protein content.

Australian Dairy Farmers Ltd, the national representative body for the dairy industry, has requested the amendments. The levies are payable by the producer of the relevant dairy products and are collected by the Commonwealth for disbursement to Animal Health Australia, for research and development. While the proposed maximum rate increase is significant, the bill will not increase the actual levy paid by industry members. It should be noted that any increase to the operative rate requires a case to be put by the industry to government, demonstrating widespread industry consultation and strong support as set out in the Australian government's levy principles and guidelines.

Stepping back to look at the wider scene, I note that in the 2012-13 financial year the Australian dairy industry produced 9.2 billion litres of milk for domestic use. The dairy industry overall represents a $13 billion farm, manufacturing and export industry, with export earnings in 2012-13 of $2.76 billion. The recent bid by the Canadian company Saputo to purchase Warrnambool Cheese and Butter shows the confidence foreigners have in the Australian dairy industry.

Eden-Monaro has a long history of dairy farming. The member for Braddon and other members have made big claims about their dairy industries. However, my electorate is no slouch when it comes to dairy products. In particular, the areas of Bega, Bodalla, Moruya and Narooma have survived and flourished on the back of dairy farming. Dairy farming in the Bega Valley dates back to the mid-19th century, around 1840, and it became the region's dominant industry during the 1860s, overtaking cattle farming. Today, 12.9 per cent of those employed in Bega work in dairy product manufacturing, primarily the famous Bega Cheese Factory. This is up from 9.5 per cent in 2006 and is by far the largest sector of employment in Bega. In terms of the Bega Valley as a whole, dairy manufacturing has the second highest level of employment, second only to education.

Dairy farmers are attracted to the Bega Valley due to the quality of the grass and the consistency of the rainfall. Today there are many dairy farms in Eden-Monaro which produce quality butter, cheese, yoghurt and milk products. Bega Cheese is perhaps the best-known dairy production company in Eden-Monaro. In fact it may also be the most famous company to have its roots and main operations in Eden-Monaro. The origins of Bega Cheese can be traced back to the 1890s when the Bega Co-operative Creamery Company began producing
butter. Bega Cheese's products are stocked in most supermarkets around Australia. These products see Bega Cheese occupy 16.9 per cent of the market share for cheese in Australia. The company continues to be profitable, expecting an after-tax profit of $44 million, according to its full-year accounts. On announcing this, the company said, 'Bega Cheese has a very strong balance sheet and is well positioned to participate in the ongoing opportunities in the Australian dairy industry.' Currently, Bega Cheese employs around 700 people in the Bega Valley and is the largest employer in Bega. It produces over 50,000 tonnes of cheese every year and is exported to over 50 countries. The size of Bega Cheese allowed it to be listed as a publicly traded stock on the ASX in August 2011. In October 2013 it was named New South Wales regional exporter of the year.

However, it is not just Bega Cheese which produces high-quality dairy products. Bodalla Dairy is another great establishment in Eden-Monaro. Bodalla Dairy's roots go back to the 1860s when Thomas Sutcliffe Mort brought dairy cows to Bodalla. The company today makes boutique cheeses, which can be purchased online; cheese accompaniments; a variety of yoghurts; and supplies milk to the local community. All the milk comes from two herds of Friesian cows and one herd of Jersey cows that graze nearby. The company also runs cheese-making courses, which make a perfect weekend getaway. The company is expanding and last year it began to stock its milk in IGA stores throughout the Eurobodalla shire.

The Bodalla Dairy Shed is important for tourism in the region, with tourists coming to sample the fine cheeses and milkshakes. Last year, the Bodalla Dairy Shed was a finalist in the 2013 South Coast Regional Tourism Awards for tourism excellence in two categories: tourist attractions and tourist cafes.

Located at Central Tilba, the ABC Cheese Factory is another milk producer on the New South Wales South Coast, founded only a couple of years ago by Erica and Nic Dibden, a married couple who have been dairy farmers for over 15 years. The couple used to supply high volumes of quality milk to the Bega Cheese Factory for use in their produce. The company ethos is to heighten awareness of the hard work that dairy farmers do and to educate the community of the benefits of good-quality produce which comes straight from the source.

The company is now best known for producing Tilba Real Milk, which is a popular milk of the New South Wales South Coast, in particular Pambula and Merimbula. Erica and Nic took a huge risk in starting up a milk production company but have been extremely successful. Through hard work and dedication, they have established a successful business which now has a strong and loyal following. Beginning in April 2012, the company was selling 1,000 litres of milk a week by December 2012 and is now selling a massive 25,000 litres a week. Such is the growth of the company that the Tilba Real market now retails in Canberra and is a very popular product at the Canberra Farmers Market. The company now employs around 15 people. Altogether, that is a great record in Eden-Monaro.

I want to note that the government is very serious about strengthening Australia's agriculture. We have a large repair job to do after the last government's massive hit on the agriculture sector. I can start with the live cattle export to Indonesia fiasco. It severely hurt the beef industry as well as being a serious blow to our international relations with Indonesia. In addition, members will know that a large part of the agricultural sector is small businesses. In my electorate of Eden-Monaro, small businesses are the lifeblood of rural communities. Across the nation, some 21,000 additional regulations were created over the last six years,
stagnating small business employment levels, resulting in 3,000 fewer small businesses which employ people. The overall result for small business has been staggering. Under Labor, 412,000 jobs were lost in small business. In fact, the small business share of the private sector workforce went from 53 per cent to 43 per cent.

As the member for Braddon recently told the House in a speech, the carbon tax on average has hit dairy farms to the tune of $20,000 each. For the sake of the dairy industry, the carbon tax must go.

Only the coalition has a plan to create jobs, by getting the budget in order, taxes down, regulation down and productivity up. Recently we released the *Agricultural competitiveness issues paper*. It is part of a process that will lead to the production of a white paper setting out policy reform in agriculture by the end of the year. It will examine issues around food security and the means of improving market returns at the farm gate, including through better drought management. Of course, we have seen drought conditions in the northern regions of our state of New South Wales and in Queensland, and it has been very dry across Eden-Monaro. At least we have been getting some welcome rains in Eden-Monaro over the last two weeks.

The white paper terms of reference also include the government's commitment to review whether the current guidelines relating to drought are adequate. But, of course, the government is also fast-tracking consideration of drought issues and it is my understanding that the Minister for Agriculture will be taking some recommendations to cabinet in the near future. The white paper will also look at access to finance, farm debt levels and debt sustainability. It will look at the agricultural value chain and recommend changes to skills training, R&D and critical infrastructure.

The white paper will be developed in three phases: first, an issues paper that has already been released; second, a green paper to be released in the first half of 2014 or mid-2014; third, a white paper to be released towards the end of 2014. Stakeholders and the broader community will have opportunities to contribute to the development of the white paper, including through formal submissions in response to the issues paper and the green paper.

We are keen to get information from both industry leaders and at the grassroots level. A task force has been established in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to develop the white paper. The task force will meet with stakeholders during the white paper development process to ensure that a broad range of views are considered. Meetings will take place in regional areas as well as in capital cities. I have asked the Minister for Agriculture to consider holding one of the formal forums in Eden Monaro. Failing getting that forum, I nonetheless have secured an agreement from the minister to visit the electorate at the end of March to talk to relevant stakeholders, with concentration on a roundtable that includes all the local shire mayors. Submissions received on the issues paper will be used to develop the green paper and, subsequently, the white paper. Submissions received on the green paper will be used to develop the white paper. That is the bigger picture. Dairy will be a focus of the review as one of our significant agricultural commodities.

In conclusion, I am happy to support the bill and believe, as I said earlier, that it helps maintain the health of Australia's dairy herd.

**Mr GRAY (Brand) (19:51):** I rise to speak in favour of both the amendment and the bill, the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014. I also rise to
say thank you to the dairy farmers of Western Australia, the farmers in Hervey, the Margaret River, Denmark and Northcliffe through the south-west of Western Australia—farmers who work hard in difficult circumstances both on the land and in the marketplace. In many cases, these are families who for generations have worked for a living in a tough and difficult environment.

