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**SITTING DAYS—2014**

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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FOURTH PERIOD

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

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—Mrs Karen Lesley Andrews MP,
Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP, Mr Alexander George Hawke MP,
Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP,
Mr Ewen Thomas Jones MP, Mr Craig Kelly MP, Hon. Charles Christian Porter MP,
Mr Donald James Randall 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

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<td>Gellibrand, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whiteley, Mr Brett David</td>
<td>Braddon, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicks, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth</td>
<td>Robertson, NSW</td>
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<th>Party</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien</td>
<td>Denison, TAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Williams, Mr Matthew</td>
<td>Hindmarsh, SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
<td>O'Connor, WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
<td>La Trobe, VIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyatt, Mr Kenneth George AM</td>
<td>Hasluck, WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
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**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

- **ALP**—Australian Labor Party
- **LP**—Liberal Party of Australia
- **NATS**—The Nationals
- **IND**—Independent
- **NATSWA**—The Nationals WA
- **CLP**—Country Liberal Party
- **AUS**—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
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<td>The Hon. Tony Abbott MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon. Warren Truss MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
<td>The Hon. Jamie Briggs MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon. Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
<td>The Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Brett Mason</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the Arts</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Justice</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Small Business</td>
<td>The Hon. Bruce Billson MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acting Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormack</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Steven Ciobo MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Education</td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Education</td>
<td>The Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Scott Ryan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Industry</td>
<td>The Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Social Services</td>
<td>The Hon. Kevin Andrews MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Social Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Paul Fletcher MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Health</td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Sport</td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Health</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. David Johnston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Stuart Robert MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Darren Chester MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
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</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>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael McCormack MP</td>
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Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans’ Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.
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<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<tr>
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<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>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business</td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Women</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)</td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Investment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</td>
<td>Gai Brodtmann MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</strong></td>
<td>Hon Anthony Albanese MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Tourism</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Local Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Infrastructure</td>
<td>Allanah MacTiernan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Western Australia</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for External Territories</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Competition</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation</td>
<td>Hon Ed Husic MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water</strong></td>
<td>Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Industry</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Vocational Education</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
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PETITIONS

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:01): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, and in accordance with standing order 207, I present the following petitions:

Banking

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

Australia Urgently Needs a Glass-Steagall Separation of Banks

This petition of the Citizens Electoral Council of Australia draws to the attention of the House the threat facing Australia's banking system from the deepening global financial crisis, which puts at serious risk the bank deposits of the Australian people, and essential banking services for the real economy. Australia is now vulnerable because our banking system is concentrated in just four banks, which between them hold the overwhelming majority of deposits and provide the majority of banking services, but which have dangerously exposed themselves to shocks in the global financial system, including through nearly $20 trillion in derivatives speculation.

We therefore ask the House to take immediate action to protect deposits and essential commercial banking services, by enacting strict banking separation as did U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt's Glass-Steagall Act 1933. Glass-Steagall split deposit-taking, standard commercial banks from Wall Streets speculative investment banks, creating entirely separate entities under different roofs, thus successfully protecting the U.S. banking system until Glass-Steagall's repeal in 1999. We ask the House to apply the Glass-Steagall principle to Australia through legislation to divide each of the four major banks into two parts: 1) normal commercial banks as per Glass-Steagall standards, and 2) institutions involved in investment banking and other forms of speculation. Banks that speculate will then do so with their own money and at their own peril, with no government protection whatsoever.

from 484 citizens

Falun Gong

To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:

This petition of certain citizens and residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House that Falun Gong is a peaceful meditation practice based on the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance. Falun Gong practitioners in China have been subjected to the most brutal and relentless persecution by the Chinese Communist regime since July 1999, causing thousands to lose their lives from illegal detention and systematic torture. Such conduct stands in blatant violation of all international human rights charters that the Chinese government has itself ratified. According to investigative reports published by human rights lawyer David Matas and former Canadian Secretary of State for the Asia-Pacific; David Kilgour, tens of thousands of imprisoned Falun Gong practitioners have been subjected to forced organ harvesting for China's transplant market and lost their lives (www.organharvestinvestigation.net).

We therefore ask the House to request the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister to openly and forthrightly call for an immediate end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

from 12,509 citizens
Racial Discrimination Act

To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:

This petition of the Multicultural Council of Tasmania and residents of Tasmania draws to the attention of the House: that, Australia is a culturally diverse country. We want to live in a country where people respect one another despite their differences - where people are free to speak their mind while respecting the freedoms and rights of others.

Australian people currently have the right to express their ideas so long as they don't say something that offends, insults, humiliates or intimidates another person or a group on the basis of their race or ethnicity. This is a fair law for everyone and it been a law that has worked to protect people from hate speech for over twenty years.

We are concerned that the proposed amendments to racial vilification provisions in the Racial Discrimination Act will see forms of cyber racism and racial abuse that are presently unlawful, become lawful activities.

We therefore ask the House to ensure that we retain strong legal protection from hate speech and that you to reject the proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act.

from 106 citizens

Telecommunications

To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:

This petition of the citizens of Eyre Peninsula in South Australia draws to the attention of the House the lack of adequate 3G/4G mobile phone, and Internet coverage across Eyre Peninsula, in particular to the towns on major transport routes and Port Lincoln airport which handles over 200,000 passengers a year. This puts lives at risk particularly in times of fire and accident emergencies through the inability to notify the many volunteers who operate most of them. This totally unacceptable service is significantly reducing the economic and social activity in this large region which is approximately the size of Tasmania. It's sparsely populated but bountiful producing 42% of the State's grain, 80% of the State's seafood and is a highly visited tourism region. Our children suffer due to lack of technology available to schools in these areas.

We therefore ask the House to: Ensure delivery of a new base tower to resolve the lack of Comprehensive hand held mobile coverage in buildings in the townships of Poonindie, North Shields and Louth Bay. Connecting us with the world, helping to save lives and improve quality of life. We also ask that the house call for and support further investigation into other popular tourist destinations and townships on Eyre Peninsula to upgrade their existing communication infrastructure and implement new infrastructure as needed by their communities for both comprehensive hand held mobile coverage in buildings and Internet access.

from 5,168 citizens

Telecommunications

To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:

This petition of Citizens of Araluen Valley, NSW. 2622

Draws to the attention of the House:

Mobile phone access is a facility necessary to the safety, business, social and recreational needs of the community. Araluen is a well established centre for orchard fruit, beef production and associated primary industry. Araluen attracts numerous recreational visitors and is itself a growing community, yet we still have no mobile phone access.

Given our geographical location and proximity to population centres we cannot be described as 'remote' however, we are not able to receive bushfire alerts or severe weather warning text. In short, we are...
deprived the numerous benefits and conveniences of a technology most citizens reasonably take for granted.

We therefore ask the house to:
Address this shortcoming in keeping with the prior assurances and commitments made in this house with regards to installing mobile infrastructure to allow mobile coverage in the Araluen Valley and surrounding areas.
from 41 citizens

Asylum Seekers
To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:
This Petition of citizens in Sydney, New South Wales draws to the attention of the House, our strong objection to the Government's plan to send Refugees to Cambodia, a very poor country with a long history of human rights' abuses. Australia needs to comply with its international obligations, show humanitarian commitment, accept its responsibility and resettle refugees here.
We therefore ask the House to reconsider the Government's decision to send refugees to Cambodia and for Australia to accommodate these people who have sought safety to make their home in our fortunate country.
from 1 citizen

Falun Gong
To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:
Global Effort to Stop the Persecution of Falun Gong
This petition of certain citizens and residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House that Falun Gong is a peaceful meditation practice based on the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance. Falun Gong practitioners in China have been subjected to the most brutal and relentless persecution by the Chinese communist regime since July 1999, causing thousands to lose their lives from arbitrary detention and systematic torture. According to investigative reports published by human rights lawyer David Matas and former Secretary of State; David Kilgour, tens of thousands of illegally imprisoned Falun Gong practitioners have been subjected to forced organ harvesting for China's transplant market and lost their lives ( www.organharvestinvestigation.net).
We therefore ask the House to request the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister to openly and forthrightly call for an immediate end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.
from 51 citizens

Asylum Seekers
To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:
This petition of the Caloundra Catholic Church Social Justice Network and supporters draws to the attention of the House: the appalling, inhumane treatment to which those seeking asylum in Australia are subjected and, consequently, the Australian Government's lack of respect for the human rights of asylum seekers, for international law and for the rights and well-being of neighbouring countries. Examples of these inhumane policies and practices are the towing asylum seeker boats back to neighbouring countries; offshore detention; long term detention, detention of children; returning asylum seekers to countries with a bad human rights record; accepting security reports from such countries; and providing such countries with patrol boats to return asylum seekers fleeing from persecution. Humane treatment would include onshore processing; giving asylum seekers legal rights; allowing them to apply for Permanent Protection here and for family reunification; allowing them to work and to attend Australian educational institutions; allowing them access to full Centrelink payments and support; and
substantially increasing Australia's immigration intake so that Australia takes its fair share of refugees, commensurate with Australia being one of the world's most prosperous countries.

We therefore ask the House, as a matter of extreme urgency, to introduce asylum seeker policies and practices that are open and accountable, humane, compassionate, ethical, respectful of human rights, including the rights of children, respectful of international law, and considerate of the rights and well-being of neighbouring countries.

from 587 citizens

**Higher Education Reforms**

To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:

This petition of the certain students and citizens of the North Shore Area and Northern Sydney draws to the attention of the House to the Budget of 2014-15, Higher Education sector. We believe that the Higher Education sector should be revised so that it does not discriminate against students based on their family wealth or make it more difficult for them to repay their debts by placing an interest rate on the HELP debt. This will not only increase the gap between higher and lower class citizen of Australia but force lower class citizens into a cycle of poverty. Though the government wishes Australia to have more universities within the top 100 around the world, this will make them inaccessible to many Australian students. It is a universal right to have equitable access to higher education and this budget is in fact denying those who are financially disadvantaged. Citizens from generations past have received the benefit of subsidised tertiary education including members of parliament, like our Prime Minister Tony Abbott.

We therefore ask the House to amend or remove this section of the Budget so that it does not make it more challenging for any students to enter university than it is already with their Higher School Certificate and to have equal advantage for everybody.

from 286 citizens

**Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Act**

To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:

This petition of the Executive Committee of the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council, on behalf of the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council ("WBACC") draws to the attention of the House:

The requirement for amendments, deletions or additions to be made to the Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Act 1986 and/or the Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Regulations 2006.

We therefore ask the House to:

Enact regulations pursuant to Section 53, relating to imposition of penalties pursuant to Sections 52A(8)(a) and (b) of the Act. Council lacks the ability to enforce by-laws by way of penalties. Enacting of such regulations enables Council to have alternatives to commencing prosecutorial proceedings for contravention of by-laws.

from 1 citizen

**Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-operative**

To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:

This petition of the members of the community within Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens and Upper and Lower Hunter Valley in NSW living within the catchment area of Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-operative.

Draws to the attention of the House: that Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-operative, as a Commonwealth funded Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, has not demonstrated good
corporate governance, transparency and accountability pertaining to the appropriate expenditure of Commonwealth funding and public monies for the provision of services and programs to Aboriginal individuals and families living in the Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens and Upper and Lower Hunter Valley in NSW.

Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-operative has not provided value for public monies with closing the gap in health and wellbeing and social disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal people in the Community.

We therefore ask the House to: commission an independent review of the corporate governance of Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-operative and the expenditure of public monies provided by the Australian Government for services and programs to the Aboriginal Community living in Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens and Upper and Lower Hunter Valley in NSW and within the catchment area of Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-operative.

We also ask the House to undertake an independent qualitative evaluation of services and programs provided to the Aboriginal Community. The findings are requested to be reported to the community in a public forum.

from 208 citizens

Sri Lanka

To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:

This petition of certain citizens and residents of Australia brings to your attention that Sri Lanka is now a nation at peace, after the defeat in May 2009 of the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) who waged a three decade long campaign of terror to carve out a mono-ethnic separate state from the island. This was achieved by decisive leadership, the bravery and sacrifices of its Defence Forces and most importantly the determination of its people to defend the unity and territorial integrity of the country.

Accelerated infrastructure restoration, de-mining, rehabilitation of LTTE cadres, IDP resettlement and the work of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) have promoted ethnic harmony within an economically strong Sri Lanka.

Those vilifying Sri Lanka using falsified claims of human rights violations include the LTTE network and other apologists who remained silent when numerous atrocities were committed by both the Tamil Tigers and the Indian Peace Keeping force which occupied North & East Sri Lanka.

We therefore request the House to:

• Reject any resolutions that would unfairly target Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council in March 2014. Any such action would not only destabilise an emerging nation but also undermine reconciliation within the Sri Lankan community, including that in Australia.

• Strengthen links between Australia and Sri Lanka, particularly in trade, education and sport as well as in the strategic areas of maritime security and the crackdown on global terror networks.

Thanking You
from 763 citizens

Asylum Seekers

To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:

Petition of certain citizens of Australia:

We, the undersigned, express our concern and dismay at the punitive and harsh policies and conditions to which people seeking asylum in Australia are being subjected. We have, as a country, prided ourselves in a culture that 'goes in to bat for the underdog' We ask for more human respect for our culture and for the people in need be shown rather than treating these people as a 'problem' to be solved.
from 661 citizens
Petitions received.

PETITIONS

Responses

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:04): Ministerial responses to petitions previously presented to the House have been received as follows:

**National Union of Students**

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 24 March 2014 regarding a petition from the National Union of Students, regarding the patient contribution payment for certain general practitioner (GP) services.

I acknowledge the issues raised in the petition, particularly in relation to the impact that the introduction of a patient contribution may have on undergraduate students.

The Government is determined to strengthen Medicare and to make our health system sustainable. This is particularly important given the ageing of our population and the costs of listing new medicines and public hospital funding at record levels.

In 2004 we were spending $8 billion on Medicare, today the figure is $19 billion and, without policy change, it is projected to climb to $34 billion in ten years' time. That is an 80 per cent increase.

The Government has moved in the 2014-15 Budget to put health expenditure on a more sustainable footing, to ensure that Australia can continue to afford a strong Medicare system. From 1 July 2015, all patients will be asked to directly contribute to their own health care costs. While the Government will continue to subsidise a majority of the costs of Medicare services, the rebate for most GP and out-of-hospital pathology and diagnostic imaging services will be reduced by $5.00.

Previously bulk-billed patients can expect to make a contribution of at least $7.00 to the cost of most visits to the GP and for out-of-hospital pathology and diagnostic imaging services. Doctors will be paid a low gap incentive - equivalent to the current bulk-billing incentive - to encourage them to charge Commonwealth Concession Card holders and children under 16 years no more than the $7.00 contribution for the first ten visits in a calendar year. After the patient contribution has been paid ten times, the Medicare rebate is increased by $5.00 and the doctor will be paid an incentive if they provide the service to the concessional patient for free.

Savings from the Budget measure will be directed to the Medical Research Future Fund to ensure Australia can continue to advance world leading medical research projects, attract and retain first class researchers and ultimately deliver improved health outcomes for all Australians.

Thank you for bringing the concerns of the National Union of Students to my attention.

from the **Minister for Health and Sport, Mr Dutton**

**Mobile Phone and Internet Services**

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter dated 15 May 2014, concerning a petition submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions, regarding poor mobile phone coverage at Shelford (886/1355),

The Australian Government recognises the importance of reliable mobile coverage to Australians. While mobile phone carriers claim to provide coverage to 99 per cent of Australia's population, there are still some areas that have no coverage, particularly in regional and remote locations.

Expanding mobile coverage has clear economic and social benefits, as well as public safety benefits for people living, working and travelling in regional and remote areas.
The Government is investing $100 million to improve mobile phone coverage in some outer metropolitan, regional and remote communities which do not currently have reliable coverage. The Government's $100 million investment is expected to generate at least matching funding from local and state governments, communities and industry.

The Mobile Black Spot Programme will improve coverage along major transport routes, in small communities and in locations prone to experiencing natural disasters, as well as addressing unique mobile coverage problems.

Further information on the Mobile Black Spot Programme is available on the Department of Communications' website (www.communications.gov.au/mobile_coverage).

I am pleased to advise that Shelford is an area that will be eligible for the programme. The information provided about mobile coverage in Shelford has been added to the database we are building of areas reported to have poor coverage. This database will be shared with the mobile carriers and other interested players to assist them in preparing their proposals under this programme.

To ensure that the Shelford community is aware of the opportunities presented by the Mobile Black Spot Programme, I have tasked my Department to contact the petition organisers and provide any assistance that is necessary.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention and I trust this information will be of assistance.

from the **Minister for Communications, Mr Turnbull**

**Australian Constitution**

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 26 May 2014 about a petition regarding the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution. I apologise for the delay in responding.

This matter is a most significant priority for the Government and I appreciate the Committee bringing this petition to my attention. My response to the petition is attached.

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are the first inhabitants of this nation, the movement to recognise them in our Constitution presents an historic opportunity to acknowledge their unique culture and history, and their enormous contribution to this nation.

I have copied your correspondence and this letter to the Attorney-General, Senator the Hon George Brandis QC, given his role in progressing Indigenous constitutional recognition.

**Response to the petition**

The Australian Government is strongly committed to pursuing recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are the first inhabitants of this nation, and the movement to recognise them in our Constitution presents an historic opportunity to acknowledge their unique culture and history, and the enormous contribution they have made.

The Government has taken a number of important steps to progress this matter. An effective, multi-partisan process and broad support will be critical to the success of the referendum. This is why Parliament re-established the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (Joint Select Committee) on 2 December 2013.

As part of its role, the Joint Select Committee, will inquire into and report on steps that can be taken towards a successful referendum on Indigenous constitutional recognition, including working to build a secure strong multi-partisan parliamentary consensus around the timing, specific content and wording of referendum proposals for Indigenous constitutional recognition. The Joint Select Committee will also

The Government has also appointed a Panel to undertake a Review under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Act 2013 to consider the levels of support amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the wider Australian public and the governments of the states and territories for amending the Constitution.

As part of its remit, the Review Panel will consider proposals put forward by the Expert Panel, including giving consideration to those which are most likely to obtain the support of the Australian people.

The Review Panel will report to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs by 28 September 2014, after which a copy of the Review Panel's report will be tabled in Parliament.

The work of both the Review Panel and the Joint Select Committee are critical steps informing the Government on how to achieve constitutional recognition.

The Government continues to fund the 'Recognise' campaign to raise public awareness and support for Indigenous constitutional recognition. Understanding why recognition is important for the nation will be critical for achieving a successful referendum that will unite the country and provide a new foundation into the future.

The Government has indicated that it will take the time necessary to do this right. A successful referendum would be a unifying moment for the nation, similar to the 1967 referendum and the 2008 National Apology. The Government intends to announce its proposed approach to Constitutional Recognition in late 2014.

from the **Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Scullion**

**Valla Beach: Pharmacy**

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your correspondence of 25 June 2014 regarding a petition submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions, regarding a request for approval of a pharmacy for the Valla community.

Following receipt of a request by a pharmacist seeking the exercise of my discretionary power to approve a new pharmacy in Valla Beach, New South Wales, my Department recently presented me with a submission outlining the circumstances of the request. I have decided to consider the request, which is the first stage of the process.

I now have three months, from the date I decided to consider the request, to decide if I will approve the pharmacist to supply Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines at the proposed pharmacy. The reason for the three-month period is to allow time for my Department to seek further information and evidence to assist me to make my decision, including seeking comments from nearby pharmacists, and further information from the pharmacist who made the request. The terms of the petition will also be taken into account during my consideration of this matter.

My discretionary power is designed to address circumstances where there is an unintended consequence of the Pharmacy Location Rules. I can only exercise my discretionary power if I am satisfied that a decision to not approve a pharmacist will result in a community being left without reasonable access to PBS medicines, and it is in the public interest to do so.

Thank you for drawing this petition to my attention and I trust this information is of assistance.

from the **Minister for Health and Sport, Mr Dutton**
Syria: Christians

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 29 May 2014 regarding the petition received by your committee about Christians in Syria.

I am gravely concerned by the effect the ongoing conflict in Syria is having on that country’s diverse religious communities. The Syrian people have suffered appalling violence by the parties to the conflict. There have been numerous worrying incidents where individuals, including Christians, have been targeted on the basis of their religion. Australia condemns all such attacks.

The Australian Government’s response to the humanitarian crisis has been generous, with $130.8 million provided for humanitarian assistance since 2011. Australia’s assistance is channelled through UN agencies and international humanitarian organisations to ensure a coordinated response to the crisis.

The parties to the conflict, and particularly the Syrian regime, have arbitrarily denied humanitarian access to some parts of Syria. As a member of the UN Security Council, Australia co-sponsored Resolution 2139 which demands that the parties allow rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to people in need. With other Council members, we are monitoring the implementation of this resolution and working to ensure the Council responds to non-compliance.

The Syrian conflict urgently needs a political solution. The Government continues to call for an inclusive political process in which all of Syria’s communities, including Christians, have a voice. Freedom of religion and belief is a core human right and this freedom must be respected in all countries.

from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms J Bishop

PETITIONS

Statements

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:04): Madam Speaker, today, on behalf of the Petitions Committee I presented 13 petitions and five responses from ministers to petitions that had already been presented. I do not intend to canvass the details of the petitions or the responses. The committee does not take an advocacy role. But the committee does have an interest in the system of petitioning, so I do want to refer to them in general terms so that I can indicate to you and to the House the diverse issues that prompt Australians to petition the House.

Today’s petitions addressed Australia’s banking system and protection for deposits, asylum seekers policy and practices, higher education funding, the Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Act, services and programs for the Aboriginal community, the situation in Sri Lanka and Australia’s relationship with Sri Lanka, Australian culture and people seeking asylum. The responses from ministers to petitions previously presented covered fees for GP visits, the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution and approval for a pharmacy in a particular community.

At this time on previous sitting Mondays, the focus of petitions I have presented have included early childhood education funding, telecommunications, the environment, road funding, Medicare funding, the classification of defence services and asylum seekers. A glimpse of petitions presented in August 2007 shows that similar kinds of issues were motivating people to petition the House—telecommunications, access to health funding, asylum seekers, the rights of Indigenous Australians, and the environment, for example.

These snapshots of current issues and those that engaged Australians seven years ago demonstrate some diversity, as well as some consistency. Naturally, the range of matters is
consistent with those that fall within the powers of the House and the parliament under the Constitution, but I think the range demonstrates more than that. It also shows that Australians are not only engaged with matters that might affect them or their families personally—for example, education funding—but also take an interest in Australia's international relations and the welfare of other people.

In 1988, the number of signatures on petitions to the House began to be recorded. Perhaps changing times and interests may be reflected in the number of signatures on petitions, and perhaps the organising abilities of petitioners may also contribute. Early this year, a petition supporting pharmacies was presented, with more than one million signatures. Until then, the subject of the petition that had had the greatest number of signatures was a protest over a tax on beer; in the year 2000, it attracted more than 790,000 signatories. Perhaps as Australians we have become more interested in health or perhaps our tastes have changed. Either way, it is pleasing that we have a system that encourages people to advocate for their causes in a way that is peaceful and open, and that provides them with a response from government.

COMMITTEES

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

Report

Mr BROUGH (Fisher) (10:08): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme, I present the committee's progress report on the implementation and administration of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. At the outset I would like to thank all 15 of the committee members who participated in the short time this committee has been in session for their bipartisan, collegiate approach to ensuring that this incredibly large and complex reform is given the best chance of success. Every member came to the committee with the approach, 'We want to do the best we can as members of parliament and as senators to ensure that the National Disability Insurance Scheme, as implemented by the agency, works.'

We heard incredible evidence of wonderful success. Some was heart wrenching, hearing about the changes that have been made to individuals' lives. We also heard that there is still an enormous amount of work to be done. On that front, I want to thank the National Disability Insurance Agency for its cooperation and work, and for the way in which it has set about this very complex task. In making the recommendations that we have, I can say today to the House that the agency have moved quickly to absorb what we as a committee recommended they do to improve the system and to ensure it is sustainable into the future and provides the sorts of outcomes every Australian desires. But they have already responded to the committee about this report, and in doing so have told us unequivocally that they accept in full all of the recommendations made that pertain directly to the agency, and for this we thank them.

What this committee undertook to do in the first instance was to visit the trial sites—in Newcastle, Geelong, Hobart, being all of Tasmania, and also in Adelaide—and talk directly to participants, to the people whose lives have been impacted the most by a lack of services, or those who have actually gained services as a result of the implementation of the scheme. We also spoke to those who are there to support the people who are living with a disability. They are the carers, their families and of course the service providers.
In this short address to the parliament this morning, I would just like to make note of a few of the issues that have come to the fore, and what is to happen from here. First of all there was a great concern about what is known as ‘tier two’—those personnel or people who are not actually going to be accepted by the agency as needing tier three or as having high complex needs, but are still going to need important services to ensure they have the quality of life that the services and the scheme is designed to provide. There is much work to be done here. In confidential conversations we have had with the agencies we are buoyed by the direction they intend to take.

Supported accommodation continues to be a major concern around the country. With state governments making what I believe to be the right decisions—that is, to get out of large complexes where people have resided for a long time. There is a great deal of angst amongst those who have resided there and feel safe. There needs to be a lot more done and a lot more innovation put in place. The state governments, the private sector and the Commonwealth are going to have to work closely together to ensure that we have a range of supported accommodation and respite accommodation that meets the market and the aspirations of the people who will be needing it.

For me, the largest issue is the readiness of the sector itself. This is a sector that has continually relied upon direct Commonwealth and state funding in block funding. The model has been turned on its head. The power has been given to the individual, as it should be. But at the same time this creates massive uncertainty for the sector. The sector not only has uncertainty but it also has to deal with enormous growth. The Productivity Commission thinks there is going to be a need for another 125,000 people in the sector. They need to be trained. So there is a lot of work to be done by COAG to make sure the Commonwealth heads of government, all of the ministers involved, work on both the people, the training and the sector as a whole in its development and robustness, so that we can move forward and make sure we meet these aspirations.

Again, I want to thank everybody who gave evidence, because it was the people who gave evidence who allowed this committee to make the recommendations we have, and in doing so give the agency and governments as a whole the power they need and the decisions they need to be able to make the right decisions moving forward on behalf of this important sector to Australia.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (10:13): I thank the member for Fisher for the way in which he has chaired this committee. With him, and the other members of the committee, we were very pleased to go to the Barwon region in Victoria, the Hunter in New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania to see the implementation in the first launch sites of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the first parts of our country where this historic reform is becoming a reality. Since then, the National Disability Insurance Scheme has launched in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and right here in the ACT.

Like other members of the committee I was blown away by the stories that we heard—the monumental change already underway. The member for Fisher will remember, as I do, the story of John Coyle in Hobart, Tasmania. Around a decade ago, John lost his beloved wife to cancer, and he is now raising his three children, two of whom have a disability, as a single dad. John describes so eloquently how the NDIS has already changed his life and the lives of all three of his children. He spoke of being overjoyed at being able to see clearly, for the first
time, a future for this children. He described the NDIS as 'a godsend'. In Newcastle the committee heard from James Bailey, a young man who suffered severe brain injury in an accident. He said, 'I am lucky to be a participant in the NDIS,' and he went on, 'Every morning I wake up and smile because I know my life is better now.'

We must never forget that, before the NDIS, the system was completely broken. In July this year, the chair of the NDIS, Bruce Bonyhady, spoke of Lillian Andren. In 2011 Lillian told the Productivity Commission of how she had acquired a spinal injury in a swimming pool accident—how there was no compensation available, of having access to only three showers a week, of falling through the cracks in our society. Her story shocked commissioners, and it was stories like Lillian's that provided the catalyst for monumental change.

The NDIS will provide social and economic benefits for people with disability and their carers and families and, indeed, all Australians in the wider economy. Analysis by PricewaterhouseCoopers shows that the cost of doing nothing, the 'business as usual' approach, would exceed the cost of the NDIS by 2025. By the time the NDIS is fully rolled out across Australia, more than 460,000 Australians with disability will benefit. More Australians with disability and their families and carers will rightly have more control over their lives, more certainty over the level of care they receive and more opportunities to have work and to be involved in school and community life. What more could we hope for than that?

Australians know that this is what people with disability deserve, and that is why we built the NDIS. This is a massive and complex reform—complex for governments, for the agency, for the disability sector and for the whole community. But, as the great Kurt Fearnley said to us in Newcastle, and the member for Fisher will remember this: The challenges that we have been listening to today have been, in my opinion, extremely positive. The NDIS was brought around to challenge people so that we could decide what level of life was going to be lived for people with disabilities.

The committee is very encouraged, as the member for Fisher said, by the way in which the National Disability Insurance Agency has responded to this report, facing head-on the challenges that need to be overcome. Recently we have seen the release of the latest quarterly report, and we welcome that. There are now 7,300 people with approved NDIS plans in place, and the NDIS is coming in on budget.

This is a great social and economic reform and, I have to say, one very much in our Labor tradition. That said, we are very pleased to see the whole of the parliament getting behind it. We are determined to see it delivered in full and on time. People with disability have waited for long enough. I join the member for Fisher in thanking all members of the committee, the people who came and spoke to us—the families, carers, advocates, service providers, state officials and NDIA officials. I want to thank all the committee staff who made sure this new committee was able to do its work in such an effective way and I include the Hansard staff, who sat with us in what were sometimes very emotional circumstances. I look forward to working with the member for Fisher and the other members of the committee so the whole of the parliament can help make sure we get the NDIS right.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell): The time allotted for statements on this report has expired. Does the honourable member for Fisher wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated at a later occasion?
Mr BROUGH (Fisher) (10:19): I move:
That the House take note of the report.

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

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr BROUGH (Fisher) (10:19): I move:
That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Amendment (Restoring Merits Review) Bill 2014

First Reading

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (10:21): by leave—I amend notice of motion No. 1, private members’ business, by omitting the word ‘Act’ from the short title of this bill.

Bill—by leave—and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Wilkie.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (10:21): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to reinstate the right of access to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal for asylum seekers with adverse security assessments. Currently asylum seekers are denied such an appeal option because of a special carve-out for what are referred to as unauthorised maritime arrivals in the ASIO Act. The issue here today and with this bill is not that there should not be security assessments or that genuine risks to Australian national security should not be prevented from entering the community. Regrettably, it has been the case over years that a handful of people have attempted to enter Australia by irregular means, and they have been found—genuinely—to be security risks. But, at the same time, there have been many people who have attempted to enter Australia through irregular means and who have received an adverse security assessment from ASIO, only to ultimately have those adverse assessments overturned. They were found to be in error or, for whatever reason, not warranted.

So, the issue is not about whether or not we should have security assessments. The issue is not whether or not there could be a very small number of people who are genuine security risks in this country. The issue today really is one about fairness and openness. If we accept that all people are equal, and if we accept that it is a fundamental basis of our system that all people should have the right to appeal an adverse finding against them, to challenge an adverse assessment, then why on earth do we have this situation in Australia where an Australian citizen who receives an adverse security assessment is entitled to make an appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal but an asylum seeker is not? The bottom line is that in our law an asylum seeker is regarded as a second-class human being who somehow is inferior and should have fewer rights than an Australian citizen. That is wrong, and this bill would
remedy that by removing that carve-out from asylum seekers from the relevant part of the ASIO Act.

The situation we have at the moment, where asylum seekers do not have the right to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, clearly puts us at odds again with our responsibilities under international law. It clearly contravenes, among other things, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. I will refer to four particular sections. Article 9.1 says that no-one shall be subject to arbitrary detention. But the problem with Australian law currently is that for detention not to be arbitrary people must be sufficiently informed of the reasons for it and there must be individualised consideration of its necessity and whether less-restrictive options might be available. There also needs to be a legal right to seek effective review of the reasons for detention and the security assessment underpinning it. But Australian law contains none of these safeguards.

Article 9.2 goes on to say:
Anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest …

This right extends to non-criminal arrest and detention, and it will be violated when people are not adequately informed of the basis for the security assessments underpinning their detention, but, again—and this is where I get to Australian law—contains nothing to prevent such violations from occurring.

In article 9.4 the convention says:

Anyone who is deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings before a court …

They need to be able to challenge a loss of liberty on the basis that it is arbitrary, unnecessary and disproportionate. Again, this option is not effectively the case in Australian law, so long as the carve-out exists in the ASIO Act in regard to asylum seekers.

Articles 7 says:
No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment …

And article 10.1 says:
All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.

It goes on after that.

My concern here is that the current arrangement where asylum seekers are denied appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal clearly puts Australia at odds with our obligation as a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It is not just international law where we are erring. Even Australia's human rights commissioner has made comment about this. In 2013, Professor Gillian Triggs said that she strongly supports extending the right to merits review in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to refugees who have received an adverse security assessment.

The government might say to me that I am on the wrong track and that in fact the so-called Stone review is a mechanism that does give asylum seekers with adverse security assessments a proper avenue for appealing that adverse assessment. But as welcome as the establishment of the Stone review was and is, it is still an inadequate mechanism for asylum seekers with adverse security assessments to make their case again, because while the Stone review does
provide some limited oversight and review of adverse security assessments, and it is something to build on, it does not cure the process of its fundamental shortcomings in law. The Stone review, for instance, is a non-legislative process operating solely as a matter of policy, and it can be discontinued on a whim. Individuals have no legal right to petition for a review by the Stone review. So in a sense it is not actually a right of appeal. It is at the whim of whomever is running the review at the time, and the outcomes of the independent review are not binding. It does not produce decisions; it produces opinions and basically requests people to abide by them.

The government might also say, 'But there are limitations with the refugee convention, so it needs to make these changes in Australian law,' but that is not the case either, because the refugee convention recognises the legitimate interests of governments taking steps to protect national security and the safety of citizens. In fact, article 1(F) of the refugee convention sets out the grounds on which people can be excluded from international refugee protection on the basis of serious criminal activity—things like war crimes and crimes against humanity. Article 32 allows refugees to be expelled where they have been deemed to pose a risk to national security or public order. Article 33 of the refugee convention prevents refugees who pose a serious danger to national security or the community from relying on non-refoulment protection.

So what do we have to fear from giving these people the right of appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal? Nothing at all. Let them appeal. We are not talking about a lot of people here. We are talking of only perhaps a few dozen in detention at any one time in Australia who are in indefinite mandatory detention on account of an adverse security finding. What do we have to fear from these people. If they make their appeal and the original security assessment is upheld, then Australia is quite within its rights as a signatory to the refugee convention to prohibit those people from entering the community.

I suggest that the problem here is that this is another punitive measure by a cruel government with a cruel policy. That is the bottom line here: it is punitive. It is another way of saying to those millions of displaced people and people on the move around the world that we are a tough country and we are going to be tough on you, and you had better not try to come our way. It is a punitive and cruel measure. It is not the sort of measure that a sophisticated and civilised country like Australia should be allowing.

I make the point again—and I must have said it 100 times in this place—that until Australia starts acting like a rich and civilised country and honouring the spirit and word of the refugee convention then we are going to have a terribly black mark against our name. I would like to thank the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce for helping me develop this bill, and also the Human Rights Law Centre in Melbourne. They have both been very helpful, and both are very exercised about this matter and are firmly of the view that it is quite improper to continue denying asylum seekers access to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

MOTIONS

Australian Red Cross Centenary

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (10:31): I move:
That this House:

(1) notes that:

   (a) the Australian Red Cross (ARC) was founded in 1914 following the outbreak of World War I; and

   (b) hundreds of thousands of volunteers signed up during World War I, and by World War II the ARC had become Australia’s largest charitable organisation with nearly half a million members out of a population of seven million;

(2) recognises that the ARC has served the Australian people for the last 100 years, most notably through its immediate response to national disasters, blood service, and everyday work to help vulnerable people;

(3) values the important contribution of volunteers and staff across the country through their local ARC including members, branches and committees; and

(4) acknowledges the ARC’s proud history of service in its centenary year.

I rise today as co-chair of Parliamentary Friends of Australian Red Cross to join with my colleagues from all political spectrums sponsoring this motion to acknowledge a century of service by the Australian Red Cross. Since 1914 the Australian Red Cross has bound together the power of humanity to give relief to those in crisis, and 30 August 2014 marked the centenary anniversary of the Australian Red Cross, making it one of Australia's longest-running volunteer organisations.

Although the International Committee of the Red Cross was formed in 1862, the Australian division of the Red Cross was established a week after the outbreak of World War I, in August 1914. A century later it continues to deliver much-needed services to the Australian and international community. Whether it is a hurricane, an earthquake or a tsunami, the Australian Red Cross is always one of the first organisations to provide much-needed relief. The Australian aid program has a partnership agreement with the Australian Red Cross. This means that we are providing $9 million in funding this year to support humanitarian training, disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction activities in disaster-prone countries in our region. In addition, we fund the Australian Red Cross to implement development projects such as health services in Afghanistan and water sanitation and hygiene—WASH—in Bangladesh and Nepal. During humanitarian crises, Australia regularly channels additional funding to the Australian Red Cross to assist vulnerable and disaster affected people.

The Australian Red Cross is also the managing partner of the Australian Volunteers for International Development program. Initially, the purpose of the Australian Red Cross was to seek ways in which the inadequacies of the army medical services could best be overcome so as to alleviate the discomfort and pain suffered by those wounded in the conflicts of the First World War. The Australian community bound together in an effort like no other to make large amounts of clothing, socks, vests, mittens, pyjamas and linens for the war effort. From the date of its inception until the armistice, the Red Cross dispatched a total of 395,695 food parcels and 36,339 clothing parcels.

The Australian attitude of mateship has most definitely been enhanced by the presence of the Red Cross in the community, with a legacy of companionship lasting to the present day. It is with the help of the Australian Red Cross that the generous culture of our nation has been fostered. The centenary year of Red Cross in Australia is therefore a significant milestone in
the social history of our nation, as it marks 100 years of humanitarian service to the people of Australia.

As a prisoner of war in Stalag Luft III, my father still speaks about the Red Cross parcels when recounting his experiences of that time. I acknowledge that much of Australian society shares a personal connection with the Red Cross whether through volunteering or receiving help themselves. As a member of the new western suburbs branch of the Red Cross for 20 years, a disaster volunteer and a former Queensland board member, I have seen firsthand the outstanding work undertaken by Red Cross volunteers, from knitting literally thousands of trauma teddies to running the Red Cross shops, and their invaluable contribution at times of disasters such as the Childers backpackers hostel fire, the Bali bombings and the devastating floods and fires in Australia.

The Red Cross, from an extremely important role played during both world wars to assisting with many natural disasters and providing assistance and response to situations involving vulnerable individuals and communities, has been recognised by the Australian government over the years. The Australian government highly values the efforts performed by the Red Cross as an association, and each individual who has chosen to volunteer their time or donate blood. It is a great testament to humanity’s willingness to help those in need that the movement is scattered around 189 countries worldwide. The Australian Red Cross boasts over 1 million volunteers—members, staff, donors, aid workers and supporters alone.

Wednesday 13 August 2014 was indeed a momentous day, marking the 100-year anniversary of the Australian Red Cross. However for the Red Cross and for all those they help, it is just another day when ordinary people work together to achieve extraordinary feats for the betterment of our society and humanity as a whole. On behalf of everyone in this chamber, I say thank you to Red Cross and their volunteers.

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

**Ms Landry:** I second the motion.

**Ms BRODTMANN** (Canberra) (10:36): I thank and commend the member for Ryan for this important motion because it is an important motion. The Centenary of Red Cross provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the very significant role this organisation plays in our society. The Red Cross is part of our social fabric. It has touched the lives of most Australians in some way. From helping someone caught up in an emergency or helping an elderly person stay in their home, to saving a life with first aid or a blood donation, the Red Cross has always been there. The centenary is a chance to thank the many thousands of volunteers who have given their time to the Red Cross over the last 100 years and to inspire a new generation of volunteers and supporters to continue the important work of this organisation for another 100 years.

For the past 22 years the Woden Valley RSL has held an Anzac and Peace Ceremony for local schools at Edison Park in Woden ahead of Anzac Day. This year students from schools across the Woden Valley attended. The ceremony is also accompanied by an essay competition and this year, to commemorate the Centenary of the Red Cross, students were asked to write about the role of the Red Cross in World War II. The winning essay was written by Ethan Theodorakis, a year six student from Sacred Heart in Pearce. He won a
medallion, $250 towards his education next year, and a book on the history of the Red Cross for his school.

At the ceremony, Ethan read aloud his winning essay and the crowd was moved by his eloquent and powerful summation of the role of the Red Cross. Today I would like to share Ethan's essay with you. It is called 'Our Mission is to Serve'. It says:

These words, spoken by the President of the International Red Cross Committee during WWII, sum up what the organisation stood for and did, namely alleviating suffering, bringing hope and saving lives. During WWII, the Red Cross provided help to people on the frontlines, in prison camps, to refugees and the families of the soldiers fighting for their life.

Its fundamental principles are 'Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality'. In short, they mean that the Red Cross will help wherever there is a need, and every human is treated equally without discrimination of race, gender, nationality, or political opinion. Given that wars are fought and people are killed in the name of nationality, ethnicity and religion, their impartial mission and sense of human solidarity is extremely important as it puts protecting and respecting lives above anything else. During WWII in Australia, the Red Cross was mainly made up of women volunteers who made clothing and linen to be delivered to the soldiers on the frontlines, or refugees of war. Besides food provision, fundraising and medical work, the Red Cross also provided services such as hospital visits, vocational training, home help, transport and ambulance services.

Members of the International Committee of the Red Cross coordinated a central “prisoner of war” agency, which was responsible for making sure captured soldiers were treated fairly, with enough food, appropriate shelter and without violence, to stop diseases and help the soldiers feel like humans, not animals. For example, at Christmas, Italian Red Cross volunteers sent all POW parcels of biscuits, cake and wine. A British Red Cross delegate went to French field hospitals and provided the patients with soap, toothpaste, shoelaces, and musical instruments.

Although I have no relatives who have served with the Red Cross, I read some personal stories in the book ‘Dunant’s Dream’, which tells the Red Cross’ history. I was particularly moved by those Red Cross workers who helped reunite families, and looked after displaced children in Europe during this time.

All this reflects the spirit and mission of the Red Cross, which is to be ready to help wherever and whenever there, is a need. After reading about the horrors of WWII, and seeing that wars today cause just as much suffering, I feel that the Red Cross’ role, then and now, is extremely important. It should be everyone’s mission to serve others.

That is the extraordinary award-winning essay from Ethan Theodorakis. Second prize in that competition went to Christopher Tsirbas and third place went to Annie Grove, both from Saints Peter and Paul Primary School in Garran, who each received a medallion and $125 towards next year's education costs. I am sure all of the students who participated in this essay competition will remain strong supporters of the Red Cross well into its second century. I congratulate the Australian Red Cross on this important milestone, and thank them for all they have done for this country.

Ms Landry (Capricornia) (10:41): Recently I was surfing the Net and came across a series of dreadful images. There were wrecked cars and buildings, with smoke rising to the sky and limbs and body parts scattered on the ground. It was another international war zone. The people who survived this attack looked very sad, very hungry, very tired and very frightened. The next image was of a small boy hugging two large loaves of bread close to his chest and flashing a big smile on his face. In the background was a truck with a familiar image—a red cross on a white background. The two loaves of bread that the Red Cross gave
the boy would not be enough to stop the conflict that most likely claimed the lives of some of his family, but at that moment in time it was enough to symbolise that humanity had a mightier impact than any weapon.

It does not matter which language you speak: Red Cross provides help to people without discrimination. With its slogan, 'the power of humanity; people helping people', it is the world's largest humanitarian movement. That is why it is fitting that we acknowledge the work of the Red Cross this year as the organisation celebrates 100 years in Australia. In 1914, nine days after the declaration of World War I, the Red Cross movement in Australia was born. It originally took the name 'the Australian branch of the British Red Cross Society'. My own experience at the receiving end of the Red Cross was when my daughter had open-heart surgery at the age of five. Red Cross provided accommodation for me close to Prince Charles Hospital, Brisbane's major heart surgery unit. They looked out for me at a time which was very distressing.

At home in Australia, Red Cross may not be directly involved in war zones, but it offers vital assistance in times of natural disaster. You will no doubt recall many such occasions. When Cyclone Tracy struck Darwin on Christmas Eve in 1974, Red Cross was there to help. When the Ash Wednesday and Black Saturday bushfires devastated parts of South Australia and Victoria, Red Cross was there to help. When Australians were injured or killed in the Bali terrorist bombings, Red Cross was there to help. When flash-flooding left many people dead or homeless in the Lockyer Valley near Toowoomba, in Bundaberg and in Brisbane in 2011, Red Cross was there to help. The floods claimed 35 lives and affected 200,000 people. And when category 5 Cyclone Yasi, one of the biggest in Australian history, struck the North Queensland coast and devastated many communities, Red Cross was there to help. In many areas, like my own electorate of Capricornia, Red Cross blood banks offer a blood donation service, collecting blood for medical use. Red Cross also provides low-cost accommodation near major hospitals for country families and patients to stay in when visiting major cities for medical treatment.

Recently, I visited the Rockhampton Red Cross to help volunteers cut a birthday cake to recognise the Red Cross centenary. Today, I want to particularly commend the Rockhampton branch for the support they give to the elderly in our community. And I would like to talk directly to them. Recently I learnt more about your Telecross service, where vulnerable clients are phoned first thing in the morning to check that they are okay. I also learnt about your TeleCHAT service, where clients are phoned by Red Cross volunteers for an extended chat on a regular basis. I was touched to learn that, for some, this is the only outside interaction they receive. Having someone to talk to assists with their health and wellbeing. Then there is your Hands on Care program, where volunteers visit patients in hospital and provide beauty services, such as doing nails and giving hand and foot massages, to support those who are ill. There are many other things Rockhampton volunteers do as well, from providing accommodation services to street stalls, helping with floods and bushfires, and running the Red Cross thrift shop. These are extremely important services to our community. In this day and age, there are not many organisations that can say they have been doing this in Australia for 100 years.