The dairy farming industry in Western Australia is relatively small. We produce less than four per cent of the national dairy product of our country—less than 340 million litres per year. We are a small producer and a relatively small market. According to Dairy Australia, Western Australia, with its nearly 340 million litres of milk in 2012-13, is not simply the smallest state producer but also a state where production has been declining over the last decade—from around 400 million litres a decade ago to nearly 340 million litres in the last financial year.

Western Australia has no real infrastructure for the large-scale export of powders to Asia and its primary product is drinking milk for our domestic market. About 20 per cent of Western Australia's milk is exported. We have a number of large producers within our small dairy economy. Harvey Fresh is the biggest dairy exporter in Western Australia, with about 20 to 30 per cent of its 120 million litres shipped to Asia via the port of Fremantle. A large proportion of Harvey's milk supplies under its private label contract gets sold through Coles and then again through Woolworths.

We are a small dairy producer. But, having said that, the dairy industry is an important part of the agricultural sector in Western Australia. That is why this bill is important. The Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014 will amend the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Act 1999 to enable the dairy industry to continue to meet its obligations in relation to animal health and welfare and its membership of Animal Health Australia. The amendments increase the maximum rates—that is, the caps—of the Australian Animal Health Council levies on dairy products from 0.058 to 0.145 of a cent per kilogram of milk fat and from 0.1385 to 0.34625 of a cent per kilogram of protein. The current operative levies are equivalent to the current cap rates.

The bill will not increase the operative rate paid by industry members—and this is important. It does not impose a financial burden on dairy farmers—and that is important. Any increase to the operative rate requires a case to be put forward by industry, demonstrating widespread industry consultation and strong industry support. The bill will allow Australian Dairy Farmers Limited to meet its requirements as a signatory to the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement and meet any obligations in the event of an emergency response, including any costs that it may incur.

The farming sector of Western Australia is an important part of our economy. The past year has been a good year in general for broadacre cropping in Western Australia. We see a crop this year that will top 14 million tonnes—close to a record—and we will see, once again, the wheat bins of Western Australia producing the bulk of our export wheat crop. That is what we do in Western Australia: we export. We help drive the wealth of our nation through exports, not just of minerals—which everyone hears about—but, importantly, also through exports of our primary products.

I would like to note the visit to Western Australia just two weeks ago by shadow minister Joel Fitzgibbon. The shadow minister met with farming industry representatives and sought to
inform himself, as the shadow minister, of the shape that our industry is in. When he had finished that visit he concluded that, in general, our broadacre cropping sets, as we know, some of the world's highest standards for dry country farming. The visit also allowed the shadow minister to see the terrific work done by CBH and our export oriented farming infrastructure and families.

It allowed him to reaffirm Labor's commitment to Western Australia farmers and allowed him to reaffirm Labor's commitment to farming activities. This is important for my electorate. Although my electorate does not produce any dairying herds or any milk, we do a lot of live animal exports. We do a lot of cattle exports but, in particular, out of my electorate, we do a lot of live sheep exports. That is important for the rural economy of Western Australia and important for jobs in my electorate. I hope that in coming months we will see a further live animal export market open—hopefully, in Iran. I know a lot of work has been done by the Western Australia Farmers Federation.

A government member: Hear, hear!

Mr GRAY: I hear the member opposite cheering in favour of the proposition of opening that market in Iran. It is important. It is one that successive governments have worked hard to achieve. It is one that is good for best practices in live animal exports and, importantly, it is a market that will add even more vigour to the Western Australian farming sector and animal production in Western Australia.

The history of grain growing in Western Australia is quite extraordinary. In many ways, the settlement pattern of Western Australia followed the attempts to open Western Australia up to farming. From the days in the 1840s of farmers literally dying in famine through to a state that now hosts Australia's export grain crop has been a tough journey. It is a journey that has been led by science and innovation. It is a journey that defines the very settlement pattern and the nature of Western Australia. Let me explain the science. Western Australian soils are ancient and dry and, as a consequence, they are also weak soils. So it really was not until science identified the lack of trace elements, and then discovered that could be rectified by a relatively simple application of trace elements, that we were able, in the early part of the last century, to begin opening the grain belt of Western Australia.

My family on my wife's side settled at Doodlakine in the 1930s and opened a small farm, which still operates. And, as my father-in-law, former senator Peter Walsh, is fond of saying, the grain belt in Western Australia is so reliable that only in one year since 1934 have they not covered the costs of their crop. That is not to say the work is easy; it is not; it is tough. But the application of the internal combustion engine, which grew at almost the same time as the growth in the Western Australian grain belt, allowed heavy mechanisation, heavy capital application to a science based agricultural initiative that produced great wealth from the broadacre cropping in Western Australia.

Following those initiatives, we had a terrific piece of innovative work done by an academic from the University of Western Australia, the member for Perth's father-in-law, Henry Schapper. The work that Henry did on farm management, the work that Mr Schapper did in driving good business practices on farms, allowed the development of a farming culture in Western Australia which became, and still is, in many ways the envy of our nation.
At the same time that it grew terrific wheat crops, our wheat belt also made a fantastic contribution to the politics of our nation, not only producing the outstanding work of John Hyde—one of the more remarkable free market economists to enter this parliament—but also Peter Walsh and, in later years, Brendan Grylls, whose association with the farming industries out of Merredin. Also, I should say, that the current Finance Minister, Mathias Cormann, also hails from the great and productive Western Australian wheat belt—or rather his wife does.

Dairy farmers, wheat farmers, pig farmers—farmers of Western Australia—work hard to produce a livelihood for themselves and to produce a bounty from the land which sees us develop sustainable industries that nurture one of our great natural strengths.

We know in this place that Australia's farmers follow world's best practice. We know that in some areas where dairy is much stronger than in Western Australia—in Tasmania for instance—not only does dairy itself drive its own businesses but the ancillary businesses, through other food production, are big employers and substantial wealth generators.

The dairy industry will be greatly pleased with the passage of this bill. The dairy industry will be greatly pleased with the attention they have received from this parliament. And the dairy industry around our nation will be made better for the thoughtful contribution that our parliament has made by supporting this bill.

I began by saying that I thank the dairy farmers of Western Australia for the work that they do. In fact, I thank all farmers. The life of a farmer is not an easy one. Every single one of my family members are farmers, principally broadacre croppers in the wheat belt of Western Australia. It is a life that they enjoy and it is a life that has provided their families with a great sense of purpose. It provides my family with a great sense of being Western Australian and a great sense of connection to the soil, to the dirt and to the great agricultural provinces of Western Australia.

It was with great enjoyment on the weekend just passed that my wife and I spent both Saturday and Sunday in the grape growing districts in the southern part of Western Australia near Northcliffe and Pemberton, where my son, in pursuit of his next scouting badge, had to complete an agricultural task. He did that by measuring the sugar levels in the current wine crop of my sister and brother-in-law. He proudly pronounced that the sugar levels in this year's crop were exactly what is required. So the harvest of that grape crop will occur on Tuesday night.

The farming sector of Western Australia has so many skills, so much to give and so much that it does give, to our nation and to our state. To simply say 'thank you' seems wholly inadequate. We are indebted to it for the life, the definition; and the great wealth it brings to our state is simply an understatement.

As I close I say again to every single farmer in Western Australia: thank you for what you do. Thank you for doing it every hour of every day of every week of the year. I wish all the farmers of Western Australia all the best for the coming season.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (20:05): Could I associate myself with those concluding remarks from the member for Brand. I also commend the member for Eden-Monaro for his speech, which was a bit of a tour de force of the dairy industries in his electorate which I found most interesting.
We have before us today a bill and I am glad to see that the bill is supported by both sides. Unfortunately, we have an amendment to the motion for the second reading, which has been moved by the shadow minister for agriculture. I will come to that, because I do not think this bill needs cheap political point scoring associated with it. It is a serious bill and a bill which both sides know is noncontroversial.

This is a very good opportunity for people to come into this chamber and talk about the importance of agriculture to their community and how it provides much-needed employment, not only for people in regional and rural Australia but also for people in urban Australia. The member for Brand gave us a very good speech on where Western Australia fits in that regard. We have already heard from one of the members from New South Wales. My good friend from Tasmania will follow me, and I am sure he will give us a very good speech on the wonderful dairy industry in that wonderful state. Remember that, when the GFC hit, for instance, the sector which kept us out of recession was the agriculture sector, and the sector which still provides this country with much-needed export dollars is the agricultural sector. It is good that we can come in here and point this out and, on both sides of the chamber, use this opportunity to talk about agriculture.