To everyone who volunteers or supports Red Cross, I stand up to speak in federal parliament today to say a very simple 'thankyou'. Thank you for your tireless efforts to help
Others. Thank you for inspiring the power of humanity. It is people like you and organisations like Red Cross that make our communities, our nation and, indeed, our world a better place.

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (10:46): I too commend the member for Ryan and all of the previous speakers in talking about the Australian Red Cross and the remarkable work that they do. I am also very pleased to speak about the Red Cross and to highlight the work they have undertaken over the past 100 years. The centenary of the Australian Red Cross was officially marked on 13 August this year. As we have heard many speakers say today, the Red Cross is an iconic institution which has served the community continually since its inception in 1914. Their mission, 'to prevent or reduce human suffering, wherever it is found' is indeed reflected in all their actions.

The Red Cross was founded in 1914 following the outbreak of World War I and is part of the largest humanitarian movement in the world. It is a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which has millions of members and volunteers operating in 189 countries. There are three components of the international movement: the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

This being the centenary of the Australian Red Cross, it is important to reflect on the role it has played in our nation's humanitarian service to those most in need. Over its 100-year history, the Red Cross has undertaken very important humanitarian roles, providing assistance in both war zones and at times of natural disasters. Red Cross also work with the most vulnerable people and communities both in Australia and internationally. Currently the Red Cross's focus revolves around seven prioritised areas, which include emergency services in Australia, international services, partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, supporting and encouraging social inclusion, supporting stronger communities, providing support for people in war areas and providing migration support.

On a local level, like others here today, I have had long associations with Red Cross groups and have seen firsthand the remarkable work of our Red Cross volunteers. In particular, I would like to mention one of the local branches in my electorate of Richmond—the Bangalow branch. It is the only branch in Australia which has 100 years of unbroken service. Congratulations to all of those at the Bangalow Red Cross. It truly is a remarkable achievement.

I have seen my local Red Cross groups involved in an array of programs that have helped so many locals, including the program under which the Red Cross provides teddies to sick children, and Telectross, a remarkable service which provides daily calls particularly to isolated and elderly people, who get great peace of mind from receiving calls to check on their wellbeing and safety. Under the Community Visitors Scheme, the Red Cross visits elderly people in nursing homes. There are also wonderful programs like Hands on Care.

On 31 July this year I had the honour of attending the annual general meeting of the Tweed Heads branch of the Australian Red Cross. The President, Marie Ivos, paid tribute to her group of 70 hardworking members, now one of the strongest branches on the north coast of New South Wales. I spoke to the group about the fact that the Red Cross has such a fine history of giving to our local community—and they have a lot to be proud of locally, nationally and internationally. The members of the North Coast Red Cross have every right to be proud of the work they do. Volunteers are the lifeblood of our community and really
deserve so much gratitude. It was also great to see the regional manager, Moray Ralph, at the Tweed Heads AGM. He paid tribute to the success of the branches that he has the pleasure to work alongside for a long period of time.

As a local member it is always a pleasure to attend these meetings and to see firsthand how much of a contribution these wonderful volunteers make. Also in acknowledging the great work of the Red Cross, I was pleased on 13 August to join members at the local shopping centre to celebrate 100 years of Red Cross service to the community. It was an enormous privilege to be invited to cut the wonderful large cake, along with the Zone 1 representative, Marie Ivos; the patron, Joyce Kingston; and Moray Ralph, the regional manager.

I would like to thank all those who support and all those who volunteer their time with Red Cross right around the country. They do a thoroughly remarkable job in making our community, our nation and our world a better place. Throughout 2014 the Red Cross will be celebrating its past and also looking to the future. The organisation has, indeed, built a very proud legacy and now needs a new generation of younger Australians to help shape the future of the Red Cross over the next 100 years. I know that they are reaching out to the public to get more involved with the many activities that the Red Cross have so that they continue to provide that very vital support. Without it, they could not continue to keep providing that support both nationally and internationally. I encourage everyone to get involved and help the Red Cross in their humanitarian mission so that they can keep changing and improving lives for the next 100 years.

Debate adjourned.

Minorities in Iraq

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (10:51): by leave—I move:

That the motion be amended to read—that this House:

(1) condemns the actions of the Islamic State in Iraq which amounts to attempted genocide of minorities including the Assyrian, Chaldean, Mandaeans and Yezidi people;

(2) re-affirms the rights of the Christian and other minorities of Iraq to live in peace and freedom and calls for all steps to be taken to ensure that all members of the affected communities can live in freedom in Iraq;

(3) calls on the Australian Government and the international community to provide humanitarian, financial and other forms of appropriate assistance to support those Christian and other minorities who have been internally displaced within Iraq;

(4) notes the aspirations of the Assyrian and Chaldean people for the establishment of an autonomous region in the Ninevah plains and welcomes the in-principle agreement of the Iraqi Government to this request earlier this year; and

(5) calls on the Australian Government through its seat on the United Nations Security Council and the international community to take appropriate steps to protect the rights of minorities in Iraq, including the Assyrian and Chaldean Christian people.

This House has considered resolutions on the plight of the Assyrian and Chaldean people of Iraq in the past. But yet again we are obliged to speak out on behalf of Iraq’s Christian minorities. The Assyrian and Chaldean people have suffered so much in the past and now perhaps face their greatest ever threat—and this is a very substantial threat indeed.
This year and over the next four years Christians of Iraq will be remembering 100 years of attacks and they will be remembering when Australia's famous soldier Lieutenant General Savige rode to the rescue of Christian people—and now, 100 years later, Australia is being called on again to stand up for the Christians of the Middle East. As I said, this is perhaps the most serious threat ever faced. The scourge of the Islamic State seeks to eliminate Iraq's indigenous people.

Let me say this very, very clearly: the Islamic State is seeking to commit genocide. And I ask the House to send the strongest possible message that we will not stand for it. Even more importantly, it is important that the House says that once the scourge of ISIS has been dealt with, once the scourge of the Islamic State has been expelled from Iraq, let us not miss that opportunity to ensure ongoing protection for the Christians of Iraq—real protections for the Christians of Iraq—and let us move to ensure that the Christians of Iraq have a safe haven where they can live in peace and prosperity and they can live with reassurance. This has been agreed to by the former Iraqi government in principle, but we must keep moving forward.

Today the House must say, 'No, there is a fourth option: to continue to live in Iraq and to continue to practise their Christian faith without interference, in freedom, as they have the right to do.' Today the House must say, 'No, there is a fourth option: to continue to live in Iraq and continue to practise their Christian faith without interference and in freedom, as they have the right to do.'

The Assyrians and Chaldeans have faced, as I said, thousands of years of persecution. But, in just in the last 10 years or more, since the fall of Saddam Hussein, it is the Assyrians and Chaldeans who have suffered so much. By some reports, before the fall of Hussein, there were well over 1.4 million adherents to the Christian faith in Iraq. Now there are potentially somewhere between 250,000 and 500,000 left. Churches have been desecrated and destroyed. Murders and rapes have been committed. Towns like Mosul and Tikrit, the Nineveh Plains, home to the Christians of Iraq, have been taken over or are under threat. The Christians of Iraq in Iraq need to know and those in Australia need to know, and those around the world need to know, that Australia stands with them—and that this House stands as one, across the divide, with them.

It is very important that this message go out from this House today as strongly as possible, as it has from many individual members and as it has from the Christian Iraqi community in Australia. I want to acknowledge the work of so many leaders, some of whom are represented in the gallery today and others who could not be with us. In no particular order, the Assyrian Universal Alliance, the Assyrian Australian National Federation, the Young Assyrians, Christian Faith and Freedom, the Australian Chaldean Federation, the Chaldean National Congress, the Chaldean Australian Society and the Batnaya Australia group are just some of the groups represented in the House today and other groups represented in the community. I want to acknowledge and thank Bill Shorten and Tanya Plibersek, the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, for making time to meet with representatives of the various groups so that they could be properly briefed.

Today the House sends the strongest possible message, as we have done in the past, and may we never have to do it again in the future because the Christians of Iraq can live in freedom— (Time expired)

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

Ms O’DWYER (Higgins) (10:57): This is indeed a very important motion that is before the House, and I congratulate the member for McMahon on bringing it forward for debate today. This motion condemns the actions of the Islamic State, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and reaffirms the rights of Christians and other minorities to live their lives in peace and security, free from persecution and free from the threat of death. It calls on the Australian government to provide humanitarian and other assistance to help these people and to use our position on the UN Security Council to protect the rights of these minorities in Iraq, including the Assyrian and Chaldean Christian people.

The Islamic State was born out of al-Qaeda, itself an extremist group with violent jihadist tendencies committed to a world dominated by an Islamic caliphate. It is well funded through such things as kidnappings, piracy and wealthy supporters; and in recent times it has been focused on exploiting the tension in the Middle East, in Syria and in Iraq, to wreak terror and destruction. We have seen, day after day, images of beheadings, crucifixions and mass executions, and recently we have heard very disturbing reports that rape is also being used as a weapon of war.

Freedom of religion and belief is a fundamental human right. To target people for their beliefs and for their religion is abhorrent and we are seeing that happen now, with the Islamic State wanting to destroy and—these words are not used lightly—commit genocide of these minority groups. Thousands upon thousands of innocent people have been killed in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. The thousands of people who have died have also included fellow Sunni Muslims. It is horrifying to all of us to know that the Islamic State now control large tracts of land in northern and western Iraq and in parts of eastern Syria. Their ambitions are, unfortunately, even greater than that. We must be mindful of the words of John Kerry, Secretary of State of the United States, who said recently:

… no decent country can support the horrors perpetrated by ISIS, and no civilized country should shirk its responsibility to help stamp out this disease.

He went on to say:
Extremists are defeated only when responsible nations and their peoples unite to oppose them.

And that is what we are doing today. Australia has been asked by the United States to join international partners to help the anti-ISIL forces in Iraq, joining with the United States, Canada, Britain, Italy and France, to name a few. On Sunday, the Prime Minister, along with Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin AC, Chief of Defence Force, announced that Australia will help transport stores of military equipment, including arms and munitions, as part of this multinational effort, utilising our RAAF C130 Hercules and C17 Globemaster aircraft. We will be supporting the Kurdish Peshmerga forces. We have been invited by the Iraqi government to help, and we must do so, to avert and stop a humanitarian catastrophe. We also must do all that we can at home to address the broader security threat posed by ISIL. It should be noted that there are about 60 Australians fighting with this terrorist organisation and about 100 Australians at home funding them.

It is very, very clear that we must do more, but we have already been doing quite a bit. We have already committed a $5 million package of humanitarian assistance. Australia has also offered to resettle 4,400 people fleeing violence in Iraq and Syria. The Iraqi Christians and the Yazidis are now listed as eligible for special humanitarian visas.
Mr Bandt: Mr Deputy Speaker?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell): Are you seeking a point of order?

Mr Bandt: On the point that just—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you seeking a point of order?

Mr Bandt: I move:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the House debating immediately whether Australian forces should be deployed to Iraq and that all other business before the House be deferred until the conclusion of the debate.

Mr Deputy Speaker—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Melbourne will resume his seat.

Mr Robert: I move:

That the member no longer be heard.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the member no longer be heard. All those of that opinion say aye, to the contrary no. I think the ayes have it.

Mr Bandt: The noes have it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is a division required?

Mr Bandt interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Really? A division is required. Ring the bells.

Mr Byrne: There are people in the gallery—

Mr Bandt: No division required.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No division required? We will cancel the division.

Mr Robert: Has he formally withdrawn?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, he has withdrawn the division. I call the member for Higgins in continuation.

Ms O'DWYER: Before I was so rudely interrupted on this very important motion set out by the member for McMahon, I was saying that the Australian government is committed to helping these people. We have committed humanitarian assistance and we have created a special visa class in order to assist those people fleeing from persecution. It is very important that we do all that we can in this place to condemn the actions that have been taking place, to assist those people who require assistance and to make sure that we utilise the international fora—which we have been doing on many occasions, through a number of UN Security Council resolutions—to make sure that that assistance can be achieved.

Finally I would just like to quote the Prime Minister, who said, I think very eloquently:

… I stress, peaceful democracies, peaceful pluralist democracies like Australia shrink rightly and understandably from reaching out to these conflicts but just because we would prefer to stand aside from these conflicts doesn't mean that these conflicts will stand aside from us.

The people who are active in the terrorist groups in northern Iraq and elsewhere hate us as much as they hate the people that they are currently attacking. They hate us not for what we've done, they hate us for who we are and for what we are.
I commend this motion to the House, and everyone in this place stands in allegiance with those people who have been persecuted so unjustifiably. You have our support. (Time expired)

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (11:04): I am acutely aware of people in the gallery who have family members who may be affected by the motion that we are discussing today. I rise to support the private member's motion of the member for McMahon condemning the actions of the Islamic State in Iraq, who, since their reign in parts of Iraq, have pursued mass killing of religious minorities living in Iraq, including the Assyrian, Chaldean, Mandaeans and Yazidi people. I would like to thank the member for bringing this motion to our federal parliament at this time, a motion that concerns many in the Assyrian, Chaldean and—in particular in my electorate—Coptic Christian communities.

We know that ISIS have systematically abused the human rights of all of those who do not subscribe to their extremist ideology and are continually finding more and more callous and brutal means and ways to enforce their control. Organisations such as Human Rights Watch advise that these groups living in ISIS-controlled Iraq are suffering horrendous persecution based merely on their religious or ethnic identities. They are living in fear and desperation with the knowledge that they are targets of those who wish to perpetrate mass killings or other heinous human rights violations and then, in some cases, broadcast them to a horrified world.

It is widely reported that these groups are being forced to convert to Islam and to pay a religious tax or be killed. Otherwise, they must flee their homes and be asked, or forced, to join almost 2½ million other internally displaced people in Iraq. From July this year Christian minorities in Iraq were having their homes marked by a ISIS fighters, as the member for McMahon has said, with the Arabic letter for 'N', which is a way of identifying that the families living in those homes were Christians, making it very clear they were being targeted and in grave danger. Their churches, places of worship and sanctuary, have been seized and their religious monuments are being destroyed. There are other Islamic minorities, the Shia Shabak and Shia Turkmen minorities, whose homes have also been marked, to identify that they are shias, and they have been subjected to kidnappings and murders like other minorities in the regions. They have been forced to flee their homes in fear of their lives and in fear for their families because they do not share the extreme views of ISIS.

The actions of ISIS are crimes against humanity. This motion talks about us raising these issues with the United Nations Security Council. There is a provision the United Nations Security Council can use, which is called Responsibility to Protect. If there were ever a case to legally mandate actions to be taken under UN auspices to protect the genocide of minorities, this has got to be it.

What we need is a lasting solution, a considered solution, a measured solution to the horrible atrocities that we are seeing. As we know, the persecution of Christian minorities in the Middle East has been happening for some period of time. Being a friend of the Coptic Christian community in my electorate, I have witnessed and heard of the persecutions that have existed—not just those happening now. For example, there have been persecutions occurring in Egypt, where there has been the burning of churches and the murders and kidnappings of Coptic Christians since August 2013; in Libya, where there has been the murder of Coptic Christians because they are Christian; and, as I said before, in Iraq, where
there has been the killing and forced evacuation of Christians, and other heinous crimes committed, because they are Christian.

The question for the UN Security Council—and we can play a critically important role in this—is to mandate lasting action to protect these minorities, because they face an extremist ideology that may not go away if we degrade ISIS, or ISIL as we call them now. We must have a lasting solution. The member for McMahon has raised these issues in this House on an ongoing basis. In my time as a member of parliament, I have heard time after time after time when talking to members of the Christian community the stories of the persecution of the Christian community in the Middle East, because they are Christian. These actions, these measures, these atrocities are so grave, it is the responsibility of the world community to take legally mandated action to remove the stain of genocide in this part of the world and, properly, for perpetuity. (Time expired)

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (11:09): I would like to commend the member for McMahon for moving this motion. I rise today to add my voice to those condemning in the strongest possible terms the actions of ISIL in Iraq and Syria and to assert my support for the Christian Chaldean, Mandaen and Yezidi people. It is difficult to describe in words the depth of the outrage and horror that we, the Australian people, have felt at reports of the despicable atrocities—beheadings, crucifixions and mass executions—being carried out in the Middle East. These examples of the most medieval acts of barbarity, combined with modern weaponry, are a threat to all people who value decency in our world. Perhaps what has shocked and horrified us most of all is knowing that Australian citizens have left our shores to take up arms for these terrorists, betraying this country and furthering their radicalisation in the process. There are some 60 Australians known to be fighting with terrorists in the Middle East and another 100 or so actively supporting them.

The Australian government shares the Australian people's grave concerns for the thousands of innocent victims of ISIL's escalating violence in Syria and Iraq. That is why over the weekend we saw the Prime Minister take prompt action to help these people and respond to the request of the Obama administration in the United States, with permission of the Iraqi government, to airlift military equipment to the Kurds. We join the US, the UK, Canada, France and Italy in coming to the aid of desperate people who find themselves fighting to protect themselves and their loved ones from terrorists whose brutality knows no bounds and who will go to unimaginable lengths to spread their hatred and kill innocent people.

As a government, we could not stand by and watch these innocent people be slaughtered without doing what we reasonably could to save them and avert potential suicide. Not only have we agreed to join an airlift of arms and munitions to the besieged Kurdish Peshmerga region but we are also taking part in the humanitarian effort. The Prime Minister announced yesterday that Australia had participated in a humanitarian drop to the besieged town of Amreli in northern Iraq, again at the request of the Obama administration and the Iraqi government. We stand ready to participate in further humanitarian drops as required. In addition, the government has already provided $130 million in humanitarian assistance since 2011 to the people affected by the conflict in Syria. The Foreign Minister, the Hon. Julie Bishop, recently announced a $5 million package of humanitarian support to Iraq. Immigration Minister Scott Morrison has offered to resettle 4,400 people fleeing violence in Iraq and Syria, and Iraqi Christians and Yezidis are now listed as eligible for special
humanitarian visas. Australia has a proud history of coming to the aid of those in need and doing what we can to take up the fight against terrorism—and, I am again proud to see Australia stepping forward.

As a Christian of Middle Eastern heritage, I have some understanding of the persecution that religious minorities can face in the region. Personally, I have been profoundly disturbed by the reports of attacks on minority groups, including Assyrian Christians—spelt out earlier. My heart goes out to them, and I have welcomed the repeated representations that Australian officials have made on their behalf at senior levels with the government of Iraq. As a government, we will continue to raise the plight of religious minorities, including Christians, at every opportunity. To paraphrase the Prime Minister, even though we understandably shrink from readily reaching out to these conflicts, the truth is that these conflicts reach out to our collective conscience. That is why it is out of a sense of decency and our own national interest that we must support the Christian and other minorities of the Middle East. Therefore, I am proud to be supporting this motion and I again commend all speakers today.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (11:14): I am pleased to support the motion moved by the member for McMahon. Iraq has gone from tragedy to tragedy over the past decade. We all know the horrors that have befallen the Assyrian, Chaldean, Mande, Coptic and Yazidi people. When friends and relatives of Australians are being persecuted in their homeland in such terrible circumstances, these Australians deserve a voice in this parliament. I congratulate the member for McMahon for moving this motion and for his long-term commitment to advancing the rights of people in our community.

I am blessed with a very active and passionate Assyrian and Chaldean community in Kingsford Smith. These great Australians value education, are community minded and are the great philanthropists of our area. Last week I was pleased to join members of the Assyrian community, who met outside this parliament to raise their voice against the tragedy unfolding in Iraq. Thousands more around the world have rallied to protest. I want to let the Assyrian and Chaldean community in my local area know that your voice in this place is being heard. In Detroit, Chicago and San Francisco in the USA, and around the world, the Assyrian diaspora are standing up and people are hearing you. There are around two million Assyrians throughout the world and your voice is giving hope to the 200,000 people displaced from their homes in Mosul and Nineveh Plain. The religious persecution in Iraq has seen some of the most vibrant Middle East Christian communities almost wiped out—forced into religious conversion and, as we have seen, driven from their homes or murdered. We know that 20,000 Assyrians lived in Mosul before ISIS took control of the city. They had a deadline of one week to leave or to convert. We know ISIS will never stop until they have displaced every person they see as an enemy. I want to quote from Mardean Isaac, a British-Assyrian novelist, who says:

The life of indigenous Mesopotamians in their hereditary habitat is irreplaceable. Villages and towns that hold the presence of time and extend rituals and ways of life passed down through generations; the vernacular richness of spoken Aramaic dialects born of shared experiences in the same places; and a disappearing architectural legacy—this living history, the very source of its own future, is at stake. The tragedy of this loss would never be lifted from the conscience of the world.

That perfectly represents what is occurring, unfortunately, at this time in their homeland. As they say, a tragedy would befall the world were this to come to pass.
ISIS is engaged in crimes against humanity on a massive scale. I am proud to say that federal Labor backs calls by Australian representatives of the Iraqi Assyrian and Chaldean Christian communities for the government to help alleviate the suffering of the humanitarian disaster in northern Iraq. The community and church leaders have called on the government to support proposals to establish an autonomous region in the Nineveh Plains, to increase humanitarian refugees from the region and to increase Australian humanitarian aid.

I am also proud to say that federal Labor welcomes the decision by the Iraqi government to support in principle the creation of an autonomous region in the Nineveh Plains. We are hopeful that the new government soon to be formed in Iraq will find ways to ensure security and autonomy for minority religious groups.

We welcome the decision of the Australian government to provide $5 million in emergency humanitarian aid for those fleeing ISIS. We call on the Australian government to use its position on the United Nations Security Council to push for greater assistance for Christian minorities facing persecution in this area. We welcome the government's decision to allocate 4,400 existing refugee places to people from Iraq and Syria, but we regret the Abbot government cutting the humanitarian refugee intake from 20,000 to 13,000. There should be more than this 4,400 available but, unfortunately, because of this cut, that is not the case at this time. I am pleased to support and to congratulate the member for McMahon for moving this motion.

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (11:19): I commend the member for McMahon for this motion. I certainly support the government's moves in the support of the RAAF flying military supplies to the Kurdish region and also the humanitarian intake, making 4,400 positions available for Iraqi Christians and Yazidis. The main point I would like to make this morning is the fact that we cannot see ISIS as some sort of organisation that can just be destroyed and that that will be the end of it. We have to understand the history. Before the 1920s, the Wahhabism of the Saudi and Sunni Muslim religion was all about unifying Islam under one voice. Everybody else was considered to be a heretic.

In the 1920s, in order to exploit the oil, the Saudi king changed Wahhabism to more of a cultural revolution rather than violent repressions. But what we see now is ISIS being the successor of the Ikhwan movement, which was a militant and puritan moralistic movement which disagreed with the cultural revolution the Saudi king wanted and, instead of the Saudi king being the head of the Sunni Islam, a caliph was to be head of that religion. The Ikhwan and the IS are a violent organisation. Their view of the world is— (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell): I apologise to the member but the time allotted for this debate has expired.

Debate adjourned.

Standing Orders

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (11:22): Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the House:
(1) debating immediately whether Australian forces should be deployed to Iraq; and
(2) defer all other business before the House until the conclusion of the debate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is leave granted?
Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (11:22): No. Given that the Prime Minister will be making a statement on this to the House later on today, leave is not granted.

Leave not granted.

Vietnam Veterans Awards

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (11:23): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) Vietnam Veterans Day is held on 18 August each year to commemorate the iconic Battle of Long Tan in 1966;
(b) on that day, 108 Australian and New Zealand soldiers in Delta Company, 6 RAR fought for hours in torrential rain to fend off a regimental assault on the Australian base by approximately 2000 regular Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army troops;
(c) 18 Australians were killed and 24 were wounded, and approximately 500 enemy soldiers were killed;
(d) despite their victory, our veterans were treated appallingly upon their return to Australia; and
(e) the number and degree of awards presented to Australian soldiers following the Battle of Long Tan is today widely regarded as ‘being little short of insulting in view of the heroism displayed’; and

(2) recognises:

(a) the tireless efforts of retired Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith, over almost half a century, to seek recognition for his soldiers;
(b) that Delta Company was awarded a Unit Citation for Gallantry in late 2009, however, two officers and ten other ranks still have not received the individual awards that were recommended in 1966, despite several reviews and inquiries naming the men; and
(c) the Delta Company Commander and four Platoon Commanders, who recommended the awards in 1966, have provided supporting material to the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal, and Part 2 of the Valour Inquiry is currently underway.

Before I begin, I acknowledge the work of authors Bob Buick and Paul Ham, whose works have provided essential information for this speech. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Retired Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith and the hundreds of veterans that I have spoken to over the years.

I would like to read a short extract from a radio message transmitted during the Battle of Long Tan on 18 August 1966 at 1630—Major Harry Smith to HQ: '11 Platoon has taken heavy casualties, almost out of ammo, and the platoon commander is dead.' His words were simple and to the point, and yet they say a great deal about the situation on the ground.

Just after 4 pm, Delta Company's first contact was a surprise encounter with approximately eight Viet Cong, and 11 Platoon moved forward to pursue them, separating from the rest of the company by about 300 metres. The enemy's attack, when it came, fell almost entirely on 11 Platoon. Tracer fire, rocket propelled grenades and machine gun fire tore into 11 Platoon, pinning them in a barrage that lasted about 15 minutes. Just as it was for most of the battle, artillery support was the Australians' saviour. At 1625, Smith called Nui Dat for reinforcements. At 1650, Smith called for every gun in Nui Dat, advising of a battalion-strength assault. A monsoon was a godsend for the forward platoon, whose survivors were still pinned down. Smith called for resupply, called for air strikes and called for...
reinforcements between 1700 and 1720. At the forward platoon, Bob Buick did the only thing he thought he could: he called in artillery fire on his own position.

It is not my intention to provide a full description of the battle; however, during the artillery barrage, the remaining men from 11 Platoon made a run for it. As the survivors reached the line, Private Buddy Lea ran out and helped drag an injured Paddy Todd through the last few metres. Buddy would later be shot through the shoulder and badly wounded. As the company regrouped, what followed would go down in Australian military history as one of our most incredible acts of bravery.

The resupply, when it occurred, was in treacherous circumstances—some might even say it was a suicide mission. Flight Lieutenant Frank Reily insisted on flying to Delta Company's relief, and would go on his own if necessary.

The enemy continued to attack in waves until the arrival of armoured personnel carriers around 1700. At the end of the battle, 18 Australians had been killed and 24 wounded.

On 21 August 1966, Smith recommended Military Crosses for Sabben and Kendall. He also sought Mentioned in Dispatches, or MIDs, for Buick, Moore, Akell and a range of others. Smith has long called for a Victoria Cross for Jack Kirby. The Australians were awarded the Vietnamese cross of gallantry in various forms by the Vietnamese government, only to have Canberra direct that foreign awards could not be accepted. Instead, they received tourist dolls, cigars and cigarette cases.

And so began Smith's administrative battle—the fight for recognition of his soldiers. It is a fight with bureaucracy that has lasted almost 50 years. Smith was told he could not do anything about the lack of Australian battlefield honours, due to the Official Secrets Act, which lasts 30 years. But, after 30 years, he was told it was too long ago and there was nothing more to be done.

I assume that those involved in this decision had never before met Mr Harry Smith. He is the definition of tenacious. Words like 'stubborn', 'obstinate', 'resolute', 'firm', 'persistent', 'dogged', 'determined' and 'steadfast' are also pretty close to the mark.

Former Prime Minister John Howard and the coalition government convened a review in 2008, after agreeing that the 1998 EOWL review should have reconsidered the honours recommended in 1966. The 2008 review upgraded awards for three officers, including Harry Smith, but excluded two other officers and 10 men on the grounds that the original documentation from 1966 was absent. This is totally nonsensical, given that two of the officers' awards were upgraded based on testimony taken as part of the 2008 review.

Given these inconsistencies, a further review was undertaken in 2009 under the Labor government, only to determine that testimony on oath was unacceptable, saying: 'Their memories may have been dimmed by the passage of time.' Thus the panel could not accept verbal testimony, as it might impinge on the integrity of the honours system.

Well, I can assure you that their memory has not dimmed over time. In fact, it may well be clearer. Their nightmares have not gone away. Their injuries still ache. And the damage is still done. Justice, recognition and acknowledgement are yet to be delivered. For the men of Delta Company who fought in the Battle of Long Tan, it seems like it was only yesterday.
There is no need for more inquiries, reviews or investigations. Enough of administrative delays and excuses! Fifty years is ample time to do what is right. We are the government of the day, and, in my opinion, an injustice has been done that must be addressed.

During one conversation, Harry Smith said something to me that I have never forgotten, and it is this: ‘No-one has to tell me what did or didn't happen at Long Tan. I haven't forgotten. I was there.’

Mr Griffin (Bruce) (11:28): I rise in support of the motion of the member for Hinkler, but I do need to make a couple of minor comments on aspects of the motion, just to pick up on a couple of points that I think are very important. Firstly, in point (a) his motion says:

Vietnam Veterans Day is held on 18 August each year to commemorate the iconic Battle of Long Tan in 1966 …

Let us be clear: Vietnam Veterans Day commemorates the service of all Vietnam veterans. It commemorates the courage and sacrifice of all Vietnam veterans. It is, I think, appropriately on 18 August because that is the anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan and that has become, justifiably, the iconic battle of the Vietnam War, but it is a day to commemorate all Vietnam veterans.

Secondly, part (2)(c) of the motion reads:

… the Delta Company Commander and four Platoon Commanders, who recommended the awards in 1966, have provided supporting material to the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal, and Part 2 of the Valour Inquiry is currently underway. Sadly, that is not the case. The Valour Inquiry part 2 is actually not underway—or, arguably, a small element of it has been picked up and referred to the tribunal but the inquiry itself actually has not taken place.

I just want to pick up on that point. I commend the member for Hinkler for his brief outline of the battle and the circumstances around some of the outstanding matters with respect to the awards. Given the shortness of time available I will make several points—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Broadbent): Would the member consider seconding the motion while he is on his feet?

Mr Griffin: I am more than happy to second the motion, Mr Deputy Speaker. I second the motion.

I will now pick up on a couple of points that I think are central to the argument about where we go from here. The Labor government set up the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal to take the parliament out of consideration of awards, because too often—without reflecting on this matter—matters of heraldry and commemoration, for example what happened at Long Tan, have ended up being pursued in the parliament. The intent was to depoliticise and to provide a process where proper consideration of proposed recognition and awards could be done independent of the political process. That was the point behind the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal. I am a little sad that we are still here, so many years after that tribunal was set up, considering this issue in the circumstances that we are.

With respect to the inquiries that have occurred in the past, the important point I would like to make very briefly is that a number of the inquiries that occurred in the years subsequent to 1966 were not able to consider the circumstances surrounding Long Tan, because the paper
work had been disposed of. One can argue as to how that happened; the circumstances were that those recommendations did not go up the line to ensure that they were considered. So it missed the End of War List, for that reason and then also the Tanzer review. You then had a situation where it only became clear to Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith and his associates after the Official Secrets Act period had expired just what had not happened, and therefore what needed to be done.

Following on from that, there were inquiries under the Howard government, which were pushed on by members of the Labor opposition, like Vietnam veteran Graham Edwards. That came up with some changes and recommendations, which I support, but when at the first hearing of the Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal, the issue came down to the question of documentary evidence versus testimony. I just want to make a quick point about that.

I accept that many years after the event it is not unusual for individuals to have recollections which are inconsistent with respect to what may have occurred in the heat of battle. However, what I do not accept and what I cannot accept is that, when a senior commander like Harry Smith tells you that he submitted documents, that fact is questioned. He submitted documents. There is no question. There is absolutely no question at all. The fact that those documents were submitted was confirmed by other commanders from the day it happened. To use that as an excuse is, in my view, unfair to the honour and the memory of those who did so much and unfair to the integrity of our awards system. The fact of the matter is: the issue of testimony ought to be able to be taken into account.

I will move on to the issue of what happens now. Former parliamentary secretary David Feeney referred this matter to Defence in March of 2013. In November last year, the now parliamentary secretary Darren Chester, member for Gippsland, wrote to the then CDF, again seeking advice on this matter. This has been with the Defence hierarchy now for in excess of 18 months. This matter needs to be brought to a head. The Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal ought to be given a reference to consider these matters properly in order to deal with this issue finally.

Mr BROUGH (Fisher) (11:33): I commend the member for Hinkler for his ongoing battle, and his predecessor Paul Neville, who was also great friends with Harry Smith. I also acknowledge the member for Bruce, who I know feels very passionately about this issue.

I come to this position both as a former minister who got to know Harry Smith and the tenacity that the member for Hinkler speaks of, but also as a former member of the 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment. As part of that battalion, to this very day Delta Company—no matter whether you are an 18-year-old soldier today or whether you are an old hand—still wears the US recognition of that unit and its gallantry very proudly. It is something that 6RAR holds very much to its heart as part of what it means to be a member of that battalion.

But I come to this debate with I guess that little bit of history. It was on the way back from Iraq with Prime Minister Howard that I convinced him that the 30 years of bureaucracy was wrong in not allowing the recognition that the member for Hinkler spoke about. That recognition was denied on 2 September 1966 on the parade ground in Nui Dat, and it goes back to the history of what we are as a nation. It was because the Queen and her representative had to ensure that we were able to allow our soldiers to receive foreign decorations; hence, the officers received cigar boxes and the soldiers received traditional
dolls. When you consider the enormity of this battle and what these men had been through, it is hard to imagine what must have been going through their heads on that day.

I want to concentrate on two quick aspects; first of the all battle itself. I was a platoon commander in 2/4RAR and a company 2IC of Alpha Company in 6th Battalion. We trained, but I am fortunate enough to say that I never went to battle. So, whilst I understand the concepts of battle and what these formations mean, I do not for one moment pretend to stand in this place as a person who has been in a two-way rifle range and say that I have experienced what these men have.

But to know that 11 platoon was out on the front and encountered the enemy—not being able to ascertain that they were what they were—formally trained and well equipped, but perhaps less qualified soldiers. They went after them in the way that Australian soldiers do. It would have been a formation that went forward; they then encountered much stronger resistance. In fact they were starting to be attacked on all sides. I think it was then a 10 platoon that was ordered to rejoin them, and they were unable to catch or join up with them. Then 12 platoon, the third platoon of the company, was ordered to make the same encounter.

What then transpired is 11 platoon had to make a fighting withdrawal to come back into a defensive line—one of the most difficult manoeuvres that you can imagine—with an incredibly determined, well-equipped and large force coming at them. The fact that this was not a catastrophe on a monumental scale—although still a disaster obviously with so many dead and wounded Australians—is testament to the training, the command, the discipline and the courage of the men of the battalion and the company and those that came to their rescue.

This is a bill about an antiquated quota system—a quota system which says that, in any particular theatre of war when Australian soldiers were there, there was a ratio of awards given for valour. I will put this in sporting parlance: imagine the Australian cricket team being told, 'Yes, everyone that scores 100, well done, you get a century, but in the history books we'll only record one per game.' There would be outrage. Being denied by nothing more than a quota system means that we have continued to disregard the valour and courage of these men and their disastrous return to Australia that was the experience of most Vietnam veterans.

As the member for Bruce said—and, as I know, the member for Hinkler feels—this can be rectified: just as 30 years of bureaucracy saying that, because South Vietnam no longer existed as a country, the soldiers who had been awarded those South Vietnamese valour medals could not wear them, was overturned in 2004, this decision can also be overturned.

To Harry Smith: what a great man. No wonder they were successful on the battlefield that day, because his tenacity and his leadership did not finish on 18 August; it has continued on in the memory of the soldiers whom he led so valiantly.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (11:38): I acknowledge the three previous speakers: the member for Hinkler, the member for Bruce and the member for Fisher. They have canvassed the argument pretty well, and I endorse the comments made by the member for Bruce, in particular, around issues to do with the nature of the proposed resolution.

I stand here today as probably one of the few people in this place—in fact, sadly, probably the only person in this place, except for the member for Berowra—who may have been in the position of being called up for the Vietnam War. The member for Berowra is a bit older than me, so he would not have been called up in that period. To the people of my generation, the
Vietnam War and Australia's involvement between 1962 and 1972 was an everyday part of our teenage and early adult lives. It scarred us in many ways.

The member for Fisher alluded to the very poor response that Australia gave to its fighting soldiers, men and women, naval and Air Force as well as army, who contributed to the Vietnam War, came back and were treated so abysmally. It was and remains an indictment on that generation of Australians who saw fit to undermine the confidence of the Australian community in those soldiers. Whether or not they were there for the right reasons is irrelevant; the fact is they were wearing the Australian uniform, and were instructed and directed by an Australian government to act and fight on Australia's behalf. It is very important that we acknowledge that that is the principal position we should all adopt around our fighting men and women when they go overseas, regardless of who is in power.

I was very, very fortunate and I understand the issues to do with the Battle of Long Tan where there were 18 service personnel killed and 24 wounded when Delta Company, as the member for Fisher rightly pointed out, along with others of the 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, engaged a much larger force of North Vietnamese army regulars. This battle demonstrated the courage, determination, tenacity and leadership that has been the hallmark of Australian military history, and they faced overwhelming adversity.

I had the great privilege to be at Enoggera on 18 August 2011 when the unit citation for gallantry was awarded by the Governor-General to Delta Company 6RAR at a ceremony. It was an appropriate recognition of the fighting qualities of these men and the leadership that Harry Smith gave those men in that battle.

We are here today to again acknowledge and recognise the importance of contribution of those men but also, most importantly, to understand that there were some 60,000 Australians, including ground troops, Air Force and navy personnel, who served in Vietnam for over a decade from 1962. This is a similar number of Australian serving men and women who have served in the Middle East area of operations over the last decade or so. This has had a tremendous impact on the Australian community, yet they came home and were so miserably treated. Now we have these older men and women and their partners, some still wearing badly the scars of their treatment and of that war.

We did not have in place at the time, I don't think, the appropriate mechanisms to recognise and address the scars that they carried with them and that many continue to carry to this day. I think we are very fortunate that we now have a system within the Department of Veterans' Affairs and across Defence which recognises what happens to soldiers, men and women, Air Force, navy, when they are at war and the possible outcomes.

Today all governments—governments of both persuasions in this place, the current government included—are committed to ensuring that treatment endured by many Vietnam veterans after the war never happens again but, most importantly, that we continue to look after their interests now and into the future; that the service and sacrifice of those who wear Australia's uniform are never forgotten; and that there is a range of services available through the Australian government, including the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service—a service founded by Vietnam veterans—to provide counselling support for 24 hours a day. The capacity for that organisation to provide the service for others has been expanded over recent times. I congratulate the government for doing that. (Time expired)
Debate adjourned.

**Boer War**

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (11:44): I move:

That this House acknowledges:

(1) that as we approach the Centenary of ANZAC we also reflect on the forgotten war in which Australians first participated—the Boer War;

(2) that as a parliament and parliamentarians we remember the beginning of Australian military history in which more than 23,000 Australian men and women put on uniforms to fight in South Africa and that about 1,000 paid the ultimate sacrifice;

(3) the amazing work that the National Boer War Memorial Association is undertaking to ensure that this war is not forgotten by advocating and raising funds for the erection of a specific National Memorial on ANZAC Parade, Canberra, to honour those Australians who served in the Boer War; and

(4) the need for additional funding to see this beautiful memorial, with its 1.5 times life size mounted troopers in bronze, which already has Government approval, a designated site and finalised design, to be completed by 2015 as part of our celebrations of Australia’s proud military history.

All wars are important, particularly to those who are profoundly affected by them—families, civilians, servicemen. However this war, the Boer War, has a particular place in our history and we should remember it. It is something we do not do. We came into being as a nation during this conflict—something pretty unusual for any nation.

At the outset, I want to thank Bill Woolmore from my electorate who is very involved in the Boer War Memorial Association for bringing this matter to my attention and asking me to remember this war and leave a mark for future generations so we never forget in the form of a magnificent memorial.

Australia's contribution to the Boer War of 1899 to 1902 was massive considering our small population at the time. Twenty-three thousand men and women from Australia served in South Africa. About a third of these did not serve with our forces because too many people volunteered and made their own way to South Africa. There were also many Australians living in South Africa before the war and they also joined many units.

Our countrymen did us proud in the Boer War and left a lasting impression. They also set the foundations of Australia's military history—a benchmark and a group of experienced officers for our later conflicts in the First World War. The Boer War was the first time that Australians and New Zealanders served together in War. About 1,000 Australians made the supreme sacrifice in the Boer War, by far our greatest loss outside the two world wars of the 20th Century. We also were awarded our first Victoria Crosses in South Africa as well as 161 other awards for gallantry. Forty-three thousand horses were also sent to South Africa at the time and none returned home. Many were lost to the harsh conditions and many were shot at the end of the conflict.

Major General lain Spencer, speaking at this year's Boer War address in Melbourne, commenting on our soldiers, said:

Although, they joined up for a variety of motives, as young men do, including seeking adventure, economic pressure, or even to escape an unhappy home life, patriotism generally played a part. There is a common theme in many of the contemporary records of fighting to help the mother country, for empire, and also for Australia—to show we were worthy of nationhood in our own right.
He went on to say the importance of the Boer War goes beyond this. We often talk about Gallipoli being the baptism of fire, where we forged our national and military history but—and it is a big ‘but’—he thinks this came from the Boer War and that the crucible of Gallipoli was born in the Boer War.

He said:

We had already redefined our attitudes to the British military. While we desired their respect as professionals, we knew we were better. We knew this because during the Boer War we had begun the process of defining our military characteristics: toughness, good humour, compassion and a healthy disregard for useless rules. We were fighters, not spit and polish parade ground soldiers; men and women who kept on under all conditions.

On returning to Australia from the war, many soldiers were carrying severe physical and emotional wounds and, unlike today, there was only minimal support for them and their families. They were welcomed home and many memorials were built but there has never been a national memorial. This is not something that is sinister—again, Canberra was not created until well after this conflict and there were two major conflicts after this so many things happened that prevented the idea of a Boer War memorial coming into being. But the idea has never gone away. These events need to be remembered. Our nation needs to honour the first men and women of Australia who went to war and pay the debt of gratitude owed to them. We need to remember the Boer War more than just the situation of Breaker Morant and Peter Hancock—that is the what most people have the impression the Boer War as. But we need to ensure that the great bravery that was shown at Elands River conflict and the Mafeking siege are also remembered. Amazing spirit was shown in these conflicts.

The National Boer War Memorial Association has raised more than a $1 million but another $3.2 million is needed. This war deserves a special place in our memory. A site has been dedicated to a memorial. There has been a huge competition. Now Louis Laumen is now creating an amazing sculpture in bronze. He has already been commissioned and has cast in bronze the first horse with the second on the way. But, for this to be completed, more money is needed. So I am calling on everybody out there in the public to jump online, go to the Boer War memorial site at www.bwm.org.au and register today to be part of this. Government needs to get on board in order to make this memorial a reality. (Time expired)

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

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:49): I second the motion. I commend the member for Chisholm for bringing this motion about the Boer War to the parliament. While the current generation’s knowledge of the Boer War is largely based on movies such as Breaker Morant, like many families I have a special connection as my great-uncle, Major Edmund Righetti, volunteered as a private to join the Victoria’s first contingent to go to the Boer War in 1899. He was severely wounded, invalided home and after convalescence returned to South Africa and rose through the ranks to Captain. His revolver, stamped with a ‘Q’, is the only one of its kind in the Australian War Memorial.

By way of background, diamonds were discovered in the Boer Republics in 1869 and gold in 1886. This discovery and subsequent exploitation of the mineral resources was the ultimate trigger for the conflict. On 10 October 1899, the British government received an ultimatum from the Boers demanding that additional British forces be removed from the British colonies of the Cape and Natal. The ultimatum gave the British 48 hours to act or the Boers would
declare war. The British then sent out an appeal to their colonies for 'Manageable numbers of dutiful military apprentices, company-sized units, preferably foot soldiers that could embark by 31 October 1899 and be attached to regular regiments on arrival.'

Australia contributed more than 16,000 out of the total 448,000 combat forces from the United Kingdom and other colonies for the duration of the war from 1899 to 1902.

Lieutenant Colonel John Howells RFD recounted earlier this year at a presentation to the Royal United Service Institute, New South Wales, the story of one particular tragedy with consequences that possibly saved many Australian lives in subsequent wars. In June 1901, a newly arrived contingent from Victoria, the 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles, under the command of a British officer Major Morris with no South African experience was tracking a party of Boers. On 12 June, they camped for the night but, unbeknown to the Victorians, they too were being tracked by another party of Boers. Major Morris personally placed guards up to a kilometre away from the encampment where, in accord with King's regulations and consistent with his experience in India, he ordered the soldiers to erect their bell tents, stack their weapons outside their accommodation and bed down for a good night's rest.

In the dimming light of sunset, the tracking Boers, dressed in salvaged British khaki, easily passed the sparsely placed guard parties, crawling to within 30 metres of the main camp. The result was a massacre.

They ran along the line of saddles and shot men in their beds. Eighteen were killed and 42 were wounded, the largest casualty list of an Australian contingent in that war. The action ended when an order given by a well-spoken Boer to the detachment's bugler resulted in 'cease fire' being sounded. This saved lives but resulted in unfounded accusations of cowardice being levelled at the Victorians.

Australian troopers James Steele, Arthur Richards and Herbert Parry, who objected to fighting under the orders of a man who called the Australians 'cowards', were given a summary court-martial and sentenced to death. Lord Kitchener intervened, commuting the sentences to 10 years' jail before a speech in federal parliament pronounced that this was a disgraceful way to treat men who had volunteered to go to war. The men were ultimately released.

This motion also has a great deal of local significance for my electorate. In May 2013 I received a petition delivered to me on horseback adjacent to Federation Stone. My colleague, Senator Ronaldson, the now Minister for Veterans' Affairs, and I were the recipients of a petition with more than 10,200 signatures calling on the then federal government to support a national Boer War memorial on Anzac Parade. More than 500 Australians lost their lives in that conflict. The men and women involved in this conflict deserve to be remembered with a lasting and fitting memorial.

I would also like to acknowledge the ongoing work of Miles Farmer and Queensland Committee Chairman Ron McElwaine from the Sherwood/Indooroopilly RSL sub-branch. The Sherwood Boer War cemetery was restored with Centenary of Australia funding and support from the then member for Moreton, Gary Hardgrave. The names on the Boer War Memorial are also reflected in many of the local street names. Students from Corinda State High School take part in the Sherwood/Indooroopilly RSL's now annual Boer War commemorations on 4 February each year at the cemetery. The students also exchange
messages with students from the Emelo High School, with whom they now have an ongoing linkage. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (11:54): I support this motion by the member for Chisholm. As we reflect on the Centenary of ANZAC we also remember the first conflict Australian people partook in, the Boer War, which occurred in South Africa between 1899 and 1902.

The electorate of McEwen contains the township of Seymour, which has a long military heritage with links back to the Boer War. One of Seymour’s crowning glories is its rich military heritage. The town contains sites like the Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk and the Australian Light Horse Memorial Park. Seymour has been a site for military training since the late 1800s. During the Boer War Australians served mostly in mounted units formed in each colony before being despatched to South Africa. In Victoria, Seymour was one of the sites used for military training. Mounted troops who trained on the hills and plains around Seymour saw action against Boer guerrillas. These mounted troops where independent thinking and country bred, and their stock horses were particularly suited to the unconventional warfare being fought in South Africa.

More than 23,000 Australians served in South Africa; 1,000 never returned home. The Boer War saw six Victoria Crosses awarded to Australians for valour. Another 161 individual bravery awards were made to Australian soldiers during the conflict. More than 43,000 horses were also sent across the Indian Ocean, but only one returned. The sacrifices made by Australians during this conflict are only surpassed by World War I and World War II. Australia's contribution during the Boer War was very significant.

The war was the first in which Australia fought as a nation, but it is the only major war not already commemorated on Anzac Parade in Canberra. It is hard to believe that there is no national memorial to Australia's first conflict. The National Boer War Memorial Association has for many years been working to rectify this situation. It has diligently been advocating for proper national recognition. In 2008 a memorial site was allocated on ANZAC Parade. The memorial will be built alongside 11 other memorials, which include memorials to World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam. The memorial will commemorate the 1,000 Australians who made the supreme sacrifice in South Africa.

In 2012, Chief of Defence Force General David Hurley unveiled the design for the National Boer War Memorial. The memorial will feature a life-size section of four mounted troopers galloping through the bush of a wide open, rural landscape. According to Keith Smith, spokesperson for the National Boer War Memorial Association:

The memorial recognises that all Australian troops in the Boer War were mounted or dependent on horses to tow their ambulances, artillery and supply wagons, to match the highly mobile Boer soldiers. It recalls their endurance and sacrifice, cast in enduring bronze.

Work has already begun on sculpting the four bronze statues of Australian mounted troops in action, but without further government and private funding the memorial will not be ready for next year when Australia commemorates the Year of the ANZAC and our proud military history. Projects of this scale need a lot of support not only from government but also the community. The National Boer War Memorial Fund needs to raise an estimated $3.2 million to complete the memorial. I can only hope we will see support for this worthy project from the Abbott government.
Recently, due to Abbott government budget cuts, the National War Memorial was advised that $800,000 a year funding for its Travelling Exhibitions program would be cut forthwith, losing funding for what had been a 17-year tradition of travelling exhibitions from the Australian War Memorial.

I hope the Abbott government takes note of the national support given to this very worthy project by successive governments and also lends its support to seeing a national place of reflection comes to fruition to honour the memories of those who were the first to sacrifice so much for this great nation.

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (11:58): First I would like to very much thank the member for Melbourne for scurrilously ruining proceedings so that obviously my speech is going to be cut short!

As the events of war slip from living memory, they grow more not less important. This is so because of that oft quoted truism that 'those that fail to remember the past are doomed to repeat it'. But more than just a quote, the Boer War was a most savage war and a most modern war—modern, in the way it speaks to us today about how public opinion can change, and those lauded upon leaving can be reviled upon their return.

Lyddite, a powerful explosive that was used in shelling in World War I, was first used in the Second Boer War—commonly called the Boer War—as was trench warfare, the widespread use of machine guns and aerial observation such as the use of balloons at the siege of Mafeking. Another dreadful innovation was concentration camps, where thousands of women and children died of diseases such as typhoid and black water fever. Nearly a century later I recall the depth of animosity of the Afrikaner people had towards the English as a result of that policy.

There are parallels in the type and conditions of engagement experienced then, and experienced now in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Debate interrupted.

STATEMENTS

Royal Commission into the Home Insulation Program

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (12:00): For the information of members, I present the report of the Royal Commission into the Home Insulation Program. I ask leave of the House to make a short statement in connection with the report.

Leave granted.

Mr ABBOTT: The government welcomes the final report of the Royal Commission into the Home Insulation Program, which has been received by the Governor-General from the Royal Commissioner, Mr Ian Hanger QC. The tabling of this report delivers on the government's election commitment to properly investigate this policy disaster and provide the victims' families with the answers they deserve. Four young men lost their lives as a consequence of this bungled program; as well, homes were damaged or destroyed and businesses suffered. I hope that this report brings some comfort to everyone affected.

The report's findings are grave and its recommendations are detailed. It details a litany of failures arising from a dysfunctional culture. So the government will carefully consider the findings and the recommendations of this report, which is a timely reminder of what can
happen if government acts with undue haste. The government will provide a preliminary
response by the end of the month, with a final response delivered by the end of the year. The
government's response will focus on ensuring that such a catastrophic policy failure never
happens again. I thank the Royal Commissioner and his staff for their work. I particularly
thank the victims' families, who shared their anguish with the commission.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (12:02): I move:
That business intervening before order of the day No. 20, Government Business, be postponed until a
later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Minerals Resource Rent Tax Repeal and Other Measures Bill 2013 [No. 2]

Consideration of Senate Message

Debate resumed.

Senate's amendments—
(1) Clause 2, page 2 (table item 3, column 1), omit "9", substitute "6".
(2) Schedule 7, page 37 (line 1) to page 39 (line 3), omit the Schedule.
(3) Schedule 8, page 40 (line 1) to page 45 (line 9), omit the Schedule.
(4) Schedule 9, page 46 (line 1) to page 49 (line 24), omit the Schedule.

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (12:03): I move:
That the bill be laid aside.

Today, I am moving that the Minerals Resource Rent Tax Repeal and Other Measures Bill
2013, the 2013 Minerals Resource Rent Tax Bill, be laid aside. The 2013 Minerals Resource
Rent Tax Bill has been twice introduced into this parliament. It was first negatived by the
Senate on 25 March this year. The bill was introduced a second time on 23 June and on 17
July the Senate passed three amendments to the bill that the House disagreed to when the bill
was returned.

The bill is being laid aside because it cannot be progressed in its current form. In particular,
the government cannot accept the three Senate amendments to the bill to retain in full the low-
income superannuation contribution, the income support bonus and the schoolkids bonus.
These measures were to be funded by the proceeds of the mining tax. As we now know, the
failure of the mining tax to return any meaningful revenue meant the former government had
to borrow money to pay for these unsustainable commitments. Retaining these three measures
add a further $9.6 billion to the nation's deficit over the forward estimates. We will, therefore,
maintain our aim of repealing the mining tax and the measures it was supposed to fund. We
will set aside the 2013 Minerals Resource Rent Tax Bill because a vote to retain the savings
measures funded by the mining tax is a vote to retain the failed mining tax.

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (12:05): The positions of the government and the position of
the opposition are very, very clear. In moving this motion today, the government want to
insist that they will continue with the abolition of the schoolkids bonus, insist that they will
continue with the abolition of the income support bonus and insist that they will continue with the abolition of the low-income superannuation contribution. They also, of course, want to continue with deferring the move in superannuation from nine per cent to 12 per cent, which is still contained in the bill, as it has been returned from the Senate, and want to continue with increasing taxes on small business, which is also included in the bill as it has been returned from the Senate.

Just last week, the Prime Minister was saying, 'We don't support raising taxes.' Here is a bill which in effect raises taxes on small business, a group in the community the coalition like to pay lip-service to but here they are voting today to continue to increase raising taxes on small business by reducing the threshold for the instant asset write-off and abolishing the loss carryback mechanism, which were introduced by the previous government. All of these measures impact right across our community, most particularly low- and middle-income earners. The abolition of the low-income superannuation contribution would be a shameful thing for either house of this parliament to pass. The low-income superannuation contribution is the only mechanism whereby low-income earners get some little assistance to save for their future for retirement through the superannuation system.

If this low income superannuation contribution is abolished, government members will have succeeded in insisting that people on low incomes receive zero tax concessions for superannuation, while at the same time insisting that people on high incomes receive more generous superannuation contributions. They will be voting against the modest measures put in place by the previous Labor government while insisting in this House on abolishing the only tax concession available for people earning under $37,000. That means that, primarily, 2.1 million women will be affected because, as the House knows, women are unduly represented in the ranks of low-income workers. They need assistance to save for their retirement.

The Treasurer huffs and puffs and beats his chest about the need to ensure that our age pension is sustainable. Well, here is a measure where we say to people on low incomes, 'If you save for the future through superannuation and put money aside right throughout your working life, then the government will provide you with some assistance.' Otherwise, people on low incomes are inevitably going to be on the age pension and the full age pension at that! But the government, in their wisdom, say 'No, no, we'll make the indexation of the age pension meaner, less generous and make people work until they are 70'—the highest pension age in the world—and if you are on a low income, are a cleaner or working in manual trades or the retail industry and earning under $37,000 then we're not going to assist you to save for your future. We're not going to help you save through superannuation.'

It is all about values, Madam Speaker; it is all about priorities. Our values on this side of the House are very clear. We will stand with low-income earners and say, 'We will provide some assistance to save for the future.' We support people getting assistance for superannuation right up and down the income scale, but we just say, 'Show a little bit of fairness and support for people on low incomes.' What have people on low incomes done to deserve the treatment from this government, apart from work hard? They have committed no crime, apart from working hard and attempting to save for the future. Of course, at the same time the government wants to further delay the increase, from nine per cent to 12 per cent, in the superannuation guarantee.
To give them their credit, the government had already indicated before the election that there would be some delay but of course they have gone further. On top of the delay announced before the election, they are now delaying further, despite the Prime Minister's commitment of no adverse changes to superannuation. I would say that delaying the move from nine per cent to 12 per cent is an adverse change to superannuation. Again, it means that low- and middle-income earners will not have the superannuation they need for an adequate and dignified retirement. The impact on rural and regional areas is particularly stark with, again, low-income earners being starkly represented right across the great rural areas and regions of our nation. Do we hear a word from the National Party in their defence? Not a word in defence of the hardworking people of rural and regional Australia, who are adversely impacted by this change, which the Liberal dominated government are determined to insist upon.

The member for Jagajaga could no doubt speak at length about the income support bonus and its important place in the social fabric of this nation. The Senate cares about the income support bonus but the House, with the majority sitting on the other side, could not care less about the income support bonus. These measures before the House and the parliamentary secretary's motion that the bill be laid aside tell us very starkly about the values and priorities of those opposite. We are happy to have that debate. We are happy to stand for the schoolkids bonus, the low-income support contribution and the income support bonus.

Mr Ciobo: What about debt and deficit?

Mr Bowen: I am happy to talk about debt and I am happy to talk about the debt that you are imposing on Australian households, who commit no crime other than working hard. Let's have that debate, let's talk about the debt and the budget emergency you have created for not only the Australian people but the states and territories right across the country. There are budget emergencies and you and your 'hopelessly out of his depth Treasurer' have created them. As he flails around, trying to sell his budget, he does not realise that the reason he cannot sell the budget is that it is a complete dud. It is a complete dud, which is bad for the economy and is fundamentally based on an unfair set of principles. That is why he cannot sell it.

Go back to the drawing board and start again, then you might have another chance at selling it. The parliamentary secretary might one day give the Treasurer a run for his money. He might step up. You go have another go. Start the budget again and this time start with a premise of fairness. The Australian people are up for a conversation about tough decisions, but we want to see a discussion based on fairness. That is what this government completely fails to do.

The Labor Party will continue to insist on the retention of important mechanisms through our social fabric such as the schoolkids bonus, the income support bonus and the low income superannuation contribution, which ensure more fairness in the system. We will continue to stand up for small businesses, which have done nothing wrong except work hard. They deserve the instant asset write-off and the loss carry-back. This side of the House stands for lower taxes for small business and by their vote today the other side of the House, despite their rhetoric, stands for higher taxes for small business. It is a fact. That is the motion you are voting on and you are voting in favour of more red tape and higher taxes for small business. That is not rhetoric; that is a simple fact contained in your bill.
Government members interjecting—

Mr BOWEN: They do not like to hear about it. They do not like to be reminded of the facts about their own legislation, which includes measures to increase tax on small business. It is a matter of fact, despite the rhetoric we hear of those opposite. They say they are committed to reducing compliance costs for small business by $1 billion a year. What a start we have in this legislation, because the reduction of the threshold of the instant asset write-off is not just a tax increase; it is a very significant increase in red tape burden for small business. Again, this side of the House stands for less red tape for small business and that side of the House, by their vote, their own legislation—

Government members interjecting—

Mr BOWEN: It gets them going, doesn't it? They do not like hearing about the impact of their own policies, their own legislation. Your words are cheap, but your policies are very expensive for small business in this country, because small business is being let down by their government. They were told lots of things before the election, but what they are seeing post election are a government determined to make life harder for small business. The Labor Party will continue to insist that the instant asset write-off and the loss carry-back, which are important tax measures, and red tape reduction measures for small business are implemented, just as the other measures contained in this bill should be.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (12:14): As the shadow Treasurer has just outlined, Labor will be insisting on the provisions that are so important in this legislation. We understand, and are plainly the only people in this House who understand, how important the schoolkids bonus is to Australian families—$410 a year for a child in primary school; $820 for a child in secondary school. For a family with two children, over the school life of their children that adds up to $15,000. The Liberal-National Party wants to take from the pockets of families. Every one of you, when you vote today make sure you think about going out onto your high street and telling every family that—

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (12:15): I move:
That the motion be put.
The House divided. [12:20]
(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes .................79
Noes .................53
Majority ............26

AYES
Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Andrews, KL
Baldwin, RC
Billson, BF
Briggs, JE
Broad, AJ
Broadbent, RE
Brough, MT
Buchholz, S (teller)
Christensen, GR
Ciobo, SM
Cobb, JK
Coleman, DB
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gambaro, T
Gillespie, DA
Goodenough, IR
Griggs, NL

CHAIR
AYES

Hartsuyker, L
Henderson, SM
Howarth, LR
Hutchinson, ER
Jensen, DG
Joyce, BT
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
McNamara, KJ
Nikolic, AA
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE
Robb, AJ
Roy, WB
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Southcott, AJ
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX
Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG

Hawke, AG
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ
Jones, ET
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O'Dowd, KD
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, FM
Smith, ADH
Stone, SN
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Turnbull, MB
Varvaris, N
Whiteley, BD
Williams, MP
Wood, JP

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodmann, G
Burke, AS
Burke, AS
Butler, MC
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Ferguson, LDT
Giles, AJ
Hall, JG (teller)
Husic, EN
King, CF
MacTiernan, AJGC
McGowan, C
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Perrett, GD

Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burke, AE
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Elliott, MJ
Feeney, D
Frizgibbon, JA
Griffin, AP
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
Macklin, JL
Marles, RD
Mitchell, RG
O'Neil, CE
Parke, M
Plibersek, TJ
Question agreed to

The SPEAKER: The question now is that the bill be laid aside.

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS

Consideration of Legislation

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (12:26): I ask leave of the House to move a motion to facilitate the introduction and passage of a bill for an act to amend the law relating to taxation, superannuation, social security and family assistance, and for other purposes.

Leave not granted.

Mr CIOBO: I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent a Bill for an Act to amend the law relating to taxation, superannuation, social security and family assistance, and for other purposes, being presented and proceeding immediately through all stages this sitting.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (12:27): I would like to speak to this motion. What we have before the parliament right now is the parliamentary secretary seeking to bring forward a new bill because what they have just done is abandon all the mining tax legislation. What has just happened here is that every single one of them just voted for the mining tax legislation to be put aside and not come back. And now, rather than wait for the proper, orderly way of introducing legislation, we have got this motion. We are trying to get a copy of the bill the parliamentary secretary is talking about. We are trying to work out what is happening to the government's agenda. What we have right now is that they are waiting for someone on the crossbench to tell them what they believe. That is what is going on right now with this parliamentary secretary—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. I call the parliamentary secretary.

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (12:28): I move:

That the question be now put.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be put.

The House divided. [12:29]

(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)
Ayes ....................79
Noes .....................53
Majority.................26

**AYES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ayes</th>
<th>Noes</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Coulton, M (teller)</td>
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**NOES**

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CHAMBER
Question agreed to.

The Speaker (12:32): The question now is that the suspension motion be agreed to.
The House divided. [12:34]

(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes .................... 79
Noes ..................... 53
Majority ................ 26

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Broad, AJ
Brough, MT
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Fletcher, PW
Gambaro, T
Goodenough, IR
Hartsuyker, L
Henderson, SM
Howarth, LR
Hutchinson, ER
Jensen, DG
Joyce, BT
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG

Noes

Collins, JM
Danby, M
Elliot, MJ
Feeney, D
Fitzgibbon, JA
Griffin, AP
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
Macklin, JL
Marles, RD
Mitchell, RG
O’Neill, CE
Parke, M
Plibersek, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Swan, WM
Vamvakinou, M
Wilkie, AD
Question agreed to, with an absolute majority.
BILLS

Minerals Resource Rent Tax Repeal and Other Measures Bill 2014

First Reading
Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Ciobo.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading
Mr Ciobo (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (12:36): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr Burke: I rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker.
Mr Ciobo: I have moved a motion, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, you have. He can still raise a point of order.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, under standing order 142(a), the parliamentary secretary is not able to move the second reading.

The Speaker: I am sorry; standing orders have been suspended to prevent this occurring.

Mr Burke: Point of order, Madam Speaker: the standing orders were suspended to allow the bill to be introduced. It has been introduced. Standing order 142(a) goes to whether it can proceed to a second reading, not whether it can be introduced.

The Speaker: My understanding is that the motion as was carried was that the standing orders be suspended so that a bill could be presented and proceed immediately through all stages this sitting. Therefore there is no point of order.

Mr Burke: I have a point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Is there a further point of order?

Mr Burke: I understand it is your ruling that the parliament will now proceed with legislation that we cannot see. That is what is about to happen. We are about to debate legislation that we cannot see.

The Speaker: For the purposes of the Manager of Opposition Business, I will read the motion that was just passed. That was, 'That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent a bill for an act to amend the law relating to taxation, superannuation, social security and family assistance and for other purposes being presented and proceeding immediately through all stages of this sitting'. Therefore, there is no point of order. I call the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer.

Mr Ciobo: I have moved that this bill be now read a second time.

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

The Speaker: The member for Lingiari will desist. The question is that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Bowen (McMahon) (12:38): On the basis that we have not seen the bill and we do not know what is in it—the government has not chosen to share it with the parliament—we will oppose it.
The SPEAKER: I understand there are copies of the bill on the table.

Ms Plibersek: Now there are.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (12:38): I would like to speak in the second reading debate we are now in for the Minerals Resource Rent Tax Repeal and Other Measures Bill 2014. We just had the most extraordinary display from the parliamentary secretary. He has just—for the first time I can think of—introduced a bill, given the second reading speech to explain what is in it and told the parliament nothing. We have a situation where he will not read to the parliament any of the words that are involved. You cannot simply table speeches—read Practice. That is not how this parliament works.

In the most arrogant fashion, the government expect the parliament to debate a bill that none of us can have a copy of for reasons that none of us can hear. What they are expecting to do now—on the mining tax, of all things—is to say to the parliament and therefore to the people of Australia, 'Just trust us. We will lock down a deal with someone in another place, but, like lemmings, everybody here can be expected to just vote for it.' Let us not forget what the first round of this legislation did. The first round of this legislation was going to abolish the schoolkids bonus—and apparently it is still there. I know that it is still there because members of the opposition frontbench are now working through details that the parliamentary secretary sought to hide from the parliament.

We have a situation where the government—I suspect for possibly the first time ever known in this parliament—has decided that we should be debating legislation that we are not allowed to see. We have a situation where the parliamentary secretary introducing the legislation does not even have the courage to put his own voice to the words that would back this bill. We have a situation now where those opposite clearly did not know what was going to be in front of the parliament—because the parliamentary secretary moving it did not even know what was going to be in front of the parliament. It is one thing for members of the backbench on the other side to be expected to wander in here like lemmings; it is another thing when the lead lemming is the parliamentary secretary. Not even a member of the cabinet was willing to introduce this bill. No-one sitting in the front row on their side was willing to introduce this bill. But, in a stroke of utter humiliation, the parliamentary secretary comes in here and gets told, 'Do not read the words out loud.' The government is that ashamed of it.

Talk about a government losing control of their own agenda! Talk about a government on something that they wanted to claim was an important election promise! Talk about a government that claimed the 'adults', of all things, were going to be in charge! What do we get instead? Instead, what we get is a parliamentary secretary who is running out right now. I would be doing the same if I were him—if I had succumbed to the same sort of humiliation that he has had to endure right now.

For the purposes of law, for the purposes of the Acts Interpretation Act, whenever there is doubt cast as to the interpretation of a bill, within the meaning of the words of the legislation themselves, the courts will go to what was said during the second reading speech. And what was said? What was said was, 'That the bill be read a second time'. That was it. That is all that was said. On tax law and the different issues that are contained within here, you are in a realm where court cases do get run. And people will now go and discover that the government did this for, apparently, no reason whatsoever; that the government did this for no reasons that had anything to do with the parliamentary debate; and that the member of the executive who
introduced the legislation did not have a clue why he was introducing it and did not have a clue what the bill would contain—or worse, if he did know, he was ashamed of what he was being asked to do. If he did know, he did not want to go back to his constituents and let them know the harm he had brought them within the parliament of Australia.

We all know that there have been occasions when debate moves quickly through this House—but usually the person they gag is not the one introducing it. Normally the person who is subject to the gag resolution is not the parliamentary secretary who is legally responsible for the bill. Normally, when we are dealing with legislation in this parliament, when the government bring on gag motions the reason is to shut up members opposing. On this occasion, not only have they shut up their own member, their parliamentary secretary, but he has also gone along with it. He has gone along with it without a resolution. He has gone along with it simply because someone said to him, 'To save time, why don't you just table a few documents rather than say a word'. We have a bill with no speech attached. We have a bill where, as far as this parliament and the traditions of this House are concerned, when weighing up whether or not we should support the bill, there are absolutely no reasons given from the government as to why this should be supported.

When they first introduced the legislation to the parliament, we had one copy in the room. No-one was able to see what was in it. Then we went immediately to full debate on the issue! As responsible members of parliament, whether in the opposition or on the crossbench, the people we represent have a right to know how we have deliberated over these issues, how we have weighed things up and how we have arrived at a conclusion. Those on the government back bench, I would have thought, would want to know what they were voting for, but I am yet to see a government backbencher rush up here and get a copy of the bill. I am yet to see anyone from the government side pay the slightest bit of interest in what we are now going to be asked to vote for. We have a situation where they could have sat here for the entire debate, where they could have been here for the entire speech from the parliamentary secretary and still be none the wiser.

In the first round of this legislation, it was only set aside a few moments ago. Up until a few moments ago, that legislation, we had been told, was a core commitment from the government. Then we get into this chamber and we discover that they have moved not that it be set aside for a later date but that it be laid aside altogether. So all those opposite voted that the mining tax bills not be proceeded with at all. Now we have the parliamentary secretary introducing legislation and none of us know what it says, none of us know what is in it. The parliamentary secretary, if he does know what is in it, does not want to let on. Instead, we have humiliation of the parliamentary secretary by not putting voice to any arguments in favour of this bill. But when you do that, when someone plays that sort of humiliation of themselves, be in no doubt that it reflects on the entire parliament.

When people come here who have an interest in what is going on in this parliament, even when we have the first conversation with school children about what parliament does, we start with saying that we talk about laws. On this occasion, the law is being kept secret. On this occasion, the parliamentary secretary is the first member of the executive in living memory to come here with a new law but not to tell us what is in it, to come here with a new law and say, 'I'd really love you to vote for it, but I've just got to keep it a secret until after the vote.'
It may well be the case that the contents of the bill are an operational matter. It may well be the case that the contents of the bill have some deep, dark secret, and there are countries that function that way. There are countries on earth, there are countries in our world which do have a system where people do not get told what the law is, where members of the executive are silenced. Those nations are not known as democracies and yet Australia’s parliament today has been humiliated and abused. Australia’s parliament today has been treated with absolute contempt by the parliamentary secretary and by whoever gave him the dumbest of dumb advice. I suspect whoever gave that really dumb advice is still in the room, but that is the only act of loyalty offered to the parliamentary secretary for the humiliation. Earlier, I was interjecting across the floor saying, ‘Why isn’t he on the front bench?’ I am embarrassed now for asking why he does not sit on the front bench. We have a situation which has never, in living memory, occurred in this parliament, where in a second reading debate the first speech is given by the opposition. We have a second reading debate where we start talking about the reasons to oppose the bill before we hear the reasons to support it, and the reasons to oppose it are being given by someone who has not read!

This is a farce. This is a government in chaos. This government has lost control of any semblance of its own agenda. This government is being run by children. Anyone who thought those opposite were going to deliver a government with adults in charge should not forget the day this government decided to give not even a single reason for their own legislation but to keep it secret and expected the entire parliament to follow blindly. Those sitting behind them will follow blindly. They will find out in their party room tomorrow what they did today.

Those of us on this side of the House have a very simple view on these matters. We will not see this parliament being abused and we will not allow a circumstance where those opposite are willing to defy ever single tradition of this House, every core fundamental tenet. I do not know how you have a democratic debate without knowing the substance of the motion. I just do not know how you are meant to have a sensible discussion with, ‘Oh, it’s a mystery, oh, it’s a secret. We’ll just deal with the debate on the vibe of the issue’—The Castle finds its way all the way to Canberra! The circumstance we have here is a complete humiliation for those opposite. We have children—

**Mr Pyne:** Have you run out of material?

**Mr BURKE:** Isn’t that brilliant? We do not have any material. There is no bill from those opposite that we can be told about. There is nothing in front of us other than complete humiliation and chaos and a government without an agenda.

**Mr CIOBO** (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (12:51): I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent that standing order 43 be suspended for this sitting.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that standing order 43, which is the standing order dealing with the movement to automatic dealing with members’ statements, be suspended.

_A division having been called and the bells being rung—_

_A honourable member interjecting—_

**The SPEAKER:** That is unparliamentary.

_Honourable members interjecting—_
The SPEAKER: I would be mindful that, during a division, privilege does not apply.
The House divided. [12:55]
(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes .................82
Noes .................55
Majority..............27

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Broad, AJ
Brough, MT
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Fletcher, PW
Gambaro, T
Goodenough, IR
Hartsuyker, L
Henderson, SM
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ
Jones, ET
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
McNamara, KJ
Nikolic, AA
O'Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, FM
Smith, ADH
Stone, SN
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Turnbull, MB
Varvaris, N
Whiteley, BD
Williams, MP
Wood, JP

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (13:01): The question now is that the bill be read a second time.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (13:01): This bill repeals the minerals resource rent tax, which is more commonly referred to as the mining tax. The government is reintroducing this legislation in order to meet both our 2010 and 2013 federal election commitments.

This bill removes the former Labor government's failed mining tax and all expenditure linked to the non-existent proceeds of this tax. This bill discontinues or rephases expenditure measures linked to the mining tax by the former government on the expectation that their costs would be met by the proceeds of mining tax revenues. As we now know, the failure of the mining tax to return any meaningful revenue meant the former government had to borrow money to pay for these unsustainable commitments. Updated costings for the bill we are introducing today will—

The SPEAKER: The member for McMahon on a point of order?

Mr Bowen: Madam Speaker, I genuinely seek your guidance. The parliamentary secretary is proceeding to read into the Hansard the second reading speech which was circulated by the other parliamentary secretary. If the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer read this second reading speech when he moved that the bill be read a second time, it would have, as the Manager of Opposition Business said, some status under law. But the fact is that the

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NOES

Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G
Burke, AS
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Fitzgibbon, JA
Griffin, AP
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
Leigh, AK
MacTiernan, AJGC
McGowan, C
Neumann, SK
O’Neill, CE
Parke, M
Plibersek, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Swan, WM
Thomson, KJ
Watts, TG
Zappia, A

Bowen, CE
Byrne, AE
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Elliot, MJ
Ferguson, LDT
Giles, AJ
Hall, JG (teller)
Husic, EN
King, CF
Macklin, JL
Marles, RD
Mitchell, RG
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Perrett, GD
Ripoll, BF
Rowland, MA
Snowdon, WE
Vamvakinou, M
Wilkie, AD
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance is reading the same speech into the Hansard when he has not moved the second reading. I seek your clarification as to whether this is to be regarded as a second reading speech on behalf of the government. Are they retrospectively trying to change standing orders to allow that as well?

**The SPEAKER:** My understanding of what has occurred is that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance is now reading his second reading speech—

**Mr Perrett:** Word for word.

**The SPEAKER:** It may be, word for word, a speech which has been circulated, but the status of his speech will be—he is simply giving his speech as the second reading. I call the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance.

**Mr McCormack:** As I was saying: updated costings for the bill we are introducing today reveal that removing the failed mining tax and all related expenditure improves the budget position by nearly $17 billion over the current forward estimates. Updated estimates for protected mining tax revenue reveal that it is expected to raise just $668 million over the same period.

This bill seeks to repeal or rephase more than $17 billion of legislative expenditure. The government cannot afford to keep borrowing money to pay for this kind of unfunded spending. By repealing or rephasing the measures related to the mining tax, this bill is a necessary step in repairing the damage caused to the nation's finances and it puts the budget on a more sustainable footing going forward. The application dates of the measures in this bill will be fixed by the Treasurer's proclamation once royal assent is received.

Schedule 1—repeal of the MRRT: Australia's mining tax has had a long and tortured journey. It was, of course, borne out of the Henry tax review, which was commissioned by the first Rudd government. One of the key recommendations was for a resource super profits tax, the RSPT. The original RSPT was forecast to raise $49.5 billion over a five-year period from 1 July 2012. This was to be a big hit to one of Australia's most successful industries. Ultimately, the announcement, consultation and handling of the RSPT was a large contributing factor to the demise of former Prime Minister Rudd. In taking over the prime ministership, former Gillard government famously struck a deal with three of Australia's biggest miners—RIO, BHP Billiton and Xstrata—and from this the minerals resource rent tax was born.

The new version of the mining tax also included an extension of petroleum resource rent tax to onshore projects. Forecast revenue on the new version of the mining tax was significantly revised down when compared to the original resource super profits tax. It was forecast to raise $26.5 billion compared to $49.5 billion over the five-year period from 1 July 2012.

Following the second version of the mining tax, there were three further variations, and forecast mining tax revenue has been written down in nearly every subsequent budget and MYEFO update. The government received just $600,000, net of refunds, for the June 2014 quarterly instalment of the mining tax. As previously mentioned, the mining tax, if allowed to continue, would be expected to raise just $668 million over the forward estimates. The mining tax has many design flaws which will preclude it from raising meaningful revenue, particularly when government administrative costs are taken into consideration.
We persistently called on the former government to explain how key details of their mining tax worked, particularly in relation to the upfront tax deduction from the market valuation method which is used to calculate tax liabilities for the minerals resource rent tax. A common statement thrown about by those still clinging to the failed tax is that the mining tax was necessary to have the industry pay its way. In 2011-12 the mining companies paid more than $24 billion in company taxes and royalties.

The mining tax is a flawed tax; and what is worse is that it imposes large administrative costs on operators in the resources sector trying to comply with the complex tax. The repeal of the minerals resource rent tax will save millions of dollars in compliance expenses for small, medium and large entities. So far in the two years of its existence, less than 20 taxpayers have contributed to paying the net $340 million raised by the mining tax but more than 125 miners have been required to submit mining tax instalment notices while making no net payments. That is around 125 taxpayers who are all complying with the mining tax legislation but not actually paying any tax. Therefore not only is the MRRT a complex and unnecessary tax which has failed to raise the substantial revenue predicted by the former government; it imposes a significant regulatory and compliance burden on the iron ore and coal mining industries and damages business confidence, which is critical to future investments and jobs.

Some have been complaining that just because the mining tax has raised so little revenue it could not possibly damage investor confidence. This argument ignores the importance that foreign companies place on investment decisions, especially in high-cost countries such as Australia. Unexpected costs in imposts imposed on business with no warning and unnecessary ongoing compliance burdens are deterrents for foreign investors, and that is exactly what the mining tax is.

The repeal of the mining tax will restore confidence and promote activity in the mining industry, creating jobs and contributing to the prosperity of all Australians. It sends a clear signal that Australia is determined to remain a premier destination for mining investment, and is once again open for business—as we have heard the Prime Minister say so many times.

Mining companies in Australia will continue to pay their fair share of tax through state royalties and company tax. We need to do what is responsible and repair the budget—that is what we were elected to do—and the removal of the mining tax and its associated expenditure is another step in the right direction.

Schedule 2 deals with loss carry-back. Schedule 2 of the bill repeals the mining tax related loss carry-back provisions that enable companies making a tax loss of up to $1 million to recoup taxes paid on an equivalent amount of taxable income in a prior income year. Companies will not lose access to their tax losses; rather, consistent with arrangements prior to the MRRT related amendments, companies will carry their tax losses forward to use as a deduction for a future year. The removal of this measure will improve the budget position by $1.3 billion over the forward estimates.

Schedule 3 deals with the small business instant asset write-off threshold. Schedule 3 of the bill amends the instant asset write-off threshold provisions. The instant asset write-off amount was increased to $6,500 in two stages as part of the mining and carbon tax packages. The mining tax package dealt with the increase from $1,000 to $5,000 whilst the carbon tax package dealt with the increase from $5,000 to $6,500. This legislation before the House
returns the write-off amount back from $6,500 to $1,000, effective from the income year in which proclamation occurs. Consistent with arrangements which existed prior to the MRRT related amendments, small business entities will still be able to deduct the value of a depreciating asset which costs $1,000 or over but over a longer time frame. The single small business pool arrangements will be preserved to maintain lower business compliance costs. Under these arrangements, assets costing $1,000 or more will be allocated to the existing general small business pool and depreciated at a rate of 15 per cent in the first year and 30 per cent in subsequent years.

If the value of the general small business pool is less than $1,000 at the end of the income year, the small business can claim a deduction for the entire value of the pool. The improvement in the budget position from reducing the instant asset write-off from $6,500 to $1,000 will be $3.2 billion over the forward estimates.

Schedule 4 deals with deductions for motor vehicles. The bill also provides that motor vehicle purchases made by small business entities will no longer be eligible for an accelerated deduction of $5,000. Motor vehicle purchases by small business entities using the simplified depreciation rules will instead be treated as normal business assets under the concessional capital arrangements available under subdivision 328-D of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997. Under these arrangements, they will be depreciated at a rate of 15 per cent in the year in which the asset is first used or installed for use and then 30 per cent for all subsequent years. If this bill is passed without undue further delay, the taking away of this measure will improve the budget position by $550 million over the forward estimates.

Schedule 5 deals with geothermal energy. The bill will repeal the extension of the income tax exploration provisions to geothermal energy exploration so that geothermal energy exploration and prospecting expenditure is not immediately deductible. Instead, normal capital depreciation rules will apply, simplifying a company's compliance expectations and requirements. Amendments are included to provide a capital gains tax rollover in cases where a geothermal exploration right is merely exchanged for a geothermal extraction right relating to the same area. This ensures that a capital gains tax liability will not be inappropriately incurred, consistent with the treatment of other mining rights. The removal of this measure will improve the budget position by $15 million over the forward estimates.

Schedule 6 deals with the superannuation guarantee charge percentage. The rate of the superannuation guarantee will be paused at the rate which is presently legislated for the proclamation year. The Treasurer will by a non-disallowable legislative instrument have the power to amend the superannuation guarantee charge percentage, which will allow the Treasurer to pause the rate for the following three income years and then increase the rate in increments of 0.5 per cent percentage points each year until the rate reaches 12 per cent. If this bill is passed without undue further delay, this measure will result in the SG rate being paused at the 1 July 2014 rate, which is 9½ per cent, and remain at that rate until 1 July 2018 when it will increase to 10 per cent on 1 July 2018 and then by 0.5 per cent every year thereafter until the rate reaches 12 per cent on 1 July 2022. These amendments to the superannuation guarantee will improve the budget position by $2.6 billion in cash terms over the forward estimates.

Schedule 7 deals with the low-income superannuation contribution. Schedule 7 of the bill abolishes the low-income superannuation contribution. The government will revisit
concessional contribution caps and incentives for lower-income earners once the budget is back in a strong surplus—and we all need that. The white paper on the reform of Australia’s tax system to be prepared before the next election provides an opportunity to consider the appropriate taxation of superannuation contributions, including for low-income earners. Low- to middle-income earners may be eligible for the superannuation co-contribution to boost their retirement savings. The removal of the low-income superannuation contribution will improve the budget position by $3.6 billion in cash terms over the forward estimates.

Finally, schedule 8 deals with the repeal of income support bonus—this is not final; it is the penultimate. The coalition made very clear in the lead-up to the last election that, if elected, we were committed to getting rid of the mining tax and all of the unfunded spending promises, including the income support bonus. Participation in the workforce is the best way to ensure economic stability and the payment system is geared to promote this while ensuring that a safety net exists for those requiring help. This bill will abolish all future payments of income support bonus from a date fixed by proclamation following the passage of the bill. Removal of this measure will improve the budget position by around $1.3 billion over the forward estimates.

Finally, schedule 9 of the bill repeals the schoolkids bonus.

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga.

Mr McCormack: The government intends to offer a more efficient targeted approach to improving education outcomes for students through effective education policies rather than through bonus payments to individuals. If this bill is passed without undue further delay, the removal of this measure will improve the budget position by almost $4.7 billion over the forward estimates.

By abolishing the failed mining tax and by repealing or rephasing the measures related to the mining tax, this bill is a necessary step to putting the budget on a more sustainable footing going forward. Full details of the measures are contained in the explanatory memorandum, and I move:

That the motion be put.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be put.

The House divided. [13:20]

The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes ................. 81
Noes .................. 54
Majority ............. 27

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Broad, AJ
Brough, MT
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)

AYES

Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S (teller)
Ciobo, SM
Coleman, DB
Dutton, PC
**AYES**

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Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER: The question now is that the bill be read a second time.

[The House divided: [13:27]

(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes ...................... 82
Noes ........................ 54
Majority .................. 28

**AYES**

Alexander, JG  
Andrews, KJ  
Billson, BF  
Broad, AJ  
Brough, MT  
Christensen, GR  
Cobb, JK  
Coulton, M (teller)  
Entsch, WG  
Frydenberg, JA  
Gillespie, DA  
Griggs, NL  
Hawke, AG  
Hendy, PW  
Howarth, LR  
Hutchinson, ER  
Jensen, DG  
Joyce, BT  
Kelly, C  
Landry, ML  
Macfarlane, IE  
Markus, LE  
McCormack, MF  
McNamara, KJ  
Nikolic, AA  
O'Dwyer, KM  
Pitt, KJ  
Prentice, J  
Pyne, CM  
Randall, DJ  
Roy, WB  

**NOES**

McGowan, C  
Neumann, SK  
O'Neil, CE  
Parke, M  
Ripoll, BF  
Rowland, MA  
Snowdon, WE  
Thistlethwaite, MJ  
Vamvakinou, M  
Wilkie, AD  

Mitchell, RG  
O'Connor, BPJ  
Owens, J  
Perrett, GD  
Rishworth, AL  
Ryan, JC (teller)  
Swan, WM  
Thomson, KJ  
Watts, TG  
Zappia, A
Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Mr Bowen (McMahon) (13:29): What a farce we have seen today in relation to this legislation. We had the parliamentary secretary move a second reading and forget to, or perhaps on instruction from the Leader of the House, read the second reading speech—which, as we have traversed, has some force of law; and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister...
for Finance read out the second reading speech without the force of law, trying to clean up the mess. These calamity kids over there—we see we have the adults in charge—now say, 'We know what's in this bill.' Some on that side of the House might know what is in the bill; the vast majority of the people who just spoke and who just voted do not know what is in the bill. Certainly, on this side of the House, we have had the opportunity for a very brief look at the bill and it is confirmed that the government is proceeding with abolishing the schoolkids bonus. It is confirmed that the government is proceeding with winding back the instant asset write-off and the loss carryback. It is confirmed that the superannuation guarantee is deferred. And it is confirmed that the low-income superannuation contribution is delayed. But there are changes.

The Treasurer is seeking the right by legislative fiat to change the superannuation guarantee without reference to the parliament. If you think we are going to cop that, you have got another thing coming. This government, who does not believe in superannuation, with a Prime Minister who calls compulsory superannuation a 'con job', now wants to remove the ability of the parliament to vote on legislation relating to the superannuation guarantee. This has been an appalling process and the House should not be treated with such contempt. Accordingly, I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the honourable member for McMahon from moving the following motion forthwith—That the debate be adjourned until the next sitting day to provide members with an opportunity to examine the legislation.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

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

Mr Ciobo (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (13:31): I move:

That the question be now put.

The SPEAKER: A division is required.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

The SPEAKER: We have called a division.

Mr Burke: Is it that the question be put or that we no longer be heard?

The SPEAKER: That the question be put.

Mr Burke: There is no question before the House.

Mr Pyne: Yes, because the member for Jagajaga seconded it. You missed it.

Mr Burke: Thank you. That is fine.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the question be put.

The House divided. [13:36]

(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes .................82
Noes ...................56
Majority...............26

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Andrews, KL
Baldwin, RC

CHAMBER
### AYES

- Billson, BF
- Broad, AJ
- Brough, MT
- Christensen, GR
- Cobb, JK
- Coulton, M (teller)
- Entsch, WG
- Frydenberg, JA
- Gillespie, DA
- Griggs, NL
- Hawke, AG
- Hendy, PW
- Howarth, LR
- Hutchinson, ER
- Jensen, DG
- Joyce, BT
- Kelly, C
- Landry, ML
- Macfarlane, IE
- Markus, LE
- McCormack, MF
- Morrison, SJ
- O'Dowd, KD
- Pasin, A
- Porter, CC
- Price, ML
- Ramsey, RE
- Robert, SR
- Ruddock, PM
- Scott, FM
- Smith, ADH
- Stone, SN
- Sukkar, MS
- Tehan, DT
- Turnbull, MB
- Varvaris, N
- Whiteley, BD
- Williams, MP
- Wood, JP

### NOES

- Albanese, AN
- Bird, SL
- Brodtmann, G
- Burke, AS
- Butler, TM
- Chalmers, JE
- Chesters, LM
- Claydon, SC
- Comroy, PM
- Dreyfus, MA
- Ellis, KM
- Bandt, AP
- Bowen, CE
- Burke, AE
- Butler, MC
- Byrne, AM
- Clare, JD
- Collins, JM
- Danby, M
- Elliot, MJ
- Feeney, D
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (13:35): The question now is that the motion to suspend standing and sessional orders be agreed to.

The House divided. [13:43]

(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes ...................... 57
Noes ...................... 82
Majority................. 25

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G
Burke, AS
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Ferguson, LDT
Giles, AJ
Hall, JG (teller)
Husic, EN
King, CF
Macklin, JL
Marles, RD
Mitchell, RG
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Parke, M

NOES

Fitzgibbon, JA
Griffin, AP
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
Leigh, AK
MacTiernan, AJGC
McGowan, C
Neumann, SK
O’Neil, CE
Parke, M
Plibersek, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Swan, WM
Thomson, KJ
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Question negatived.

The SPEAKER (13:47): The question now is that the bill be agreed to.

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (13:47): Again, we see this continuing farce—

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (13:47): I move:

That the question be now put.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the question be now put.

The House divided. [13:50]

(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes ...................... 82
Noes ...................... 57
Majority .................. 25

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Broad, AJ
Brough, MT
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Frydenberg, IA
Gillespie, DA
Griggs, NL
Hawke, AG
Hendy, PW
Howarth, LR
Hutchinson, ER
Jensen, DG
Joyce, BT
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McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
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Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Roy, WB
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Southcott, AJ
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX
Question agreed to.

**The SPEAKER** (13:51): The question now is that the bill be agreed to.

**Mr BOWEN** (McMahon) (13:51): This is a rort to rout the superannuation savings of ordinary Australians. This is a disgrace!

**The SPEAKER:** The member will resume his seat. We have just concluded the question that the motion be put, and the motion is that the bill be agreed to.

The House divided. [13:52]

(The Speaker—the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ayes</th>
<th>Noes</th>
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<td>82</td>
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**AYES**

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<td>Wilson, RJ</td>
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<td>Wood, JP</td>
<td>Wyatt, KG</td>
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**NOES**

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<td>Bandt, AP</td>
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<td>Bowen, CE</td>
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<td>Brodtmann, G</td>
<td>Burke, AE</td>
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<td>Burke, AS</td>
<td>Butler, MC</td>
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<td>Butler, TM</td>
<td>Byrne, AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chalmers, JE</td>
<td>Champion, ND</td>
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Question agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (13:54): I move:

That the bill be now read a third time.

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (13:54): Madam Speaker, I am seeking the call.

The SPEAKER: The member for McMahon on a point of order.

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (13:54): We will oppose the third reading because this is a rort to wreck the superannuation of Australians.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. That is an abuse of the standing orders and he knows it.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Given that that has now been made clear, does the member for McMahon get to continue his speech?