What is the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014 about? I will go over the context of the bill. The bill increases the maximum permitted rates of the Australian Animal Health Council levies on dairy produce from 0.058 to 0.145 of a cent per kilogram of milk fat and from 0.13850 to 0.34625 of a cent per kilogram of milk protein. Australian dairy farmers required the increases in the maximum rates in the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Act to enable it to continue, for the next decade, to meet its obligations, as a partner with government and other live stock industries, under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement. It is very important to note that the bill will not increase the actual levy payable by industry members and will not impose a financial burden on dairy farmers. I think everyone in this place welcomes that.

The Australian dairy industry is vital for the nation. The dairy industry of south-west Victoria is vital for my electorate of Wannon. It is the largest dairy producing area in the country. As a result, we also have dairy processors in my seat. We have Fonterra and Murray Goulburn. We have Warrnambool Cheese & Butter, which, as we all know, has recently been taken over by Canadian company Saputo. Lion also has processing interests in my electorate. The industry provides much-needed jobs and much-needed incomes. It also supports dairy farmers in my electorate. Dairy farmers work hard, provide local employment and contribute to the community in a significant way. They not only help our local community and help jobs locally but they also provide much-needed export income.

The dairy industry in my electorate this time last year was in a great deal of pain. We had had, in what is usually a reliable rainfall area, one of the driest nine months that we had ever seen. Prices were low, the cost of fodder and grain to feed the dairy herds was high, cash reserves were run down and debts on farm began to increase. Fortunately, the best thing that could happen to farmers, in particular dairy farmers, happened in my region towards the middle and end of last year—we got substantial rainfall. In some cases, farmers were able to cut hay, silage and more silage. They put that away, which means that they have it there in reserve. For those uninitiated to dairying, grass is the best thing that you can provide a dairy cow to make sure you get very good milk, and Australia produces the best milk.
Not only did we get good rainfall, which led to good grass growth, meaning that farmers could restock their fodder, but we also saw, through the battle for Warrnambool Cheese & Butter, people begin to understand the importance of this sector and what it can provide to this nation. An overseas company, Saputo, and two local companies, Bega and Murray Goulburn, bid for Warrnambool Cheese & Butter, and the share price more than doubled. It gave great confidence to the industry to know that people saw it as worthwhile and valuable. In the end of that process, Saputo won. There are a couple of lessons that we need to learn arising from that process, but Saputo won in the end because it was able to convince the shareholders and the board of Warrnambool Cheese & Butter that it was the best option.

Murray Goulburn were also very keen to purchase the asset but they had to go through the Australian Competition Tribunal to be able to put a wholehearted bid on the table. Unfortunately, that process can take some time. Something that we need to relook at as part of our review of competition policy is whether we can speed up the process that occurs when something is taken to the Australian Competition Tribunal. I will say, though, that the rules and regulations, the hoops that all companies would need to go through as part of the battle for Warrnambool Cheese & Butter, were quite clear from the outset, when the process started.

It was very pleasing to welcome the Deputy Prime Minister down to my electorate of Wannon last Friday to speak at the Sungold Field Days, the largest dairy field days in this nation. Sungold is one of the products which is produced by Warrnambool Cheese & Butter. The Deputy Prime Minister gave a very insightful speech about where he saw the future of agriculture and the Australian dairy industry over the next few years. One of the more interesting things that he said was about our need as a nation to understand the importance of our agricultural assets and to encourage Australian investors—whether they be superannuants, whether they be private investors—to realise how important our agricultural assets are to us and the potential returns they can give us over the years to come. I would like to place on the record my thanks to the Deputy Prime Minister for coming down and speaking at the luncheon of that important field day.

I would like to turn now to the pious amendment put forward by those opposite. It reads:

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

(1) failure of the Government to act urgently in response to the effect of the drought on the dairy and other agricultural sectors; and

(2) omission of ‘resource sustainability’ in the terms of reference for the Government’s agriculture white paper."

I will just address drought for a minute. The government was left with a non-existent drought policy by those opposite, so we have had to systematically, methodically and carefully put together a package, and that is what we have done. That is under active consideration as we speak, and I am sure that we will hear in the very near future about what the government is going to do in this area. But for those opposite to engage in cheap political points scoring on this matter is contemptible. They left us with no money, so we have had to do the best we can to come up with a policy. I have full confidence, following the Prime Minister's tour of drought affected areas, that that is exactly what the government is going to do.

It is also remiss of those opposite to talk about terms of reference being left out of the agriculture white paper. The agriculture white paper process—and the member for Eden-Monaro set it out in detail—is once again going to be a very systematic, very considered
approach to what we need to guarantee the future of this great industry for our nation. It is going to focus on the key area—because without this nothing else follows—and that is: how do we ensure that the sector remains profitable? If you cannot have the profitability, you can forget about the sustainability and all the other issues which flow on from that. Profitability is what we need to drive into the sector.

If those opposite are serious about making this white paper process a proper one, the first thing they can do is take away the most serious burden on the industry at the moment, and that is the carbon tax. They should go and talk to Murray Goulburn about the carbon tax bill that they have to pay. They should go and talk to individual dairy farmers, who are currently going to have to pay $7,000 to $10,000—or $15,000 when they are big operations—per annum for the carbon tax. That is before we see the impact on fuel added come 1 July. So rather than putting forward this pious amendment, why don't the opposition look at the imposts on the sector at the moment? There is one impost which they could fix immediately by getting rid of the carbon tax. Do not come in with these cheap political pointscoring exercises. Do your research, do your homework and look at what is in the long-term interests of the sector. If you do that, you will start to realise that we must fix regulation, we must fix the taxation system—in particular, the carbon taxation system—and we must ensure that there is that much-needed flexibility in the workplace. A sector like the dairy industry needs that, because obviously during milking times—mornings and afternoons—there is a greater need for labour than there is in the rest of the day.

I commend this bill to the House and I welcome the fact that both sides are in favour of the substance of the bill.

**Mr HOGAN (Page)** (20:21): Coming from a regional electorate like Page where we have a strong dairy industry, it concerns me when I hear the two words 'levy' and 'increase'. However, the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014 is not about raising the industry levy our dairy farmers' pay. In fact, it will not necessarily cost the farmers or the industry one cent. This is about establishing a free insurance policy that will give our farmers the flexibility they need to quickly respond to a health crisis in their industry. This bill leaves it up to the farmers to vote to increase the levy to a new maximum rate in the event of a disease outbreak. Australian Dairy Farmers Limited asked for this piece of legislation to increase the maximum cap. This will allow it to continue to meet its obligations to Animal Health Australia and to other animal health and welfare initiatives.

The Australian Animal Health Council, which was set up in 1996, manages more than 50 national collaborative projects that improve animal and associated human health, biosecurity, market access, livestock welfare, productivity and food safety and quality. Part of the Animal Health Council's mission is to 'build capacity to enhance emergency animal disease preparedness'. The bill increases the maximum permitted rates the Australian Animal Health Council can levy on dairy produce from 0.058 cents per kilogram of milk fat to 0.145 cents, and for protein milk from 0.138 cents to 0.346 cents. What it does not do is increase the actual levy payable by industry members or impose a financial burden on our dairy farmers. This is because any actual increase to the levy must first be put forward by the dairy industry, demonstrating widespread consultation and support, in accordance with the Australian government's Levy Principles and Guidelines.
We know from bitter experience that, if we are slow off the mark following a health outbreak, there can be serious consequences. We need look no further than the outbreak of mad cow disease in the UK and closer to home to the equine flu. These diseases caused serious financial and personal hardship for individual farmers and breeders, for the industry as a whole and for the national economy, which our then Treasurer Peter Costello noted.

Global competition in the dairy industry is intense. This bill removes a roadblock to allow farmers to respond effectively to an outbreak so they can protect the industry and its domestic and global market share. We all know that large parts of northern New South Wales and Queensland are in drought and this government, to its credit, is now working on an assistance package. The Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, and the Prime Minister, Mr Abbott, visited the drought affected areas a week or so ago to look at the type of assistance needed to support these industries. I want to put this in context: this should not necessarily be looked upon as an industry handout. If we were to look at the industry handouts that happen across the world in agriculture, we would see that Australia is at the bottom of the chart. Australian government assistance to farmers is barely measurable on a chart, whereas many other countries give very heavy support to their farmers. This will be assistance in the sense that it is a one-off because of the weather experienced recently.