The SPEAKER: No, because the parliamentary secretary is seeking the call.

Mr Burke: For what? We are in the middle of a speech from the member for McMahon.

The SPEAKER: I will give the call to the member for McMahon.
Mr Bowen (McMahon) (13:55): Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is a rort to wreck the superannuation savings of ordinary Australians—

Mr Ciobo (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (13:55): I move:

That the motion be put.

The Speaker: The question is that the motion be put.

The House divided. [13:57]

(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

AYES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S (teller)
Ciobo, SM
Coleman, DB
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Gambaro, T
Goodenough, IR
Hartseyker, L
Henderson, SM
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ
Jones, ET
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Laundy, C
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
McNamara, KJ
Nikolic, AA
O'Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Roy, WB
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Southcott, AJ
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX
Wicks, LE

Ayes ...................83
Noes ....................57
Majority ...............26

AYES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S (teller)
Ciobo, SM
Coleman, DB
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Gambaro, T
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Macfarlane, IE
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O'Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, AC
Price, ML
Ruddock, RE
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, BC
Scott, FM
Smith, ADH
Stone, SN
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Turnbull, MB
Varvaris, N
Whiteley, BD
Williams, MP
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (13:58): The question now is that the bill be read a third time. The House divided. [13:59]

(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes ................. 85
Noes .................. 56
Majority ............. 29

AYES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S (teller)

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Brough, AJ
Broad, MT
Christensen, GR
AYES

Ciobo, SM   Cobb, JK
Coleman, DB   Coulton, M (teller)
Dutton, PC   Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW   Frydenberg, JA
Gambharo, T   Gillespie, DA
Goodenough, IR   Griggs, NL
Hartsuyker, L   Hawke, AG
Henderson, SM   Hendy, PW
Hogan, KJ   Howarth, LR
Hunt, GA   Hutchinson, ER
Irons, SJ   Jensen, DG
Jones, ET   Joyce, BT
Keenan, M   Kelly, C
Laming, A   Landry, ML
Laundy, C   Ley, SP
Macfarlane, IE   Marino, NB
Markus, LE   Matheson, RG
McCormack, MF   McNamara, KJ
Morrison, SJ   Nikolic, AA
O’Dowd, KD   O’Dwyer, KM
Pasin, A   Pitt, KJ
Porter, CC   Prentice, J
Price, ML   Pyne, CM
Ramsey, RE   Randall, DJ
Robb, AJ   Robert, SR
Roy, WB   Ruddock, PM
Scott, BC   Scott, FM
Simpkins, LXL   Smith, ADH
Southcott, AJ   Stone, SN
Sudmalis, AE   Sukkar, MS
Taylor, AJ   Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE   Turnbull, MB
Van Manen, AJ   Varvaris, N
Vasta, RX   Whiteley, BD
Wicks, LE   Williams, MP
Wilson, RJ   Wood, JP
Wyatt, KG

NOES

Albanese, AN   Bandt, AP
Bird, SL   Bowen, CE
Brodman, G   Burke, AE
Burke, AS   Butler, MC
Butler, TM   Byrne, AM
Chalmers, JE   Champion, ND
Chesters, LM   Clare, JD
Claydon, SC   Collins, JM
Conroy, PM   Danby, M
Dreyfus, MA   Elliot, MJ
Ellis, KM   Feeney, D
Ferguson, LDT   Fitzgibbon, JA
Giles, AJ   Griffin, AP
The SPEAKER (13:58): (In division) We are proceeding with the division. In accordance with standing order 97, at two o'clock we move to questions without notice; however, section 97(b) provides that, should a division be in progress, the division will proceed and be completed, and the result announced.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Iraq and Syria

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:01): by leave—I rise to address the House on the developing situation in Iraq. Many Australians are understandably apprehensive about the risk of becoming involved in another long and costly conflict in the Middle East. The situation in the Middle East is indeed a witches’ brew of complexity and potential danger. Doing anything involves serious risks and weighty consequences. But doing nothing involves risks and consequences, too. As things stand, doing nothing means leaving millions of people exposed to death, forced conversion and ethnic cleansing.

So far this year, more than a million Iraqis have been driven from their homes. We have all seen on our screens the beheadings, the crucifixions and the mass executions. Peoples and cultures that have existed for millennia are faced with extermination. Thousands of women have been forced into sexual slavery. President Obama has labelled what is happening at the hands of the ISIL movement a potential genocide. I refuse to call this hideous movement an 'Islamic state' because it is not a state; it is a death cult. In good conscience, Australia cannot leave the Iraqi people to face this horror, this pure evil, alone—or ask others to do in the name of human decency what we won't do ourselves. It is right to do what we prudentley and proportionately can to alleviate this suffering, to prevent its spread, and to deal with its perpetrators.

So far, Australian aircraft have participated in humanitarian airdrops to people trapped on Mount Sinjar and, just yesterday, to the besieged inhabitants of the town of Amerli. Yesterday’s airdrop was mounted in conjunction with American, British and French aircraft.
In coming days, Australian aircraft will join an airlift of supplies, including military equipment, to the Kurdish regional government in Erbil. American, British, French, Canadian and Italian aircraft will also be involved. This involvement has been at the request of the Obama administration, and with the support of the Iraqi government.

So far, we have met requests for humanitarian relief and for logistical support. So far, there has been no request for military action itself. Should such a request come from the Obama administration, and be supported by the government of Iraq, it would be considered against these criteria: Is there a clear and achievable overall objective? Is there a clear and proportionate role for Australian forces? Have all the risks been properly assessed? And is there an overall humanitarian objective in accordance with Australia’s national interests?

Like President Obama, Australia has no intention to commit combat troops on the ground. But we are not inclined to stand by in the face of preventable genocide either. Australia is not a country that goes looking for trouble but we have always been prepared to do what we can to help in the wider world. Many Australians, understandably, will shrink from reaching out to this conflict on the other side of the world—but this conflict is reaching out to us. At least 60 Australians are fighting with terrorist groups across Iraq and Syria. They are supported by about 100 more. And we know—or at least should prudently assume—that many of them will seek to return to Australia. They will return accustomed to kill. Around two-thirds of Australians who returned from fighting with terrorist groups in Afghanistan, a decade or so back, subsequently became involved in terrorist activities here. A number are still serving long jail sentences. The Australians and their supporters who have joined terrorist groups in the Middle East are a serious and growing threat to our security. That is why the government is boosting counter-terrorism funding by $630 million and updating our laws so they keep pace with evolving technologies and the developing threat. At the same time we have stepped up engagement with community groups here in Australia.

I want to stress now, as I always do, that the threat is extremism, not any particular community; the target is terrorism, not religion. We need to understand, though, that people who kill without compunction in other countries are hardly likely to be law-abiding citizens, should they return to Australia. They have come to hate us no less than they hate their victims in Iraq and Syria. They do not hate us for what we do, but for who we are and for how we live. They hate us because we let people live and worship in whatever way they choose. And I thank God that we do. I am grateful that the government’s actions so far have been fully supported by the Leader of Opposition. This is as it should be when our nation faces threats to its national security. Obviously, the parliament will have a chance to speak to this statement and that of the Leader of the Opposition in coming days, and that too is as it should be in a free and fair democracy such as ours.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:08): I thank the Prime Minister for keeping me updated as events unfolded of the weekend. I thank him for agreeing to Labor’s request for a statement to the house today. Labor’s support for the government on this question is underpinned by three key principles: (1) responding effectively to the humanitarian crisis in Iraq to prevent genocide and prevent suffering; (2) promoting a unity government in Iraq that is inclusive and can achieve national cohesion—a government that would reject sectarianism and the alienation of minorities, enabling effective security and control of Iraqi territory. Indeed, we do not believe we should act in a way that would leave
Iraq in a worse position. The third principle is: denying motivation and opportunity for Australian foreign fighters. We must reflect carefully on what we do. We should not confuse empty jingoism and aggressive nationalism with steady decision making; neither can we ignore the dreadful consequences of fanaticism and extremism.

Today all members and all parties have the opportunity to express their views in this place and in the Federation Chamber. Today is also an important opportunity for all of us in the opposition to place on the parliamentary record Labor's support for the dedicated and professional men and women of our Australian Defence Forces and Labor's unreserved condemnation for the evil of ISIS and the genocide it is inflicting on minorities in Iraq. Labor has promised to take a constructive and cooperative approach to this most important question, and the fact that Labor regards the role of international cooperation, featuring Gulf and regional nations' engagement as crucial, especially after a new Iraqi government is formed on or around 10 September.

National security is, and always will be, for Labor above politics. Whilst we deplore violence and war as instruments for achieving solutions to geopolitical problems, we acknowledge that sometimes it is necessary for the international community to take strong steps to end death and destruction. The decision to send Australian men and women into harm's way is never taken lightly. Carrying out this mission in a region torn by violence and under the risk of attack from an aggressive enemy, capturing weaponry as it advances, brings with it a deadly risk. We can have full confidence in the skill and bravery of our Australian Defence personnel. In providing assistance to the people of Iraq, Australia will be represented by some of the best-trained and best-equipped service men and women in the world. Australia along with the air forces of several countries will be resupplying Kurdish Peshmerga troops—the front line against the terrorist incursions in northern Iraq. Australians can be proud of the part we have already played in this international mission. Our Australian forces in Iraq are assisting an international humanitarian effort to prevent genocide against beleaguered minorities in northern Iraq.

Let there be no doubt about this use of the word 'genocide': the Islamic state of Iraq and Syria, ISIS, is indeed a barbaric organisation. It is fuelled by poisonous hatred and extremism, engaging in the wilful massacre of innocent people and the unforgivable degradation of forcing women into slavery. Theirs is a most egregious abuse in the name of Islam. Their every action is a betrayal of millions of good people of conscience who follow that faith. That point deserves to be made again: the Islamic State does not represent the Islamic faith. No follower of that religion of peace and tolerance should be made accountable for the crimes of these fanatics, especially in suspicious times when unfounded resentment can run high. No citizen of Australia or any nation should be driven into the arms of extremism by intolerance.

The events unfolding in Iraq have horrified the international community. A United Nations report based on 480 interviews and documentary evidence reveals the breadth and the depth of the atrocities being perpetrated. The report says:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children have been present at the executions, which take the form of beheading or shooting in the head at close range ... Bodies are placed on public display, often on crucifixes, for up to three days, serving as a warning to local residents.</th>
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<tr>
<td>The evidence is overwhelming. The Islamic State is an enemy of humanity engaged in crimes against humanity. For the forces of ISIS, the enemy is not one nation, one faith or one people.</td>
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CHAMBER
The enemy is the very existence of peace; it is the presence of justice; it is freedom of worship, freedom of association, freedom of speech and freedom itself.

More than a decade ago Simon Crean stood at this dispatch box as Labor leader to support our troops but oppose a war. History has vindicated his judgement. The decision to go to war in Iraq in 2003 was based on false evidence. It was a rushed position devoid of an effective plan to win the peace and devoid of widespread international support, but, as the government has said, the situation we face today is very different. This is not 2003. In 2003 we went to Iraq without international support, without the support of the majority of the Iraqi population. Today the Iraqi government is speaking with the international community, seeking our assistance. Today we have a United States administration adopting a methodical, internationally-inclusive approach. Today we can look to the nations of the region, the Arabic leaders, for their part in a solution to this problem.

It is truly terrible that, more than a decade after a war which inflicted so much loss on the Iraqi people and divided the international community, fanaticism and sectarian ethnic hatreds have again pushed this region to the brink of disaster. I am conscious that there are still details to be worked through and that the situation is evolving, but Labor's principles on this question are clear. We must respond effectively to the humanitarian crisis in Iraq, to prevent genocide and alleviate suffering. We must promote an effective, inclusive unity government in Iraq that eschews sectarianism and the alienation of minorities and that builds national cohesion, enabling effective security and control of Iraqi territory. We must deny motivation and opportunity for Australian foreign fighters.

We are committed to these principles just as we are committed to the support of our brave service personnel and just as we are committed to taking a constructive approach to this question. Australians listening to this parliament and throughout our country can be certain that Labor and the coalition stand as one on the importance of national security. We share a resolute commitment to keeping our people and our country safe, now and always. When Labor declares our opposition to ISIS and all its works we understand that we are not dealing with rational people. The religious hatred that we are seeing is not rational and never has been. Religious factions who violently hate one another are an anachronism in Australia. We certainly expect people who come here to leave such causes and arguments behind. Our citizens are rightly shocked by the brutality of this evil sectarian struggle, but the inescapable fact is that genocide is being perpetrated against defenceless people. We cannot cooperate with this evil by refusing to support the innocent.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:16): by leave—I move:
That further statements on indulgence on the Prime Minister's statement on Iraq be permitted in the Federation Chamber.

Question agreed to.

Mr Bandt: Isn't Team Australia allowed to debate? Can't we speak on this motion?

Mr Wilkie interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Provision has just been made for you to speak to it in the Federation Chamber.

CHAMBER
MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:17): I inform the House that the Minister for Foreign Affairs will be absent from question time today, as she is in Samoa attending the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States. The Deputy Prime Minister will answer questions on her behalf. I also inform the House that the Treasurer is unwell and will be absent from question time today. The Minister for Trade and Investment will answer questions on his behalf.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:18): My question is to the Prime Minister. One year ago today, the Prime Minister promised a government of no surprises and no excuses. This morning, as part of Dementia Awareness Month, I visited the Kangara Waters aged-care facility, where the Prime Minister has cut the dementia and severe behaviour supplement for 16 residents. When did the Prime Minister tell these Australians—indeed, any Australians—before the election that he would cut this supplement of $16 a day?

Mr Dutton interjecting—

Mr Hutchinson interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Health will desist, as will the member for Lyons.

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga will also desist.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:18): Obviously, dementia is a very, very serious issue. This government certainly intends to do all that we reasonably can to help aged-care providers to provide appropriately for their patients with dementia. The problem is that the scheme that the Leader of the Opposition refers to was poorly designed and grossly underfunded by the former government. The former government allocated, as I recall, about $10 million for this particular scheme. Because of the poor design, at least 10 times that amount was spent in a very short space of time. We have suspended the program and we are working with aged-care providers to redesign the program on a basis that is sustainable so that people with dementia get the care that they deserve.

Ukraine

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (14:19): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister please update the House on the most recent developments in Ukraine and the response of the Australian government?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:20): I do thank the member for Solomon for her question. It is a very important subject and it rightly concerns members on both sides of the House. For months Russia has been running a proxy campaign to destabilise Ukraine in clear breach and defiance of international law. As this House well knows, in July, Russian backed rebels shot down flight MH17 using Russian supplied weapons, thus murdering 38 Australians. This was so much worse than a tragedy; it was an atrocity.

Now Russia is deliberately and openly violating Ukrainian sovereignty. NATO says that at least 1,000 Russian soldiers are operating openly inside Ukraine. NATO has released imagery
showing combat forces, including heavy weapons and armoured vehicles, in operation inside Ukraine. So far, at least 2,500 people have lost their lives in this conflict. Let us be clear about what is happening: Russia started it and Russia must take responsibility for this loss of life. Russia quite brazenly is trying to break eastern Ukraine away from Ukraine, into a separate country. If Russian troops remain in Ukraine and if Russia persists in its attempts to break up a neighbouring country that has done it no harm, Russia risks becoming an international pariah.

I inform the House that Australia will lift its sanctions against Russia to the level of the European Union's. There will be no new arms exports; there will be no new access by Russian state-owned banks to the Australian capital market; there will be no new exports for use in the oil and gas industry; there will be no new trade or investment in the Crimea; and there will be further targeted financial sanctions and travel bans against specific individuals. I further advise that the ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence will be at the NATO summit later this week for consultation with our friends and allies. I want to make it absolutely clear that the bullying of small nations by big ones and assertions that might is right should have no place in our world.

**Budget**

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (14:23): My question is to the Prime Minister. Before the election, in a press release dated 26 August 2013, the Prime Minister said:

Over 320,000 Australians are afflicted by dementia …

These numbers will only increase as our population gets older.

Prime Minister, given the increasing number of Australians affected by dementia, why did you cut the dementia and severe behaviours supplement without warning to anyone?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:23): As I explained in answer to the previous question, from the Leader of the Opposition, this was a poorly designed and underfunded program. I accept that the former government was trying to do the right thing. Regrettably, in this area—as in so many others—good intentions were not matched by smooth and effective implementation of policy. Good intentions were not matched by effective public administration. I repeat to the member who just asked the question what I said in response to the previous question: this particular program has been suspended. It will be redesigned in consultation with the aged-care sector to ensure that dementia sufferers are dealt with appropriately, suitably and with compassion.

We do take the problem of dementia very seriously indeed. That is why, to honour our election commitments, the recent budget included a $200 million boost to research on the treatment of dementia. This is a very serious problem. It deserves to be tackled properly and comprehensively, and that is exactly what will happen under this government.

**National Security**

Mr VARVARIS (Barton) (14:25): My question is to the Minister for Justice. Will the minister inform the House how the recently announced national disruption group will work to keep Australians safe from the threat of home-grown terrorism?

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (14:25): I thank the member for Barton for that question. He will recall that I spoke in the House last week about the $64 million that the
Abbott government is investing to significantly enhance the ability of federal law enforcement agencies to combat the threat of foreign fighters. Over half of this money will be spent on an AFP-led multiagency national disruption group. This group will be a dedicated unit focused on both traditional and non-traditional ways of disrupting foreign fighters and destroying their support networks. It will bring together Australia's law enforcement and intelligence community, including Customs and Border Protection, ASIO, ASIS and the Attorney-General's Department. However, the key strength of the national disruption group will be its ability to utilise any of the resources or any of the agencies at the disposal of the Commonwealth government to help in the fight against extremism and terrorism.

While stronger policing capability and traditional law enforcement methods will be essential, other Commonwealth agencies can provide non-traditional methods of disruption which can prove to be extremely effective in disrupting the activities of foreign fighters. The national disruption group will co-opt any agency that can help it in achieving this end. An example is Centrelink; we will co-opt Centrelink to make sure that foreign fighters are not in receipt of Centrelink payments. We will use the Australian Taxation Office to run taxation compliance checks or help us with unexplained wealth orders which might include taking proceeds of crime action. We will use DFAT to cancel people's passports. We will use Defence, Immigration and the whole gamut of resources that are available to the Commonwealth government to disrupt the activities of people who might seek to do Australia harm. This whole-of-government approach ensures that all of Commonwealth government resources will be available to disrupt and prevent foreign fighters and violent extremists from harming our national interests. They will be backed up by two 10-person investigation teams, which means that they will have the necessary manpower to do the job that we require of them.

Many members of this chamber will be aware that this is very similar to the approach we have used in the battle against organised crime—using all of the resources and the agencies at the disposal of the federal government to do everything we can to disrupt their activities. The activities of the National Anti Gang Squad have been very successful.

Foreign fighters and extremists should be aware that the full force of the Commonwealth government will be utilised in stopping them from going overseas to fight, in stopping them from funding terrorist activities and in stopping them from engaging in violent extremism here in Australia.

Budget

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:28): My question is to the Prime Minister. One year ago today the Prime Minister promised a government of no surprises, no excuses. Dr Julie McClellan, a GP in Melbourne, in the Australian Doctor petition against the GP tax questioned why she would have to ask:

… the confused, elderly lady rocking in the corner for her $7?

When did the Prime Minister tell Australians before the election that they would be forced to pay his new GP tax?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:29): I say in response to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition what I have said in response to numerous questions over the last few months—that is, if it is right and proper to have a modest co-payment for access to
Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme drugs, it is surely right and proper to have a modest co-payment for access to Medicare

Members opposite know that it makes sense to have a modest Medicare co-payment—

*Mr Champion interjecting—*

**Mr ABBOTT:** because the former Prime Minister Bob Hawke actually introduced a modest Medicare co-payment.

*Mr Champion interjecting—*

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

**Mr ABBOTT:** The member for Lingiari and the—I cannot remember his seat; he used to be the member for Reid—they voted in this parliament for a modest co-payment back in the early 1990s. So members opposite know that there is a very strong case for a co-payment—

**Mr Burke:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The question goes to when the Prime Minister told the Australian people.

**The SPEAKER:** The Prime Minister has concluded his answer.

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**Budget**

**Mr PALMER** (Fairfax) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Health, Mr Dutton. As most Australians are against the co-payment, Palmer United, the Greens and Labor have now formally declared war against it. There is no prospect of it becoming law. Why does the government persist in undermining business confidence by not putting forward proposals that have the support of the Australian people and by putting forward proposals that will never happen? Do they want to frighten people or undermine business confidence?

**Mr DUTTON** (Dickson—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (14:31): I thank the member for Fairfax, and I thank him for the way in which he has been able to engage with me and with the government on this very important issue. We have had very productive discussions and his suggestions around the co-payment, which I have not spoken about publicly, we have welcomed. We have done work on the proposals put to us by the member for Fairfax and the Palmer United Party. Like the government, the Palmer United Party—and I think most good thinking Australians—understand that we have a problem when it comes to Medicare and we want to make sure that we can sustain it for the next generation. Labor had two independent reports that came to them and said that spending at its current level was unsustainable, but what did they do; what the member for Sydney do? She spent more money on building great big new bureaucracies and not on front-line services. Labor run around telling people, 'We raise $10 billion out of the Medicare levy. That'll pay for Medicare,' but, in typical economic fashion conducted by the Labor Party, the problem is that, for the $10 billion that we raise, we spend $20 billion a year on Medicare. So, if the Labor Party are going to go out before the next election saying to the Australian public that they are going to double the Medicare levy to pay for the gap, they should go out and declare that, if that is their plan. If their plan is to increase taxes, they should be up-front about it, but of course they are not, because Labor cannot manage the economy and they cannot manage the health portfolio.

We were spending $8 billion a year 10 years ago on Medicare. Today we spend $20 billion a year. In 10 years time we will spend $34 billion a year. What we are saying is that, through...
a modest co-payment, we will strengthen Medicare for the next generation. That is what the government aims to do. At the same time, we have adopted Labor's logic when it comes to the PBS, because Labor introduced a co-payment on the PBS. Why did they do that? They did it because, at the time, Labor were honest with the Australian public and they said, 'Our medicine scheme is unsustainable without the co-payment.' We are definite about our plans to strengthen Medicare and to make sure that we have a world-class health system for a generation to come. Labor are putting a proposal to the Australian public which is unfunded and, in typical Labor fashion, they ran out of money before they were able to do anything about this problem before the last election.

**Asylum Seekers**

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (14:33): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Will the minister brief the House on the latest monthly update on Operation Sovereign Borders?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:34): I thank the member for McPherson for her question and her ongoing interest. I can say that the latest monthly update released today points to the continued success of Operation Sovereign Borders. I commend all of those men and women who serve as part of that operation in a civilian and non-civilian capacity, led by Lieutenant General Campbell. I can also say that, in addition to that, it is not just what is being achieved through Operation Sovereign Borders but how it is being achieved by all of these agencies working together under a unified command to get the job done, with a very simple and clear mission and that is to stop the boats.

I can tell you that for all of August there was no successful venture—not a single successful venture—and that makes seven out of eight months this year where there has not been a single successful venture. But there was one successful venture where people were transferred to Nauru in the last month. I can count them: there was one. In comparison, if I have to count up those that occurred under the now opposition, when they were the government watch, they would all have to take their shoes and socks off because, to count them up: 268 in eight months of last year. Just in the month of August, there were 25 ventures, and under this government there have been no such ventures this August.

I can also say that there are now fewer than 10,000 people in Indonesia as a result of the draining of those who are coming to Indonesia, as a result of the successful policies of this government. In addition to that, I would say that there are now 300 transferees who have gone to offshore processing and have had their claims assessed. I can tell you how many had their claims assessed for offshore processing when those opposite were running it, and the answer is a big fat zero—absolutely none. One hundred and seventy-nine people have been resettled—some of them have jobs; some of them are attempting to start businesses. Four hundred and five people have decided to leave. That is five times the rate of departure from offshore processing that was occurring under the previous government.

The policies being implemented by this government on our borders are working, and they are working in a way that those opposite never could have pretended or dreamed would work, and the record bears it out. But there is more work to be done, because we can never, ever rest on this issue. The Australian people trust us not to rest. They know that those who sit on this side of the House will be forever vigilant when it comes to this issue. We will never relax on these issues. We will never compromise the policies which are working to stop the deaths at
sea and to stop the rot that occurred under the previous government. They trust us to get this job done and, deep down, those on the other side know they trust us to get this job done.

**Budget**

**Ms KING** (Ballarat) (14:37): My question is to the Prime Minister. One year ago today the Prime Minister promised a government of no surprises and no excuses. Dr Tony Bongiorno, a GP in my electorate of Ballarat, wrote to me recently about elderly patients with skin tears who need to visit the GP twice a week to have their wounds dressed. When did the Prime Minister tell GPs they would have to collect the GP tax from patients like these?

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:38): The Labor Party, under Bob Hawke, told people that this was a sensible, reasonable and decent thing to do. The Labor Party, under Bob Hawke, put a co-payment on the national agenda, just as they had earlier put a PBS co-payment on the national agenda.

**The SPEAKER**: The Prime Minister will resume his seat. I call the member for Ballarat on a point of order—if it is on relevance. It is not an invitation to repeat the question.

**Ms King**: It is on relevance. The Prime Minister was asked when he informed people of his policy.

**The SPEAKER**: The member will resume her seat. The Prime Minister has the call.

**Mr ABBOTT**: I say to the member, who has asked the question again and again and again in one form or another: if it is right and proper to have a co-payment on the PBS, why is it not right and proper to have a modest co-payment on Medicare? All I can assume is that those opposite are going to abolish the PBS co-payment—and they will have to find billions and billions more to support this latest policy idiocy which is coming yet again from members opposite. Everyone knows what the opposition really think because the Labor shadow assistant treasurer has told us. And I presume that the people that the shadow minister for health has referred to have been informed by her that her side is deeply divided on this. Let me refer yet again to what Labor's shadow assistant treasurer has said:

… there is a better way of operating a health system, and the change should hardly hurt at all. As economists have shown, the ideal model involves a small co-payment—it won't hurt at all—

**Mr Shorten interjecting**—

**Mr ABBOTT**: The Leader of the Opposition says, 'This is pathetic.' He should not abuse his own frontbencher like this. If what I am reading is so pathetic, how is that man still on the Labor frontbench? Bob Hawke, the father of the co-payment, was right; the member for Jagajaga, the midwife of the co-payment, was right; and so is Labor's assistant treasurer, the son of the co-payment. They are all right, and this government is right: a modest co-payment for Medicare makes sense, just as a modest PBS co-payment also makes sense.

**Small Business**

**Mr WOOD** (La Trobe) (14:41): My question is to the Minister for Small Business. Will the minister inform the House what the government is doing to energise the small business sector. How will this help the economy?
Mr BILLSON (Dunkley—Minister for Small Business) (14:41): I thank the member for La Trobe. What a great privilege it was to work with him at a small business community forum recently in Beaconsfield and to hear firsthand from those people mortgaging their houses—and, in some cases, their firstborn—to invest in an enterprise about what it is that we are actually doing to support their enterprise. A key part of that is about getting those broader economic settings right. We often hear the debate in this place about what should and should not happen, but there can be no argument about the need to get the economic fundamentals right in this country. Through that, we can build a strong economy and create the prosperity that we need to generate the wealth and revenue to maintain crucial government services to invest in infrastructure for the future and to give our defence and security organisations all the tools they need to continue this country's reputation as a great place to raise a family and build a business.

What we are doing is trying to get the budget fixed. There was a time when Labor thought that that mattered. There was a time when anyone with any sense of responsibility in this parliament knew that you could not see the ship of state heading towards the rocks without taking responsibility to right its course and get it back on track. But instead of going along and supporting the clear economic strategy that this government has outlined, those opposite and some on the crossbench and in the Senate are saying there is no problem. Well, we know the trajectory of the budget. We know we have inherited six record budgets from Labor. We know we have inherited a budget deficit trajectory of $123 billion. We know that Labor has left us on track for $667 billion of debt.

Even at the debt level right now, $1 billion a month is being borrowed just to service that debt—$1 billion that could go into that crucial infrastructure supporting those programs that we talked about. So I think it is right that the business community is saying to this parliament and in particular the Senate: 'Please let the government get on with its job. It has a credible economic action strategy, a budget recovery plan that sees important and measured changes being made today to get the trajectory right so that we can do the right thing by our citizens into the future.'

There is nothing fair about knowing that the budget is in a precarious situation if we do nothing. There is nothing just about saying someone else can fix that problem down the track and making the action to correct it harder than it needs to be. If we take measured action today, we can see the budget recover and we can arrest the financial difficulties that Labor has created and left for this government and this nation. But we need to start that work now. So I again urge those opposite to listen to what the business community is saying; listen to what competent, wise economists are saying; take responsible action now; see the government's budget recovery action introduced; avoid the need for harsh action down the track; and let us get on with energising enterprise and building the prosperity we need for the future. (Time expired)

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:44): I announce to the House that we have with us in the chamber Her Excellency Ms Uni Klovstad, the Ambassador of Norway, and we make her most welcome. We also have with us a ministerial delegation from Zambia, and we make you all most welcome.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (14:44): My question is to the Prime Minister. One year ago today the Prime Minister promised a government of no surprises and no excuses. Sue Drury, of Ballan in Victoria, is on a disability support pension and requires multiple medications, which cost more than $140 a month, and fortnightly visits to the GP to treat her chronic conditions and leukaemia. When did the Prime Minister tell Sue before the election—

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith will desist!

Mr STEPHEN JONES: he would make it harder for her to visit the doctor with his GP tax and increased costs of medicines?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:45): I accept that the lady in question is doing it tough. I obviously accept that she is doing it tough, and I dare say that she does not particularly like the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme co-payment which she has to pay and which the Labor Party put in place and which the Labor Party increased significantly over the years—and they did not ever take it to an election.

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin will desist!

Mr ABBOTT: The fact is that a Medicare co-payment for visiting a general practitioner has been on our national agenda for years. It was put there by Bob Hawke, with the assistance of the member for Jagajaga, and it has the enthusiastic support of Labor’s shadow Assistant Treasurer, and that is why it should be on our agenda today.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr ABBOTT: I have concluded this answer.

Home Insulation Program

Mrs MARKUS (Macquarie) (14:46): My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Will the minister inform the House of the key findings of the Royal Commission into the Home Insulation Program?

The SPEAKER: I call the honourable the Minister for the Environment—and there will be silence on my left. This is a serious matter and we need to hear the answer.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Was that the member for Wakefield?

An honourable member: It was.

The SPEAKER: Then he will remove himself under 94(a).

The member for Wakefield then left the chamber.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (14:47): I thank the member for Macquarie. I can inform her that the report of the Royal Commission into the Home Insulation Program was tabled earlier today by the Prime Minister. Four young men lost their lives whilst working on this program: Matthew Fuller, Rueben Barnes, Mitchell Sweeney and
Marcus Wilson. I know, from conversations today and in recent weeks, that time has barely diminished the pain for the families. Commissioner Hanger's report therefore makes for sombre reading. It details the litany of policy and implementation failures. The report describes the program as a serious failure in public administration. In particular, it concludes that the Home Insulation Program was 'poorly planned and poorly implemented'.

In listing the findings, three particular failures stand out: firstly, overruling departmental advice for a longer five-year program, in favour of a two-year program commencing earlier, thereby sacrificing planning for safety in return for speed of delivery, so as to pursue a practically unachievable commencement date; secondly, overruling departmental advice to use a regional brokerage model, instead changing it to a model of direct delivery by, in many cases, inadequately trained installers, in order to expedite the program; and, thirdly, replacing a viable training model with an inadequate supervision model.

The report found that the program was hurriedly conceived and hastily implemented. Specifically, the report finds that, among others, the former Parliamentary Secretary for Government Service Delivery and subsequently Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Government Service Delivery:

... at all times pushed the commencement date of 1 July 2009 despite any concerns expressed by others as to whether it was properly attainable ...

The report also finds that the Australian government failed to take proper responsibility for the regulation of its own programs. We will therefore carefully consider the report's findings and recommendations. I thank the royal commissioner, Ian Hanger, and, on behalf of the government of Australia, I say to the families of the four young men: we are sorry for the errors that led to these tragedies. Nothing can bring these beautiful young men back, but we can and we will learn the lessons.

**Budget**

*Ms KING* (Ballarat) (14:50): My question is to the Prime Minister. One year ago today the Prime Minister promised a government of no surprises and no excuses. I refer to an email from Toby Green, a single person on a low income with an inherited blood disorder that requires multiple medications and monthly GP visits and blood tests. When did the Prime Minister tell Toby before the election that, because of the GP tax, he would soon be asking if he should reduce his GP visits and blood tests to two times a month, stop taking some medications or only take his medications every second or third day?

*Mr Pyne*: That's outrageous!

*Ms KING*: It's in his email.

*Mr ABBOTT* (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:51): Well, the member that asked the question wants the person in question to pay a PBS co-payment. The member who asked the question wants the person about whom she has asked this question—

*Ms Kate Ellis interjecting—*

*The SPEAKER*: The member for Adelaide will desist!

*Mr ABBOTT*: to face a PBS co-payment. Not for a second do I pretend that people with chronic illness—

*Ms Owens interjecting—*
The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: are having an easy time of it. Not for a second do I pretend that things are easy for people with chronic illness.

Ms King: Why are you making it harder for them?

The SPEAKER: The member for Ballarat has asked her question and will desist!

Mr ABBOTT: But, if it is right and proper for the member for Ballarat to insist on people with chronic illness paying a modest co-payment on their PBS medicines, why isn’t it right and proper for us to say that, for some early visits, there should be a modest co-payment for visits to the doctor?

The Labor Party under Bob Hawke introduced a co-payment. When the member for Jagajaga was the health adviser to the relevant minister the Labor Party introduced a Medicare co-payment. The Labor Party’s shadow Assistant Treasurer thinks a co-payment makes sense, and if they want to repudiate his statements, they had better repudiate him and tell him that he cannot sit on their front bench—*(Time expired)*

Higher Education

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (14:52): My question is to the Minister for Education and it regards the vital work the minister is doing in higher education. Will the minister outline to the House how the government’s reforms to higher education will benefit students and how they will contribute to a better university system?

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin is warned!

Mr HAWKE: Are there any alternative proposals, Minister?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:53): I thank the member for Mitchell for his question. I can tell him that the biggest winners from the government’s higher education reforms will be the university students, especially first-generation university goers and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left.

Mr PYNE: My, how they get excited—

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton is warned!

Mr PYNE: Why will those students be big winners?

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton can leave under 94(a).

The member for Moreton then left the chamber.

Mr PYNE: They will be winners in four ways: because of the expansion of the Commonwealth grants scheme to non-university higher education providers; because—

Mr Watts interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Gellibrand can also remove himself under 94(a).

The member for Gellibrand then left the chamber.
Mr PYNE: of the expansion of the demand-driven system to diplomas and associate diplomas—

Mr Fitzgibbon interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Hunter can join him if he wishes.

Mr PYNE: Both of those measures will benefit lower SES students and first-generation university goers to the tune of 80,000 more students a year by 2018. They will also benefit by the introduction of the largest Commonwealth scholarship fund in Australia's history and they will benefit by more revenue for universities, leading to more research and better quality teaching. In return, the government is asking, on behalf of the taxpayers, that students contribute 50 per cent of the cost of their education—when they are currently contributing 40 per cent. So we are asking for a 50-50 split—that is, 50 per cent from the taxpayer and 50 per cent from students, when currently it is 60-40 in favour of the student.

Labor's proposal, on the other hand, is more of the same—more of the inevitable decline. Plus, when they were in government, they proposed savings to the university sector of $6.6 billion. Labor proposed cuts $6.6 billion with no capacity for extra revenue to be raised by the university system.

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith can remove herself under 94(a).

The member for Griffith then left the chamber.

Mr PYNE: Paul Kelly nailed this in *The Australian* on the weekend when he was quoting Mike Gallagher, the executive director of the Go8 universities, who said of the Labor Party:

It is outrageous that they have washed their hands of responsibility for the mess they created.

That Labor created. He also said:

Unless there is reform we will continue to drift, we will fall behind the emerging universities of Asia and we will fall out of touch with the vital global centres of knowledge.

There was a time when there were Labor figures who were strong enough and big enough to recognise the need for reform. Bob Hawke said:

You've got to get rid of the idea that there is or ever has been or ever could be free education.

Ms MacTiernan interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Perth will remove herself under 94(a).

The member for Perth then left the chamber.

Mr PYNE: He said:

The social democratic society is about equitable payment and, the beneficiaries, I believe, have an obligation to make a contribution towards the cost of it when they can.

Bob Hawke got it when Labor was a big party, not the small party that it is today.

Budget

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:56): My question is to the Prime Minister. One year ago today, the Prime Minister promised to be a government of no excuses and no surprises. Despite being asked on four separate occasions today to say exactly when he told the Australian people about his GP tax before the election, he has refused to do
so. On what date did the Prime Minister tell the Australian people before the election that he planned to slug them with the new GP tax and when will the Prime Minister of Australia give an answer, not another excuse?

The SPEAKER: It is almost a statement rather than a question but I will give the call to the Prime Minister.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:57): The Labor Party well and truly placed on our national agenda the whole idea of a Medicare co-payment. Bob Hawke, the member for Lingiari, the member for Werriwa, the member for Jagajaga, Labor's shadow Assistant Treasurer, skulking and cowering down there on the outer front bench—

Mr Shorten: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The point of order is on relevance. I was not asking about anyone else. I was not even asking about when Arthur Phillip did it.

The SPEAKER: As I said, it was more like a statement than a question. However, the Prime Minister has the call for a very broad statement.

Mr ABBOTT: Labor's shadow Assistant Treasurer has been speaking and publishing for years on this very point—'There's a better way of operating a health system.'

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr ABBOTT: You cannot disown your clear words.

Manufacturing

Dr HENDY (Eden-Monaro) (14:58): My question is to the Minister for Industry. Will the minister inform the House how the government is working with Australian industry to identify and access new markets and create jobs and opportunities for the manufacturing sector in my electorate of Eden-Monaro and elsewhere?

Mr IAN MACFARLANE (Groom—Minister for Industry) (14:58): I thank the very enthusiastic member for Eden-Monaro—

Mr Conroy interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Charlton will desist or leave. The choice is his.

Mr IAN MACFARLANE: who not only is a long-term resident of the Queanbeyan area but also knows the more than 500 manufacturers and small businesses associated with manufacturing in his electorate. This morning I was delighted to go out and visit ACT Steelworks and Michael and Dan Berry. As an old farmer, I must admit that when I saw the welders flashing, I thought, 'Here we go; I'll just roll up my sleeves and have a go at this again. I am sure I could still do it.' Of course, those skilled people would do it much better than I.

An honourable member interjecting—

Mr IAN MACFARLANE: No, they do not have too many manual workers on that side of the House. I was there this morning, with the member for Eden-Monaro, to announce the $50 million Manufacturing Transition Program and to assist industry in their transition—

Mr Conroy interjecting—

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

The member for Charlton then left the chamber.
Mr IAN MACFARLANE: He goes out every time I stand up. I think it is due justice, Madam Speaker. In terms of the changes we are seeing in industry in Australia, while the previous government simply papered over the problems that kept emerging, we are actually approaching this issue and this challenge—I must admit it is a challenge—to make sure we get industry into the world's global supply chains, to make sure that we take opportunities to make better businesses, better jobs and better wages. To do that you need structural change, which leads to new markets and new job opportunities. The Manufacturing Transition Program will see grants between $1 million and $10 million awarded to businesses on a three to one basis, so that they can make that transition and, in many cases, move firms away from low-tech commodity-style production to advanced manufacturing using the natural advantages that Australia has. This is a strategic approach by this government to put together a package not only of practical and targeted infrastructure, not only of getting the economic fundamentals right but also putting together an industry package worth more than $1 billion to assist industry to meet the challenges of the future.

There will be an increased investment by this government in the skills and jobs area, as well as ensuring that science plays a bigger role in assisting industry and competitiveness as we go forward. I will have more to say on that in the very new future.

Crime

Mr FEENEY (Batman) (15:02): My question is to the Minister for Justice. Can the minister advise what the selection criteria were for the Safer Streets Program?

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (15:02): I thank the member for Batman for that question. I am advised that he is the shadow minister for justice, although this is the first time, a year into government, that he has had the opportunity to ask me a question in relation to my portfolio. Sadly, the member's question, after waiting a year, is not a particularly good one. He has had a very big day today. He got up early and did the doors—he had a rather nervous and sweaty performance on the ABC—when he said that the eligibility criteria for the Safer Streets Program remains a secret. So keen are we to protect the eligibility criteria for the Safer Streets Program from public scrutiny that we have published them on the internet. Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Silence on my right! The member for Longman will desist.

Mr KEENAN: To assist the shadow minister, the internet is available on computers. I am very happy to table these criteria, although, had he cared to do a little bit of research, he would have found them at www.ag.gov.au. I am happy to highlight some of the very important projects we have been spending the $50 million Safer Streets money on: $1 million for projects within the seat of Parramatta, almost $600,000 for projects in the seat of Brand, $400,000 for projects in the seat of Bruce, $300,000 for projects in the member for Perth's electorate and $255,000 for projects in the member for Adelaide's electorate. All of these projects have been funded in Labor seats and all our subject to the same specific selection criteria as set out in the publicly available program guidelines, including the level of need, the likely crime prevention benefits and the value for money of the project.

Ms Rishworth interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kingston will desist.

Mr Danby interjecting—
The SPEAKER: And the member for Melbourne Ports will desist.

Mr KEENAN: Indeed, the Auditor-General is having a look, as he is required to do, at the Safer Streets Program, but in a letter dated 26 August, he also advised me that he will be looking at crime prevention projects funded prior to the Abbott government coming to office. Indeed, he will be looking at projects funded from 2007 to 2013.

I welcome the first question from the shadow minister for justice. I only wish that it could have been better.

Child Care

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (15:05): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Education. Will the minister inform the House of the recent Department of Education data on childcare usage in Australia? What action is the government taking to address the concerns that exist in the childcare sector and among parents?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Assistant Minister for Education) (15:06): It is a pleasure to take a question from my friend, neighbour and colleague the member for Parkes, representing, like me, rural New South Wales. I visited Lake Cargelligo in his electorate recently when we opened a centre that used innovative streams of funding from the Commonwealth and the state, a dual sector licence, to look after both the preschool and the long day care needs of the children in this small rural town. We in the coalition, because we represent every corner of Australia, understand the different child-care needs in rural and regional Australia much better than Labor ever did. So whether you are from outback WA like the new member for Durack, from outback Queensland like the new member for Capricornia, or from rural villages in western Victoria like the new member for Corangamite, we absolutely have it covered.

But the problems in the cities are just as bad as the problems in the country. Last week, I was in Western Sydney and it was a day when data from the Department of Education revealed the pressures on child care all across the country, because, although the average hours of use are going down, the demand continues to rise. That indicates severe pressure operating within the system. It is, indeed, a national problem.

Why is this? It is because Labor sat on their hands for six years while the problem developed and did absolutely nothing. Last week, we saw the shadow minister's sensitivity in this area, and I suspect that that stems from her shame at the policies that did not come out when she operated under the incompetent administration that she did.

So what do you do? What do you have left when you have tried your hardest? A desperate scare campaign—and that is what we have seen since the change in government. We have had the Leader of the Opposition misquoting data from the Early Childhood Australia reports; they actually had to put out a release correcting him. We have had both the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow minister popping up in every state, telling severe untruths about the state of our childcare policy. It is a scare campaign. It is misleading parents. It is misleading the community. It is completely untrue—such as saying that our childcare benefits have been cut when in fact the childcare benefit for every family in every childcare centre went up on 1 July and was always going to go up under our policy. What we saw from Labor was that simply adding dollars does not work.
So what are we doing? We have the Productivity Commission inquiry underway. We have new policy settings coming down in the New Year. We have got $12½ million going back into occasional care. We are already working with the states and territories to fix up the red-tape and compliance overburden left to us by Labor. People can have confidence that this government, that represents every corner of Australia, will get it right, in every corner of Australia.

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

**QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER**

**Questions in Writing**

**Ms ROWLAND** (Greenway) (15:09): Madam Speaker, in accordance with standing order 105(b) I ask that you write to the Treasurer seeking reasons for the delay in answering a question in writing. The relevant question appears as No. 192 on the *Notice Paper*.

**The SPEAKER** (15:09): I call the Honourable member for Werriwa, who has a question to me.

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON** (Werriwa) (15:09): Speaker, in accordance with standing order 105(b) I ask that you write to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection seeking reasons for the delay in answering a question in writing. The relevant question appears as No. 195 on the *Notice Paper*.

**PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS**

**Ms MACKLIN** (Jagajaga) (15:10): Madam Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

**Ms MACKLIN**: Yes, Madam Speaker—twice, by the Prime Minister in question time, knowingly, I suspect.

**The SPEAKER**: Please proceed.

**Ms MACKLIN**: The Prime Minister said that I was a midwife and the assistant to the GP co-payment back in the 1990s. This is false. The Prime Minister knows that it is false. I was not the midwife nor the assistant to the co-payment. I opposed the co-payment in the 1990s, and I oppose it now.

**Dr LEIGH** (Fraser) (15:10): Madam Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

**Dr LEIGH**: Yes, Madam Speaker, I do, most grievously.

**The SPEAKER**: Please proceed.

**Dr LEIGH**: On three occasions during question time, the Prime Minister suggested that I support the government's GP tax. This is false. The Prime Minister should worry more about what he promised last year while he was campaigning for election than what I wrote when I was in university.

**The SPEAKER**: I might say that when you have a personal explanation, it is not an opportunity to entertain debate.

**Mr Pyne**: He is very embarrassed, Madam Speaker!
DOCUENTS

Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:11): A document is presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the document will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

COMMITTEES

Public Works Committee

Report

The SPEAKER (15:11): Earlier in the day, because of the suspension of standing orders and other activities, we were unable to hear from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, so we will now hear from that committee. I call the honourable member for McPherson, who is the chairman of that committee.

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (15:12): On behalf of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, I present the 5th report of 2014 of the committee, addressing referrals made in June 2014.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

Mrs ANDREWS: by leave—This report deals with two referrals: one from the Department of Social Services, and the other from the Department of Defence. The total estimated cost of these referrals is $109.22 million. The first referral was for the proposed fit-out of new leased premises for the Department of Social Services in the Australian Capital Territory. The cost of the project is $55.86 million. The national office of the Department of Social Services is currently housed in leased buildings in six locations in the Australian Capital Territory. The largest of these is the Tuggeranong Office Park facility. The lease on this facility expires in early December 2016, and the owner of the accommodation indicated to the Department of Social Services that there are no options available to extend the lease for an appropriate period of at least 15 years.

Following a call for expressions of interest to provide the Department of Social Services with suitable long-term accommodation, four respondents were shortlisted. The department chose, as its preferred option, to lease a developer-built building and seek approval to carry out an integrated fit-out of 30,400 square metres of that building. The Department of Finance endorsed this decision. The Department of Social Services will be the sole occupant of the building, which will be built adjacent to DSS’s current accommodation in Tuggeranong. DSS told the committee that its proposal to lease and fit-out a new building will yield over $70 million in savings to the department over the term of the lease, compared to the cost of the current lease.

It is worth noting that the Australian Capital Territory government recently called for expressions of interest to provide 3,400 public servants with 42,000 square metres of space. The ACT government received 11 registrations of interest, of which 10 proposed providing a new building and only one proposed the refurbishment of existing office space in the city. This appears to indicate that at the moment in Canberra it may be more cost-effective to fit-out a new building, as DSS has chosen to do, than to refurbish existing office space.

CHAMBER
The committee held public and confidential hearings on the project in Parliament House and it conducted an on-site inspection in Tuggeranong. The committee saw the existing DSS accommodation, which is 23 years old and would require significant repairs and maintenance were DSS to remain there. Among other concerns, the roofing has deteriorated, causing multiple leaks; and the essential plant and equipment is at the end of its economic life. The committee is satisfied that the project has merit in terms of need, scope and cost and recommends that the project proceed.

The second inquiry in this report is Defence Housing Australia's development and construction of housing for Defence at RAAF Base Darwin in the Northern Territory. The project cost is $53.36 million. There are approximately 4,500 Defence members residing within the Darwin area; of those, approximately 1,800 are members with dependants. The standard and availability of housing for Australian Defence Force members and families in Darwin has been a longstanding concern for Defence. Currently, there is a heavy reliance on the private rental market, which suffers from significantly low vacancy rates.

This project will provide 80 modern dwellings for junior Defence members. The proposed housing will be built according to Defence Housing Australia's guidelines for tropical housing design. Defence told the committee that building 80 new on-base dwellings is a cost-effective means of supplying bulk housing for families of junior Defence members posted to Darwin. The committee inspected the proposed site for the new dwellings and received a private briefing on the project from representatives of the Department of Defence and Defence Housing Australia in Darwin. Additionally, public and private hearings were held in Darwin.

The committee is cognisant that flood mitigation is a key consideration in Darwin and that areas of RAAF Base Darwin, including the project site, have been subject to flooding in the past. Neighbouring off-base residents, particularly those in the suburb of The Narrows which adjoins the project site, have been impacted in the past. Defence Housing Australia told the committee that to assist with flood mitigation, the project site has been partially redesigned to include additional stormwater runoff measures where this proposed development abuts The Narrows residences. DHA expressed confidence that these measures will protect The Narrows' residences from flooding as a result of the project. The committee is satisfied that the project has merit in terms of need, scope and cost and recommends that the project proceed.

I would like to thank members and senators for their work in relation to these inquiries. I also thank the secretariat for their ongoing support to the committee. I commend the report to the House.

BILLS

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Seniors Health Card and Other Measures) Bill 2014

Returned from Senate

Message received from the Senate returning the bill without amendment or request.
BUSINESS
Rearrangement

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry) (15:18):
I ask leave of the House to move a motion to enable notice No. 5, private members’ business, to have priority over other business in the Federation Chamber for 20 minutes from 4.45 pm.

Leave granted.

Mr BALDWIN: I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent notice No. 5, private members’ business, having priority over other business in the Federation Chamber for 20 minutes from 4.45 pm.

Question agreed to.

BILLS
Australian Renewable Energy Agency (Repeal) Bill 2014
Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
to which the following amendment was moved:
That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:
"whilst not declining to give the Bill a second reading the House notes:
(1) the Government's plan to abolish the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) is contrary to the advice of experts;
(2) the ARENA adds a great deal of value to efforts to tackle climate change in Australia and around the world by supporting new commercial models and new technology developments to reduce carbon pollution;
(3) the ARENA has invested $940 million and mobilised over $1.8 billion in private investment, totalling $2.75 billion in total value since 2012;
(4) the ARENA is a critical part of a suite of policies implemented to address dangerous climate change and to accelerate renewable energy infrastructure;
(5) the role of the ARENA along with the Renewable Energy Target and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation are vital to a clean energy future; and
(6) the ARENA has been a clear success in driving investment, reducing carbon pollution and boosting the Government bottom-line."

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (15:19): It is a great pleasure to continue my remarks on the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (Repeal) Bill, especially on Wattle Day, the first day of Spring, and especially after such a long and cold winter.

Last week in my remarks on this bill, I was making the point that it provides savings of $1.3 billion to the budget; and how completely out of touch members are on the opposition side. They still believe we can just spend, spend and spend, as though there is some magical money tree out in the Prime Minister's courtyard. If we do not make this saving of $1.3 billion, let's be very clear, that money must be borrowed and it must add to the debt that we already have. And it must correct the prospect that in the future taxes will be higher and
government services will be lower because we have to finance the ongoing interest payments on that debt.

The nation currently has to pay $12 billion in interest every single year. If we go back, just six short years, back in 2007, we as the Australian nation were receiving $1 billion a year in interest. The previous Howard and Costello government had paid off Labor's debt; they had put money in the bank; and we were receiving that money.

Now, because of the debt that has been rung up—north of $300 billion—it is now $1 billion a month, or $33 million every single day. In this parliament when a bill comes up, we are given a speaking time of 15 minutes. So, during the 15 minutes that I am speaking on this bill, the interest payments that this country will have to make on the debt that Labor rang up is $347,000. Every 15 minutes of the day, $347,000 is the interest bill that we have to pay on the debt. We know that 70 per cent of that, close to one-quarter of a million dollars, flows out of the country because that money is borrowed from people overseas. That happens every 15 minutes of the day, every day of the week, every week of the month, every month of the year—until we start paying that debt back. But that is not good enough for this Labor Party. They want to continue to borrow the $1.3 billion—that is, the savings that we believe will be achieved by repealing the renewable energy agency.

We have to remember that that money comes at a cost—an opportunity cost—because it has to be taken away from other programs. That $12 billion a year could fully fund the NDIS. When I go around my electorate—and I am sure many other members find this—constituents come up to me and ask: 'What's happening with the NDIS?' We have to be honest. We are working out ways of how to fund it. We could fund it with $12 billion a year, if we hadn't had six years of the Labor government continuing to run deficit after deficit after deficit.

We talk about fairness. It is not fair for governments of today to be borrowing money and running up a deficit, because that means that future generations, our children and our grandchildren, will have the burden of higher taxes and fewer government services. It is also not fair because in Australia we need to recognise that, if we are borrowing money, the costs to service those interest payments are substantially higher than many other countries in the world. That is because the 10-year government bond rate, the rate at which the Australian government borrows money, is substantially higher than for the rest of the world; in fact, we have 40 per cent higher borrowing costs than the UK or the US; 50 per cent higher than Spain; 60 per cent higher than Canada; 160 per cent higher than France of all places; and 250 per cent higher than Germany. That is why we simply cannot go and spend, spend, spend, as this opposition wants us to do.

The other thing that the opposition does not seem to get at all is that government investments have a long history of failure after failure. I have recently been reading a book called Uncle Sam Can't Count—a history of failed government investments. It lists investment after investment and how, when governments subsidise industries, there is a long history of failure. It impedes economic growth and hurts the very industries and companies they are trying to help. Sadly, those are the failings of this opposition. They simply think: if we have a bigger bureaucracy, throw around more taxpayer's money or provide greater subsidies, it will somehow cure the problems.

But we know economic history has shown the complete opposite. For example, in the area of renewable energy, just look at the Kyoto Protocol. Several years ago there was all this
hullaballoo that the US had not signed the Kyoto Protocol to reduce their CO₂, their carbon dioxide emissions, but the EU had and how terrible the US was. And the EU, with all this regulation and signing protocols, would reduce their CO₂ emissions. But we know what has happened: since the Kyoto Protocol was signed carbon dioxide emissions have increased in the EU. So the more government regulation and interference in the market, and the greater the subsidies for renewable energy, we have seen the opposite happen in the EU: an increase in carbon dioxide emissions; but, in the US, which never signed the Kyoto Protocol and relied on free market entrepreneurs to develop and innovate without the need or interference of the government, carbon dioxide emissions have come down.

Not only has the EU failed to do what they set out to achieve by reducing CO₂ emissions; it has actually smashed their economy. Today in the European Union, 19 million people are unemployed. The average unemployment rate across the entire European Union is more than 12 per cent, so it has been a complete economic failure. It has been a complete failure of what they were trying to do in contrast to the USA, which, without government interference, has achieved those reductions in CO₂ emissions.

The opposition have to realise that when they talk about sustainability, nothing is sustainable unless it is economically sustainable. When we are talking about targeting and putting government investment in renewable energy, we need to be careful that we are not targeting the wrong enemy. My concern, especially for constituents in the western part of my electorate in the Liverpool area, is the effect of air pollution—not CO₂ pollution but particulate matter. We know that, according to a new State of the Environment report, in 2011, 3,000 Australian—more than twice the national road toll—deaths were attributed to air pollution. In New South Wales alone, we are talking about 1,400 deaths and 200 hospitalisations every year caused by particulate matter air pollution.

Particulate matter is the ultrafine dust, smoke and particles that are released into the atmosphere through fuel, especially diesel engines. Preferably, this is where we should be targeting our resources, rather than reducing carbon dioxide emissions, because we can save lives. We can have greater health outcomes, if that is where we train our guns.

The other issue we need to look at for government investment or some encouragement is the issue of our liquid fuel security. With our refineries closing down and relying on imported oil, we have a significant issue with our fuel security. We only have seven days supply in the supply chain but we have the potential to have coal-to-liquids plants to convert our brown coal into liquid fuel. This is a proven technology called liquefaction.

South Africa already produces 30 per cent of its liquid fuel needs from liquefaction—from turning coal into liquids oil. For all the talk about China, it is advancing very quickly on this. In fact the International Energy Agency has recently said that the only country that has meaningful investments in coal to liquids is China. Yet we have this great coal resource and we not using it.

The other issue, which was raised by members of the opposition in this debate, is the RET. I believe that we should not be giving any special advantages to any particular power companies in the energy industry. But if there is no change to the RET, it is very clear from the recent review, the taxpayer will bill giving a $22-billion subsidy to the wind farm industry. That works out to be a $1,000 subsidy for that industry for every man, woman and child. We hear talk of lowering the wholesale price of electricity; it is a completely and utter
furphy. What counts is the cost of production and the retail price. You cannot lower the cost of production and you cannot lower the retail price if you are producing a mandated percentage of production from a higher cost source. With that $22 billion cost, if we are not going to make any changes to the RET then members of parliament on either side need to carefully explain the benefits. What are the benefits to this nation of giving a $22 billion subsidy to wind farms?

We hear that this is taking action on climate change but we must quantify what that action actually is. How will spending $22 billion reduce the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere? How much will investing $22 billion change the temperature? And will that change in temperature be beneficial? Will it equate to $22 billion? It will, more or less. This is the debate that we must have because we are investing taxpayers’ money. We are getting in the way and we are interfering in the market. Therefore, I commend this bill to the House. The savings of $1.3 billion are most important for this budget.

Mr Giles (Sculin) (15:32): It was very interesting that the member for Hughes talked about the debate we must have because, having listened to his contribution for the last 12 minutes, I am entirely in the dark as to how it related to the legislation that is before us. It was, however, an interesting and wide-ranging contribution. As ever, the member for Hughes is hard to follow. He talked about fairness but that was a fairness narrowly fiscally defined that had very little regard, if any, for our environmental future or for the prospects of our children and their children. He also gave us an economic history lesson which I did find interesting. And I would be interested to hear how he might expand upon how it would be applied, for example, to the government’s Direct Action scheme, which seemed to fit very poorly within the frame of principles the member for Hughes very eloquently expressed.

This is a government that is bereft of vision. It is a government that seems solely concerned with dismantling the work of previous governments. It shows in this debate, as at large, the narrowest of ideological agendas, which denies any positive role for government and, in the context of the bill before us, denies us a clean-energy future. This is also sadly another broken promise—described by another contributor in this debate as one of many seeming acts of random meanness.

The minister came out before the election in support of ARENA but I will come back to that later—suffice to say another broken promise. I note, as the previous speaker did, that it is difficult to separate this bill from its context in the release of the Warburton review into the renewable energy target that was handed down at about the time I thought I was about to make my contribution to this debate on Thursday of last week.

In the context of the ARENA bill, the findings of the Warburton review seem somewhat ironic, to say the very least. The RET review handed down by Mr Warburton offers the very real prospect of the destruction of the renewable energy industry. It backs in very strong vested interest and is involved in acts of redistribution just as profound as those referred to by the member for Hughes but in the opposite direction. But what is really interesting about this is the review concedes that the RET is working, that it is exerting downward pressure on wholesale electricity process as well as reducing emissions.

While it is no surprise that this government of all governments would want to destroy the renewable energy target, especially when a self confessed climate change sceptic has been appointed to conduct the review, this is a real Alice in Wonderland moment here, a real Alice
in Wonderland topsy-turvy moment. Acknowledging that the RET is working, the government proposes to scrap it anyway. It really is surreal. What it shows is two things: a deep commitment to undoing the work of the previous government, as I touched on earlier; and, seemingly and sadly—for all the high rhetoric before the election about increasing public trust in politics—an equally deep commitment to breaking election promises.

The bill before us seeks the closure of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency through the repeal of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency Act 2011. That act sets out the legislation framework for the Australian Renewable Energy Agency and its objectives, essentially to improve the competitiveness of renewable energy and related technologies and increase supply—pressing challenges most of us would agree. The act also details governance arrangements and funding available. Since 2012 ARENA had been operating as an independent agency, something this government is not terribly fond of; designed to improve the competitiveness of renewable energy technologies. In essence, ARENA has had the mandate of reducing the cost of renewable energy technology development and increasing its use—a critical objective to a sustainable future. How is this being done?

ARENA provides financial assistance for research, development, demonstration and, importantly, commercialisation of renewable energy and related technologies. Its role indeed goes beyond this to develop skills in the renewable energy industry. It has been promoting renewable energy project innovation nationally and also internationally. As previous Labor speakers noted, ARENA currently supports more than 190 projects to earn more than $1.5 billion in private sector investment. This is just a foundation and it ought to be a solid foundation. There are nearly another 200 projects in the pipeline with the potential of drawing more than $5 billion in private sector funding.

This bill before us risks the investment arrangements already in place and puts a complete freeze on the $5 million for future investment. I note in passing, as I know other speakers have done, that 70 per cent of this funding has gone to projects in rural and regional Australia, creating jobs for the future in these areas. The axing of ARENA puts these projects in jeopardy and puts these vital jobs in jeopardy as well.

I was struck not only by the contribution of the member for Hughes in this debate but also that of the minister in his second reading speech, which, interestingly, did not set out what ARENA needs to be abolished. In fact, I believe—and I think any fair reading of the speech goes along these lines—it made the opposite case: it reads more like a eulogy for a close friend who has left us too soon, which, in a sense I guess, it is. The minister states:

Financial assistance, largely through grants, has been provided to nearly 200 renewable energy developments, including the construction of renewable energy projects, the research and development of various technologies and the development and deployment of renewable energy, along with activities to capture and share knowledge gained through all of these projects, to advance the sector towards full commerciality.

ARENA has made significant progress towards achieving its objectives. So the government is not seeking to abolish ARENA because it is not working; it is getting rid of ARENA because it is working—just like the RET. We only need observe the extreme comments from government members when it comes to renewables—indeed, anything to do with the environment—to gain an understanding of this reflexive hostility towards renewable energy. There is no rationality to this. Why on earth would anyone be against clean energy
that does not wreck the environment? Consumers are certainly on side. Operators of nearly 200 renewable energy developments across the country are as well. I can see two reasons, though: one is the dominance of climate change deniers within the ranks of this government; and the other, the power of vested interests concerned with their commercial prospects, not Australia's future. I suspect the minister, yet again, has been rolled by his own cabinet, as he was with industry assistance for the auto industry. The minister goes on to state in his second reading speech:

ARENA has played an important role of increasing the competitiveness of technologies and the supply of renewable energy in Australia.

Delivering on these projects will allow Australia to take a pragmatic approach, focusing on our capabilities to ensure that Australia is well positioned to take up technologies that work as they become commercial.

I could not agree more with the minister. That is what makes this government's decapitation of ARENA so deeply frustrating.

As I alluded to before, the context of this bill is the government's broader attack on clean energy in its concept and in practice. It is not unlike the governments irrational hatred of public transport. It is little other than something which is reflexive, prejudicial and unthinking. There is no logical or rational reason behind the decisions; it just starts from its prejudice and works backwards, taking all of us backwards with it. And, so, here we are, debating whether to tear down something the government acknowledges works well for no apparent reason. Here with ARENA; tomorrow or some time very, very soon, with the Renewable Energy Target.

The government has conceded that there is no emergency, so it is unclear why there is any need to proceed with this act of economic as well as environmental vandalism in terms of the act that is before us—the abolition of ARENA. As with this bill, I note—as I have had the opportunity to contribute in this place—the government also sought to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. In recent days The Australian Financial Review reported, in advance of the Warburton report, that the coalition is on the verge of scrapping the Renewable Energy Target—desperately finding a way through to achieve that ideological goal in the face of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

I have been contacted by many constituents who are furious with the government about scrapping of the RET and other measures designed to tackle climate change. I was reminded of this during the break when a full house came to an event Mark Butler conducted in Lalor—a full house of people deeply concerned about where this government is taking us in climate change; a room full of ideas, full of energy, full of frustration that an architecture which is working to address a fundamental concern they have for themselves, for their children and for their grandchildren is being torn down with nothing being put in place to replace it. The people who attended that meeting and my constituents more generally know the RET keeps their bills down, they know it helps environment. What they cannot understand is why the government opposes the RET and why the government proposes to get rid of ARENA.

The unanswered question of 'Why?' can be asked about a lot of this government's policies. Where is the evidence base? It is a bit like this government's climate change denialism writ large, where all the evidence points in one direction but the government goes the opposite way instead, preferring prejudice to evidence. I remember being in this place asking the same
question not so long ago about the government's attempt to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. Of course, the Clean Energy Finance Corporation works. It is making money for the Australian people, and yet this government is seeking its abolition. No evidence then, no evidence today. I think in the very near future, no evidence supporting an attack on the RET.

On the other hand, on this side of the chamber, we can and do point to an evidence base of successful renewable energy policies. I remind the House that during our time in government wind power tripled; jobs in the renewable energy industry also tripled to more than 24,000; and Australian households with solar panels on their roofs increased from around 7,000 to more than a million—many of these in new estates in the electorate of Scullin.

Outside of the electorate of Scullin some of the biggest wind and solar farms in the Southern Hemisphere are in Australia. Investment in most of these projects is being driven by the Renewable Energy Target. When Labor was in government, Australia ranked in the top four most attractive places in the world to invest in renewable energy projects. Since the election of this government—the Abbott government—and this Prime Minister began his latest scare campaign against renewables, aided and abetted in defiance of the energy by Mr Warburton, Australian has fallen to ninth on the global index. I fear we have much further to fall.

According to the Clean Energy Council's 2013 report, nearly 15 per cent—14.76 per cent—of Australians' electricity came from renewable sources in 2013, enough to power the equivalent of almost five million homes. Nearly $5.2 billion was invested in Australian clean energy in that year, much of it, as I noted earlier, in regional areas. 2013 marked the third successive year that clean energy investment was over $5 billion. And 705 megawatts worth of large-scale renewable energy projects came online during that year. As I said earlier, more than 24,000 people were employed in the industry by the end of that year. Wind turbines alone provided enough energy to power 1.3 million homes. Not enough to deny a scare campaign, but enough to make a real difference to meeting Australia's clean energy future.

Total demand for power from the grid fell for the fifth straight year. And I note, for all the concern about cost, that Australians will pay up to nearly $1.5 billion more a year extra for their electricity bills after 2020 should the RET be scrapped.

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, the nearly 24,000 solar jobs are expected to fall to 12,300 should subsidy cuts be introduced. What does the coalition say to the nearly 11,000 unemployed Australians and their families who would be affected by this; most of these in rural and regional Australia, an area for whom this government speaks a lot about with rhetoric but does so very little for in practice? These are uncomfortable facts for the coalition, facts that they do not want to acknowledge, and for obvious reasons because if they did, they could no longer sustain this extreme position on renewable energy.

All of the progress that was made under the previous government is being undone by this reckless government. It is reckless on its own terms, as Mr Warburton has said, as the bill before us demonstrates, as the success of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation demonstrates and, indeed, as the member for Hughes's lecture on economic history also demonstrates. All this progress is being undone by this reckless government, which is so adept at tearing things down and so ill-equipped at meeting the challenges of Australia's future.

I note that this bill has been referred to the Senate Economics Legislation Committee, which is due to report this week. I look forward to its report and the prospect through it of a
more considered debate. I hope that these debates will draw the attention of members of this House to the amendment moved by the member for Port Adelaide. I am reminded of the comments the Prime Minister made this week and last week when he spoke of the fundamental responsibilities of government. Here, we also turn to the fundamental responsibilities of government: when we talk of clean energy, we talk of the chance to safeguard our future. It is not a chance we can pass up.

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (15:47): The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (Repeal) Bill 2014 is another shameful part of the government's attack on the renewable energy industry and on the renewable energy policies of the former Labor government. ARENA, which is the subject of this bill, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, was established by the former Labor government in 2012. It was established as an independent agency, designed to improve the competitiveness of renewable energy technologies in Australia and to increase the supply of renewable energy to Australia's electricity market. It was a part of a comprehensive set of policies designed to reduce Australia's carbon emissions, to reduce Australia's reliance on fossil fuels and to make sure that Australia can play its part with the community of nations in tackling what is, of course, a global problem—that being the global problem of reducing carbon emissions so as to reduce the effects of dangerous climate change, the effects which we are already experiencing here in Australia.

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency works to reduce the cost of renewable energy technology development and increase its use in Australia. It is an agency that provides financial assistance for the research, development, demonstration and commercialisation of renewable energy and related technologies, which develop skills in the renewable energy industry and which promote renewable energy projects and innovation both nationally and internationally. In that sense, ARENA is like agencies that have been created across the developed world, many of them in nations with which we trade which are designed to the same end—to ensure that we will increase the use of renewable energy in our economy.

As with other of the former Labor government's comprehensive set of policies designed to deal with climate change, to take real action on climate change, ARENA has proved to be a success. It currently supports more than 190 renewable energy projects, drawing more than $1.5 billion in private sector investment. There are a further 190 renewable energy projects in the pipeline which have the potential to draw more than $5 billion in private sector funding. Seventy per cent of ARENA funding has gone to projects in rural and regional Australia, creating jobs for the future in these areas. The axing of ARENA, as with the attacks that we have seen on the renewable energy target by the Abbott government, puts all of those projects in jeopardy—the 190 renewable energy projects already being supported and the potential further 190 renewable energy projects in the pipeline.

The bill risks the investment arrangements already in place for existing projects and would put a complete freeze on future investment arrangements, most notably in New South Wales, the state which has the largest number of projects presently funded by ARENA and some $582 billion of ARENA funding; or the ACT, with some 27 projects and $24 million of ARENA funding; or Victoria with some 24 projects and $89 billion of ARENA funding—all of them having leveraged many hundreds of millions of dollars of private funding.
The attack on ARENA is part of an attack that we have seen now across the board on renewable energy policies and on climate change policies of the former Labor government. It is worth noting that renewable energy policy under our government was a success story, but the facts have never been allowed by the Abbott government to stand in the way of a blind ideological obsession with destroying all real action on climate change and apparently a blind ideological hatred of all things to do with renewable energy.

It needs to be borne in mind that in addition to this bill, which would abolish the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, the Abbott government has also had legislation before the parliament to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. And of course we have been reading in the media for months that the Prime Minister wanted his renewable energy target review panel to recommend scrapping the renewable energy target altogether.

Nobody could know why the Abbott government wants to put an end to such successful policies that have delivered savings to Australian households, created Australian jobs that drive investment in Australian industries and that are good for Australia's environment. Nobody could tell why a set of renewable energy policies that have been resoundingly successful should now be the target of this destructive activity of the Abbott government.

It is worth stating just a few facts about where Australia got to with the policies of the former Labor government supporting renewable energy. During Labor's time in government wind power tripled, jobs in the renewable energy industry also tripled to more than 24,000 and Australian households with solar panels on their roofs increased from around 7,000 to more than a million. In that million are some nearly 6,000 households—5,951 on the latest statistics—in my own electorate of Isaacs. I can now say, proudly, that some nine per cent of households in Isaacs are now running on the sun. That support, putting their money where their mouth is, is something that we have seen right across Australia not just in my electorate but in every electorate. People have been moving to put solar panels on their roofs, supporting what they understand, rightly, to be the correct future direction for the Australian economy, which is towards renewable energy—not to have less renewable energy but to have more of it.

Some of the wind and solar farms in Australia in the large-scale projects are the biggest in the Southern Hemisphere. Investment in most of these projects was driven by the renewable energy target, driven by the set of policies that the former government put in place.

When Labor was in government Australia ranked in the top four most attractive places in the world to invest in renewable energy projects. Since the election of the Abbott government and since the Prime Minister began his latest scare campaign against renewable energy, Australia has fallen to ninth on the global index and, in all likelihood, will fall further. We saw, even before the government makes a decision on the renewable energy target, from the rhetoric that has been employed by the government and from the kinds of attacks that have been made by the Prime Minister and his ministers on renewable energy and on the renewable energy target a collapse in the investment pipeline and a collapse in confidence in the industry. It is extraordinary to think that a Liberal government, formed by a party that once prided itself on its support for business, should be engaged in what is nothing more than an attack on a successful Australian industry. No-one should be in any doubt about the effect of all of the things that have been said by the Prime Minister since coming to office, all of the encouragement that has been given by the Prime Minister and his ministers towards the destruction of the renewable energy target. They are utterly contrary to the things that they...
said before the election. It is worth bearing in mind what the Prime Minister, as then Leader of the Opposition, said back in September 2011:

Look, we originated a renewable energy target. That was one of the policies of the Howard government, and yes, we remain committed to a renewable energy target … we have no plans to change the renewable energy target.

Going forward a year, *The Australian* reported that the then opposition leader had told the party room that people saw generating renewable energy as an important issue and the coalition had to commit to it. The present Minister for the Environment said from opposition in February last year:

We will be keeping the renewable energy target. We’ve made that commitment. We have no plans or proposals to change it.

And further:

We have no plans or intention for change and we’ve offered bipartisan support to that.

Just to complete the set, the present parliamentary secretary, Senator Birmingham, said at the Clean Energy Week conference in July last year:

It has been interesting to note the claims being made about what the Coalition will or won’t do. All of it is simply conjecture. The Coalition supports the current system, including the 41,000 giga-watt hours target.

Come government, all of that has been ripped up and all of that has been forgotten. And what we have got, as in so many other areas of policy, is a government that have no intention of keeping the promises they made before the election, that have no intention of keeping faith with the Australian people and that were at all times, it would appear from the way they have been talking since the election, setting out to destroy the renewable energy target. I say again that in renewable energy we have an industry which is serving Australia very well

In that quotation of the then opposition leader, now Prime Minister, in September 2011, he reminded us then that the renewable energy target was commenced by the Howard government. What is perhaps distressing is that the coalition was committed to the renewable energy target at the 2004 election, the 2007 election, the 2010 election and the 2013 election. The coalition has supported the renewable energy target and renewable energy at four elections and, because of the bipartisan support for the renewable energy industry, billions of dollars have been invested in Australia's clean energy industry. What we are now seeing is the Prime Minister walking away from the table and leaving a large prospering Australian industry stranded.

Since 2001, the statistics show that the renewable energy target has delivered the deployment of over 7,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity. In 2013, renewable energy contributed to around 15 per cent of all electricity generated across Australia. The renewable energy target has delivered more than $20 billion in investment in renewable energy technologies. It has delivered wholesale energy prices as much as $10 per megawatt hour lower than they would be without the renewable energy target. And it has delivered over 15,000 jobs. As currently designed, if left alone by this mob of wreckers who are now the government of Australia, the renewable energy target would create a further 18,000 jobs between 2014 and 2020. That would include some 9,700 jobs that are going to be created in large-scale renewables and 8,700 jobs in small-scale renewables, if the renewable energy target scheme is simply allowed to do its work and is left alone by the government. Total
additional investment in large-scale renewables would be nearly $15 billion in today's dollars between now and 2020. Finally—and, of course, this was the great scare that was tempted to be erected with a whole range of false reports, false analysis and false statements that were made by the government about prices—the renewable energy target scheme, if left to do its work, can deliver both lower wholesale and lower retail power prices.

What is probably disappointing to this government is that the renewable energy target panel did not deliver what they hoped it would, which was to say that there was some dramatic improvement that might be caused to retail prices if the renewable energy target were abolished. Far from it. We have a report that bizarrely says that the renewable energy target scheme was attracting too much investment and was creating too many jobs. As the shadow minister, Mr Butler, has said, what warped world is Tony Abbott living in where too many jobs is something to be critical of? I say again: this is not a government that actually understands business. It is certainly not a government that favours business in any way. If it were, it would be supporting the renewable energy target. (Time expired)

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (16:02): I rise today to support the amendments moved by the member for Port Adelaide on the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (Repeal) Bill 2014. When it comes to the environment, climate change and the renewable energy sector more broadly, this government is building quite a reputation. Regretfully, this reputation is nothing short of abysmal. Through this government's actions last month, Australia now has the unenviable record of being the first country to be going backwards on climate change.

This week in the Senate, the government are attempting to divest themselves of responsibility for environmental protection and, instead, hand delegations of environmental approval powers to state and local governments. That is right: they want to hand over decision-making power for nationally significant environmental sites to the premiers and chief ministers of Australia. Leaders like Colin Barnett, Premier of Western Australia, the man who oversaw the controversial WA shark culling earlier this year, will now have carriage of decisions made for the Ningaloo Reef. Will Hodgman, with his axe and saw in hand and bulldozers at the ready, will make decisions about Tasmania's iconic World Heritage listed forests. And Campbell Newman, Premier of Queensland, will be waving in the ships to dredge and dump on our precious Great Barrier Reef. Next in the government's sights are the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, ARENA, and the renewable energy target, both of which carried bipartisan election support but are now ready to be thrown onto the scrapheap by this government that says one thing before an election and does the exact opposite after.

The previous Labor government established ARENA in 2012. It is an independent agency designed to improve the competitiveness of renewable energy technologies in Australia and to increase the supply of renewable energy to Australia's electricity market. ARENA works to reduce the cost of renewable energy technology development and increase its use in Australia. Effectively, ARENA does three things: firstly, it provides financial assistance for the research, development, demonstration and commercialisation of renewable energy and related technologies; secondly, it develops skills in the renewable energy industry; and, thirdly, it promotes renewable energy projects and innovation both nationally and internationally.

ARENA currently supports more than 190 renewable energy projects, drawing more than $1.5 billion in private sector investment. There are currently a further 190 renewable energy projects in the pipeline which have the potential to draw more than $5 billion in private sector investment.
funding. Seventy per cent of ARENA funding has gone to projects in rural and regional Australia, creating jobs for the future—areas like my electorate of Newcastle, a regional city in transformation. The Abbott Liberal government's axing of ARENA puts these projects and jobs in jeopardy. It puts the future prosperity of regional areas like Newcastle under a cloud. This bill risks the investment arrangements that are already in place for existing projects and puts a complete freeze on future investment arrangements.

As mentioned, ARENA has seen significant investment into the local economy of Newcastle, with projects continuing to have considerable impact. No fewer than 17 ARENA projects have been either completed or are in progress in my electorate. They are led ably by Newcastle researchers from the public and private sector, with a range of local, national and international partners contributing through collaborative research and/or direct financing. ARENA funding into Newcastle totals almost $60 million, with the total investment figure into the local economy more than doubling when you include the funds invested by partner organisations. At a time when Newcastle is seeing job loss after job loss, the renewable energy sector has been a saviour, a beacon of hope for now and the future. Newcastle has a long history of excellence in the energy sector, positioning us perfectly to become the home of renewable energy generation and future technology.

The lead agency for the majority of the ARENA projects in Newcastle is the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, the CSIRO. As our nation's premier research agency the CSIRO has by itself made scientific breakthroughs that change the way we live and how others around the world live. Its breakthroughs and new technologies have enriched and saved lives: wi-fi, extended wear contact lenses, Aerogard and the first influenza vaccine—the CSIRO is behind all of them. The list is impressive and goes on and on.

Breakthroughs in the clean energy sector are now being seen as well. Earlier this year, in Newcastle, the CSIRO announced a breakthrough in solar energy generation. For the first time, solar energy was used to generate the hottest supercritical steam ever achieved outside of fossil fuel sources. This breakthrough has been described as the equivalent of breaking the sound barrier and confirms the potential of solar energy to be used to drive power station turbines now fuelled by coal or gas. It is a truly remarkable feat and an important breakthrough for our planet's future. It is but one of the many projects in Newcastle that have benefited from the creation of ARENA.

But actions by this government are putting future breakthroughs in the clean energy sector in danger. The incredible researchers behind this solar energy breakthrough work every day with a cloud hanging over their future. They are in danger of losing their jobs through this government's $115 million attack on their organisation—with more than 700 job cuts at CSIRO already announced. And that is before ARENA is abolished, as this bill attempts to do, and the government's continued attack on the renewable energy sector through their loaded report and actions on the renewable energy target. As we see this government make decision after decision to put the renewables industry under threat, I want to make sure that the Newcastle based ARENA projects are not forgotten. It is important that they are acknowledged and put on the record in this place. Who knows how long they will continue under this promise-breaking government.
As I mentioned, the CSIRO are the lead agency on most of the Newcastle based ARENA projects. Current or completed ARENA projects lead by CSIRO in Newcastle include:

- the optimisation of central receivers for the advanced power cycles project that is investigating a new family of solar components which can provide a higher temperature range;
- the plug and play solar power project that is addressing barriers to solar hybrid power system growth;
- the development of combined cycle using solar reformed gas project that aims to demonstrate the technical and economic feasibility of a combined cycle power plant fuelled with natural gas that has been 'upgraded' using solar thermal energy;
- the formation of ASTRI, the Australian Solar Thermal Research Initiative, a consortium of leading Australian research institutions collaborating on 'over the horizon' projects on concentrated solar power research projects in close partnership with US research organisations and leading CSP companies;
- a project to improve translation models for predicting the energy of PV power systems, to reduce the investment risk for large scale PV power plants, by investigating the relationship between the manufacturer's power rating for solar panels and the energy the panels generate over time;
- the solar driven supercritical CO₂ Brayton Cycle project that is examining ways to reduce the cost of solar energy to less than 10c per kilowatt hour;
- the hybridisation of concentrated solar thermal with carbon capture and storage project that is investigating the feasibility of using concentrated solar thermal energy in a post combustion carbon dioxide capture process at coal fired and gas powered stations;
- the solar air turbine systems project, led by a partnership between CSIRO and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, that is developing and testing the components of the world's most powerful solar air turbines to increase efficiency while decreasing manufacturing, installation and operation costs;
- the Virtual Power Station 2 project that is creating the next version of a virtual power station that can undertake pilot-scale testing of load, generation and energy storage coordination;
- the advanced steam generating receivers for high concentration solar collectors project that demonstrates that significant reductions in the levelised cost of electricity can be achieved by moving operation of concentrating solar;
- the solar hybrid fuels project that sees CSIRO partnering with Chevron, Orica and the Colorado School of Mines to make synthesis gas from natural gas at temperatures compatible with conventional solar thermal storage;
- the recently completed solar thermal research hub project that constructed Australia’s largest solar thermal research hub at the CSIRO National Solar Energy Centre in Newcastle—a fantastic facility, I might add, that houses most of the researchers working on many of these ARENA projects;
and the CSIRO's last but definitely not insignificant ARENA project in Newcastle, the thermoelectric generator for concentrated solar thermal systems project that is developing and applying high performance thermoelectric materials and technologies to concentrated solar thermal systems.

Also in Newcastle, ARENA is supporting the Australian Photovoltaic Institute on a number of projects. The institute is developing an interactive live solar map of Australia that tracks the uptake and impact of PV across Australia. They have also completed a project that assessed a range of ways in which customers and electricity utilities might participate in a distributed energy market. And then there is Granite Power Limited, who are working on a solar supercritical organic Rankine Cycle for power and industrial heat that will demonstrate an innovative CST system's ability to provide 24/7 electricity using integrated solar thermal storage and operating as an automated pilot plant in conjunction with a gas heater. And, finally, there is the University of Newcastle, project partner on many of the listed projects, who took the lead on the completed fabrication of thermionic device using advanced ceramics project that created a working prototype of a thermionic energy converter which directly converts into electricity the heat generated by concentrated sunlight. The contribution of ARENA funding and organisations like the CSIRO and the University of Newcastle have added enormous value to Newcastle, and their research is making advances across the world.

All of these projects make it clear that Labor's renewable energy policies are a success story. But they are now under attack from the Abbott Liberal government. In addition to this bill to abolish the ARENA, the Abbott government also had legislation before the parliament to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, and, as we have read in the newspapers over the past few weeks, the Prime Minister wants to scrap the RET altogether. His loaded RET review, prepared by hand-picked climate change deniers, is no doubt the precursor to government actions to destroy the renewable energy sector in Australia by abolishing the RET.

The RET is doing exactly what it was designed to do, and no-one really knows why the Abbott government wants to put an end to such a successful policy, which delivers savings to Australian households, creates Australian jobs, drives investment in Australian industries and is good for Australia's environment. The RET, I might add, is a policy that has enjoyed bipartisan support and was introduced by the Prime Minister's own mentor, former Prime Minister Howard. It has had, as we have heard, bipartisan support over many elections. Even the current Prime Minister, in 2011, made that clear, when he said:

Look, we originated a renewable energy target. That was one of the policies of the Howard Government and yes we remain committed to a renewable energy target. … we have no plans to change the renewable energy target.

In February last year, the now Minister for the Environment said:

We will be keeping the renewable energy target. We’ve made that commitment. We have no plans or proposals to change it. We have no plans or intention for change and we've offered bipartisan support to that.

On that basis, I would have thought that both the Prime Minister and the Minister for the Environment would have been stepping up, after the Warburton review was released last week, to reaffirm their commitment to the existing RET, or perhaps even that the Minister for Industry would have stood up to fight for the renewable energy sector. Sadly, for our
economy and for our planet, we have not seen any positive action for the environment or the renewable energy industry from the relevant ministers or the Prime Minister, in either the week since the report was handed down or the year since they were elected. I suggest that the Prime Minister, the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Industry need to change their tune and join the overwhelming majority of Australians in their support for renewable energy in Australia, by keeping ARENA and by letting the RET continue to do what it was designed to do. It is the very least they could do. (Time expired)

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (16:17): The legislation before the House today, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (Repeal) Bill 2014, is part of the government's dogged campaign to destroy and dismantle the policies and the programs that were put in place by the former government to implement a clean energy future. We have seen it with the legislation to dismantle the price on carbon—something that I will return to during my address; the attempts to kill the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, an organisation to set up and fund on a commercial basis those commercial projects which are very bankable but which, for reasons best known to the banking sector, are not attracting the finance that they should otherwise deserve; and, of course, the bill before the House today, the bill to abolish the Australian Renewable Energy Agency.

We knew that we were in a bit of strife with this package of reforms when we heard that devastating admission by the Treasurer himself, who told us that he breaks out in a sweat every time he drives past a wind farm. It must be a terrible trip from North Sydney down to Canberra, as he has to avert his eyes as he drives past the wind farms on Lake George. But never mind; like some latter-day Don Quixote riding his wooden horse, he comes in here waving his wooden sword and says, 'I'm going to do away with all of that'—not tilting at windmills but destroying them. That is what this legislation is designed to do. This legislation—and the whole approach of this government since they were elected—is to dismantle the package of reforms that were put in place to give us a clean energy future.

I want to say a few things about the Australian Renewable Energy Agency. It is an independent agency set up in July 2012 by the Labor government as part of a package of reforms. It was provided with approximately $2.5 billion worth of funding, and it has got two objectives. To improve the competitiveness of renewable energy technologies is its first objective. The second objective is to increase the supply of renewable energy in this country. One of the things that it was focusing on doing was directing funding towards those bodies which had ideas which were beyond the brainwave stage but had fallen a lot short of commercialisation—so organisations with a track record of being able to turn an idea, an invention, into something that is able to be commercialised and then attract finance from the private market.

ARENA are doing pretty well, I have got to say. Every dollar of ARENA support is leveraging around 1.8 times that amount from the private sector. They have the runs on the board. Let us not forget that they have only been up and running for a little over two years—two years and two months. They have already set a world record by funding a program that has set the highest temperature stream ever produced using energy from the sun. ARENA has funded the Perth Wave Energy Project, which is set to be the world's first commercial-scale wave energy array that is connected to the grid and able to produce, in addition to the energy, desalinated water. They are building Australia's first off-grid solar farm, to power Rio Tinto
Alcan's bauxite mine and the Weipa township in North Queensland. And they are constructing the largest PV power station in the Southern Hemisphere, 15 times the size of Australia's largest existing solar farm. AGL has estimated that the station will create over 450 jobs for rural and regional New South Wales in the construction phase, with more local jobs created to support the construction workforces. Once the plants are operational, there will be about five permanent jobs in each of the locations where they have been put in place.

One of the most important things about the work of ARENA, Deputy Speaker Scott—and I know you will be interested in this, being a member, as I am, who represents a regional electorate—is that over 70 per cent of ARENA funding has gone into regional and rural Australia. You know, as I do, the devastating effect that lay-offs have on regional employment. Given the fact that they are struggling with drought and a whole heap of the impacts that are facing primary producers at the moment, when you see projects like this with the capacity to produce good, long-term jobs in regional Australia, you would think any sensible government would be grabbing those opportunities with both hands.

In my own electorate, ARENA funded a $2.2 million investment under the previous Labor government through the Emerging Renewables Program. In 2012, they funded BlueScope to produce an integrated, and I might say aesthetically pleasingly, solar rooftop system that integrates what we all know as the Colorbond rooftop system—an Australian invention that has now been commercialised and is one of the best corrugated iron roofing systems in the world. You can imagine the capacity if that proud local Australian company, BlueScope, is able to integrate solar technology in the coating and therefore into the product of Colorbond. It will take that flat metal product to a whole new level.

ARENA is working with BlueScope to fund that program, which is providing three important benefits to the steelworks in my electorate. Firstly, it is helping to maintain BlueScope's operation on the south coast. Secondly, it is creating new markets in Australia and overseas for new and innovative products. Thirdly, it will reduce the cost of rolling out clean energy solar power. It will do this by ensuring that the solar system and the roofing can be installed at the very same time, whether it is at the time the roof is being replaced or at the time the house is being built. You can imagine the benefits that that will have in the housing and construction sector.

The parliamentary secretary, the member for Paterson, Mr Bob Baldwin, was so impressed with the project that was funded by ARENA he even came out in June this year to take credit. Obviously, he could not take credit for the idea, because it was an idea that was funded under a Labor government, but he was out there to cut the ribbon—in that time-honoured fashion. He came out there to take the credit and to congratulate BlueScope—and in the process pat himself on the back for such an innovative and important project. I have got to say that, if it is good enough to go to my electorate and cut the ribbon and announce the importance of this project, it has to be good enough to come in here and back the agency that made it possible.

It is often said that Australia has boundless natural resources. In fact, we sing about it in our national anthem. The Climate Institute estimates that Australia has enough clean energy to potentially power over 14 million homes—well over half the housing stock within this country—and remove pollution equivalent to taking 11 million cars off the road. There is strong growth in Australia's alternative electricity sector, with an additional 38,000 megawatts of generating capacity projected to be installed by 2030. This includes the renewable energy
sector including wind, solar, bioenergy and geothermal—as well as gas, which is not so renewable. It is also estimated that, in net terms, close to 34,000 new jobs will be created in Australia's electricity sector by 2030. That includes over 7½ thousand permanent ongoing jobs and close to 21,000 construction jobs. Something that interests me as a representative of an electorate with a strong manufacturing sector is that it is expected to create over 5½ thousand jobs in the manufacturing sector. The vast majority of these jobs are going to be in the renewable energy sector, because that is where the main game is. Initiatives such as the legislation before the House today put all of that at risk.

I want to say a few things about the renewable energy target, because it has been in the news. As I said at the outset, it is a part of this government's dogged determination to dismantle and destroy the package of reforms that was doing something about giving Australia a clean energy future. The renewable energy target was supposed to be bipartisan policy. The now Prime Minister and the so-called environment minister said in the lead-up to the 2013 election, hand on heart, that they were committed to the renewable energy target. In fact, Tony Abbott, the Prime Minister, said, 'We originated a renewable energy target'—that is right; he took credit for it. 'That was one of the policies of the Howard government. Yes, we remain committed to a renewable energy target, and we have no plans to change the renewable energy target.'