The drought did not start yesterday or last week. It has already affected milk production, with output falling last year. We cannot make it rain but we can provide the right economic and regulatory conditions for the industry to adapt and prosper. That is what we are doing by introducing the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014, by announcing 19 March as the government's first repeal day to scrap thousands of suffocating pieces of regulations and by negotiating free trade agreements such as the one with South Korea. Many dairy farmers and many people in my electorate have told me that they felt the previous government's answer to anything was to provide more regulation and more rules. We know that that does not help any person trying to produce wealth or jobs in this country.

This bill should be seen as part of a package that provides the framework for the dairy industry. It will help farmers to withstand domestic shocks, like the outbreak of disease, and to protect and grow their industry's profitability and market share so it can continue to employ tens of thousands of workers in regional Australia.

Over the last few years, overseas investors have shown intense interest in many of Australia's dairy companies. While this has caused some consternation, it reflects a global recognition of the importance of Australian dairy and agriculture in meeting the dietary needs of a rapidly growing world population and, in particular, Australia's role in becoming the food bowl of a burgeoning Asia. We all know that, in Australia's infancy, our nation was said to ride on the sheep's back. Now, in what many are calling the Asian century, it is Australia's food industry that will increasingly feed the world.

After negotiating the free trade agreement with Korea, which the dairy industry hailed as 'a step forward' and 'providing a range of new opportunities', I cannot think of many things worse than farmers signing contracts with Australia's 10th largest dairy market only to find they cannot deliver due to the slow response to an outbreak. If we are to make the most of this Asian century, we must make sure that any disruption to the supply chain caused by a disease outbreak is minimised as much as possible.
The dairy industry is critically important to my community. Norco, our dairy co-operative, was founded in June 1895. Last year it purchased 152 million litres of milk from its 159 members, an increase of 3.3 million litres from the previous year. It directly employs 413 locals. I might say that they make, in my humble opinion, Australia's best ice-cream, in which I regularly indulge. Norco had a tough 12 months last financial year as it held up the farm-gate price for its members and restructured its business for the future. Conditions for the local dairy industry are starting to look a bit rosier, with indications the farm-gate price is rising and Norco signing a number of significant deals made possible by the restructure. One is to supply milk to Coles supermarkets private label in South-East Queensland, another is to produce that supermarket's branded ice-cream, which I happily report to parliament scooped 12 silver medals in this year's Sydney Royal Cheese and Dairy Produce Show.

A government member: They scooped it.

Mr HOGAN: They did scoop it. Norco is also now exporting ice-cream to Japan. Norco is currently looking with our help to export fresh milk into China and the last time I spoke to them, they had had two attempts. They are trying to sort out some initial problems, but this is potentially an exciting prospect for them. In the company's annual report, Norco's chairman Greg McNamara said that it was also looking for other export opportunities as:

The heightened international interest in food produced in Australia from Australian sourced ingredients should provide Norco with opportunities to enter into new business partnerships which are designed to enhance our export opportunities.

Of course, we know that Australia has a great, clean image in this field, as it has in many others.

Mr McNamara is talking about Australia's competitive advantage. Business studies 101 states that in a globalised world, countries and businesses will reap the rewards if they exploit their competitive advantage, and it is our role as the government to ensure this industry can do just that. We have a part to play in ensuring the industry can maintain an uninterrupted supply of quality milk and other value added produce like ice-cream, butter and yoghurt.

Norco, I am happy to report, takes quality assurance very seriously. It places a high priority on assurance programs and certifications within each of its three processing facilities. This bill will allow Norco to quickly join the rest of the industry in responding to an outbreak so it can maintain its quality domestic and export dairy produce without having to wait for the government to legislate for a levy rise to pay for the emergency response.

Nationally, dairying continues to be an important rural industry. It is Australia's third largest rural industry and a major regional employer not only on farms but also through processing, manufacturing and distribution of a range of high-quality products. I have some quick facts to put it in perspective. The Australian dairy industry is forecasting the production of about nine billion litres of milk this financial year. There are 6,770 dairy farms located across Australia. About 1.6 million dairy cows produce all of Australia's milk. About 50,000 people are directly employed on dairy farms and in manufacturing plants. In the six months to last December, the industry earned about $1.4 billion in exports. As we know, exports increase the real wealth into our country not only from the people it employs and the taxes they pay but also from real export dollars. Owner-operated farms dominate the Australian dairy industry.
In the International Year of Family Farming, it is refreshing to remember share farming was employed on 18 per cent of farms in 2012-13, while corporate farming made up just three per cent of the total. Although the bulk of milk production occurs in the south-east corner of the country, it really is a national industry with all states having their own dairy industries that supply fresh drinking milk to our regional communities and cities. The industry adds value to the processing of milk through the production of fresh lines such as yogurt, custard, ice-cream, butter, cream and a wide variety of cheese types. Longer shelf-life products such as bulk and specialised milk powders are also produced in high volumes.

This bill will protect this industry not through tariffs or subsidies, or by slugging farmers with higher costs and more regulatory burdens, but by allowing it to be nimble and flexible, and enabling it to respond to a potential emergency health situation in a more timely way than it currently can. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (20:34): I rise also to speak on the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014. The dairy industry is a very important industry not only in my electorate but also in the state of Tasmania. I note the contributions by the previous speakers. Like the member for Wannon, I also associate myself with the comments made more generally by the member for Brand about the importance of farmers. They were most appropriate. I note also the comments by the member for Page about the total Australian dairy production. Based on the figures he provided, it suggests that dairy production in Tasmanian is something akin to 10 per cent of the total national production. Given that Tasmania's land mass only makes up two per cent of the nation's total, it emphasises the importance of the industry to the state of Tasmania. It may also be relevant to know that about 12 per cent of the nation's rain falls on that two per cent. That is probably the link to the production of milk in our state.

In my largely rural electorate of Lyons, in Tasmania, nothing is more important than protecting our domestic livestock from the threats posed by exotic diseases. In fact, as an island continent Australia has a natural competitive advantage in regard to biosecurity. The island status of Tasmania also gives us a distinct advantage in many respects as far as biosecurity is concerned, though I acknowledge there are some disadvantages having a piece of water between us and Victoria. Anything that this government can do to help keep our state disease free will certainly be supported wholeheartedly by me.

This amendment bill seeks a redistribution effectively of the funds from the existing levy on dairy farmers so that the Australian Animal Health Council can secure a small increase in the existing levy. I note that it is supported by Australian Dairy Farmers, which recommended and asked for this increase to be introduced. The Australian Animal Health Council is a not-for-profit public company managing more than 50 national projects that improve animal and associated human health, biosecurity—the focus of this bill—market access, livestock welfare, productivity, food safety and food quality. The Australian government is a shareholder in the Australian Animal Health Council. This amendment bill does not increase the overall levies on dairy farmers, but it will enable the country's peak dairy industry body to lift the cap on rates with the existing levy money going into animal health.

In respect of biosecurity, Tasmanian farmers are already on the front foot. A new livestock biosecurity office has just been appointed to work out of the Tasmanian Farmers & Graziers Association office in Launceston to better educate farmers about the threat posed by exotic
diseases. Jess Coad was appointed with the help of existing dairy levy funds to help farmers become proactive in responding to the possibilities of diseases like foot-and-mouth and mad cow disease and their effects on all livestock industries. I note also the work done by the state department in the past few years in trials and responses to deal with such outbreaks were they to happen. The Tasmanian Farmers & Graziers Association CEO, Jan Davis, is a firm believer in prevention rather than cure and she supports this amendment bill, as it allows more money to go into biosecurity education. Those involved in this fast-growing Tasmanian industry agree with Jan Davis.

We need to be careful not to generalise about the state of the dairy industry in this country. I note comments by the member for Calare in respect of competition and the challenges faced by many farmers, particularly fresh milk suppliers. I note also examples given by the member for Hume in relation to an example of an industry at its height, as is the case in New Zealand. The New Zealand industry is a shining light in dairy production, but the Tasmanian dairy industry is performing well. In fact, return on capital and return on capital including capital depreciation in Tasmania are much higher than the national averages. Importantly, the cost of production in Tasmania was recently measured at about three cents per litre below the national average. This is largely due to innovation in investment made by farmers and downstream processors in Tasmania. Also, Tasmania has a natural competitive advantage in producing high-quality, high-protein feed owing to its high rainfall.

We are also experiencing an expansion of irrigation, most recently on the north-west coast in the Dial Blythe scheme in the electorate of my colleague the member for Braddon. In this electorate there was also a welcome development on the historic Woolnorth property, which will increase Tasmanian dairy production with an additional 14,000 cows. This is part of what is required to fill the stainless steel equipment that already exists in Tasmania. Tasmania faces the challenge of filling stainless steel equipment already invested in by local and international investors and we need approximately 70,000 dairy cows to fill that existing capacity—what a wonderful problem to have. This year's Tasmanian Dairy Conference in Burnie will be held on 26 March. Convenors are aware of the need for vigilance in the industry regarding biosecurity and the prevention of exotic diseases. Biosecurity is one of the nine topics up for discussion.

I note also the tragic figures announced this week for youth unemployment. Tasmania is at the bottom of the pile on youth unemployment: one in five Tasmanians aged between 15 and 24 is unemployed. It is a crisis of confidence as a result of 14 years of Labor-Greens state governments, and the next election, on 15 March, cannot come soon enough. The south-east corner of my electorate has the fourth worst figure in Australia, which to me is unacceptable. The dairy industry offers one of the very few opportunities for employment now and in the future to young people with a range of skills.

There are very few industries or sectors in our country in which a young person can start as a labourer and within 10 years have an asset backing of more than $1 million. There are many examples of this on the north-west coast in the form of share-farming. It is a fantastic opportunity and I encourage young people, even those from non-agricultural backgrounds, to look at the opportunities within the dairy sector in Tasmania. This sector offers an opportunity to build a career in a range of different areas. The industry is the backbone of local...
communities. It is nothing for a dairy farmer to spend more than $1 million annually with suppliers in the local community, be they electricians or rural merchandise suppliers.

The key point that I would like to make about dairy is one that is true of the challenges that face agriculture in our country and more broadly. I digress, but I came out of the wool industry, having bought and sold wool and exported wool out of Australia for many years. Wool is an industry that has virtually no local processing capacity left in this country. But in the case of dairy, we do, and we are seeing investment in this country in an industry in which we have a natural competitive advantage.

All of Tasmania's milk is value added, with the small exception of local fresh milk production. There are cheese factories at Burnie—my colleague the member for Braddon went through a number of acknowledgements of awards that that particular business has received, and I will touch on that a little bit further; there is the Tasmanian Dairy Products milk powder factory at Smithton, which is producing dairy milk powder that is being exported all around the world, particularly focusing on the opportunities that are opening up in Asia, not least of all China; there is yoghurt production in Launceston; and there is chocolate production in Hobart.

I would also like to particularly mention two perhaps smaller but more diverse businesses that are within my electorate. One is the Pyengana Dairy Company. Just for the member for Braddon's reference, it has recently won not only the 2014 but also the 2013 Australian Grand Dairy Champion Award for cheddar cheese. The other is the Ashgrove family business located on the Bass Highway between Deloraine and Devonport. It is an example of an award-winning business that has diversified its traditional milk production business into one based around tourism and is now employing 80 people within the local area. It is a fantastic success story. The knock-on benefits of value adding, such as in the businesses I have described, are significant.

The Tasmanian dairy industry is small in so many respects. The mere 445 dairy farmers last year at farm gate accounted for 40 per cent of the total value of agriculture in my state. People like Grant Archer and people like Grant Rogers, albeit a New Zealander. We are working hard to make him an Australian, although he tells me he will never support the Wallabies! There is Paul Bennett, who comes from the Ashgrove business I mentioned before. These people are doing wonderful things to encourage the expansion of the dairy industry in our state that is needed to fill the processing capacity that exists already within the state.

The Tasmanian dairy industry's mission is to focus on the long term. That will be by maintaining a low on-farm cost of production. This is the natural competitive advantage that we have in Tasmania because of our rainfall, because of the investment that we are making in irrigation and also because of the climate that we have that can produce high-quality ryegrasses. The long term will be secured by the business management improvements that are being undertaken in maintaining and also developing strong supply chain relationships with those businesses that are investing in that part of the industry in Tasmania. It will also be secured by supporting efficient, innovative and responsive processing capacity. Having the processing capacity locally is such an important reason why the dairy industry in Tasmania is successful at the moment.
Confidence in such an important thing in so many industries. Get rid of the carbon tax and you will see this sector in my state expand even further. I commend the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014 because it will improve the health and wellbeing of the Tasmanian dairy herds and biosecurity within my state and also provide confidence within the dairy industry, which is so important to the state of Tasmania.

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (20:49): I would like to speak in support of the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the good work done by Australian Dairy Farmers Limited, the national representative body for the dairy industry. This bill proposes amendments to the act to increase the maximum rate of the Australian Animal Health Council levy on milk fat and milk protein. These amendments are clearly necessary for the industry to meet its obligations in relation to the important animal health and welfare initiatives that have to be agreed to for the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement, the EADRA. Importantly, this bill will not increase the actual levy payable by the industry and its members. It does not impose a financial burden on dairy farmers. Furthermore, it will have no financial impact on the Commonwealth. Any increase to the levy rate will require a case to be put forward by the dairy industry. The case must demonstrate widespread consultation and support in accordance with the Australian government's Levy Principles and Guidelines.

The levy has not been increased since 1999 and ADF have indicated that they have no current plans to increase it. However, the proposed increase in the levy cap will give the industry the flexibility it needs to invest in preparedness for foot-and-mouth disease and emergency disease response capability and surveillance. For the dairy industry this is a particular priority. FMD, foot-and-mouth disease, has been described as the single greatest threat of any disease to Australian livestock. A large outbreak of FMD has the potential to reduce Australia's gross domestic product by $10.3 billion to $16.7 billion, which would have a very significant effect on our economy.

We, the coalition government, are proud of the industry and have confidence in its future. We want to help the dairy industry, along with the agricultural sector generally, to grow and prosper and achieve our goal of helping Australia become a world leader in sustainable food production. Our focus is on securing market access, cutting red tape and ensuring that farmers can continue to get a fair price. The government is active in encouraging the development of productive farming systems and world-standard resource management practices.

In my electorate of Flynn and, indeed, in Queensland, the dairy industry is somewhat different from what our good members from Tasmania have been telling us about the industry there. While the demand in Queensland for milk products is increasing by seven per cent a year, our dairy farmer business is declining. The Port Curtis Co-operative Dairy Association is a co-op that I have lived with ever since I was born—my family had a dairy farm where I grew up. Unfortunately, in Queensland we have become price takers and we cannot justify the low price of around 55 cents a litre for milk. Some of my farmers three or four years ago were getting 60 cents a litre and we have found that the drop to 55c was unjustifiable.

The three main players in our industry in Queensland are the dairy farmers themselves, who have little or no say in their industry; the processors, who are generally overseas owned; and, of course, the big Coles and Woolworths stores, who sell the bulk of milk. I do believe that the future is in the overseas markets and that for Queensland, as a growing state, the
ability to give fresh milk to the population is a must. The industry itself is sometimes struggling. I have 29 farmers in my electorate who supply milk to Rockhampton PCD. The big danger is that if too many more dairy farmers drop out of business then we are afraid that the Rockhampton branch could close. If that happened it would be a tragedy, so we have to encourage our farmers to hang in. I think the future is in Korea and the other Asian markets, and I have to thank Andrew Robb for the good work he has done on tariffs and the free trade agreement with Korea. That can only help the farmers’ cause and it means so much.