There have been a few people who have been reminding the Prime Minister of that over the last few weeks—and that is because we have just seen a report which has sent a shudder down the spine of the 20,000 people who earn their livelihood directly in the renewable energy industry. What we have seen since the announcement of the Warburton review has been a capital strike. We have seen an absolute capital strike. We have seen the fact that the renewable energy sector at the moment is unbankable because of the uncertainty. They talk about sovereign risk. There is no greater sovereign risk going on in Australia at the moment than that which has been inflicted by this government on the renewable energy industry.

But we should have known—the writing was on the wall—when the Prime Minister decided to appoint Dick Warburton, who I do not cavil with. He is a distinguished Australian and a very successful businessman. You can only imagine the conversation that went on between the Prime Minister and Mr Warburton when he approached him to head this review—Prime Minister: 'G'day, Dick; its Tony here.' Mr Warburton: 'Prime Minister, how are you? It has been a few days—how are you?' Prime Minister: 'Dick, I want to appoint you. We are scouting around and we need to appoint a few people to some government boards.' Mr Warburton: 'I am very interested Prime Minister. I am always willing to serve my country.' Prime Minister: 'We had you pencilled down for the renewable energy target, the RET review.' Long silence. 'Prime Minister, there's a problem with that. You that I'm a climate change sceptic. You know that I'm on the record as opposing this.' 'You're just the man for the job,' says the Prime Minister. 'We had you picked out as just the bloke to do this review.'

I do not criticise Dick Warburton, a distinguished Australian, but frankly, when you appoint a climate change sceptic, at best, somebody who has a hostile objection to the renewable energy industry, you are hobbling any perception that this could be anything other than a fit-up job. Indeed, that is what the rest of the community is seeing it as. Is there any reason there has been a capital strike on this industry? It is a capital strike with devastating impacts. We have seen tremendous growth in the renewable energy sector, tremendous
employment growth. We have seen over 20,000 jobs not just in the capital cities but particularly throughout regional Australia. In many instances, we have seen the renewable energy sector taking the pressure off electricity prices for ordinary households.

Never has that been more obvious than during the recent heatwaves we have experienced in eastern Australia, particularly in south-eastern Australia over the last two summers. We saw temperatures soar into the 40s and, as you would know, people then switch on their air-conditioning units. Had there not been a renewable energy target, therefore creating a renewable energy sector, the old coal and gas power companies would have been doing what they have always done—charging exorbitant rents, because they do not make much money during the normal period but they make their big profits when it is peak pricing, charging enormous prices to the retailers, passing them on to the households. But for the renewable energy target and the renewable energy sector, we saw prices coming down, particularly during peak times. That is why I and many on this side of the House say, 'If you want to put downward pressure on electricity prices, you will keep the RET, you will put in place the package of market based reforms, which have a chance of reducing carbon emissions, and you will keep your hands off the only package which is going to give us a clean energy future.'

**Dr Leigh (Fraser) (16:32):** We are back again in the House debating climate change, after a period of months in which members of the government have, one after another, begun attacking Australia's moves to deal with dangerous climate change. A GLOBE-Grantham survey looked at parliaments around the world and how they were acting on climate change. It covered over 60 nations, accounting for about 90 per cent of global emissions. It found that only two nations were backsliding on tackling climate change: one was Japan, which was shutting down nuclear reactors in the wake of the Fukushima disaster—understandable, you might say; the other was Australia. Australia is now one of only two nations in the world that is backsliding on tackling climate change. It should not be that way because Australia emits more carbon pollution per person than any other country in the developed world and we stand to lose as much as any other country in the developed world. The Great Barrier Reef is a fabulous asset to Australians, not just for those of us who want to visit it but also for the economic benefit that tourism brings.

Australian agriculture could be threatened by unchecked climate change and we have now seen, as a result of record temperatures, the Bureau of Meteorology introducing a new colour to its temperature maps in order to account for the new high temperatures Australia is seeing. This has consequences. We know that natural disasters will become more frequent if climate change is left unchecked. We know it has health consequences. We know that the impacts of extremely hot days on the health of particularly older Australians can be significant. So climate change is an issue we need to do something about.

Thankfully we have not only good advice from scientists saying the climate change is happening and humans are causing it but also good advice from economists on the most efficient and effective way of dealing with it. But that is where the good news ends because this government has appointed climate sceptics to review the renewable energy target in the form of Dick Warburton and to advise the government in the form of its number one business adviser Maurice Newman, who seems to be writing the same opinion piece week after week, saying that climate change is a fraud and a hoax, that it is all a big con put on by those great
It would be comical were climate change not such a serious issue for Australia, but we know that, if we do not act now, then the cost for future generations will be higher. A new book put out by one of my Harvard professors, Dale Jorgenson, looks at the cost to the world of unchecked climate change. It estimates, as a result of rising seas and the extinction of plant and animal species, that the cost of climate change amounts to nearly $1.6 trillion annually worldwide. His book, *Double Dividend*, looks at how pricing carbon pollution can not only reduce the impact on the environment but can also provide fiscal revenue which can be used for a beneficial purpose. That was what Labor did in government. We increased the price of pollution and we decreased the price of work by cutting taxes.

Under this government we are seeing the opposite because this government has repealed the carbon price, the most effective and efficient way of dealing with climate change, it has lost revenue and, therefore, has to increase income taxation, in direct contravention of the pre-election promise. So the double dividend has become a 'double cost'. The government has lost not only the ability to deal with dangerous climate change but also the revenue with which the former Labor government was able to reduce taxes and encourage work.

Now we are seeing this attack on sensible climate change supports extending to the renewable energy target—again, a broken promise. On 29 September 2011, Tony Abbott said:

> Look, we originated a renewable energy target. That was one of the policies of the Howard Government and yes we remain committed to a renewable energy target.

He went on to say:

> … we have no plans to change the renewable energy target.

*The Australian* on 20 June 2012 reported:

> … the Opposition Leader told the partyroom that people saw generating renewable energy as an important issue and the Coalition had to commit to it.

The Minister for the Environment, as he calls himself, said in a speech on 27 February 2013: 'We will be keeping the renewable energy target. We have made that commitment. We have no plans or proposals to change it. We have no plans or intentions for change and we have offered bipartisan support to that.' And, lest anyone could be in doubt that the coalition's support for the renewable energy target extended to support for its precise target, Senator Birmingham said in a speech to the Clean Energy Week conference on 24 July 2013:

> It has been interesting to note the claims being made about what the Coalition will or won’t do. All of it is simply conjecture. The Coalition supports the current system, including the 41,000 giga-watt hours target.

That was—just over a year ago—Senator Birmingham committing the then opposition, now the government, to support the renewable energy target.

But we have seen, instead, the coalition putting in place a RET review, headed by climate sceptic Dick Warburton, which comes to the conclusion that the renewable energy target should be rethought because of the impact it has on existing generators who do not use renewables. That is right: the primary concern of this government is not consumers—because the RET review very clearly shows that electricity prices are lower as a result of the RET putting more supply into the market. It is not, of course, bad for those who work in the

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CHAMBER
renewable energy sector, who have seen the number of jobs triple in that sector to more than 24,000 jobs. It is not bad for Australian households, only 7,000 of whom had solar panels on their roofs when the Rudd government was elected in 2007, and now one million of whom have solar panels on their roofs. And it is not bad for wind power, which has tripled in total generation capacity in Australia.

The Treasurer might think that wind farms are a blight on the landscape, but, frankly, I think that the Treasurer ought to be more concerned about the health effects of unchecked climate change. We are now seeing, in the United States and in China, a renewed focus on dangerous climate change because of the concern about clean air. President Obama launched his initiative on climate change at a children's asthma centre, reflecting the impact that dirty air can have on human health. China is now setting up emissions trading pilots covering hundreds of millions of Chinese and it is looking at a national scheme to 2018. As we know, President Obama's first choice in dealing with climate change was putting a price on carbon pollution. Unable to get that, he has moved to a second-best approach, part of which encourages states to put a price on carbon pollution. California has just done that—and its economy is significantly larger than Australia's. And the US and China, as we know, are engaged in negotiations about the pledges that they will put on the table ahead of the Paris talks in 2015.

Australia's climate denialism was brought into sharp focus when the Prime Minister visited Canada and stood next to Stephen Harper and declared that he would be part of something you might think of as a 'coalition of the unwilling'—climate change sceptics united; a coalition of conservatives across the globe—standing for the new flat-earth movement, that climate change is not happening. But barely were the words out of his mouth when we had David Cameron in the UK running as fast as he could to say that the UK supported an emissions trading scheme. Conservatives in New Zealand under John Key also supported an emissions trading scheme. And why wouldn't they? It is not a left-right issue; it is a matter of pragmatism. Putting a price on carbon pollution is the most effective and efficient way of achieving outcomes.

The bill before the House looks at the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, and we on this side of the House are proud to support renewable energy. In the ACT, there have been 27 projects worth $59 million that have been backed by ARENA. Twenty-four million dollars of that funding came from ARENA; the remainder came from the private sector.

Encouraging investment in renewables must be part of a long-run Australian future in which we decouple carbon pollution from economic growth. Australian businesses have the ingenuity and the ambition to be able to continue to grow in a clean, green environment, and the notion that the way in which we produced electricity in the 1960s is absolutely right for the 2060s is taking an ostrich approach to public policy.

Australia needs to back renewables because renewables are not only putting downward pressure on power prices but also allowing us to reduce Australia's carbon footprint. We know that if we do not reduce Australia's carbon footprint the impact could be considerable. The risk is that if Australia does nothing then, by the time we have to engage in dealing with climate change, the impact on the Australian economy will be larger, not smaller, than if we begin today by taking modest steps.
The government's unwillingness to put the health of Australian children before its own political needs concerns me deeply. Australia needs to be part of the global movement to tackle climate change. When we look at the economic research that is being done on this, it is very clear that a cap and trade approach is the right way to go. A cap and trade approach when applied in the case of acid rain under George HW Bush in the United States produced all of the abatement that had been projected but at a third of the cost. Why did it manage to do that? Because, when you back the ingenuity of the market, you are often surprised to see the ways in which the market is able to reduce carbon emissions. One of my favourite examples of this occurred simply as a result of labelling. Tesco, the British supermarket company, decided that it would label the carbon emissions on its products, and a potato chip manufacturer was shocked to discover that its carbon pollution was higher than it had expected. It looked into it a little further and it turned out that what had been happening was that it had been buying potatoes from growers at wet weight—the growers had been keeping them in green houses using extra electricity to get more water into them, which then had to be boiled out during the cooking process. They switched their buying process to buy dry weight and their carbon footprint fell, whilst also saving money. There are many illustrations of this kind in which it is possible to achieve significant reductions in carbon emissions and to do so in an equitable way.

What is striking about this government is that they are backing the big end of town at every turn. We know that climate change threatens the most vulnerable. Lower income Australians are less likely to live in houses with air conditioning; they are less likely to hold the insurance that people fall back on when natural disasters strike. Lower income Australians are suffering as a result of the payment cuts being put in place by this government, driven by the budget hole that they have created as a result of scrapping the carbon price. When we look overseas, we can see many low-income people around the world for whom climate change is an existential threat—people living in subsistence conditions in low lying Pacific atolls and people in countries like Bangladesh, which is likely to be severely impacted by unchecked climate change. We have the ingenuity and the mechanisms to deal with dangerous climate change, but we have a government which is unwilling to listen to the experts and is instead appointing sceptics and backing the big end of town over the most vulnerable.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:47): I wholeheartedly oppose the repeal of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency because it is a backward step for our country and it will have a significant effect on our ability to compete in a low carbon future. Labor is fully committed to ARENA and to its role in improving the competitiveness of renewable energy technology and increasing the supply of renewable energy in Australia.

It has been interesting to listen to the speeches over the last few weeks from people around the community, but particularly government members, about the great work being done by ARENA—how it is investing in world-class renewable projects, providing certainty to the sector and creating jobs. However, while those opposite acknowledge the considerable success of ARENA, they still want to get rid of the agency through the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (Repeal) Bill 2014. I assume this is purely for ideological reasons rather than for the great benefits generated by ARENA, not just in terms of developing and supporting world-class renewable energy projects but most importantly in terms of creating jobs for Australians right across the nation.
I want to go into the background of ARENA. Labor established ARENA in 2012 as an independent agency designed to improve the competitiveness of renewable energy technologies in Australia and to increase the supply of renewable energy to Australia’s electricity markets. ARENA provides financial assistance to organisations, largely through grants. It has been providing these grants to nearly 200 renewable energy agencies or organisations for development projects. I note that 70 per cent of ARENA's funding has gone to projects in rural and regional Australia—that is, 70 per cent to country Australia. The Abbott government's axing of this body and its very important work puts many of those projects and jobs in jeopardy.

I also want to talk about a few of the 200 projects that ARENA has supported to date, including 27 projects based right here in the ACT. The projects that I want to talk about today are quite extraordinary. They focus on solar energy and on improving the way in which we generate solar energy. One of the projects here in the ACT is an Australian solar energy floor casting system. ARENA has put just over $3 million into this project, and it has a total project value of $7.6 million. The lead organisation for the project is the CSIRO. As we know, those opposite have a complete disdain for the CSIRO. I think they are getting rid of about 500 jobs there. This is not really surprising, given the fact that they do not even have a minister for science. Why would they respect a world-leading organisation such as CSIRO, which produces extraordinary research that benefits not just Australia but countries around the world, particularly the agricultural sector?

The partners of this extraordinary project are the Australian Energy Market Operator, the Bureau of Meteorology, the University of New South Wales, the University of South Australia and the US National Renewable Energy Laboratory. It is not just Canberra but also academic organisations, laboratories and bureaus right across Australia that see the benefit of this investment. This project was developed because there was difficulty in providing accurate supply and demand forecast models on solar energy, and so the project sought to improve those models and, through the process, increase commercial viability and ensure the stability of the electricity grid. The benefits of the project are that it would produce the most advanced operational solar forecasting system available and, through its unique research-access to data, provide a platform for knowledge sharing for researchers, investments industry and governments. It not only has an immediate effect, being able to better forecast what was happening in the solar space, but also has a knock-on effect of benefits for the academic community, industry and government.

The other project I will highlight today is worth just over $4 million of ARENA funding and has a total project value of just over $15 million. The lead organisation of this project is the wonderful Australian National University. Its project partners are the UNSW, Trina Solar and Tempress. The locations involved are interesting: Sydney, Changzhou in China, Vaassen in the Netherlands and here in Canberra. This project is interesting for the fact that it is looking to focus on advanced surface and contact technologies to improve solar cells. The project benefits are to develop advanced industry-ready cell designs that reduce costs and increase efficiency, and to access new markets. The benefits of these improvements will flow to Australian customers through the project partner Trina Solar, which is one of the largest suppliers of solar panels in Australia.
There is another project here in the ACT to do with solar panels, specifically for the relatively hot and arid Australian environment. Unfortunately, the photovoltaic modules are not optimised to operate in Australia, so significant improvements are required in energy yield. Module failure rates tend to affect the production of solar, because these panels are not optimised to operate in Australia. This project, through just over $500,000 of ARENA funding and $1.2 million in total funding through the ANU, is designed to improve solar panels so that they gave greater cost effectiveness of PV in Australia, to provide a better understanding of PV module degradation in Australian conditions and also to make locally manufactured PV modules more competitive in the Australian market and, I suppose, the international market—particularly in those areas where the circumstances are similar to Australia, those hot, dry and arid areas.

These are extraordinary projects that are just some of the 200 ARENA has supported to date. It is extraordinary to think that they could be no more. On 1 July this year, ARENA celebrated its second anniversary. It has been in existence for two short years and has succeeded in shifting Australia's energy landscape. Under Labor's renewable energy policies, wind power generation has tripled. The number of jobs in the renewable energy sector has tripled, and the number of households with rooftop solar panels has increased from 7,400 to almost 1.2 million. Labor's renewable energy policies have been a success story but are now under attack from this government. This government is seeking to undo that important work, and it is important work that has significant benefits for regional and rural Australia. Why is ARENA so important for renewable energy? We have learned from renewable energy markets overseas that stable, long-term policy provides the renewable energy industry with the certainty it needs to expand. In Australia, ARENA is an important part of this long-term policy setting.

We should be learning from the rest of the world. The number of countries with renewable energy targets more than doubled between 2005 and 2012, with at least 118 countries—over half of the world's countries—now having renewable energy targets in place. Of these, 109 countries have policies to support renewables in the power sector. Currently 19 of the G20 member countries have some sort of renewable energy support policy, and all of Australia's top 10 trading partners have policies to promote renewable energy. Worldwide, an estimated five million people work directly or indirectly in renewable energy industries, and that is going to grow. Global investment reached US$243 billion in 2010, an increase of 30 per cent from 2009. This is a growth industry. In order for Australia to maintain its competitiveness in the international arena, we have to develop industries that will be able to compete in a low-carbon environment, in a low-carbon world and in a low-carbon market. The move proposed by the government is regressive. In addition to getting rid of ARENA, the government is considering getting rid of the renewable energy target, either by scrapping or significantly weakening it. It is not just an attack on the renewable energy sector through ARENA but also an attack on the RET.

As we all know, the RET was introduced by the Howard government in 2001 as part of its climate change strategy and sought to increase renewable electricity generation by an additional two per cent by 2010 on top of existing generation. Until now it enjoyed bipartisan support. It is quite extraordinary that it enjoyed bipartisan support for such a very long time.
The target was subsequently expanded in 2009 by the Rudd government to 20 per cent of all electricity generation by 2020.

Despite the now Prime Minister and ministers promising prior to the election not to change the RET, saying, 'We have no plans to change the renewable energy target', a number of ministers have now vowed to abolish it. Despite this promise, we now hear that the RET is placing 'upward pressure on power prices.' Consequently, we had the Warburton review. As a result of that review, the whole renewable energy industry is in a complete state of flux and uncertainty.

Modelling has established that the abolition of the RET would see no reduction in household power prices and cause carbon emissions to climb by 15 million tonnes a year on the back of a nine per cent increase in coal fired power. The modelling, commissioned by the Climate Institute, the Australian Conservation Foundation and the World Wildlife Fund, indicated that for a household consuming 6½ megawatt hours of electricity annually—which is the New South Wales average—reducing the renewable energy target would add about $35 to the annual power bill. Most of this increase would take place after 2020. For the same household, an abolition of the renewable energy target would add about $80 a year to the annual power bill. The modelling indicated that reducing the renewable energy target would cost the federal budget about $680 million in extra funding to meet Australia's target of five per cent emissions reductions by 2020. This would be in addition to the socialised costs amounting from higher levels of pollution, which the model estimated conservatively to be about $14 billion.

Not surprisingly, we learnt last week that the government's apparently independent review of the RET recommended that it significantly weaken or even scrap the target. But this recommendation is completely out of step with what the Australian community wants. A recent Newspoll, published in The Australian on Wednesday 20 August, showed that 98 per cent of Australians support renewable energy. I would like to take the few minutes I have left to read from just a couple of the emails that I have received from the Canberra community on this issue—some of those 98 per cent of Australians who support renewable energy. This letter from a constituent says:

May I register with you my strong objection to any proposal to weaken or reduce the Renewable Energy Target. Any such step is retrograde and gives no benefit to the community at large, whilst encouraging the fossil fuel industries.

Another constituent says:

The Renewable Energy Target has been remarkably successful in building clean wind energy throughout regional Australia. With bipartisan support, it has driven over $18 billion of investment thousands of jobs, delivering community benefits and bolstering rural economies. Clean wind energy guards Australian consumers against the risk of power price rises. It cuts the wholesale cost of power and reduces our exposure to the swiftly rising price of gas.

These are just a few of the views of the 98 per cent of Australians who support renewable energy. With the world moving towards renewable energy—I think 19 of the 22 G20 member countries have some sort of renewable energy support policy in place—it is just extraordinary that this government should swim against that tide.

This government's attack on renewable energy is an ideological one. Scrapping the ARENA and scrapping the RET will do nothing to reduce power prices. It will be devastating
for the renewable energy sector in Australia. Most importantly, it will lead to job losses, and it will put Australia behind the rest of the world when it comes to renewable energy. We on this side completely oppose this retrograde step.

Mr Watts (Gellibrand) (17:02): Deputy Speaker, we on this side of the House understand the importance of research and development. With R and D comes the medication that saves you an expensive and risky operation; the social networks that allow millions around the world to connect with a swipe of the finger; and the technology that allows cars to drive themselves. And when we look to solve our complex environmental problems, research and development must play a key role in reducing our carbon emissions and in addressing climate change. Nowhere is this clearer than in the area of energy development. We are blessed in this country with unlimited wave, wind and solar power. What is limited is our ability to harness this power through our existing renewable energy technologies. It is essential to invest in research and development so that we can improve this capacity. If we can more effectively harvest energy from our renewable sources, we will be able to power the homes of Australian families far more effectively, while protecting Australia’s environment. We will be able to create thousands of jobs within the renewable energy sector at the same time. We will be able to move into a future where our energy capacity is determined not by what we dig out of the ground, but by how we harvest the energy found all around us.

However, investment in research and development can come at a high cost for the organisations that undertake it. Quite often, the companies undertaking the research cannot absorb high R and D costs into their product budgets—so new, innovative solutions occur at a slower pace and at a higher price than in the national—and the current global—interest. In these areas, effective government investment in research and development can do wonders for the industry in question. This is particularly true in the case of renewable energy, where investments in research and development can pay off in vastly improved storage capacities. They can create wind farms far more effective at capturing wind power, and solar panels far more effective at saving sunlight. These investments can create a renewable energy sector that generates cheaper and more environmentally friendly energy—keeping the costs of energy down for Australian families, and addressing climate change at the same time. These investments put Australia at the forefront of renewable energy development around the world, adding to our export of green technology, and creating more jobs at home in Australia.

Government investment must always be managed effectively so that there is as little waste as possible. We must ensure that taxpayer funds are spent on the research that will have the most value for the Australian people. We must make sure funds are allocated for their commercial, not political, value. It is important to have an independent agency that can effectively manage this task. This is the crucial role that the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, ARENA, plays. It ensures that our renewable energy sector continues to grow and to develop. It does so not only by investing in renewable energy projects—and by doing so, encouraging private sector investment so that our renewable energy sector grows—but also by investing in research and development, so that we can discover the technology that will make our renewable energy industry even more effective in the future. In this way, government investment takes our renewable energy industry into a new and exciting future. ARENA uses these two tools to work towards a broader goal: to create a larger, more competitive, renewable energy industry in this country.
ARENA has had significant success in reaching this goal in recent times. Since its creation by the Gillard Labor government in 2012, it has invested $940 million into renewable energy development. This in turn has encouraged over $1.8 billion of investment from other sources for new projects. Every $1 of investment from ARENA has leveraged at least $1.80 from industry and other groups. In particular, ARENA is investing much of this money in research and development for renewable energy. We have seen investments of $462 million in early-stage research and development; $1 billion into transforming pilot-stage programs into large-scale development; and $1.1 billion into deployment of these projects so that they can become competitive.

The efforts of ARENA have led to investment in over 190 renewable energy projects across this country. They have led to significant technology breakthroughs, creating a renewable energy industry with world-class technology. Thanks to ARENA investment, we have seen the highest-ever temperature of steam produced using energy from the sun recorded by researchers from the CSIRO. We have seen the creation of the world's first commercial-scale wave-energy array in Perth, which produces both electricity and desalinated water. We have seen investment in the largest solar power station in New South Wales and Australia's first off-grid solar farm in remote Queensland. ARENA is helping to create a renewable energy industry that creates cheaper and more efficient power for the Australian people. It is also creating more jobs for Australian workers, particularly in regional Australia. Over 70 per cent of ARENA funding has gone to regional and rural areas in Australia.

It is clear that ARENA's efforts are working—and they are working well. Combined with the work of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the renewable energy target, we saw the renewable energy industry under the previous Labor government become a resounding success. Under the previous Labor government we saw the production of wind power triple and we saw solar panels on Australian households increase from approximately 7000 households across the nation to over one million—making a significant impact on the energy bills of these households. We also saw jobs in the renewable energy sector triple to an industry that now employs 24,000 people across the country.

These policies have created a positive impact on Australia's households, Australia's job market and, of course, Australia's plan to address climate change. Deputy Speaker, it is clear that if you truly believe in the future of our renewable energy industry, you must believe in developing that industry for the future. And targeted government investment through independent agencies, such as ARENA, as well as the work of the RET and the CEFC, are crucial to achieving that goal. Unfortunately, the Abbott government has made it clear that science and technology are at the very bottom of their agenda. Right off the bat, they have shown their disdain for scientists by abolishing the minister for science and excluding the position from the Abbott Cabinet. They followed this by slashing scientific funding in May's budget, cutting more than $1 billion out of scientific research and, through the deregulation of university fees, stopping the dreams of aspiring scientists in their tracks by doubling the price of a science degree and putting an extra penalty on students who pursue research studies after the completion of their undergraduate degree.

The Abbott government have saved their most poisonous venom, however, for the science of climate change. When you start this policy area with the viewpoint that the science of climate change is 'crap', as our Prime Minister does, any action you take on the issue is likely
to be half-hearted at best. This lacklustre approach can be seen through the Abbott government's ruthless dismantling of the carbon price in this country. It can be seen in their Direct Action policy—a policy so full of political hot air it might add a couple of degrees to the world's temperature by itself. It can also be seen in the political weight given to the opinions of the honourable Member for Flinders by the cabinet. Those on the other side of the House have been known to joke and mock that carbon dioxide emissions are a weightless and invisible gas. The same could well be said of the reputation of the environment minister after 12 months of the Abbott government—a man of so little weight political weight that he has been rolled on every major climate change decision by the Abbott government. If only we could harness the energy from the environment minister being rolled by the Abbott government, Australia's renewable energy industry would have a rosy future, indeed! Despite writing his thesis on the importance of putting a price on carbon, his view is given little credit in the cabinet. We are talking about a minister who asserts the government is 'working on' the Million Solar Roofs program, despite the government defunding the program in the mid-year economic forecast. This is a minister who goes around claiming that the government is committed to the renewable energy target at the same time his Prime Minister undermines the RET completely by appointing a climate sceptic to review the success of the scheme and make recommendations for its future. This is a minister who was considered such a lightweight he was removed from the renewable energy target review process, even though it was already populated with climate-denying cranks and Abbott government cronies.

Such blatant undermining of the most senior voice for the environment in the Abbott government shows just how little the Prime Minister cares about climate change policy. It is an approach also a cabinet who seem not to be able to make head or tail of coalition climate policy. As recently as last Tuesday, the Parliamentary Secretary for Industry announced $21.5 million for solar research funding under the ARENA banner. And yet last week we saw the minister in this chamber arguing to abolish ARENA, the very body best equipped to allocate that funding. What all this adds up to is an attack by the Abbott government on the renewable energy sector for reasons of pure ideology. This ideological extremism is writ large all over their threats to cut the renewable energy target, their attacks on the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the abolition of ARENA seen in the bill under consideration today.

This bill not only freezes future investment in the industry, it risks the investment arrangements that have already been implemented by ARENA. It risks investment in the 24 projects in my home state of Victoria, which, while receiving only $89 million of ARENA funding, have attracted $198 million of private investment. It risks investment in another 178 projects around the country, which have a total value of less than $10 million. This is investment in the small projects, research grants and scholarships, where the dice are being rolled and new, innovative technology is being developed. It is bad enough that the Abbott government is willing to ignore the development of science and technology in our country, particularly in relation to the renewable energy industry, but that they are also willing to ignore the economic benefits that flow from the development of this industry is extraordinary.

When Labor was in power, Australia was in the top four of the most attractive countries in the world for renewable energy investment. Since the election of the Abbott government, we have fallen to ninth place. The Abbott government is actively discouraging foreign investment in an industry which contains what President Obama of the United States has called 'the jobs
of the future'. Indeed, I recently had a stakeholder in the renewable energy industry remark to me that, if the Prime Minister really believed we were 'open for business', why was he closing the door on one of the most important industries for Australia's economic future? Other energy companies have spoken out more publicly about the impact that the Abbott government's plans for renewable energy—in particular their plans to gut the renewable energy target—will have on their companies. The managing director of Infigen Energy recently remarked that 'financial devastation' awaits the 24,000 people who work in the industry. So the Abbott government—in pursuing their anti-science, anti-climate-change agenda—have hurt Australia's environment and Australia's economic future and they are doing so in the face of overwhelming opposition from the Australian people. In an opinion poll published in the *Australian* as recently as 20 August, 95 per cent of Australians said they supported renewable energy. Only two per cent of the Australian population—only two per cent!—agreed with the coalition's regressive world view. That is less than the 6.1 per cent of Australians who think we should abolish the federal government!

There is hardly an issue upon which Australians are more united, yet the Abbott government seems content to fly in the face of environmental benefits, economic benefits and overwhelming public support in scrapping ARENA in the bill before the House today.

Investing in science and technology is investing in our nation's future and it is investing in our children's future. For our future to remain clean, green and economically prosperous, we must ensure the technology that powers our renewable energy industry is the best that it can be. Targeted government investment—which spurs the growth of this industry and creates innovative new ways of producing energy—should be encouraged by government, not axed and undermined as is the case under the Abbott government.

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency has worked wonders in encouraging the development of our renewable energy industry. It has invested in hundreds of projects around Australia and created thousands of new jobs. It has invested in an industry that is supported by 98 per cent of the Australian people. Yet the Abbott government is willing to sacrifice this great agency that is doing great work on the altar of an out-of-touch ideology. It is an ideology that does not believe in climate change, despite the overwhelming evidence of scientists around the globe, and an ideology that prefers to put ribbons and bows on puffed-up farming schemes rather than to take any real action on climate change.

The abolition of ARENA, along with threats to the CEFC and the RET, threatens to take our renewable energy industry back to an era when sunlight was only for sundials and windmills were only for Don Quixote. Labor will never stand for such reckless disregard for Australia's environmental and economic future. We oppose this bill and all efforts by the Abbott government to torpedo Australia's renewable energy industry and our environmental future. This bill is a prime example of the extreme and out-of-touch agenda that the Abbott government has introduced since its took government.

This is a policy that may play well over a sherry and a cigar after an IPA symposium, but it will cause the Australian public to run screaming in horror when it reaches the real world. Labor will not allow Australia's climate policy to be hijacked by an undergraduate culture war. We will fight this extreme, out-of-touch agenda in this chamber, we will fight it in the Australian community and we will fight it until we return to this place a government that
believes in fighting climate change and believes in investing in the renewable energy industry for the benefit of both the Australia economy and our environment.

Mr PALMER (Fairfax) (17:17): The Australian Renewable Energy Agency, ARENA, is an organisation that is helping Australia become a leader in the renewable energy sector. It is a sector that is set to expand rapidly across the globe. ARENA is investing in renewable energy projects, supporting research and development activities and supporting activities to capture a share of knowledge. To date, it has funded 192 projects by allocating $938 million to their funding. This has produced projects that are worth $2.6 billion, and the fund has $2.5 billion to spend on projects.

After extensive discussions with former US Vice-President Al Gore, the Palmer United Party is determined to vote in the Senate against this bill that will wipe out ARENA. By doing so, the Palmer United Party will also be preventing the Abbott government from breaking yet another election promise. Renewable energy is a growth industry and renewable energy is a rapidly expanding industry that is investing billions of dollars at a time when investment in other areas of the economy is waiting. It has created $20 billion of investment already and could generate another $14.5 billion out to 2020, simply if the government kept its election promises. But the government wants to kill ARENA and has commissioned its hand-picked friend Dick Warburton to try to kill the renewables industry via an assault on the renewable energy target. Mr Warburton's report is dead on arrival.

In its promises before the election the government made itself very clear that there would be no changes to the renewable energy target. The Prime Minister said in 2011: ‘We have no plans to change the renewable energy target.’ The Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt, and the then energy spokesman, Ian Macfarlane, said before the election:

The coalition is not proposing and has not proposed any changes to the target…

Senator Simon Birmingham, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment, said:

Can I make clear, the Coalition supports the current [RET] system, including the 41,000 GWh target.

Palmer United is ready to hold the government to account and to vote down any changes along the lines recommended by Mr Warburton. That is why his report is dead on arrival.

I note Mr Warburton has chosen to personally attack me in the *Financial Review*, saying that I was engaged in ‘crazy’ and ‘dumb’ politics because the Palmer United Party was opposing 75 per cent of the government's agenda. I will not return the personal insult to Mr Warburton, but I will say we are proud to oppose many of the government's proposals—especially and particularly those like Mr Warburton is proposing that would harm Australian families and business.

On the price effects of the RET, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Dick Warburton and his team in taking six months, spending $6 million and reading 23,000 submissions to reveal what we already knew: the RET brings new companies with cheaper prices into the market. It looks like the only winners from this proposal will be the big energy companies. Why would we reward the same companies that have been ripping off Aussies for decades?

The Prime Minister is not just breaking his promise to retain the Renewable Energy Target he is breaking his promise to try to maintain cheaper electricity prices in Australia. He is
thinking in the short term, despite the fact that in the long term the RET pushes down our electricity bills because we are generating a big chunk of our power with free fuel.

By Palmer United ensuring the savings from the abolition of the carbon tax were passed on, we reduced electricity prices. Origin Energy in Queensland has announced an eight per cent reduction in electricity prices. That is why the Palmer United Party will not be supporting any RET change or reduction in the Senate. We will be voting for lower prices and greater competition for Australian consumers.

When the review of the RET was announced, the Prime Minister said that the RET was causing 'pretty significant price pressure in the system.' Will the Prime Minister now admit that he was mistaken and agree with his review of the RET that said impacts on retail electricity prices appear to be small? If the government is truly concerned about the cost-of-living pressure on Australian families, as it has repeatedly claimed, then it would be announcing today that it has no intention of making any changes to the RET.

Putting solar panels on your roof is a great way to protect your family from higher electricity prices. Millions of households have done it and many more millions want to. The changes to the Small-scale Renewable Energy Scheme proposed by the Warburton RET review threaten ordinary Australians from being able to significantly reduce their electricity bills. The review proposed changing the Small-scale Renewable Energy Scheme, which helps working Australians put solar PVs and solar hot water on their roofs. If this government is really concerned about cost-of-living pressures on ordinary Australians, it should announce that it is rejecting these changes to the Small-scale Renewable Energy Scheme.

Before the election, the Prime Minister promised to cut the cost of living for everyday Australians. Installing solar is one guaranteed way people have to slash their power bills. On average, a household will slash its power bill by 65 per cent when it installs solar. There are two million households that prove this point, and there are millions more that want to get solar. People on low incomes, self-funded retirees, pensioners and community groups have all invested their own money to slash their power bills.

Moving to the issue of industry uncertainty, when the government was elected it claimed that Australia was open for business. This stands in stark contrast to the instability that the government has created in the renewable energy sector. The uncertainty that the RET review has created is causing billions of dollars of investment to be put at risk. The government needs to bring this uncertainty to a swift end by standing by its election promise that there will be no changes to the RET.

The RET was responsible for creating 24,000 new jobs and if left unchanged will create an additional 18,400 jobs by 2020. Ninety per cent of additional renewable energy generation in the period since its inception is attributable to the RET. It doubled Australia's renewable energy capacity in the period between 2001 and 2012. If the Prime Minister wants a prosperous and wealthy Australian economy, then we should be using every resource that we can to support this country. If we have a huge amount of untapped resources above our heads, such as sunlight and wind, we should capture it and use it to power our economy.

In relation to other industry reaction, the sugar industry used to burn sugar cane waste as fast as they could to get rid of it. With $600 million of investment under the RET, they now burn it a lot more efficiently and export renewable electricity to the grid. The RET review
recommendations are pretty disastrous for them. They have a further $1 billion or more of potential projects at existing sugar mills in Queensland—projects that bring jobs into regional Australia, help grow the industry and generate renewable electricity in the regions close to population centres where the energy is needed. Putting 8,500 gigawatt hours of renewable energy into the Queensland electricity market will bring more competition and drive down electricity prices for Queenslanders, but it will not happen without the RET.

The RET is not just good for big cities it also brings valuable jobs and investment to regional Australia. ARENA is also supporting the sugar industry by supporting projects to help convert waste into energy. This sees millions of dollars flowing into an industry that the LNP has abandoned. The National Party is kicking sugar farmers in the guts. The renewable energy target and ARENA are driving investment in this industry, yet Dick Warburton, the Prime Minister and the National Party want to end this support. The Palmer United Party will not be part of that. On the other hand, Mr Warburton is proposing a range of unsupportable measures to weaken the renewable energy scheme, such as allowing woodchips from native forests to be burnt and counted as renewable energy. That would be crazy; only plantation timber is fit for such a purpose. The measure proposed by Mr Warburton to allow native forest wood waste into the RET would not only be bad for the environment but wreck consumer confidence in the scheme.

Queensland and the Sunshine Coast, to most Australians, have plenty of sunshine. Using the power of the sun to generate energy makes sense, and this is nowhere more the case than in my home state, the sunshine state of Queensland, where solar has been enthusiastically embraced. Queensland now leads the world in the uptake of household solar, with nearly 400,000 solar homes together generating 1.1 gigawatts of power. This makes Queensland rooftops the fourth-largest power station in the state. In my own electorate of Fairfax, nearly 14,000 homes are powered by the sun—that is, nearly one in four homes. Helped by policies like the renewable energy target, my constituents have invested $104 million of their own hard-earned money into putting solar panels on their roofs. These people have been motivated to take control over ever-increasing power bills and to do their bit for the environment, but they have also been angered by ongoing attacks from politicians like the Premier of Queensland and the Treasurer of Queensland, who recently likened these homes owners to 'champagne sippers and the latte set.' The reality is quite different. Many of the people who have gone solar are from lower- and middle-income households. They are young families, retirees, people without a decent roof space but worried about their electricity bills and people like Fay, an 81-year-old pensioner living in a retirement village in Currimundi. Fay estimates that at least half of her fellow villagers have also gone solar and invested their own savings in a 1.5 kilowatt solar system, helped with a rebate from RET. Fay says that her solar provides a huge relief every time she gets an electricity bill, but she has been frustrated by the chopping and changing of government programs. Fay said to me: 'It is not fair or reasonable for one government to promote solar and the next government to take it away.'

The renewable energy target has also helped drive jobs and investment on the Sunshine Coast. There are over 100 small and medium solar businesses and installers on the Sunshine Coast. There are also bigger manufacturing operations like Latronics, an inverter company based in Caloundra, which is providing its product to 30 countries and selling it around the world. The Sunshine Coast Regional Council has plans for a 10 megawatt large-scale solar
farm near Coolum incorporating 50,000 solar panels. This will provide 50 per cent of the
council's electricity needs, save ratepayers millions of dollars and help create a clean-tech hub
on the coast. It would be the first large scale solar farm built by a council in Australia. All this
is at risk if the RET and ARENA are axed.

In the few weeks since the Palmer United Party announced it would not support the
Australian Renewable Energy Agency (Repeal) Bill 2014, my office has been inundated with
handwritten letters from people in my area in Queensland and from around the country who
have been calling on the Palmer Party to ensure that the future of solar stays strong in
Australia. I can tell those people today we have heard you. The Palmer United Party will do
the right thing by the people of Australia, the industries of the future and the jobs they are
generating. We will save the renewable energy target and the Clean Energy Finance
Corporation. We will not be voting for this bill, so that will save Australia's Renewable
Energy Agency as well.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (17:28): Tonight I speak in accord with a
significant number of constituents in my electorate, most recently Katy Carolan of Rossmore
and Angelina Al Kaaby of Austral, who seek that the Australian Renewable Energy Agency
be preserved, that the renewable energy target be retained and that the Clean Energy Council
be supported. It is surprising that we are debating the Australian Renewable Energy Agency
(Repeal) Bill 2014 this evening, because the man who is now the Prime Minister of this
country—who rushed around the country shoving factory workers into photographs with him,
sometimes at the behest of employers, and raving about people being liars and spreading
untruths—said on 29 September 2011:

Look, we originated a renewable energy target. That was one of the policies of the Howard government
and yes we remain committed to a renewable energy target. I certainly accept that the renewable energy
target is one of the factors of the current power system which is causing prices to go up but we have no
plans to change the renewable energy target.

We all know that this contrived investigation by Mr Warburton, an acknowledged sceptic in
the area of climate change, was basically designed to soften up the electorate on behalf of
 corporate interests concerned at the way their cost structure was being undermined by the
spread of solar in this country.

Tonight, we are dealing with an organisation was legislated for in 2011 and was operative
from July 2012. It has put significant investment into renewable energies—into their spread
and particularly into novel technological developments—to reduce carbon pollution. By doing
that, it has mobilised far greater finance from the private sector. As many other speakers have
said, most of these developments are in rural and regional areas, for obvious reasons: the
availability of alternative energy sources there, the lack of effect upon households et cetera. It
has to be stressed that we see a significant number of National Party members not speaking in
this debate, possibly because of the proportion of that development that has occurred from
this particular measure in rural and regional areas. We have heard figures. One of the
outcomes is 1.2 million households with solar. I will summarise later some of those
developments.

Perhaps Nicholas Stern—the Chair of the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change
at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and President of the British
Academy and someone acknowledged for serious work in this field previously—had in mind this government in particular when he said:

Unfortunately, the current pace of progress is not nearly rapid enough, with many rich industrialised countries being slow to make the transition to cleaner and more efficient forms of economic growth.

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 …

Delay is dangerous. Inaction could be justified only if we could have great confidence that the risks posed by climate change are small. But that is not what 200 years of climate science is telling us. The risks are huge.

That is the reality that is being articulated by a significant thinker in this field. He also noted:

The IPCC has concluded from all of the available scientific evidence that it is 95% likely that most of the rise in global average temperature since the middle of the 20th century is due to emissions of greenhouse gases, deforestation and other human activities.

That is the reality that is denied by many opposite. They have been told: 'Go through the motions. We should pretend we believe in climate change. There are a lot of people out there who are listening to these international bodies. People have picked up that we are not scientists. Perhaps these people that are talking about climate change, around the world after major studies, are not self-interested; perhaps they actually do know something about this field. We had better pretend that we actually do recognise climate change.' But we all know from the occasional outburst, the occasional indiscretion, that many in the government opposite are not too supportive of that reality.

I note that, as this government undertakes this very unfortunate initiative to basically undermine renewables, to undermine alternative sources of energy and to undermine the international effort against climate change, the International Energy Agency has made some comments about the international trend at the moment. They are not an affiliate of the Australian Council of Trade Unions; they are not associated with the British Labour Party or the German Social Democrats; they are a respected international agency that specialises in this field. Their comments about what is happening around the world and what should be happening here are very apposite:

Wind, solar and other renewable power capacity grew at its strongest ever pace last year and now produces 22% of the world's electricity, the International Energy Agency said on Thursday in a new report.

... … …

Maria van der Hoeven, the executive director of the IEA, said governments should hold their nerve: 'Renewables are a necessary part of energy security. However, just when they are becoming a cost-competitive option in an increasing number of cases, policy and regulatory uncertainty is rising in some key markets. This stems from concerns about the cost of deploying renewables.'

And, by Christ, I think Australia might be in the category she is alluding to there. She went on to note: 'Hydro and other green technologies could be producing 26% of the world's electricity by 2020'. That is a credible international source that says there is a 'lack of nerve' at the moment; governments driven by corporate interests, driven by a lack of knowledge, driven by a lack of courage, driven by an inability to face up to crisis, and driven by an inability to understand that if we do not do something the situation is going to be exacerbated.
As I said earlier, there has been a heavy concentration of developments in this sector in rural and regional areas: Alinta Energy at Port Augusta, a solar thermal feasibility study for a stand-alone solar thermal plant; Doomadgee Solar Farm in the Gulf of Carpentaria; a solar photovoltaic diesel hybrid, allowing diesel generators to be turned off—1.26 MWP of solar photovoltaic generation. That of course is typical of what is occurring in this field. There has also been funding of credible academic authorities such as Swinburne University for wave energy farm research. Mr Ivor Frischknecht, the CEO of ARENA, the group that is going to be abolished by this government, described the world's first redeployable large-scale solar diesel hybrid in regional Queensland as: 'a viable renewable energy alternative that could equally be used to assist in international relief efforts'. That is another area that is not too interesting to this government, which has slashed foreign aid. But that particular initiative in trying to counter the threat of climate change could be utilised, because of its ability to be moved, to help foreign aid efforts.

What we are seeing here now is a total repudiation of commitments that were given to the Australian people; that this government would not undermine ARENA; that it believed in it. It somehow associated itself with some of these changes. As someone said earlier, the minister introducing this bill is at pains to basically tell us of the wide benefits that have occurred from this organisation. They have been very positive about outcomes. But then the bill comes along and it is actually designed to destroy ARENA. This country has a responsibility to take a lead—rather than to be a retrograde non-player in international agreements—and not to move towards inaction.

In 2010, the Climate Analysis Indicators Tool from the World Resources Institute in Washington DC has noted—and it has been made with slight variations every other year before and after since it became an international issue—that per capita emissions in Australia at that point were 27.4; UAE, 38.2; USA, 23.5; and Canada, 22.9. All four of them, interestingly enough, were amongst the people at the back of the field when you look at their lack of activity. So there is a responsibility in this country to be in the lead rather than undermine the move towards alternatives.

As noted by Kofi Annan's Global Humanitarian Forum, the interesting thing is:

Nearly 98% of the people seriously affected, 99% of all deaths from weather-related disasters and 90% of the total economic losses are now borne by developing countries. The populations most at risk it says, are in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, south Asia and the small island states of the Pacific.

While we sit on our hands and undermine the need to act, the people most unable to cope with this are in those underdeveloped countries.

An article by John Vidal in The Guardian Weekly noted that:

- 310 million people will suffer adverse health consequences
- 20 million more people will fall into poverty
- 75 million extra people will be displaced by climate change

in the estimates of Kofi Annan's foundation.