In terms of the eastern states, including Tasmania, Queensland still plays a part but it is the minor player and I think our farmers are the worst off. I was at a meeting with the dairy farm group where they were talking about a world price. I said I had not heard of a world price. They said it is about 40 cents or 45 cents a litre. I think Victorian farmers are on something like that. I asked what the price was for Queensland milk. They said, 'You can easily work that out—it is world price plus freight from Victoria to Queensland.' That is the way they will work it out. So I went around and I asked a few dairy farmers how much the price of freight was from Victoria to Queensland, because that is what they are thinking in the long term if things get worse in Queensland, and I was told it was 18c. That would put milk in Queensland at about 58 cents a litre.

If we were able to get our dairy farmers up from 55c to 65c, that would ensure the viability of the dairy farms in my electorate. I hope that can be achieved one day. I do not think 10 cents a litre to our dairy farmers would hurt the consumer. Surely if we can work around our processors, Woolworths and Coles et cetera, I think that is very achievable. At the present rate of 55 cents a litre, it is not on.

To give you some facts and figures on Queensland, we produce about 500 million litres of high-quality fresh milk a year. The industry generates $240 million worth of milk products. It adds $2 billion to the Queensland economy. The dairy industry in Queensland is quite a large employer, with around 3,000 people having jobs in the dairy industry. Of course, the industry throughout Queensland, not just in Flynn, still faces massive challenges. The ongoing supermarket price war has forced the processors and the farmers into an unprofitable situation—I refer you back to the 55 cents a litre. The farmers have to put up with drought and increasing costs, and the wretched carbon tax is not helping their cause one little bit. Where you have dairy farms you have irrigation, crops of lucerne to grow and cattle to feed on a 24-hour basis, and when you start pumping water from one place to another it is very costly, with electricity bills going through the roof.

However, the coalition government is working in partnership with the industry to ensure a balance of market power for the dairy farmers in Queensland and throughout Australia. We are trying to cut red tape. We are trying to get rid of the excise fuel levy that is going to come in on 1 July. If we do not get rid of the 6½c diesel impost from the carbon tax then our dairy farmers, especially the 29 farmers I talked about in my electorate, will have their business go down the gurgler. They cannot pay that extra fuel price when they are already producing at below cost. It is a dire situation.

To get back to the measures in this bill, the dairy industry is the third largest rural industry in our economy, coming in just behind beef and wheat, so it is important to Australia. We have 6,770 farms with, on average, 240 cows per farm. Each cow produces about 5,926 litres a year or 16 litres a day. That is much bigger than it was before.
Debate interrupted.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The SPEAKER (21:00): I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

**Age Pension**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (21:00): Shortland electorate is one of the oldest electorates in Australia. It has over 19.8 per cent of people over the age of 65 years and an overwhelming majority of these people receive the age pension. Labor understands that pensioners need and deserve a decent income, one that allows them to buy food, visit the doctor, pay their electricity bills, their gas bills and their water bills. On this side of the parliament we do not believe that just because you are a pensioner you should live in poverty. That is why the Rudd government delivered the biggest increase to pensioners since its introduction. Labor is committed to ensuring pensioners continue to receive a decent income. We on this side of the House do not believe that pensioners should be targeted by the Abbott government cuts.

Minister Kevin Andrews and Treasurer Hockey have been manufacturing a crisis and creating widespread fear amongst pensioners—Treasurer Hockey with his 'age of entitlement' and softening up the Australian people in order to wreak cuts upon them, and Minister Andrews with his misinformation about a welfare crisis with his statements that 'Australia is at risk of becoming a welfare state like "nations in Europe"'. Welfare spending is actually well below other countries. Welfare spending in Australia accounted for 8.6 per cent of GDP in 2013 compared to the OECD average of 13 per cent. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is hardly a crisis—

The SPEAKER: The deputy is not in the chair.

Ms HALL: Madam Speaker, my apologies. The spending on welfare has not increased. In the UK 12.2 per cent of GDP is spent on welfare and in the US 9.7 per cent is spent on welfare, in comparison with the 8.6 per cent in Australia. So the ABC's Fact Check has confirmed that social service Minister Kevin Andrews' claims are false. Madam Deputy Speaker—

The SPEAKER: I repeat, the deputy is not in the chair.

Ms HALL: Madam Speaker, the other aspect of this matter is that the Prime Minister has constantly refused to rule out cuts to the pension. Labor is committed to ensuring pensioners continue to receive a decent income. We on this side of the House do not believe that pensioners should be targeted by these Abbott government cuts, as I have already mentioned. That is why we were so disappointed and so upset when yesterday in question time the Prime Minister stood here and refused to rule out cuts to the pension. It is also why we were so disappointed when we heard the former leader of the New South Wales Liberal Party John Brogan calling on the Abbott government to cut the pension.

I think that pensioners deserve to know that the income they receive for the pension is safe. They deserve to know that the government will ensure they continue to receive a decent income. The pensioners that I represent in this parliament rely on the government and the significant number of people who are over 65 years of age—that 19.8 per cent of the
population in Shortland—rely on the pension. Over 80 per cent of those people in the Shortland electorate receive the pension.

Pensioners are frightened. They feel very vulnerable and the Abbott government is feeding on this vulnerability. I have had pensioner after pensioner ringing my office concerned about the proposals of this government to cut the pension. I give a guarantee to the pensioners of Shortland, and for that matter the pensioners of Australia, that I will fight the Abbott government cuts and make sure that they continue to receive a decent level of income. They have worked hard for Australia in the past and now it is our turn to make sure that they have a decent living.

**Hume Electorate: Telecommunications**

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (21:05): I rise to speak on a matter of great importance to businesses and constituents in Hume: the need for improved telecommunications. If you are smart enough to set up a business along the Hume corridor between Sydney and Canberra, one of the busiest transport routes in Australia, you would be thinking you would have access to reasonable to telecommunications. Well, you would not. One business—and I know there are many more—Choice Seedlings at Werombi, near Camden, is so frustrated they are thinking of going elsewhere. In the words of the owner, Germaine Borg:

> We are considered one of the biggest players in the vegetable seedling game yet we are losing business every week due to poor communications. We have tried training our customers to call our landline but they don't want to speak to the receptionist, they want an answer straight away.

During the election I visited 70 villages across the electorate and it became clear to me just how important this issue is for Hume. Small businesses rely on connectivity and, as more people move out of Sydney and Canberra into my electorate and nearby areas, the importance of this issue is intensifying. The government's $100 million Mobile Coverage Program is an important step towards addressing this disadvantage.

Tonight I would also like to talk about internet services. Many businesses and households in Hume are struggling with the disadvantage of unreliable internet with low speeds and constant dropouts. At my house just 10 kilometres from Goulburn and just a few kilometres off the Hume Highway, we get one megabit per second on a good day using wireless.

Recently, I have been getting feedback about congestion, slow download speeds and frequent dropouts on the NBN interim satellite service—and that is if you were lucky enough to get onto the system before it became fully subscribed. As we know, there are literally thousands of people who cannot get access to the service, when they were assured by the former Labor government that they could—people like the Dysons, who relocated their educational software business to just outside Goulburn.

They confirmed that satellite internet was available through the NBN before their move. They had no idea that this service would become fully subscribed. Only after their move, and the remodelling of their premises to support their business, did they discover that they just could not access the service. In desperation, and to avoid substantial losses, they have leased new premises and relocated their business to a town centre. They are the victims of the former Labor government's mismanagement.

Australia has always suffered from the 'tyranny of distance', and as an export focused and outward-looking country we have always been unbelievably innovative in how we have
addressed this tyranny. Again, there are some smart thinkers out there who are trying to bridge the gaps left by Labor's failed policy. In Harden, the community is establishing infrastructure for fixed wireless across the town and beyond. This is being achieved through a private contractor and coordinated locally, delivering speeds of up to 100 megabits per second or faster, and data transfer within the town is free. The whole service is provided from a container on a hill just outside Harden, and is linked into the Melbourne-Sydney fibre backbone.

Another business in my electorate, Yless4U, provides fixed wireless services on the outskirts of Canberra and is operated by locals Anne and Anthony Goonan. They saw an opportunity—a gap in services provided—and they jumped in. We need more entrepreneurs like them, and an NBN that accepts and encourages these entrepreneurs.

The Labor Party proposed an NBN that was city-centric and that ignored the biggest problems in Australia's telecommunications—those in regional areas. Our plan will solve the real problems for Australian telecommunications. It encourages network competition, it is matching technologies to locations and it is prioritised to those parts of Australia that need it most, like my electorate of Hume. I am delighted that as part of this reprioritisation the NBN recently announced a fixed wireless rollout plan in the Goulburn region. This will be a big step forward, and I look forward to similar announcements in other nearby regions. Thank you.

**Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras**

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (21:10): I rise tonight to acknowledge the fact that this Saturday will be one of many times—almost every year—out of the last 30 years that I have participated in the Mardi Gras march in Sydney.

It is a celebration of the diversity which makes Sydney a great global city. It is also a time to recognise that discrimination continues to occur against the gay and lesbian community in a range of areas, including the recognition of their relationships. I have always believed that equal rights for all people—regardless of sexuality, race or gender—are a fundamental right.

Through Labor governments we have seen significant advancement in this area. In every election since 1996 Labor has committed to removing important areas of legal discrimination against same-sex couples. This has included taxation, superannuation, social security, health, aged care, veterans' entitlements, workers compensation and employment entitlements. Most recently, we successfully extended Labor's Paid Parental Leave scheme to include same-sex couples. These are important steps forward, but we must recognise that there is still some way to go.

I am proud to be part of the Australian Labor Party, whose support through our platform for marriage equality is now entrenched. Labor's national policy platform now reads:

Labor will amend the Marriage Act to ensure equal access to marriage under statute for all adult couples irrespective of sex who have a mutual commitment to a shared life.

It is important also that we have a conscience vote on this issue. I respect those who disagree with this position; I also, though, believe that by giving one group of Australians equal rights does not diminish the existing rights that people have.

I know that there are people, also, in the coalition who support equality for all, regardless of their sexual orientation. I believe that it is important that everyone in this parliament be
allowed to participate in a conscience vote on the issue of marriage equality. I recall when I moved the Superannuation (Entitlements of Same Sex Couples) Bill in this parliament—it was controversial. We could not even get debate in this chamber in terms of a vote. I do not believe there is anyone in this chamber today who does not believe that it is an appropriate reform to allow people to ask access to their partner's superannuation—their own contributions. That shows that progress occurs.

I think that quite often, many of those, particularly on the progressive side of politics—to which I am proud to belong—often romanticise about the past. I believe that history does move forward, that support for tolerance does move forward, and that in terms of this reform we will see full equality very soon.

In recent times I have participated in Mardi Gras with people including New South Wales Premier Barry O'Farrell, which is important. There has been a message sent for Saturday from the leader of the Labor Party, Bill Shorten, from the deputy leader, Tanya Plibersek, and from many other members of parliament.

What we see also in the celebration on Saturday is that it is a major tourism event for Sydney. It is a major economic activity that creates jobs and creates a sense of wellbeing in the community. At this time when on many unfortunate occasions there have been incidents that have caused violence on the streets of Sydney, one of the things that has always characterised Mardi Gras is a sense of community and a sense of respect for each other.

I assure my constituents in Grayndler, and many others who have written to me that I will continue to be a strong campaigner for equal rights, regardless of sexuality.

Economy

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (21:15): I have been in this place only a short time, but it has not taken me long to work out that politicians have a real skill in making things complicated. We have a structural budget deficit. I have heard economists trip over themselves to explain what that means. I come from Western Sydney and we like keeping things simple. As of 31 January we had 11.6 million people who had a job and were paying into the system and we had 23.2 million people drawing on the system.

We have an employment problem and the debate around it has been so poor. Why? Because I do not think enough people taking part in the debate have actually employed anyone. Those opposite come from a union background, and that is fine. Unions are relevant to them and 13 per cent of the workforce. But of the 11.6 million people that I mentioned, 7.6 million people are employed by small, medium and family businesses. That is 70 per cent of the workforce. Where is their voice? It sits on this side of the House.

Over the past six months those opposite have called for support for big business and today's example is Qantas. There is probably no better example of how commercial thinking differs from the thoughts of those on the other side. In 2000 when Virgin kicked off, Qantas had 29,200 employees and Virgin had none. Today Qantas have 33,500 employees and Virgin have 9,500. Over the next 12 months Virgin will employ 1,500 more people. So, whilst over the past 13 years the airline industry globally has struggled, we have had increasing competition and increasing employment. There is competition at play in this market, as there should be.
Governments should not be involved in this market. Government creates an environment that business operates in and ultimately businesses employ in. What has that environment been like? Over the past six years every business in Australia, irrespective of size, has had the expense side of their P&L mercilessly persecuted. At the same time consumer confidence has been shot to pieces. Whereas traditionally business owners would increase prices to maintain margins and ultimately their bottom line, they have not been able to do that. In fact, because consumer demand has been so weak, many have actually had to lower their prices at the same time as incurring increasing costs. They have turned to the expense side of their P&L and the expense that has been lowered to offset this is wages. SMEs have reduced their hours of operation or changed the way they run their business or the owners have worked more hours themselves and not paid themselves. Over the past six years there has been an unprecedented casualisation in our workforce and that has occurred to give employers the flexibility to reduce their expenses by lowering wages.

Here is where it gets even worse. The reality is that we do not have only an unemployment problem; we have an underemployment problem. The best piece I have seen on this was done late last year by former Labor senator John Black. He concluded that unemployment and underemployment in this country were running at around 13 per cent. Is it any wonder that yesterday we heard that youth unemployment is running at near 20 per cent in the west of my electorate in Western Sydney? From Auburn to Drummoyne, all the way through there, family businesses operating in shopping centres have laid off casual staff and are working extra hours themselves and not paying themselves. This is the reality. This is microeconomics. This is how it plays out on the ground.

Those opposite keep asking for our plan. The plan is simple. Get out of the way and let SMEs solve the unemployment and underemployment problem we have, as they have done in the past—and will do in the future. Get out of the expense side of every business in Australia. Let them take on bank debt, back themselves and employ people the way they have done in the past—and the way they will do in the future. The best way to do this is to repeal the carbon tax. It feeds into every expense in every P&L in this country. It takes no prisoners.

I know that the engine room of this economy has always been, and will always be, small, medium and family businesses. I just wish the Labor Party got it.

Ballarat Electorate

Ms KING (Ballarat) (21:19): I want to raise a number of issues that are affecting my regional community in Victoria at the moment. This month alone the government has presided over basically the end of the automotive industry in this country and a reduction in postal services for regional Victoria and it is softening up the electorate for the introduction of cuts to health. It is expecting Australians to pay for health services, including those who can least afford it.

The news in my own electorate that Toyota would cease its automotive manufacturing operations in Australia is devastating for the workers at Toyota and those employed throughout the car component supply chains. The end of Australia's automotive industry will have a lasting impact on our economy and in particular on the economies of Victoria and South Australia. This impact flows to regional Victoria, with local businesses in my own electorate making metal pressings and assemblies, disk brake pads, seatbelts, exhausts and
automotive electrical harnesses. Work provided by the automotive industry underpins the operation of these businesses in other sectors.

Unless the government does the right thing by the workers it has betrayed and delivers a structural adjustment package to support the transition to these new jobs that the Prime Minister talks about, then investment in important skills that support regional economies like Ballarat will be lost. It is incredibly important that any structural adjustment package not just focus on metropolitan Melbourne or on Geelong but actually look at all the regions that have car componentry.

When the Prime Minister says that he is seeking to roll out shovel-ready infrastructure across Victoria, he should start his search with the Ballarat freight hub. I am concerned when they talk about infrastructure that they are talking about projects that were already funded by Labor and are projects that exist in metropolitan Melbourne. The freight hub is a major job-creating infrastructure project in my electorate and it is a critical part of the Ballarat West employment zone. When complete it will deliver a projected 9,000 new jobs and $5 billion in economic output each year in my community. Labor committed $9.1 million in the May budget towards stage 1, and I acknowledge the great work of the previous speaker, the member for Grayndler, who was the then Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, on helping to make that into a reality. Unfortunately, it is one of the projects under the Nation-Building Fund that the Abbott government have cut. I implore them: if you are serious about assisting job creation in regional Victoria, particularly those towns deeply affected by the collapse of the car industry, then you need to fund this project.