In conclusion, I very firmly oppose this measure. It is not an issue for which the government has a mandate. Clearly, they tried to delude the Australian public that it would be business as usual in this particular sector. It is a situation where an organisation has been
Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (17:39): The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (Repeal) Bill 2014 being debated is yet another example of the regressive, backward-looking approach of the Abbott government to renewable energy. Whilst Australians are calling out for more renewable energy, this government is doing everything it possibly can to ensure that our energy supply remains dependent on old technologies while discouraging research and technological development of renewable energy.

The Australian Renewable Agency or ARENA, as it is widely known, has the slogan of building tomorrow's energy infrastructure and its goal is to do this by lowering costs and increasing the use of renewable energy. I think that is something that all Australians support.

Over the last week or so I have been receiving numerous emails from my constituents encouraging me to support ARENA and vote against any moves by this regressive Abbott government that says one thing before and another thing after an election. They have encouraged me to oppose the abolition of ARENA and vote against any changes to the renewable energy targets—targets when, coupled with ARENA, will deliver better and more dependable energy long term and give us a longer life span. ARENA also looks at new technologies which are the gateway to the future.

ARENA has a proud record. It has invested $1 billion and another $1.8 billion has been leveraged from industry and others. That is a significant contribution to renewables and renewable research. ARENA is managing more than 180 projects—that is including fellowships and scholarships—worth $2.8 billion. Of these, 15 projects have been completed and there have been more than 40 variations to maximise results. An additional 37 projects are in contract negotiations.

ARENA supports and recognises new and immature technology solutions that are high risk. They are the innovators. They encourage innovation as opposed to those on the opposite side of this House who have a very narrow, short-sighted vision for the future that is rooted in the past rather than looking towards new technologies and research. ARENA also shares information that supports industry rollout as well as to the wider community.

This government stands condemned for its action in this area. ARENA has over 190 projects worth $2.5 billion, of which 15 are completed, and there is ongoing investment and research in so many other areas. There is another $7.7 billion worth of projects under construction, and these projects are innovations, technologies, that would not have come to fruition without the work of ARENA and where it is at at the moment.

Shortland is an electorate where solar energy has been embraced. People in Shortland have converted to solar panels, solar homes. There are 4,885 solar homes in Shortland and it is generating 12.2 megawatts of clean energy. Around 18,500 jobs nationwide have been created by clean energy, renewable energy and solar energy in particular. There has been a $36.6-million investment in solar power saving 15,266 tonnes of CO₂ and $2.7 million on power bills. Since November last year, an additional 19 families in Shortland electorate have moved to powering their homes by renewable energy.

As well as bringing investment and benefits to the whole community, renewable energy is a growth area for jobs in new technologies and new industries and it looks to the future.


CHAMBER
unfortunately for us in Australia, the government are a government of climate change deniers. They give lip service to the fact that climate change is actually an issue. They pretend that they are concerned about CO\textsubscript{2} emissions. But every single action that they take in this parliament says they do not believe in climate change, they do not care about climate change and they are going to do nothing to bring about changes, to develop renewable energy or to invest in the technologies and sciences of the future. They only give lip service. They only pretend to be interested in climate change. Otherwise, why would they be abandoning ARENA? Otherwise, why would they be actively considering getting rid of the renewable energy targets that are so important to the future of the renewable sector and so important to the environment we live in, the ecology and the future of this nation?

I really believe that those on the other side of the House need to go back to the drawing board. They need to determine what they really believe in. I know there are members on the other side of this House that actually accept the fact that climate change is a reality, that we need to take action for the future, that we need to invest in these new technologies and that ARENA actually plays an extraordinary role in our society and in our country. Any organisation that for $1 billion of investment can gain $1.8 billion is certainly doing what it was set up to do.

I think no issue is a more defining issue between us and those on the other side of the House than climate change. As I said that, I thought, 'Actually, practically every issue we debate in this House is a defining issue.' Those on the other side of the House were prepared to bring down a cruel budget that really hurts those people who can least afford it. On this side of the House we support people that look to government for support. I think about our approach to health care and the approach of those on the other side of this House to health care. I think of our approach to the environment across a wide variety of areas and then I think about how those on the other side of this House approach it. I think about fairness, I think about equity and I think about discrimination. And then I look at the way those on the other side of the House approach those issues and I hesitate to say that climate change and our approach to it is the real defining issue.

Practically everything we debate in this House, how we debate it and even ensuring that the democratic process is in place defines us. We saw this morning a piece of legislation rammed through this House. It was introduced with the parliamentary secretary standing up and giving a second reading speech saying that he moved that the bill be read a second time. That was the extent of his speech. There was no legislation in the House for us to look at. This is the quality of the Abbott government. It is a government that looks back to the past and does not embrace new technologies. It does not look to promoting industries such as solar, bio-energy, hybrid enabling, ocean, wave, wind or geothermal energies. This is a government that is prepared to sit on its hands and rely on the technologies of the past.

ARENA has overseen a lot of innovations and a lot of programs. There was the Emerging Renewables Program, which supported the development and early-stage deployment of renewable energy technologies. The Southern Cross Renewable Energy Fund was funded under the Renewable Energy Venture Capital Fund. The venture capital fund is a very important aspect of ARENA that supports those emerging projects and industries. ARENA supported high-value Australian renewable energy knowledge by increasing awareness of renewable energy solutions and by sharing research knowledge. That is very important
because the sharing of knowledge is how industries develop and build upon the findings and research of other industries. This decision to abolish ARENA is a really backward step when it comes to that area.

ARENA also provided funding for the Accelerated Step Change Initiative for exceptional and commercialised projects not captured under other renewable ARENA programs. ARENA has announced many initiatives. There has been funding announced by the parliamentary secretary. ARENA is providing $2.5 million for 12 cutting edge solar research and development projects. Once again, all these projects are under threat simply because we have a government that has no vision, has no initiative and has no commitment to see that we have a viable renewable industry going into the future. Some of those projects are enhancing existing technologies to advance emerging technologies in photovoltaics, solar and solar storage—all really important areas that we need to come to terms with within the solar industry and for progressing the solar industry into the future.

ARENA going will cost thousands of jobs across rural Australia. The agency is responsible for researching and supporting renewable projects and emerging technologies, such as concentrated solar energy. Many of these projects are carried out in rural Australia. That being the case, I am sure that we can look to National Party members standing up in this House and speaking out and opposing the abolition of ARENA! Wind and solar are examples of industries that are vitally important in the country—and for local earthmovers and the people who build the roads. People who maintain them are looking at moving to a more renewable approach to energy.

With the abolition of ARENA Australia will be taking a backward step. This is a government that does not value ideas. This is a government that does not value new technologies. This is a government that looks to the past. This is a government that stands condemned for its attempt to abolish ARENA.

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (17:54): I rise to join in the condemnation of the attempts by the government to repeal the legislation surrounding ARENA. We have some confidence that this legislation will fail to get support in the Senate. But, of course, that is only half the task. Obviously, even if this very important research entity within Australia, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, remains, it is important that it continues to get funds.

I do not believe that the move to abolish ARENA is really principally about the government being climate change sceptics. I think it is grounded in a far more fundamental problem, and that is one where the leadership of the current government is actually just not interested in any vision of the future; its primary interest is to unravel anything that was put in by the previous Labor government. It has no agenda beyond that of student politicians. Indeed, the Prime Minister and many of his henchmen really approach politics as student politicians. This is all about sticking the rough end of the pineapple up the opposition; not about having any vision of what we need to do to take this country forward.

It is almost unbelievable that we do not have any understanding of the importance of government funded research and development in this area—how critical it is for us to have research and development of these sunrise industries so that we have an economic future. We have been told that we have to demolish the car industry, we are going to withdraw support from the car industry and we are going to see tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of jobs lost—but, not only jobs lost; our advanced manufacturing capability reduced. We are
going to see submarines and battleships going to be constructed offshore—again, losing that advanced manufacturing capacity. Here we have yet another industry that we are turning our backs on. Forget climate change. The most socially conservative person could understand the importance of ensuring that we have some skin in the game of renewable energy. Let me quote Mark Diesendorf, associate professor from the university of New South Wales, who says:

There is no rational reason for a political person to oppose the growth of renewable energy in Australia. These are new industries being implemented by small and medium-sized businesses, creating jobs and supporting technological innovation.

Let us understand a little bit about how we get new industries, how we get to the stage of the development of the internet; the development of the algorithm that underpins the search engines; the development of touchscreen technology; the development of wi-fi; the development of radar. Each and every one of these—things that are underpinning the 21st century technologies—each and every one of those innovations had at their heart government investment. It is really important, for innovation to thrive, that we have government investment. In those cases by and large the investment came out of the investment in defence technologies. But there were very creative collaborations between institutions, between the private sector and the public sector. If we do not do that we really will not see these technologies develop in this country.

They will develop. Do not let any of us think that we are not going to see great leaps forward in renewable energy over the next 10 years. The question is: do we want Australia to be part of that? Do we want to be in the game of development or do we want to sit back there and become just become technology takers? We are not going to have a role if we do not get in there and invest. Look at the fundamental functions of ARENA. They fund research in collaboration with research institutions and the private sector. They go for demonstration projects, they go for pure research and then for the early stage commercialisation of renewable energy projects. All of this is really important if you actually understand how technology develops, how we go from an idea to a commercially realistic project. Let me quote a paper put out by the International Energy Agency in 2011 in which they talk about how critical it is that we have investment at this particular stage. It states:

Significant challenges, mostly linked to a lack of joined-up policies to reduce investor risk and the resulting funding gap, hamper the smooth … transition from demonstration to deployment for viable—technologies—

The absence of adequate financing means that the point at which innovative energy technologies might be deployed in the market and prove themselves on a large scale may be delayed or at worst fail, a phenomenon commonly termed the commercialisation ‘valley of death’.

Indeed, this was the very place where ARENA was targeting their work: they were ensuring not just the pure research and the demonstration project but the early stage of commercialisation—avoiding that valley of death. That is what ARENA was doing and that was enabling an enormous number of Australian companies to engage and develop technology and a wide source of renewables.

This development is not going to stop because we stop ARENA. The world is not going to stop doing this. Renewable energy will not stop being developed. Let me quote Steven Cohen, a professor at Columbia University in the School of International and Public Affairs. He said:
The need for low-cost and reliable energy is going to grow … Engineers and businesspeople all over the world see the demand and are working to figure out a way to generate supply. In the global economy, the old line fossil fuel companies will not be able to prevent the diffusion of new technology once it is developed. Ask Kodak what happened to companies that do not change their strategies to reflect the emerging technologies.

That is what we are doing in Australia—we are acting as if we are Kodak. We are in there backing it 100 per cent. We are saying that the technology we are going to go with, the technology we are going to persist with, is the fossil fuel technology and that that is our business model, and that we are not going to be part of this new emerging industry that is happening around the world.

Just in the last couple of weeks, we have seen companies like Suntech, the Chinese solar energy firm, announce that they are going to close their local research arm and close-down the research projects that they had in Western Australia. Suntech have been investing more than $3 million a year in Australian research and development. Because of the decision of this government to close down ARENA, the decision of this government to put under question the renewable energy target and its decision to demolish carbon pricing, Suntech are moving their effort out of Australia, and no doubt will be working, as they are, in China and in India to develop these emerging markets. Let us remember this: we are not going to stop this development. ARENA is not going to be there. That is not going to stop the research being undertaken, but it is going to stop us having a meaningful role in it.

Seven of China's largest subeconomies already have emissions trading schemes and now China have announced that it is going to rollout its national market for carbon permit trading in 2016. They will be a major hub. South Korea is going to be launching its scheme in 2015. Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam are drawing theirs up. You can see what is happening. We have a mob of Luddites here in this place—people who do not actually understand the technologies and industries of the 21st century and the role that government research and assistance in the early commercialisation of these projects play in ensuring the development of some home-grown technology. We are going to be left behind in this game.

The wonderful work that we have seen happening in Australia and in Western Australia will pretty much come to a grinding halt. One WA company that we were talking to recently told me that they are aware of several projects that were in discussions with ARENA—really good projects. Several were large scale—10 megawatt to 30 megawatt solar projects on the south-west interconnected grid. Another project was a plantation fuel biomass project on the south-west interconnected grid and several large-scale solar projects on the north-west interconnected grid. The combined value of these projects would be over $500 million and the vast majority would have been funded from private sector investment. Again, to ensure that we get over that hump, that we move beyond and do not fall down into the valley of death, it is important that we have government assistance at that critical time to allow that research to take place and for that early commercialisation to be derisked, to some extent, for the private sector.

I want to finish by quoting the Australian Academy of Science from 2010. It says:

Australia’s renewable energy future poses important national choices. We can adopt the reactive path of minimisation of known economic costs, leading to the slow uptake of renewables mapped above. Or we can be proactive in stimulating research and installation of renewables, a path that will lead to a more rapid uptake. The second option has the potential to put Australia at the leading edge of renewable
energy technology, an objective of particular importance to the Australian Academy of Science. It may also have the potential for sustainable job creation and stimulation of export business opportunities. Government policies are crucial in determining both the rapidity of evolution and the future potential net economic value of our energy future …

So forget this being an argument about climate change. It does not have to be an argument about climate change. This is an argument about where Australia is going in the 21st century, to participate in the new sunrise industries. This is quite clearly an industry in which there is enormous investment going on around the world. We have just pulled the rug from under the Australian industry. Shame on you, Mr Abbott, and your government.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (18:08): Since coming to office the Abbott government has done all it can to erase any reference of climate change from its policies and publications. Climate change is rarely mentioned by government members and the words have been effectively deleted from government publications and any other printed material that the government issues. Where the government has been able to do so, it has also disbanded, abolished or defunded every climate change initiative that was set up by the previous Labor government.

We are told that the government does not even want to mention the topic at the G20 meeting, which is to be held later this year here in Australia. It is such an important issue and the government does not want to talk about it.

I commend the member for Perth on her contribution to this debate on the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (Repeal) Bill 2014. I heard her mention only a moment ago that China has now committed to a full national emissions trading scheme by 2016. Over 30 per cent of the global emissions that come from that country—one of the biggest emitters—are now going to be part of an emissions trading scheme. That is the kind of commitment that I would have thought countries such as Australia should be making rather than back-peddling and walking away from any action on climate change. We heard earlier this year that the US is also making strong commitments, as are so many other countries. Again, I am not going to go through all of them, but they have been mentioned by so many other speakers in this debate.

The issue will not go away just because the government does not want to talk about it or because the government wants to defund or dismantle anything to do with climate change that was previously established. Might I say that not everything was established by the previous Labor government. Some initiatives date back to a previous coalition government, yet the government now wants to walk away from anything to do with climate change and global warming.

The concerning thing about that is that this is happening at a time when the scientific advice relating to climate change is becoming much clearer and much more certain. As I said a moment ago, we are now clearly out of step with what other countries are doing and, quite frankly, I can understand why we are now being criticised by other governments of back-peddling.

Consistent with the Abbott government's theme of denying climate change—and I note the comments from the member for Perth who said that perhaps it is not that they are simply in denial but that they simply want to undo everything that Labor does because that is the nature of their political thinking—doing away with the Australian Renewable Energy Agency is simply another part of that process.
It is clearly an ideologically driven decision that makes no economic sense and no environmental sense. It is also another broken promise of the Abbott government. Last August, before the election, environment minister Greg Hunt said:

We are keeping ARENA and ARENA is the body looking at specific support for development projects in the solar space.

That was one year ago. Contrary to the environment minister's assurances just prior to the election that they would keep ARENA, the Abbott government now wants to scrap it. It is even more illogical, given that only in June this year the industry minister was singing ARENA's praises in the Federation Chamber, when he said, 'ARENA has allocated in excess of $1 billion for renewable energy projects in Australia, with a further $1.8 billion being leveraged from the private sector.' He went on to say:

But we certainly expect some great results from those programs that have already been funded under ARENA.

So why would the Abbott government want to wind up a program that was, to use the minister's words, 'getting great results, creating jobs, attracting co-investment of nearly two to one and producing world-leading renewable energy technology'? I believe the government wants to because, firstly, it wants to wash its hands of climate change. Secondly, it wants to because the Abbott government wants to prop up the energy companies and the fossil fuel sector, which will undoubtedly be the beneficiaries of a reduction in renewable energy investments in this country. The minister effectively acknowledged that in his second reading speech, when he said:

This government supports the energy and resources sector. We recognise it as one of our economy's most significant drivers of jobs, private sector investment and national revenue.

So the minister acknowledges that it is really the energy sector and the resources sector that the government is interested in and nothing else. The fact is that, since it was established in 2012, ARENA has supported more than 190 renewable energy projects. I understand that there are about another 190 in the pipeline. If they were to get the support and funding that they need and get off the ground, that would also bring in an additional co-investment of around $5 billion. We are talking about significant amounts of capital that will be going into these projects in addition to the money that ARENA itself would put into them.

ARENA has done its job and, in conjunction with the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, which members in this place would recall the government also wanted to abolish—and I suspect the government will now want to also abolish the renewable energy target, given the report that was handed down last week—we have actually seen a transformation in this country with respect to our energy sources.

Wind power has tripled, renewable energy jobs have tripled to around 24,000 across the country and the latest figures show that we have about 1.3 million homes with solar panels on them and some 840,000 homes with a solar hot water system on them. Those figures speak for themselves. The programs and the investments made in them have undoubtedly worked and have been successful, and the figures clearly show that. But that is not in the interest of the energy companies and that is why I suspect there is pressure on the government to wind back ARENA and close down the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, and the next step will be to do away with the renewable energy target.
I want to talk for a moment about the jobs that were created as a result of the investments in clean energy technology—the 24,000 jobs that span the country. Most of those jobs are in manufacturing and, again, most of those jobs in the manufacturing sector of this particular category are in regional and rural Australia. They are jobs that support and sustain country towns and country regions more than anything else—two to one, 70 per cent. It will be those communities that will be hit hard when we defund ARENA and those jobs are lost, or the new investment is simply not there. It also goes to the issue of manufacturing jobs. My understanding is that, in Germany, clean energy technology now accounts for more jobs in the manufacturing sector than the automotive sector. That highlights the opportunities that are there if governments are prepared to look forward rather than back and invest in what the future holds rather than what the past holds. It is very concerning that we are losing jobs in manufacturing—and this will be a severe blow to manufacturing—at a time when manufacturing in this country is already under immense pressure as a result of this government's decision to cut hundreds of millions of dollars of industry assistance to the manufacturing sector and turn its back on the automotive sector by not supporting the car makers, and now it will create so much uncertainty with respect to Defence contracts and who is going to get those jobs. Manufacturing is already doing it tough and this is going to be a real blow.

I quote from a manufacturer in my electorate of Makin. They opened up the business only two or three years ago. I refer to the business Tindo Solar. They made a submission to the renewable energy target review and said:

The long-term stable framework of the RET policy has provided the confidence for Tindo to establish the solar PV manufacturing plant in 2011.

They went on to say:

The weakening of the SRES—the Small-scale Renewable Energy Scheme—will impact significantly on the solar industry. Tindo Solar as a manufacturer and installer of solar systems nationally would be impacted significantly—which would certainly lead to job losses. This would happen right at a time when the future looks bright for Tindo with imminent expansion of our workforce …

That is straight from the horse's mouth. That is from a manufacturer set up in 2011—I have been through the brand-new plant—that manufactures solar panels and competes with the rest of the world at a competitive price, with a new type of panel that was previously not available, and yet their business is being put at risk because of the policies of this government. There would be many similar stories, I have no doubt, but I can speak about that one with a degree of personal understanding because I have been through the plant.

It is my view that this government is making decisions for the wrong reasons. It does not make economic sense, it does not make budgetary sense, it does not make business sense and it does not make environmental sense to walk away from ARENA and, for that matter, all the other initiatives that were committed to by previous governments with respect to climate change. The reality is that our climate is changing. Human activity is significantly contributing to that change, and the changes are raising the risks and costs that will be faced by mankind across this planet in the years ahead. We have a program in place that is getting results and yet we are going to—if this government has its way—walk away from it.
The last point I want to make about the foolishness of the policies of this government relates to the costs associated with many of the decisions of government. Many members opposite quite often come into this place, including those who spoke in support of this legislation, and talk about the $1.3 billion that is going to be saved by the government by abolishing this measure and how we need that money. They never talk about the impact of these kinds of decisions in dollar terms. I will quote from an article put out by Dr George Crisp, a Perth GP and a member of Doctors for the Environment. He talks about the real health costs associated with climate change and the way we are polluting the air through the burning of fossil fuels. He refers to four or five different studies that have already been done. I quote from his press release. He said:

… the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering estimated the annual externalised costs of fossil-fuel generated electricity in Australia to be $2.6 billion.

The next example he uses is from Harvard University. He said:

Paul Epstein at Harvard Medical School found the health and environmental consequences of coal cost the US economy between one third and one half a trillion dollars each year.

He alluded to a third example and said:

The 2011 US EPA review of their Clean Air Act concluded that every dollar spent on cleaner air produced $30 in health benefits.

He went on to say:

European studies findings are similar, estimating that health savings more than outweigh costs of emissions reduction, and that those benefits continue to accrue over time.

The case is quite clear: there is very good reason to continue with the policies that are already in place. There is a requirement for us to do so because the rest of the world is acting and because we have the scientific advice that says that we should be doing something about it. We have programs, projects and policies in place that are delivering the results—and that is admitted to by the minister—and yet we want to walk away from them, all because of political ideology. This side of parliament does not support this measure and I certainly do not, because I believe it is wrong and I believe we will pay dearly for it in the years to come.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (18:22): I commend the member for Makin for his very erudite elucidation of the issues surrounding this piece of legislation. I have been hearing bits of the debate during the course of the day, and I have heard nothing from the government that is anything like a convincing argument. That raises a number of serious questions which have been alluded to during the course of the debate. The member for Perth spoke about the Luddites on the other side of the chamber. I am not sure they are all Luddites, but they have clearly had their understanding of the need for environmental action in this regard, and the importance of ARENA, suppressed by the ideological motivations that, no doubt, come from the minister responsible for the environment. No clear-minded person, no good-thinking person, could come to the conclusion that ARENA is not worth keeping and does not make a significant contribution to the Australian community.

We all know that ARENA works to reduce the cost of renewable energy technology development and has been very successful in increasing its use in this country; that it provides financial assistance for the research, development, demonstration and commercialisation of renewable energy and related technologies; that it develops skills in the renewable energy
industry; and that it promotes renewable energy projects and innovation both nationally and internationally. I am reminded by the shadow minister that ARENA currently supports more than 190 renewable energy projects drawing more than $1.5 billion of private sector investment and that these 190 projects in the pipeline have the potential to draw more than $5 billion in private sector funding as well. And 70 per cent of ARENA funding has gone to projects in rural and regional Australia, creating jobs for the future of those areas. It is that aspect of this that I want to talk about. The people who have got most to benefit from research and innovation in alternative methods of energy production are people who live in high-cost areas remote from major cities and towns and in remote parts of this country.

I note that in June the Senate referred the provisions of this bill to the Senate Economics Committee for inquiry. There were 130 submissions received, one of which came from the Centre for Appropriate Technology, an organisation based in my home town of Alice Springs. I am grateful to Lyndon Frearson, the CEO of CAT Projects, for allowing me to quote liberally from that submission because it makes substantial sense and provides a practical example of how the Australian Renewable Energy Agency has been able to assist organisations and businesses in remote and regional Australia.

CAT Projects evolved as a commercial engineering services on of the Centre for Appropriate Technology in 2008, specialising in renewable energy services to remote communities and pursuing opportunities to utilise CAT’s intellectual property in commercial and international settings. CAT is a unique organisation in this country. It is wholly owned and governed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and has an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander board. It has its head office in Alice Springs, with national outreach offices in Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory. CAT has worked for over 30 years bringing people and technology together to deal with basic technological challenges in remote parts of Australia. This approach is grounded in effective engagement and sustainable outcomes facilitated by innovative and effective responses to these challenges. CAT project solutions are people focused, innovative and practical and they acknowledge the important relationship between people, place and technology. It is a proud locally owned company.

CAT Projects, in its submission to the Senate Economics Committee, pointed out that CAT projects, by dint of its submission, is well placed to comment on the efficacy and importance of ARENA as an agency. As a company based in remote Australia, CAT Projects deal daily with the impact of high energy prices associated with isolated diesel and gas power supplies.

I understand that most people in this chamber, including in the government, have got absolutely no bloody idea what happens in the bush. They have got no idea what happens in rural and remote Australia. They have got no real idea of what powers communities in remote parts of the Northern Territory or of the costs involved. I say to the government that, if you raise your eyes a bit and have a look at what is going on in the bush, you will appreciate what CAT is doing. Existing projects such as grid extensions and large capital intensive power supplies have proven to be inappropriate for remote Australia. Hence, thinking differently about energy supplies, the technologies that are used and the financial structures that are used to develop them is vital.

ARENA, through its Regional Australia's Renewables initiative and its Community and Regional Renewable Energy Program, has been explicitly dealing with these issues. The continuing existence of ARENA has been of critical importance to remote and regional
Australia. There are a range of barriers in the bush, not least of which is that remote and regional areas have some of the highest marginal costs of power generation anywhere in the country. And yet they are located in areas with some of the highest renewable energy resource potential—including, particularly in my communities, solar power.

With high energy costs being a key barrier to further development of northern and remote Australia, alternatives to the existing modes of generation, transmission and consumption of electrical energy must be considered, if only to act as a hedge to fluctuations in energy prices. There are a number of issues that we need to deal with—a common set of structural barriers to deployment of renewable energy sources in remote communities. They include issues to do with governance, supply chains—the intellectual supply chain, the labour supply chain, the logistical supply chain—finance and capital constraints. ARENA as an agency has recognised the importance of incentivising innovation with respect to these barriers, with a specific focus on not simply throwing money at the issues, rather asking industry, utilities and other government agencies to consider how different approaches to business can materially address the barriers previously identified.

A key example of this—and this is a very important example—is a project with which CAT Projects have been involved for some time and which is presently in the final stage of negotiating a funding agreement with ARENA: the Voyages Yulara 1.8-megawatt PV system. Yulara is a tourist township some kilometres from Uluru. It consists of five separate accommodation facilities and associated infrastructure, with attendant services, including a primary school, a medical clinic and emergency services: police, fire and ambulance. The resort is wholly owned by Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of the Indigenous Land Corporation. Power is supplied to Yulara by a combination of diesel and compressed natural gas, trucked daily 440 kilometres from Alice Springs. The cost of generating a supply of energy to Yulara is in excess of $300 per megawatt hour, excluding any margin for overheads and profit by the supplier. The integration of a large PV array, with a peak daytime penetration of around 30 per cent, was reviewed by CAT Projects on behalf of Voyages in 2013. Even the most conservative estimates of the costs of the development, future energy costs and the value of the energy generated from the PV plant indicated that the project had a high probability of being viable in its own right.

There were some issues. In the first instance, Voyages did not have the internal capacity to appreciate or manage the technical risk associated with the project, the energy supplier did not have the access to capital to support the project, and the regulatory environment made it prohibitively difficult for a third party to establish the PV system in its own right. Without intervention, the opportunity to drive down the local long-term costs of energy would be lost. Enter ARENA. The ARENA I-RAR program acted as a catalyst for Voyages to reconsider the project and how additional support from ARENA might help resolve the barriers that had been identified. Critically, the mere presence of ARENA as an active agency willing to fund projects in this space gave substantial confidence to the board and management of Voyages that the project would be successful.

As a direct result, Voyages made an initial expression of interest through ARENA for funding for a 1.8-megawatt PV plant, with the funding requested being between 15 and 20 per cent of the projected capital cost. ARENA accepted the EOI and advised that Voyages could proceed to a full application, and they did. Voyages were required to complete detailed design
documentation for the project, then go to tender and include the locked-in tender prices as part of the final submission. Voyages did this. They completed the tender process with the assistance of CAT Projects in June 2014. The pricing that was returned, along with the financing proposals, was substantially better than what had been originally estimated and resulted in Voyages being able to be confident that the plant would be built and financed without direct support from ARENA.

The final negotiations with ARENA have resulted in an agreement for ARENA to fund a knowledge-sharing program for the project in order to disseminate the lessons learnt as well as some of the up-front design and development costs. The value of this contribution from ARENA is now around six to seven per cent of the total project cost. This process has proven the important catalysing role of ARENA as an independent agency. Through being present and engaged with industry, ARENA has been able to build confidence and collaboration between end consumers of energy, technology suppliers and the financiers who support these projects. It is very clear that, were ARENA not in existence, the Yulara plant would not be proceeding at any time in the foreseeable future and that there are many other projects around remote and regional Australia that would suffer a similar fate—and no doubt will—as a direct result.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): Tell the nation what ARENA is.

Mr SNOWDON: Don't we know, mate? I will come to it in a moment. I am just conscious of time. It is a sure and certain view of CAT Projects that the repeal of ARENA and the subsumption of its roles into a larger department will have a materially detrimental effect on the long-term development of regional and remote Australia. I am 100 per cent certain of this—absolutely certain. CAT Projects strongly support ARENA, as do I. The previous Labor government established ARENA in 2012, as an independent agency designed to improve the competitiveness of renewable energy technologies in Australia and to increase the supply of renewable energy to Australia's electricity market—exactly what has happened at Yulara.

I say to members opposite, as I said at the beginning of my contribution, that they need to look beyond their own little piles as they think about this bill. They need to understand its implications not only for them but most particularly for those people who live in high-cost areas, where the cost of electricity production is exorbitant and innovation is required. Innovation based on good science, good engineering, good technology and decent investments by informed investors and enlightened organisations such as ARENA can make a material difference to the outcome and mean that, in the long term, we have got sustainable energy supplies to the most rural and remote parts of Australia—for people who deserve better attention than they are getting from this government. I say to the government—and others have made this contribution before—get over being climate sceptics. We know climate change is real. It is about time you actually took heed of not only the science but the very, very good work that is being done in Australia around alternative energy production and renewable energy. Just get over it and do not proceed with this silly piece of legislation which is going to do harm to all of us.

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (18:37): I rise to argue against this bill, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (Repeal) Bill 2014, which represents another serious blow to Australia's ambitions and achievements when it comes to renewable energy. Abolishing the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, known as ARENA, will jeopardise Australia's
renewable energy future. It will mean a serious delay in our progress towards a decreasing reliance on fossil fuels. It will mean falling behind in a fast-growing and competitive global industry generating 21st century jobs and it constitutes a further retreat in Australia's contribution to combatting climate change.

ARENA supports growth in Australian renewable energy production and supply right across the innovation chain, from research and development to demonstration projects and to the deployment of new technology. Since its creation in 2012, ARENA has invested $940 million and has mobilised $1.8 billion in private capital in support of more than 190 projects—70 per cent of which are in rural and regional Australia. There are another 190 projects with a combined value of nearly $8 billion currently under consideration. On average, the ARENA funding model has leveraged 2.2 times the quantum of public investment in private capital contributions to approved projects.

It should be a matter of pride to all Australians that, within the set of innovative projects made possible by ARENA funding, including some which constitute Australian firsts, this critical Labor government program has actually supported two world-first projects. The CSIRO's advanced steam generation project has set a world record for producing the highest temperature steam ever created using energy from the sun. The Carnegie Wave Energy project, in my electorate of Fremantle, is on track to be the world's first commercial-scale wave energy array, delivering both renewable energy and emission-free desalinated water.

As the representative of a community that has consistently urged governments at every level to provide leadership in renewable energy and sustainability, I am pleased to have supported Carnegie Wave Energy since its earliest efforts to design, test, and apply its very exciting wave energy technology. Indeed, I spoke about it in my first speech to parliament. I am glad that through ARENA funding, in addition to support provided by the WA government, the Fremantle Carnegie Wave Energy technology will soon be making a contribution to the delivery of renewable energy in Australia, and no doubt overseas as well. Another project supported by ARENA in WA has been a feasibility study for the Perenjori 20MW Dispatchable Solar Tower Project.

Without ARENA as an important part of the Labor government's suite of policies and programs in this space, which also included the renewable energy target, the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the carbon price, Australia would still be lagging the rest of the world in terms of new energy sources and energy-efficiency technology. For those who say that such technology should find its own way in the market without government assistance, it has to be remembered that our existing stationary hydrocarbon power infrastructure was created with very significant public investment and ongoing subsidies. Indeed, in today's West Australian, it is noted that, while household electricity prices in WA have risen 86 per cent since the Barnett government was elected in 2008, the state government subsidy for the provision of electricity still amounts to $600 million each year.

Last week in this parliament we were honoured to have the opportunity to hear from former Japanese Prime Minister, Naoto Kan. He discussed the social, political, economic and environmental impact of the Fukushima nuclear disaster three years on and what can be learned from this devastating incident. Mr Kan is a strong advocate in Japan for the transition from nuclear energy to renewable energy and urges Australia to continue to look to renewables rather than nuclear energy or fossil fuels in confronting the challenge of global
warming. Mr Kan described how he looked out of the window as he flew over Australia's vast, beautiful and expressive landscape and realised the extent to which the Australian continent has the greatest opportunity of any country to utilise its natural renewable energy potential, whether in the form of solar, wind, wave or geothermal energy. In fact, to illustrate his point, Mr Kan noted that he had visited Fremantle's Carnegie Wave Energy project when in WA earlier last week.

I am grateful to one of my constituents, Gordon Payne, whose submission to the Senate inquiry, notes:

Many leading specialists in the world in the area of energy economics are predicting a major shift around the world to renewable technologies. Solar panel costs have fallen dramatically, and battery storage cost are also trending sharply downward. The same specialists look with envy at Australia's resources in renewable energy. But they are amazed and concerned that we have not developed these resources to any great degree, and that we not doing enough in-depth research into our renewable energy potential. ARENA was set up to address these concerns in 2012. It is short-sighted to withdraw this agency so soon. It seems that a political decision has been made which ignores Australia's long-term interests, and which is aligned to the interests of the non-renewable energy sector. Renewable energy projects are great employers and with the mining boom winding down, we have an opportunity to make a transition to a future economic model that includes lots of renewable energy. Agencies like ARENA are vital to this transition.

Another of my constituents has noted in an email to Minister Hunt, which was copied to me, that, 'We have capability and we have capacity but we have neither dreams nor commitment.' Subsuming ARENA within the Department of Industry and providing a ridiculously small $15 million by way of an annual allocation shows the government's short-sighted, visionless approach and its predilection for favouring the established, yet unsustainable energy producers.

When ARENA was created by the former Labor government, I argued in favour of its legislative foundation and its policy logic by making reference to the global progress on renewable energy investment. At that stage, in late 2011, I was pleased to be able to make reference to a report commissioned by the United Nations Environment Programme and undertaken as a cooperative endeavour between the Frankfurt School-UNEP Collaborating Centre for Climate and Sustainable Energy Finance and Bloomberg New Energy Finance. The report noted that in 2010 new investment in renewable energy in the developing world outstripped the quantum of investment from developed countries for the first time—$72 billion as against $70 billion; whereas in 2004, the ratio was four to one in favour of developed nations.

Globally, the investment in renewable power and fuels grew 32 per cent from 2009 to 2010 and constituted 5.5 times the investment in 2004. That was the global environment into which ARENA arrived. Since that time, Australia has begun to find its rightful place in the burgeoning worldwide renewable energy industry through appropriate government assessment and facilitation. As part of a comprehensive and carefully linked suite of programs and policies designed to put Australia on the path to a clean energy future, ARENA has assisted in developing the next generation of affordable renewables by working to improve the competitiveness of renewable energy technologies.

Since 2012, ARENA has proved the logic and value of this approach. Any government of good sense would allow it to continue its vital work in assessing and supporting worthy
projects in the name of Australia's clean energy and green job future. Current and future ARENA projects should play a leading role in maintaining Australia's place at the forefront of research and innovation. This R&D would of course lead to the further discoveries we need to help our nation achieve a properly diverse energy profile and to make our contribution to tackling climate change.

Now, sadly, that incredible and necessary surge, which has already proven its value, and which has so much more economic, social and environmental value in prospect, is being cut off at the knees by a government whose chief obsession is to undo the progress and leadership that the Australian people wanted to see from their elected representatives and that the former Labor government worked hard and collaboratively to deliver. It is hard to imagine a government with a less positive agenda: no to renewable energy, no to universal public health care, no to support for single parents and to age and disability pensioners and carers, no to equality in education, no to unemployed young people, no to the global poor and dispossessed, no to environmental protection. That is no way to govern any nation, let alone a country with a strong, progressive culture and tradition like Australia.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (18:45): I got an email the other day. It is not the first one. I got a few actually from constituents writing to state how proud they are as Australians by the fact that our country has embraced renewable energy and what we have achieved so far with our renewable energy targets. I will not go through the whole of this email but it asks me, as their local member of parliament, what is my position on this issue. Helen who lives at Willmott said, 'Will you support keeping the RET as it is or will you support changes to it?' While this debate is about the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, it is also about whether or not we think this sector is important, provides value, and is worth pursuing. In terms of ARENA, it is.

When asked about whether I support renewables and whether I support the RET, of course I do. Any person with an ounce of common sense would think that, if we have finite resources which we use for the generation of energy and if it has been demonstrated that the way we are generating energy at the moment has an impact, that we need to find ways to offset that impact and, if there is a smarter way of generating energy and if we can look at, for instance, how to make the use of renewable energy a more efficient process, that is, apply research to see how we can generate renewable energy in a much more efficient way, you would do it. You would say, 'This is the way to go. It makes common sense.'

ARENA has dedicated nearly $940 million, which it has invested, with $1.8 billion mobilised in private investment. It has been doing a massive amount of work in the context of the broader push to make Australia's renewable energy sector a lot more vibrant and a lot scale stronger. It makes perfect sense. Those opposite have gone from a position where they said they would support ARENA but on coming to office they have changed their mind and they said they would support the RET.

We have seen Dick Warburton's efforts. This is a bloke who has sworn eye patches on both eyes when writing about the renewable sector. How he can recommend that a sector has an important role to play in the generation of energy in this country but pretty much sign a death warrant for that sector by seeing the end of RET escapes me and it escapes common sense. You need to work out why it is that those opposite are doing this. We have got it all wrong. There are no policy reasons for why they are doing this. They committed to it before the
election and said that they would keep ARENA and keep RET, but then they committed to the review. A lot of people recognise the way this government works, that at its very heart it has pulled apart all the architecture, the framework that was there to support us generating energy in a much more efficient way, and by efficient I mean recognising that there is a cost which comes about as a result of generating energy through the use of coal, that we have a cost to pay in the clean-up.

Look at one of the biggest domestic political issues affecting China right now—that is, what are going to do about pollution? With pollution in some of their biggest cities so bad, there are serious concerns about peoples’ longer term health. The government knows it is a major political issue. Whenever their political representatives are gathered, there is a focus and a recognition on generating energy in a much cleaner way, in changing the way people behave so that human activity that is causing that pollution has to change.

Governments in different parts of the world know that they have to do something about this. While all these other governments are spending their time finding ways to generate energy efficiently, more effectively and more cleanly, and to do it in a much more sustainable way, while the world is going one way this government is adamant it will go backwards. The rest of the world is going forward; this government has shifted into reverse gear. Why is that when you look at what ARENA is doing, at what is being achieved in terms of the renewable energy target and you look at the way Australians have responded?

For instance, when Labor went into office in 2007 about 7,000 homes in this country had solar panels on their premises. Look at Australia today. There are 1.2 million roofs with solar panels on them. At the peak in 2011-12, 7,000 a week were being installed. You can see that the community has supported renewable energy, in particular solar energy. The community has embraced it.

There have been, obviously, some criticisms about the way that feed-in tariffs have operated and the way that that might have distorted the market. But if you then go to the issue of whether, for example, the RET and the embracing of renewable energy actually had an impact on wholesale and retail power prices, you can cite a raft of studies that demonstrate that that was not the case—that they have not been causing an upward tick in prices. The reality is that the biggest chunk of increases in electricity prices has been overwhelmingly as a result of the way that state based distributors, network owners, have invested in their networks and been able to obtain price rises to reflect that investment. So that has been the biggest driver of power price increases in this country—a fact, ignored by those opposite. The renewable sector has not had any impact, when you look at it, in relative terms, on the increase in power prices.

So why would this government be doing what it is doing in terms of trying to scale back ARENA and in terms of what it is doing with the RET, as has been announced in the last few days, and the report that has been handed to government? Why would it be doing it? Why would you want to get rid of a sector that is creating 24,000 jobs in this country, and the offshoots of that—the other people, the other companies, the other firms, and the other sectors that have benefited because of the work that they have obtained as a result of this increase in demand? Why would you do that? The installation of major wind-turbine facilities in different parts of this country is helping generate energy in such a way that, in some cases, you can see the increase in the share of energy production. Why would you get rid of a sector that is helping to be able to offset the increase in demand for energy that we have experienced?
Actually, what you are seeing now, for the first time, is a drop in demand. That is for a number of reasons. People are using energy a lot more wisely. Energy efficiency standards in homes are having an impact. Renewable energy is available and you can see the impact of that taking up a greater share of energy production generation in this country. You can see all of this happening. So you can actually witness—and we are one of the first generations to witness—a change in the way that energy is being generated and in the way that it is being used. So, if we are part of that, what is it that motivates this government to change its mind about what is happening with ARENA and what is happening with the RET?

Again, they committed—they said that they would commit—to ARENA and the RET. The now Prime Minister, before he was opposition leader, actually argued for a carbon tax. He said that the simplest thing to do was to apply a carbon tax—that was in 2009. You have got him saying that on the public record. And now he has built himself a reputation for tearing apart everything that has to go with the way in which we generate energy in this country and to avoid the way in which we operate when it comes to energy generation. So they have committed to ARENA and to the RET, but they have changed their mind on that.

You have a person who has gone from being a backbencher to an opposition leader to a Prime Minister, who has changed, at every step of the way, his position on the way in which we tackle emissions and on the way that energy is generated. And now we have got to this point, where we are debating the demise of ARENA. The thing is: I think that you have to look at the way in which the Prime Minister got to the job in the first place. Look at the way he got to the job of becoming opposition leader. Again, this is a person who had argued for a carbon tax. Tony Abbott, the member for Warringah, had argued for a carbon tax, and then recognised the palpable sense of outrage in the coalition over the deal that was being done back in 2009 in setting up the CPRS or the emissions trading scheme then, and recognised that the only way to stop it was to take the top job. So what he did was to coast in on the sentiment that existed in the coalition; he surfed that to the top, and he got rid of the member for Wentworth from that role because of the depth of feeling that exists on the other side of the chamber in dealing seriously with this issue.

When they were in opposition they set up all these ginger groups. You see that now that they are in government; there are ginger groups all over the coalition. In a climate where wages growth is the worst it has been for decades, there are ginger groups that are arguing for the abolition of penalty rates. Then you see that there are ginger groups that are arguing for taxation reform on employee share-ownership schemes; they have had a really great run on that. And then we have seen this other ginger group form on the RET, arguing against the renewable energy target and arguing for changes to a scheme that was introduced by John Howard.

Clearly what we are seeing here is not the triumph of policy; what we are seeing here is the triumph of politics within that side, because no-one could seriously believe, on policy terms, or on their own commitments in times past, that they were serious about having a genuine reluctance to embrace what ARENA does or what the RET does. What this is about is the Prime Minister heading off at the pass the growth of another outbreak of the Neanderthals that exist within the coalition, dominating policy and potentially dominating his job. On no grounds—on no logic; on no common sense—can you argue for what is being put forward in this bill or what is being put forward in terms of the RET. This is not about saving the
climate; this is about saving the PM's support within the coalition—ensuring that he keeps feeding the Neanderthals that exist on that side of the fence, who argue against the common sense, logic, fact and data that say that what we have been doing as a nation on renewables is the right thing to do.

You simply cannot see how this is going to benefit us into the longer term. When we have an opportunity to, as I say, transform the way that we generate energy in this country, and to ensure that the work of ARENA continues, in making sure that renewables become more and more efficient, then that is the way to go—not what is being put forward in this bill. We need to continue our commitment to the development of renewable energy generation in this country and to ensure that, in years to come, when we do need to make the moves that other countries are making, we are not left floundering and that we are ahead of the curve and not behind it as we always seem to find ourselves in these debates.

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance)(19:00): It is a pleasure to sum up the second reading debate on the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (Repeal) Bill which repeals the Australian Renewable Energy Agency Act 2011.

Now I note that some of those opposite have used this debate as a grandstanding opportunity to talk about Renewable Energy Target Scheme and other policies but, if we focus on the bill at hand, we will see that the government has—as mentioned many times in the House during the debate—committed $1 billion, to more than 200 projects. It will be honouring these commitments and is keen to see them succeed.

This bill gives effect to the government's decision to close the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, ARENA, and deliver budget savings of almost $1.3 billion. This bill represents part of the government's commitment to make the structural changes necessary to achieve savings and return the budget to surplus. The bill also transfers management and decision-making on ARENA's functions to the Minister for Industry and to his department. This is how it should be.

The ARENA board, statutory chief executive officer and chief finance officer positions will go, with the Minister for Industry to be responsible for ARENA investment decisions. This legislation, once passed, will enable the minister to have far greater oversight of future expenditure and that currently in ARENA's pipeline. The repeal of the ARENA Act will also enable efficiencies and synergies by transferring management of ARENA's existing commitments and other functions into the Industry Department.

There were and are some good people involved in ARENA. There is no question about that at all; they are good people with good intentions and they have worked hard. But how long is the government, which is facing a budget emergency, expected to prop up an agency which was established merely to meet the political whims of the Greens at a time when Julia Gillard was prepared to do and say anything to save her political skin?

The coalition has been quite up-front about the state of the nation's finances. Labor was handed the very best set of economic figures when it won office in November 2007, for the first time since March 1996. Unbelievably and inexplicably, less than six years later, Labor left the incoming Abbott-Truss government with the worst books in Australia's history. Granted, Labor had to contend with the global financial crisis of 2007-08. I admit that. But
nothing can excuse the member for Lilley for the six deficit budgets which plunged this nation into the depths we now find ourselves. And he knows it.