There are further opportunities for local investment as well. While these are smaller projects, they are certainly equally important when it comes to jobs in the building sector and the construction sector and for the long-term health and wellbeing of these communities. There was over $800,000 for an all-inclusive play space in Victoria Park in Ballarat, $7 million for an aquatic centre in the growing community of Bacchus Marsh and $1.25 million for the multipurpose centre at Victoria Park in Daylesford. The government reversed these payments to community infrastructure; they cut these programs in my community that were funded by Labor as part of the Regional Development Australia Fund. But the government have an opportunity, if they reverse their decisions, to give our communities the economic shot in the arm they so desperately need.

I want to talk briefly about another couple of issues that have also been important. Last week the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education visited Ballarat to open the newly named Federation University and to officially see the new science and engineering building and our great new sporting facility. Labor provided $39.9 million for this facility, an incredibly important piece of infrastructure for teaching and learning in our communities. Again, without a pipeline of investment in those sorts of projects in our education institutes in regional communities, there will be substantial job losses and opportunity losses in those communities.

Briefly, in the short time I have left, I want to talk about Australia Post's decision to walk away from its commitment of sending mail directly from its distribution centre in Ballarat. There are many other regional communities that that affects. Ten full-time jobs across regional Victoria will be lost as a result of this decision. And walking away from the next day postal service delivery is, frankly, a shameful thing for Australia Post to do. I have called on
the Minister for Communications to ask Australia Post to reverse this decision. Ballarat is an hour and a half from Melbourne. We are not remote. It should not mean that mail we want to send to Daylesford or to Drummond leaves Ballarat, goes to Melbourne for sorting and then comes all the way back up the highway to go to those communities. We deserve better in regional Victoria.

General Practice

Mr PORTER (Pearce) (21:25): I rise to speak on a fast-developing issue in my home state. It is already affecting the people in the seat of Pearce and, before too long, it will become a very pressing issue for Western Australia generally. Simply put, the issue is this: there is an existing shortage of GPs in Western Australia. This shortage is presenting a very real problem for many communities and this shortage will, at a not-too-distant future point, become a very, very serious problem. I do not pretend that this is a simple problem or a problem new to this recently elected coalition government, but this is an opportunity to put on record some of the known dimensions of the problem.

There is very significant evidence of a medical workforce shortage in Western Australia and that the shortage is rapidly growing more serious. The most recent statistics from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and from the Bureau of Statistics show that the medical workforce growth in Western Australia is not even close to keeping pace with population growth. Current estimates by the Western Australian Department of Health show a deficit in 2013 of 500 general practitioners. Western Australia has the highest rate of population growth in Australia. The growth rate in the 10 years to 2011 was 24 per cent compared to the national figure of 15 per cent. Indeed, many outer suburban areas of Greater Perth grew at rates greater than 200 per cent. Currently, the annual growth rate is 3.4 per cent; over 7,000 people are added to WA’s population every month. That is based on ABS data from 2013. That means around 1,750 people are being added to Western Australia’s population per week.

The recent Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report Medical workforce 2011 shows that WA currently has the lowest level EFT of doctors per head of population at 348 doctors per 100,000 people compared with 381 doctors per 100,000 people for Australia as a whole. Perhaps the most telling data set is this: the number of medical students starting training in WA per year is the lowest in Australia at 13.8 per 100,000 of population. That same data set is 21 per 100,000 in Queensland, 22 per 100,000 in South Australia and 23 per 100,000 in Tasmania. The AIHW report states:

Between 2007 and 2011 the number of employed medical practitioners increased in all jurisdictions, except Western Australia.

It goes on:

The FTE rate increased in all jurisdictions, except in Western Australia, where it declined from 383.1 to 348.8 FTE medical practitioners per 100,000 population, with the increase in both the number of medical practitioners and the hours they worked not keeping pace with the increase in population.

The Health Workforce Australia report Health workforce 2025 shows that if Western Australia is to become self-sufficient in doctors, an additional 1,672 doctors—and that is over and above those projected from recent but modest growth in medical school places—will need to be practising by 2025. As well as a severe shortage, which is soon to become critical, there is a maldistribution of doctor supply geographically. In rural Western Australia, 53 per
cent of practitioners are overseas trained, and the continuing importation of overseas trained doctors is certainly not the long-term solution to a real supply problem. In rural and outer metropolitan WA, primary care GPs are particularly undersupplied. Retiring practitioners in these areas are not being replaced. Poorer health status in these areas is in part attributable to the difficulty in finding doctors.

The western suburbs of Perth have four times the number of GPs per head of population than the eastern suburbs. Our views about western and eastern suburbs and their demographic profiles are reversed where I come from when compared to those which you might be used to, Madam Speaker. I do not suggest this problem is unknown, and the coalition's early efforts are laudable. The government has committed to doubling the practice incentive payment for teaching medical students. The government is investing $40 million in up to 100 additional medical internships. The government has committed to provide 175 grants for rural and remote general practices to expand facilities. Again, it is not a simple problem, but I finally and prudently note that the previous coalition government, over the full course of its time in office, invested in nine new medical schools which resulted in the increase in medical students now graduating.

House adjourned at 21:30

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Hunt to present a Bill for an Act to amend the law relating to social security, and for related purposes.

Mr Hunt to move:
That this House:
(1) notes that the carbon tax is inflicting massive damage on the Australian economy, as follows:
   (a) in its first year of operation, the carbon tax was a $7.6 billion hit on the Australian economy and a direct hit on around 75,000 businesses;
   (b) 348 companies have paid $6.6 billion in direct emissions liabilities in 2012-13;
   (c) a further $1 billion has been slugged on business through reduced fuel tax credits, and charges on the refrigeration and aviation industries; and
   (d) 16 of the 20 largest carbon tax bills have gone to electricity companies, and the power sector is being hit with $4.1 billion in additional costs, pushing up power bills for families; and
(2) calls on the Senate to pass, as a matter of priority, the:
   (a) Climate Change Authority (Abolition) Bill 2013;
   (b) Clean Energy Legislation (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013;
   (c) Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Import Levy) Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013;
   (d) Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Import Levy) (Transitional Provisions) Bill 2013;
   (e) Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Manufacture Levy) Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013;
   (f) True-up Shortfall Levy (General) (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013;
   (g) True-up Shortfall Levy (Excise) (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013;
(h) Excise Tariff Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013;
(i) Customs Tariff Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013; and

Ms MacTiernan to move:
That this House:
(1) recognises that:
   (a) new technology pioneered in Perth in the last six months for clearing Telstra ducts is dramatically reducing cost and construction delivery times for the laying of fibre optic cable in Telstra pits and ducts;
   (b) the process of innovation and learning-by-doing is reducing the cost and delivery time for connecting more homes and businesses directly to fibre optic cable; and
   (c) the NBN Co Limited (NBN Co) Strategic Review has premised the rollout on the basis of there being no cost savings in network rollout from innovation; and
(2) calls on the Government to instruct NBN Co to consider the opportunity for innovation and cost saving and reconsider its estimation of the project costs for delivering fibre to the premises across Australia for the National Broadband Network.

Mr Zappia to move:
That this House:
(1) notes with concern the:
   (a) loss of jobs and closure of several major operators in the manufacturing sector and the decline in Australia’s manufacturing sector as a share of GDP;
   (b) impact on communities that the loss of manufacturing jobs will have; and
   (c) impact that the loss will have on small businesses directly associated with and reliant on manufacturing; and
(2) calls on the Government to articulate as a matter of urgency what assistance is to be made available to those affected, when it will be made available and who will be assisted.

Mr Conroy to move:
That this House:
(1) recognises the importance of investment certainty for clean energy investors;
(2) notes that:
   (a) under the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET), around 3,500 MW of new renewable energy capacity has been commissioned since 2001, with total investment to date of $18 billion;
   (b) the Clean Energy Council estimates that there is potential for another $18.7 billion in clean energy investment if the MRET policy was retained in its current form;
   (c) over 24,300 people are directly employed in the renewable energy industry;
   (d) the Australian Energy Market Commission has found that the cost of the MRET accounted for approximately three per cent of residential retail electricity prices in Australia; and
   (e) reducing the greenhouse gas emissions intensity of our electricity generation sector is essential if we are to reduce Australia's carbon pollution; and
(3) calls on the Government to commit to retaining the MRET at the legislated 41,000 gigawatt hours by 2020.