The return of ARENA's uncommitted funding will deliver a saving of almost $1.3 billion to the budget. In the context of the debt and deficit legacy left by Labor, that is necessary. Every saving helps to reduce the awful mess with which this nation was saddled from the six years Labor was in office.

Like so many other Labor-Greens schemes, ARENA had its shortcomings. Consider the following as just one example of how the Labor-Greens alliance chucked hard-earned taxpayers' dollars at ARENA for no environmental benefit. Ocean Power Technologies Australasia sought to develop a wave power station off the coast of Victoria near the city of Portland. The plant, to be built in three phases with a total capacity of 19 megawatts, was awarded a $66.46 million grant under the Renewable Energy Demonstration Program, a $435 million competitive grants program designed to accelerate the commercialisation and deployment of new renewable energy technologies for power generation in Australia.

Funding also went to the Oceanlinx 1MW Commercial Wave Energy Demonstrator, based in South Australia. The Oceanlinx commercial wave energy demonstrator was a 3,000 tonne structure measuring about 21 metres wide by 24 metres long. The device was designed to sit in shallow water, using oscillating water column technology to generate 1MW peak output. The Oceanlinx patented OWC and air turbine technologies were combined in Oceanlinx's greenWAVE device, designed to be a highly efficient energy converter with no moving parts under water. As waves rise within the OWC, it was designed to drive a column of air ahead and through a turbine to generate electricity.

In February 2014, construction of the device was complete and it was intended to transport the device from Port Adelaide to Port McDonnell for grid connection and 12 months operation and testing. Transportation took place on 1 March and was expected to take about four days. On 2 March 2014, complications were experienced during transportation of the device, just 24 hours into the operation. The device was set down in shallow waters off the Fleurieu Peninsula in South Australia. As a result of the transportation complications, the device was damaged beyond repair. This monstrosity remains visible offshore at Carrickalinga.

In July 2012 Oceanlinx had received nearly $4 million in funding—taxpayers' dollars—from the Emerging Renewables Program, administered by ARENA, to support the development of renewable energy technologies.

Labor leader Bill Shorten said this was the very kind of project ARENA had to fund with taxpayers' dollars. At the same time, he condemned the coalition for wanting to get rid of ARENA. Yet three days later—going back to this Victorian project I talked about earlier—the bombshell dropped. Plans to build the world's largest wave power project in Portland were scrapped. The $230 million bid to harness the ocean's currents was shelved by Ocean Power Technologies and its subsidiary Victorian Wave Partners. Victorian Wave Partners and OPT Australasia director Gilbert George told Warrnambool's The Standard that the project was simply too large and the parent company, OPT Incorporated, based in the United States, had decided to withdraw following a review.
Here’s another ARENA flop. A renewable energy company was handed nearly $5 million in federal grants, taxpayers’ dollars, and was then put into administration. The member for Maribyrnong continues to insist we need more of this sort of taxpayer-subsidised things to pretend we are cooling the planet. Taxpayers are not that easily hoodwinked. If Labor had thrown all the money it wasted in six years of office in the ocean, now that would have made waves.

But after talking about some of the wasteful projects funded under ARENA, I would remind the House that there are around 200 good projects, worth $1 billion, that this government supports and will honour. We will seek to get outcomes from these investments to advance the renewable energy industry towards commerciality. The government remains committed to the development of renewable energy technologies in Australia. I’ll say it again: more than $1 billion in funding is available to support around 200 ARENA commitments to existing renewable projects, with a total project value of $2.8 billion. These projects span the technology development chain from PhD research to near commercial deployment and include a broad range of technologies, such as solar, marine, biofuels, integration and storage technologies. These projects represent a significant investment by the coalition, by the government, by the nation, in renewable energy. The government is keen to see these existing ARENA projects delivered in the coming years and the knowledge we gain from them shared broadly to allow further development of the renewables sector.

It is also worth remembering that there is and will continue to be good work occurring across Australia to improve environmental outcomes in a way that makes good business sense, including in my electorate of Riverina. The 13 local councils I represent all promote biodiversity measures to lessen the effects of salinity and sustainability in their day-to-day operations.

The meatworks at South Gundagai, Wagga Wagga and Yanco, all mightily relieved the carbon tax has gone, thanks to this government, do all they can to lessen their carbon footprint while at the same time producing quality protein for hungry and growing markets.

JBS Riverina at Yanco is Australia's largest integrated feedlot and processing facility. The facility has a feedlot capacity of 52,000 head with a two-shift operation five days per week processing 600 head of the highest-quality grain-fed beef cattle. It employs 430 full-time employees, underpinning the workforce of the neighbouring Leeton and Narrandera shires. Major international markets for the product are the European Union, Japan and the United States of America. The JBS Riverina premium product is served at top-end restaurants right across our nation.

The carbon tax had a significant job-destroying impact on the competitiveness of the export orientated meat industry. Higher electricity and gas charges have been incurred. JBS cost structures to process a beef animal in Australia is twice that of the US—and that goes right throughout our abattoir industry—their biggest competitor in international markets. The repeal of the carbon tax has been a major step forward in unwinding these costs.

There is in place a program to efficiently produce compost from our manure at JBS Riverina. This compost is used in garden remediation in Sydney and across New South Wales. JBS Riverina has a major water re-use strategy through irrigation of its farming land. It is all important, because it is all about sustainability, renewable energy and getting the job done without big government grants. This is commercial reason, commercial reality. The
business is about being sustainable whether in farming practices, water and energy use and animal health and welfare.

I would like now to respond to some of the hysterical—and they were hysterical—assertions made in the member for Charlton's contribution last Thursday. Let's not forget the member previously worked for Greg Combet, the former climate change minister, for six years, helping devise the job-destroying carbon tax package which many blame for eroding trust in Labor—and that is so true. The member has strong union backing—that is typical—and outlined his intentions the day after last year's election in a Newcastle Herald article headed: 'Conroy to stick to local issues.' Maybe he should do just that instead of repeating wild claims such as quoting the Garnaut report forecasting that if climate change is not combated we will see a 98 per cent reduction in farming in the Murray-Darling area. That is totally ridiculous. The greatest danger to irrigation farmers in the Murray-Darling Basin faced in recent years was the man-made drought forced on them by the Labor-Green alliance.

As with so much of what we heard from those opposite during this second reading debate, what we heard from the member for Charlton was hysteria rather than hard facts. The facts are these: $1 billion is a lot of money for any industry and the hard fact is that we have a budget mess we have to clean up. We were elected to do so. We are getting on with the job of doing it and we will do it. So we are focusing on getting the most out of that $1 billion and returning uncommitted funds to the budget to help us repair the mess. It is all about accountability—that is what we stand for; that is what we represent.

This bill implements our decision to abolish ARENA. In doing so, it will enable us to realise the administrative efficiencies of bringing ARENA activities into the Minister for Industry's department, bank the savings from uncommitted funds and get on with the all-important job of getting the most out of what has already been invested. I commend the bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the amendment be agreed to. There being more than one voice calling for a division, in accordance with standing order 133 the division is deferred until 8 pm.

Debate adjourned.

Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill 2014
Report from Federation Chamber

Bill returned from Federation Chamber without amendment; certified copy of the bill presented.

Ordered that this bill be considered immediately.

Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (19:13): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.
**Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014**

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Mr VARVARIS** (Barton) (19:13): The Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014 is the first key in the necessary reforms that the coalition is committed to so that children can be granted loving parents and a secure home. This bill is key in allowing for automatic Australian citizenship to be granted to children adopted by Australian citizens under bilateral adoption arrangements between Australia and countries that are not party to the Hague Convention on intercountry adoption.

Currently, children who are adopted through bilateral arrangements do not inherit automatic citizenship. Parents must organise a child category visa, for adopted children to come to Australia, even though the adoption process is correct and accepted both domestically and internationally. Clearly, this imposes both additional costs and delay to the child and to the prospective parents. Yet those who are adopted through the Hague Convention, are given Australian citizenship status without the waiting times for a visa to come through. These children are able to be flown to Australia and start their new lives immediately.

This bill allows for this key amendment so that adopted children become citizens just as those born in Australia are citizens and are permitted to travel to our shores as Australian citizens to start a new life with their family. This bill will expand the current scope of the Hague Convention, so that the same permits are incorporated under bilateral agreements and children adopted from either arrangement have the same benefits. The coalition is committed to helping Australian families to be united with their adopted children within an appropriate time frame to minimise the emotional ramifications of lengthy waiting times.

Australia has currently one of the lowest intercountry adoption rates in the developed world. Two out of five adoptions in Australia are of children born overseas, with statistics showing only 129 adoptions for Australian couples in the year 2012-13. Of these adoptions, 61 adoptions were under the Hague Convention, with 68 from non-Hague adoptions. Statistics also show that on average the waiting time for intercountry adoptions was about five years as of 2013. Back in 2007-08, the waiting time on average was three years.

Overall adoption from overseas has decreased by 13 per cent. Whilst there are many factors which contribute to the overall decline in intercountry adoption of children by Australian parents, no doubt, the average waiting time of five years is a major deterrent for parents seeking to adopt a child from overseas. The waiting period is a combination of the process of adoption plus the time it takes for the child to be granted a visa to arrive in Australia.

Australia's intercountry adoption process is both state and federally governed. Whilst it is always prudent that we have disciplined visa requirements and entry permits, we must also not allow it to impede with the best interests of the child. As I previously mentioned, the median length of waiting periods for intercountry adoption has increased continuously since 2012, from 37 months or three years to 61 months or five years and, in some cases, up 10 years.
Whilst the reasons behind this can be attributed to an increase in processing times in the
countries of origin from where the child was born and the bureaucracy of application, it is
fundamentally distressing for all parties involved when there is false hope of a successful
adoption when a visa is delayed and their child remains in their original surroundings.

Although Australia currently places no cap on the number of child visas it grants per year,
the federal government department of immigration sets the quotas for child visas to be granted
each year meaning that there is a backlog with each successful applicant waiting for a child
visa to be granted to their adoptee. Requests for child visas far exceed the quotas set per year
and are a major contributing factor to delays between the time the adoption application is
successful to the time the child is united in Australia with his or her adoptee parents.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection has confirmed in the recent
government's interim report on intercountry adoption that the process time for adoption visas
can exceed 12 months depending on the location and complexity of cases. Thus to have a
successful adoption application only to be thwarted by the outcome of a child visa does not
make sense for what should be a seamless and joyful process.

The coalition is committed to lifting Australia's intercountry adoption statistics to reflect
the needs of the parents and child, and this bill today is one step in the right direction to
enable important streamlining for overseas adoption. Making important reforms to the current
immigration and citizenship requirements so that one aspect of the intercountry adoption
process is easier and quicker will benefit children awaiting new homes and encourage willing
Australian parents to adopt without being hampered by unnecessary visa waiting times.

I would like to reiterate that this bill is important to relieve some of the frustrations that
current and prospective parents experience in the adoption process. It is an important first step
for all parents wishing to adopt. The essence of time is pertinent to intercountry adoptions,
which are inherently about giving children better lives.

This bill seeks to amend the existing Migration Regulations 1994 by allowing automatic
citizenship for children adopted by Australian parents, the current benefit enjoyed by those
adopted under the Hague Convention. There is great value in having greater efficiency in the
intercountry adoption process, which prioritises the needs of the children. This bill is focused
on the needs of children and is not about reducing the due diligence of the adoption process.
This bill seeks to eliminate the unnecessary waiting time for a child to step foot on Australian
soil by granting automatic citizenship to those adopted outside of the Hague Convention.

As an Australian and as a member of the coalition, I hope that those on the other side
would agree with me that Australia is right in recognising all children, whether domestically
or abroad, who cannot be brought up with their respective family are entitled to grow up in a
stable, secure and loving family. By allowing this bill to be implemented, we can unite
children who are in need of stability with their new loving families in an appropriate and
timely manner.

I commend this bill to the house.

Ms O’NEIL (Hotham) (19:20): I very much appreciate the chance to speak on this very
important bill. In my first speech in this parliament I spoke about the special interests that I
have in the welfare of children.
I am someone who has my own child, I have fostered children in the past and I am also a member of parliament who is interested in pursuing good public policy. I think all those lead you to really think about the special role that we play in this House in protecting children.

In speaking today in this bill on intercountry adoption, I want to revisit some of the statements I have made and talk about how any policy that we put in place in this House to extend adoption needs to be very balanced and it needs to put the interests of children first. In many instances this is going to mean facilitating the smoother passage of intercountry adoptions, and that of course is the subject of the bill today. But in doing so we have to ensure that Australia keeps the safeguards in place that will make sure that children are protected.

This bill has been under debate in this House for a number of months now. During the sitting break we had an incident that I guess you could say exploded in the media around Australia of issues relating to the surrogacy program that is in place in Thailand at the moment. This bill, of course, is not to do surrogacy. I raise that simply to make the point that for people of goodwill and good-thinking people, it is almost unimaginable that there are people out there in the world who will seek to use things like surrogacy and adoption for ill means. But I think we all discovered that the issues relating to baby Gammy in Thailand illustrate that there are people out there who will try to use these types of systems for really evil acts. I just want to reiterate today that what we have to strive for in this parliament is to find the right balance. I appreciate, I accept and I applaud families who go through intercountry adoption to bring children who are living in very difficult circumstances in other countries in the world—in countries where they will never have anything like the opportunities that Australian children will get—and that adoption is a very legitimate and laudable way for many Australians who cannot have children or perhaps who want to have a larger family. But there are risks and I think we need to be alive to those.

The bill before us today seeks to amend the Australian Citizenship Act so children who are adopted directly from nations who are not signatories to the Hague convention are granted Australian citizenship. That sounds a little bit complicated but what we are really saying here with the bill that we put forward today is that we are broadening the range of countries from which children can be adopted and actually become Australian citizens overseas. So it will help people who are adopting from those countries to have a smoother and simpler transition for their new child in the family to become an Australian citizen.

The amendments we are talking about today follow work undertaken by the interdepartmental committee on intercountry adoption, which made actually quite a significant series of recommendations about how intercountry adoption can be made easier. One of those recommendations was that we allow citizenship to be extended for countries that are not signatories to the Hague convention. I know that this issue is one that the community feels really strongly about, because we are talking about the welfare of children here. There is nothing better than giving a child a home who would otherwise not have one or not be in a safe and loving home. For adoption to be made smoother means that more children can potentially be welcomed into those situations in Australia.

 Australians are, I think, by heart generous people and we have a long and proud history of welcoming people overseas to start new lives here. In my own electorate of Hotham, the history of migration in that area can be seen up and down almost every street along the
suburbs that I represent. There are hundreds of instances every year where that is facilitated through intercountry adoption. We see somewhere between 100 and 400 families a year.

We have quite a long history of intercountry adoption in Australia. I would say that, while a vast majority of adoptions have been happy stories of creating larger and nicer families for people, there have been issues with some of those instances in the past. Through the 20th century it has become a lot easier for people to move around and forge connections. The issue of intercountry adoption has evolved and as it evolves and as people can travel more easily, the need for regulation has in one sense increased.

It is with that knowledge that Australia signed up to the Hague convention on protection of children and cooperation in respect of intercountry adoption. Australia signed up to that in 1998 and it put in place really important principles that should govern how these agreements are put into effect. I think the first one is really the most fundamental of those principles, and that is that intercountry adoption should only take place when it is in the best interests of the child and with respect to his or her fundamental rights. The Hague convention also established cooperative system amongst contracting states so that safeguards are respected and the abduction, sale of and trafficking in children is prevented. The third critical principle of that agreement was to ensure that contracting states like Australia recognise adoptions that are made in accordance with the convention. From those principles you can see that what the Hague convention is really trying to do is create a network of countries around the world who all share this strong view that intercountry adoptions should only take place when they are in the best interests of the child.

There are many families in Australia that would love to give a home to a child but are unable to have children themselves. These families often turn to adoption. I am very sympathetic about the plight of any family who want a child and have a lovely home to offer but are just unable to have a baby. As a mother I can say I know how devastating it would be not to be able to have a child for someone that desires that in their lives. I know, by and large, that families who are seeking to adopt from overseas do want to help vulnerable children. Of course, these incidences that I referred to earlier are very much the minority, but the amount of human pain and agony that is in each of those instances is so profound and so great that we simply must have laws in place to provide those protections. And when it comes to children, before almost anyone else in our society, it really is the law and it is this parliament and the people that stand in this parliament that provide those checks and balances to make sure that vulnerable children are not taken advantage of. It is the sentiment of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to respect and protect a child's interests and needs that finds expression in the Hague convention that I have talked about. We need to ensure that this sentiment finds expression in the legislation today.

I want to talk a little bit about the specific provisions of this legislation. There are many countries around the world that are signatories to the Hague convention in those countries have signed up to the principles I have talked about. But there is a view that, having signed up for those principles, Australia confers a certain, I guess, smooth transition of young children who come through that adoption program for signatories to the Hague convention. The legislation here is really extending those privileges, if you want, to a few countries that are not part of the Hague convention.
We on this side of the House will support the amendments and the general objectives of the bill, but I do want to talk a little more about the risks in place here. We are effectively removing a protection that was provided to children who might be adopted into Australia. In relatively recent times, we have seen adoption programs in parts of the world that are not signatories to the Hague convention not working very well and not protecting the interests of children. We have seen, very sadly and unfortunately, the Ethiopia-Australia intercountry adoption program closed. That was closed by the former Labor government because, in all honesty, the ministers who were responsible for overseeing the program could not be confident that the best interests of children were being protected by the partner country. One of the reasons that led to the closure of the program was Australia being able to identify orphanages in which it could have confidence as well as the increasing competition for overseas adoption in Ethiopia, which led to a very large increase in non-government agencies operating there. In that particular program, the quality of those agencies and the nature of the competitive system that had developed were reasons for deep concern, and we were hearing significant and frequent reports of issues.

To in any way trade children in a competitive system runs absolutely counter to the spirit in which almost all families go into the adoption process and counter to the Hague convention of which Australia is signatory. But these will remain a risk when we are dealing with nations that are not signatories to the Hague convention. We need to make sure that there are stringent safeguards in place if we are going to deal with countries as though they are part of the Hague convention, after all the focus on adoption must always be finding a family for the child not finding a child for families. It is paramount that we remember that children are at the centre of this process and it is their protection that is the most important thing. That ultimately should be what drives all of our legislation in this very important area.

Labor will support this bill, but there are reservations around this issue which I think anyone in this House would have to share, especially given the events that transpired with the Thailand surrogacy program over the last few months. But, of course, we do not want to stand in the path of the new happy families that can be created through intercountry adoption. There is no doubt that one of the greatest gifts Australia can give to children anywhere in the world is a safe and loving home for a child that does not have. There are 129 children who are living in loving homes now with a future full of possibilities in Australia. Those children were all adopted, I think, over the last 12 months. When we look at where those children have come from, the reality is that about half of them come from places that are not signatories to the Hague convention, so there is a need to try to provide a better process for intercountry adoption from those countries.

We can make adoption simpler. We can make it safe. We are very prosperous. We are generous here in Australia. We can give so many children good lives. That is why Labor will support a streamlined process for intercountry adoption that provides safeguards for children, and that is why I stand in support of this bill today.

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra—Chief Government Whip) (19:33): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014. I have had an interest in matters relating to intercountry adoption over a long period of time. My comments may in fact take a different perspective in part to that put by the member who preceded me. I have no personal interest in the issue of intercountry adoption. I have been
fortunate to have children of my own and grandchildren. But I do know people who are relatively close to me who have sought to adopt children who find it in enormously difficult to do so. In part, I have come to a view that a lot of the bureaucracy that has been developed over time has been designed to limit the opportunities for overseas adoption rather than to promote the opportunities overseas adoption. I think that is an unfortunate outcome because there are children in great need of assistance abroad and there are Australian couples who are unable to have children of their own who would be loving parents. To be able to match them, in my judgement, is something that should be encouraged. I have had people who I have known who have adopted children. I have seen them brought up and I know that that family has provided that sort of environment for the child.

This legislation needs to be understood in the context of some fundamental changes that the government is intending. I want to put that beyond doubt. While the legislation itself deals particularly with the need to facilitate the grant of Australian citizenship to children adopted by Australian citizens under bilateral adoption arrangements between Australia and countries that are not a party to the Hague convention on intercountry adoption, this measure will ensure that such children who otherwise would have required a passport from their home country will be able to travel on an Australian document on the basis of their Australian citizenship. That will facilitate their entry to Australia being undertaken far more quickly and easily than might have otherwise been the case. That is what the bill does.

But if you go to the Prime Minister's speech introducing this—and this is an unusual bill in the sense that, while it deals with the citizenship issues relating to intercountry adoption, the Prime Minister wanted to make it clear, and I want to agree with him, that for too long it has been too hard to adopt—he said that for too long this has been a no-go zone. The Prime Minister makes it clear that there are too many children who have no parents, or no effective parents, who deserve a better life and that adoption is a way of giving it to them. I could not agree more. He went on:

The government wants to make it easier to adopt when it is in the best interests of the child. We do not want to repeat the mistakes of the past, but we do want to remove the red tape—

and those factors that reduce delays. And further, the Prime Minister said:

So in December last year I announced that the government would improve overseas adoption by the end of this year.

The government has been delivering on it. He went on:

… the government has considered a report by senior officials on options to reform overseas adoption which was informed by over 100 submissions from the public.

The Prime Minister then said:

We have announced improvements to the process for families adopting children from Taiwan and South Korea.

We have opened a new overseas adoption program with South Africa—and are commencing discussions with seven other countries …

He further made it clear that the Council of Australian Governments, COAG, had agreed in principle to a new national overseas adoption service from 2015. Then he spoke of the matters that the Minister for Immigration was dealing with.
Why do I take an interest in these matters? It may surprise you, Mr Deputy Speaker, but back in March 1991, I addressed a question to the then minister for immigration, Gerry Hand. I asked him about consultations taking place between the government sector and non-government organisations and about resolutions of the Social Welfare Administrators Conference that were made in June 1990 on the issue of overseas adoptions. I believe that was when it was decided that all states should close their intercountry adoption registers. I asked why, because it seemed to me that we were making it more difficult for prospective parents to be able to adopt. I asked whether it was resolved to consider new programs only at the request of government-recognised welfare authorities and, if so, why? I also asked: Does the term "government recognised welfare authorities" include both overseas adoption agencies that have been recognised or registered by the Government and the appointed adoption authority of that country, in the terminology used in principle 3 of the Joint Committee report of April 1986.

I was particularly concerned that what we had seen was a closing of registers that enabled children to be accessed. I was concerned that there were some, I think, prejudicial views that had informed this discussion. I raised that matter because, in 1994, I had the opportunity to do what members opposite are now doing and that is speaking to a bill introduced by the then government. That bill, the Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Amendment Bill 1993 gave certain guardianship powers of non-citizen children to state and territory governments rather than to the federal minister. While we did not stand in the way of it, I was concerned at the way in which a lot of the decisions had been made in this area. I want to repeat what I had to say in 1994 because I thought it was particularly germane at the time. While the opposition did support the bill at that time I did say that, having previously held some responsibility as shadow minister for immigration, I was not comfortable with a lot of the secrecy and the approaches between the Commonwealth and states, and meetings involving state welfare ministers in the various practices that states sought to put in place.

I was concerned that at that time Western Australia had had an inquiry in relation to overseas adoptions and in that inquiry they had found concerns about early Australian practices in relation to domestic adoptions involving Aboriginal children where it was alleged that, in some cases, children were removed from their families and placed in foster care situations in Australia. Because of the issues in relation to separated children we were being asked to take a much more critical view of the way in which overseas adoptions might be considered. It impacted upon the way in which state government officials were advising their governments on the way in which these issues should be addressed. It troubled me as to whether that was the appropriate way for overseas adoptions to be considered.

When Deborra-Lee Furness established her adoption awareness program through the creation of the National Adoption Awareness Week—she was one of the creators and patrons of the Lighthouse Foundation—there was a new enthusiasm to look at overseas adoption. I want to single her out as someone who has, I think, helped to change attitudes in relation to these matters. I think she helped to familiarise the Prime Minister with the need for these reforms. In a sense I am disappointed that, in dealing with the states, as I had to when I was the Attorney-General, in discussing some of these issues I found there was not a ready acceptance, as I think has now emerged, to entertain a number of these issues.

I go back to the comments of the member for Hotham. In terms of the Hague convention and the issues that go to the need to provide appropriate care for children I do not wish to see
those matters in any way compromised. But I think we need to ensure that where Australians have satisfied the requirements to be prospective adoptive parents they should not be unreasonably excluded, as I think many are, left waiting, sometimes until they are then judged to be too old to adopt, when there are so many children living in institutional care abroad, who, if they were able to come to Australia would have a better life.

I think long-term institutional care is much less satisfactory than putting children into a loving family relationship where they are able to be fully supported. In fact, if you look at the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, you will see that it says:

… the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding …

That starts to put this issue into perspective. This legislation is important because it starts to reposition Australia in these matters. I strongly support the legislation, but I look forward to the further measures that the government is intending to press.

I again reiterate my personal admiration for Deborra-Lee Furness for the leadership she has taken in this area and for the way in which she has started to change community attitudes. In my view, over time, many more children will be able to be more adequately assisted and will be able to live far more satisfactory lives than if they were left in institutional care abroad.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (19:46): I rise today to speak on the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014 and commend the contributions made by other speakers. The key feature of this bill is to facilitate the grant of Australian citizenship to children adopted by Australian citizens by expanding the scope of existing Hague convention provisions to non-Hague states through bilateral adoption arrangements. While Labor supports changes that will enable parents to avoid red tape and any increased confusion, it is important to raise the significance of maintaining stringent safeguards to protect the children from exposure to abduction and trafficking. I am sad to see that even on the ABC news tonight we have examples of when this can go wrong, whatever safeguards are set up.

In Australia, intercountry adoption is regulated through Commonwealth and state and territory legislation. We heard the Chief Government Whip detail some of the challenges that come with our Federation and having some harmony. The Commonwealth is responsible for establishing and managing intercountry adoption programs and, under this responsibility, they are accountable for the rights and protection of the child as well as ensuring that all contracting states recognise the objectives set out in the Hague convention, such as specific safeguards.

Australia has a long history of involvement in intercountry adoption. Immediately after World War II there was a great effort by Australian families to adopt children from overseas following the Second World War, but it was not until the Vietnam War that significant numbers of adopted children began to arrive in Australia and be placed with families. During the 20th century, thousands of children were deported from the United Kingdom to its colonies, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand and other, former colonies. Between 1912 and 1970, about 7,000 of these children were sent to Australia to populate a nation with what was called at the time ‘good white stock’. They were promised that loving families were waiting to adopt them. Sadly, many were delivered into institutionalised abuse. Well-known national charities such as Barnardos provided a wider range of child care services, along with the Church of England, the Methodist Church, the Salvation Army and, obviously, the
Catholic Church. The children were separated from their families and told that they were orphans, while the parents were told they had gone to a better life, but most were brought up in institutions or by farmers and, sadly, many were treated as child slave labour, and that might have been the best that happened to them. The migrated children were euphemistically told that they would find an idyllic lifestyle in our new country—a land of sunshine and oranges. In reality, they were often badly cared for, counted as second-class citizens, arrived sick or without a name and put in overcrowded and run-down institutions. Very few were actually adopted or fostered.

Thank goodness, former Prime Minister Gillard commenced the royal commission looking into institutional child abuse. That has and will expose, and will let the nation know, many of these tragic tales from our past. Thankfully, intercountry adoption is a much brighter tale. The rise of intercountry adoption in Australia in the late 1960s coincided with a rapid decline in white infants available for domestic adoption. As the popularity to adopt increased, the Commonwealth government instigated a push to have all the varying state adoption laws made uniform. Following this change in legislation, state governments recorded the highest ever rates of adoption, reaching a peak of almost 9,798 infants and children in the year 1971-72. During this time, Australia also began embracing multiculturalism at a policy level. The final vestiges of the white Australia policy were removed in 1973 by former Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. Australia also saw medical innovations such as the contraceptive pill and introduced welfare reforms such as income support for single mothers. These all combined gradually to change attitudes towards single motherhood. Perhaps there was also a changing attitude by Catholics to the idea of having children.

On that note I would like to give a big shout-out to my eldest nephew, Andrew Garbe, who was adopted out in the 1970s by my sister. I only met my nephew at my sister Debbie's 50th birthday party, but obviously now he plays a big part in my family, even though he seems to live a fairly crazy life sometimes up in the Northern Territory. That experience led Attorney-General Roxon to put me on the committee regarding the national apology for forced adoption. The apology was delivered by Prime Minister Gillard, sadly on the day of the 'faux coup' and was lost amidst all the media coverage, but surely it was one of the great days in this parliament. I will quote some of the words of Prime Minister Gillard on that day, 21 March 2013. She said:

Today, this Parliament, on behalf of the Australian people, takes responsibility and apologises for the policies and practices that forced the separation of mothers from their babies, which created a lifelong legacy of pain and suffering.

We acknowledge the profound effects of these policies and practices on fathers.

And we recognise the hurt these actions caused to brothers and sisters, grandparents, partners and extended family members.

It was a great day in the Australian parliament that should be acknowledged.

Coming back to the legislation, as you can imagine, these changes contributed to the subsequent decline in the number of Australian children available for adoption. Intercountry adoption emerged in Australia as an institutional practice in the 1970s and, since that time, has been the focus of controversy, with diverse viewpoints. In 1975 the Commonwealth government established an interdepartmental committee to investigate intercountry adoption in Australia. Joint Commonwealth and state delegations visited eight South-East Asian
countries to investigate possible new partner countries with which Australia could establish intercountry adoption programs. Throughout the 1980s the number of intercountry adoptions continued to grow—to 420 adoptions in 1990—before dropping to a constant figure of around 250 throughout the 1990s.

In 1998 Australia ratified the Hague convention on the protection of children and cooperation in respect of intercountry adoption. The Hague convention is implemented in Australia largely by the Family Law Act and associated regulation. The Hague convention aims to ensure that intercountry adoption only occurs when it is in the best interests of the child. It aims to protect children and their family against the risks of illegal, irregular or ill-prepared adoptions abroad. The convention also focuses on the need for countries to work to prevent the abduction, sale or trafficking of children. The objects of the Hague Convention are to establish safeguards that will ensure intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of the child and with respect to his or her fundamental rights. It establishes a cooperative system among contracting states so that safeguards are respected and the abduction, sale and trafficking of children is prevented and ensures the contracting states recognise adoptions made in accordance with the convention.

The Hague convention of 25 October 1980 on the civil aspects of international child abduction is a multilateral treaty that seeks to protect children from the harmful effects of abduction and retention across international boundaries by providing a procedure to bring about their prompt return. The convention was drafted to ensure the prompt return of children who have been abducted from their country of habitual residence or wrongfully retained in a contracting state not their country of habitual residence. The primary intention of the convention is to preserve whatever status quo child custody arrangement existed immediately before an alleged wrongful removal or retention, thereby deterring a parent from crossing international boundaries in search of a more sympathetic court. The convention only applies to children under the age of 16.

As of January 2014, 94 states are parties to the convention—sadly, over 100 countries are not party to it. In 2013 the treaty entered into force for South Korea and Kazakhstan, significantly for Australia. On 1 April 2014 the convention became effective for Japan and on 1 July 2014 it became effective for Iraq. Australia has intercountry adoption programs with 12 Hague convention countries and has bilateral arrangements with two non-convention countries—Taiwan and South Korea. Taiwan is significant because my electorate has a very significant Taiwanese presence. In recent years, there has been a significant shift of focus in international studies of adoption that look beyond its personal implications for individuals and families and seek to examine the broader social, cultural and political implications of adoption practices.

As a response to increased risk to children, in March 1994 Labor introduced sponsorship limitations in migration regulations that prevent a sponsorship from being approved if one of the proposed applicants is under 18 years of age and the minister is satisfied that the sponsor's spouse or de facto partner has a conviction or outstanding charge for a registrable offence. These changes require Australian national police checks and/or foreign police certificates as part of the process of assessing the application, hopefully weeding out those who are not appropriate.
In Australia there were 129 intercountry adoptions finalised in 2012-13. This figure represents 38 per cent of all adoptions over this period. Intercountry adoptions have gone down by 13 per cent since 2011-12. A new report has identified significant barriers facing Australian families wanting to adopt from overseas. Inconsistent rules, costs and the lengthy wait to adopt deter many people from even starting the adoption process. The amendments to the Australian Citizenship Bill will streamline the ability of Australians to seek adoptions from non-convention countries that meet the standards of the Hague convention and they will also enable the adopting parents to obtain Australian citizenship for the child at his or her country of origin. The bilateral arrangements regulations were amended in March this year. This will enable children adopted through bilateral arrangements with Taiwan and South Korea, and previously with Ethiopia, to obtain automatic recognition under Commonwealth, state and Territory laws, thus removing the need for families adopting children from non-convention countries to go through the process of applying for an additional final adoption order from an Australian court. Taiwan is now the largest country involved with Australia's intercountry adoption program. As I mentioned, I have a significant Taiwanese population in my electorate, so anything that can further that process is to be commended.

I urge the government, in their changes, to ensure adequate funding is provided for post adoption support programs as recommended by the Senate committee. The government should be extremely attentive to ensure the amendments do not lead to coercive practices and breaches in international and national laws. The Attorney-General's Department must ensure that criminal organisations cannot exploit loopholes by applying the regulations and safeguards required regardless of whether the child's country of origin is a signatory to the Hague convention.

Recent events in Thailand have emphasised our international obligation to protect the best interests of the child and to pay particular attention to the potential exploitation of families in home countries that may be laden with false information, mistruths and overpromises in the search for a better life for their children. We saw the horrible situation of Gammy. I was actually in Thailand talking to departmental staff before that story broke, and it broke my heart to hear of the situation for Gammy. Intercountry adoption should always be about finding families for children, not children for families. I say that carefully because I know the heavy heart that can come for families desperately seeking a child who are not able to find one through the normal processes.

Popular Australians have taken up the campaign to eliminate bureaucratic obstacles to adoption. Actors Deborra-Lee Furness and Hugh Jackman are the parents of two intercountry adopted children. I commend them for their efforts. More people in the community are becoming aware of the difficulties people face when adopting children from overseas who are abandoned and orphaned. Hugh Jackman starred in a great movie, *Paperback Hero*, which came out in 1999. It was filmed at St George and Nindigully.

Mr McCormack interjecting—

Mr PERRETT: He might look at *The 12th Fish* as a sequel to be filmed out at Nindigully!

I would love to see him and Claudia Karvan go back out to Nindigully and St George. I am sure they would be most welcome. I know that my sister, who worked at the Nindigully Pub when he was out there, is still talking about the experience of serving Hugh Jackman. So I
commend both Deborra-Lee Furness and Hugh Jackman for their continued efforts to see the process for adoption in Australia improved and their drive to improve conversations with countries like Vietnam, Kenya, Bulgaria, Latvia, Poland, the United States and Cambodia over the future of intercountry adoption.

Obviously the desire to have a child and give a child an opportunity is an incredible urge. I know it can be a difficult journey, especially nowadays with Australians having children later. With women making decisions about having children much later and with one in six not being able to have a child even though they so desire, intercountry adoption and adoption in general will become a much more significant issue. I wish them all the best. The opposition will support the government and stand together with the government on this. With proper safeguards in place, I will be supporting the bill before the House.

Debate adjourned.

**Australian Renewable Energy Agency (Repeal) Bill 2014**

**Second Reading**

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

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

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

(1) the Government's plan to abolish the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) is contrary to the advice of experts;
(2) the ARENA adds a great deal of value to efforts to tackle climate change in Australia and around the world by supporting new commercial models and new technology developments to reduce carbon pollution;
(3) the ARENA has invested $940 million and mobilised over $1.8 billion in private investment, totaling $2.75 billion in total value since 2012;
(4) the ARENA is a critical part of a suite of policies implemented to address dangerous climate change and to accelerate renewable energy infrastructure;
(5) the role of the ARENA along with the Renewable Energy Target and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation are vital to a clean energy future; and
(6) the ARENA has been a clear success in driving investment, reducing carbon pollution and boosting the Government bottom-line."

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell) (20:01): In accordance with standing order 133(b), I shall now proceed to put the question on the motion moved earlier today by the honourable member for Port Adelaide on which a division was called for and deferred in accordance with standing orders. No further debate is allowed.

The House divided. [20:05]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Mitchell)
Ayes ...................... 53  
Noes ...................... 81  
Majority .................... 28

### AYES

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### NOES

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### CHAMBER

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Question negatived.

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

The House divided. [20.13]

The Deputy Speaker—Mr Mitchell)

Ayes ..................82
Noes .................53
Majority .............29

AYES

Alexander, JG          Andrews, KJ
Andrews, KL            Baldwin, RC
Briggs, JE             Broad, AJ
Broadbent, RE          Brough, MT
Buchholz, S (teller)   Christensen, GR
Ciobo, SM              Cobb, JK
Coleman, DB            Coulton, M (teller)
Dutton, PC             Ensch, WG
Fletcher, PW           Frydenberg, JA
Gambaro, T             Gillespie, DA
Goodenough, IR         Griggs, NL
Hartley, L             Hawke, AG
Henderson, SM          Hendy, PW
Hogan, KJ              Howarth, LR
Hutchinson, ER         Irons, SJ
Jensen, DG             Jones, ET
Joyce, BT              Keenan, M
Kelly, C               Laming, A
A Y E S

Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
McNamara, KJ
O'Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE
Robb, AJ
Roy, WB
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Southcott, AJ
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Truss, WE
Turnbull, MB
Varvaris, N
Whiteley, BD
Williams, MP
Wood, JP

Laudy, C
Macfarlane, IE
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Nikolic, AA
O'Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, FM
Smith, ADH
Stone, SN
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX
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N O E S

Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burke, AE
Butler, MC
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Ferguson, LDT
Giles, AJ
Hall, JG (teller)
Husic, EN
King, CF
Macklin, JL
Marles, RD
Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Parke, M
Pilibysek, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Swan, WM
Thomson, KJ
Watts, TG
Zappia, A

Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G
Burke, AS
Butler, TM
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Feeney, D
Fitzgibbon, JA
Griffin, AP
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
Leigh, AK
MacTiernan, AJGC
McGowan, C
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Perrett, GD
Ripoll, BF
Rowland, MA
Snowdon, WE
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakirou, M
Wilkie, AD
Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (20:16): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms Price (Durack) (20:17): I rise to speak on a bill that expresses this government's commitment to helping every man and woman who has, or will, put their heart, mind and a significant amount of money into giving a better life to a child by bringing him or her to this great country of ours. The Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014 seeks to amend the Australian Citizenship Act 2007.

Before discussing the significant benefit these amendments will bring to Australia's adoption processes, let us look at exactly what is intercountry adoption. It refers to the adoption of a child from overseas by prospective parents in Australia. The adoption must be arranged by a state or territory welfare authority. The term does not refer to adoptions which prospective parents have arranged by themselves and which may be illegal. Needless to say, this decision is not entered into lightly by prospective adoptive parents but, unfortunately, current processes often make it a long and arduous one. At its core, that is what these amendments seek to improve.

In Australia, intercountry adoptions are recognised by the Commonwealth when they are processed under the Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption or, as most people simply put it, the Hague convention. They are also recognised when the child in question is adopted by Australian citizens through bilateral arrangements made by Australia with countries who are not signatories of the Hague convention.

The Hague convention came into force in Australia in December 1998 and was designed to protect the best interests of children involved in adoption and to establish cooperation amongst contracting states, thereby preventing the abduction, sale of or trafficking in children. This government's reason for proposing these amendments is not only to encourage Australians to undertake intercountry adoptions in those cases where it would improve the life of the adopted child and the lives of the adoptive family, but also to improve the processes that are currently undertaken by prospective parents to adopt a child. We are achieving this by continuing our overall agenda to reduce regulation and to improve Australia's adoption processes, by streamlining access to citizenship for children adopted by Australian citizens through these bilateral agreements.
Previously, Australian citizens have been able to adopt children from South Korea, Taiwan and Ethiopia under prescribed arrangements in the Family Law (Bilateral Arrangements—Intercountry Adoption) Regulations 1998. This government has already announced improvements to bilateral arrangements, specifically for those families adopting children from Taiwan and South Korea. Although it is important to note that Australia's intercountry adoption program with Ethiopia is now closed, the changes by this government to adoption processes will also help those families who are currently waiting for their adoptions to be finalised.

Those changes will effectively remove the requirement for families to obtain an adoption order in Australia, which would generally be granted after a 12-month wait. Instead, these improvements will allow adoption orders from South Korea and Taiwan to be recognised in Australia without needing to go to a state or territory court. In essence, the amendments that the government seeks to make further expand this scope. It does this by amending the Australian Citizenship Act, so that the process for families adopting a child under a bilateral agreement are brought in line with those who adopt from countries which are parties to the Hague convention.

It is the view of this government that, where the same standards and safeguards are in place to those countries who are party to the Hague convention, the same adoption processes should apply. By passing these amendments, we will improve the adoption process by allowing children who are adopted under Australia's bilateral agreements to no longer require a visa to enter Australia. They, instead, will immediately be eligible to apply for, and be granted, Australian citizenship once the adoption is finalised overseas. Put simply, adoption approvals will change to an automatic process which will allow the adopted child to travel to Australia, as an Australian citizen and on an Australian passport, with their new family, as long as Australia has signed a bilateral agreement with the home country. This will significantly improve the administrative processes of adopting a child under these arrangements, and will save adoptive parents a significant amount of time and money. This is because, under the current processes, a passport from the child's home country has to be obtained, and an adoption visa issued under the Migrations Regulations 1994.

Although the financial benefit of these changes will be significant, we must not forget the emotional strain that is placed on families wishing to open their hearts to an adoption. By reducing the time frame for processing adoptions, this government will help to reduce the amount of stress placed on these families.

The amendments proposed by this bill were announced by the Prime Minister in December last year when he committed to establishing an interdepartmental committee on intercountry adoption. The purpose of this committee was to recommend options for implementing reform within Australia over the next 12 months. The committee finalised its report in April.

In total, 108 submissions were received by the committee from stakeholders, as well as individuals representing adult adoptees; adoptive or prospective parents; academics; individuals with a professional interest in intercountry adoption; and parents and children, who are now adults, who were deeply affected by past practices of forced adoption. When investigating different approaches to streamline the intercountry adoption process and to create a framework for reform, this government of course could not do so without first acknowledging and being aware of Australia's unfortunate history of forced adoption, as a
means to ensuring that history does not repeat itself. The majority of submissions received by
the committee were supportive of intercountry adoption, with an ongoing theme being the
need to focus on the child's interests first and foremost.

It is also important to note those submissions which were not supportive of intercountry
adoption, in order to understand and acknowledge any legitimate concerns being raised. These
concerns generally focused on appropriate safeguards being in place to protect parents and
children from unlawful practices. This is something that should be of concern to all
Australians, which is why I am pleased that any partner country Australia forms bilateral
agreements with is expected to meet the same standards and safeguards as those who are
signatories to the Hague convention. These standards and safeguards were recently met by
South Africa, with the Prime Minister announcing the commencement of a new intercountry
adoption program on 5 May. The Abbott government has also now commenced discussions
with seven other countries about possible new overseas adoption programs. I look forward to
these programs being established and more children being welcomed to Australia by their
loving families.

These agreements will go hand-in-hand with the COAG's agreement in principle to
implement a new national overseas adoption service from 2015. The minister for immigration
is also developing options to reduce waiting times for visas for adopting children from
overseas.

These are significant changes that I believe reflect the commitment that is made by many
Australian families to improve the lives of children from other countries by caring for and
loving those children as they would one of their own.

I am aware of two Western Australian families who each made the brave and heartfelt
decision to adopt a child from another country. One of these children is from China and the
other is from Cambodia. In each case, I must say that the story of the child's past was very
tragic and that in each case the child was living in an orphanage in their respective country at
the time of adoption.

One of my constituents, Jane Foreman of Geraldton, adopted her son from the Philippines
more than six years ago, and she is currently waiting to adopt her son's two sisters. This is
what Jane said in an email to me recently:

Thanks for meeting with me Melissa. After I left you, I phoned Adoption Services and found that we
had finally received allocation for our son's two sisters!!!

I have been busy getting all the paperwork completed and our immigration papers will be couriered
to the Philippines tomorrow!

I am really pushing for an 8 week waiting time until we can meet and bring home our two new
daughters.

Melissa, six years of waiting has been too long for them and for us.

I am very thankful to our Prime Minister for taking up the issue of Inter-country Adoption and
committing to streamlining the process to make it easier for Australian families to adopt.
This cannot be good for anyone—the waiting, the worry, the stress and anxiety, not to forget
the expense, and the separation of a brother from his two sisters for so many years. We must
expedite this process.
When we think of the costs involved in the adoption process, I think it is important to remind each member in this place and all those outside it that families do not make this decision flippantly. It is both an emotional and a financial decision to not only add value to their own lives but improve the life of the adopted child. They do this by opening their homes and their hearts and all that this great nation has to offer.

To get to this point, the families did, however, face a time-consuming and costly process. The first cost is the adoption fees in Australia, which vary greatly between the states and territories. In fact, just for the first application, fees can vary from $2,706 in Western Australia to $10,503 in South Australia. This does not take into account other costs such as airline travel, overseas accommodation, and the costs of preparing documents which are more commonly known as notarisation fees.

Families also then need to take into account the estimated adoption fee of the child's home country. This again varies. As an example, Taiwan—which had the highest number of intercountry adoptions with Australia in 2012-13, at 28.7 per cent of total adoptions—has an estimated adoption fee and cost of between US$5,000 and US$14,000, depending on the child's needs and the agency facilitating the adoption.

As you can see, the costs quickly add up. Over the past decade, there has been a decline in the number of overseas adoptions in Australia, with 370 in the 2003-04 financial year—(Quorum formed) By passing the proposed amendments before us today, those in this place will highlight to every Australian and our international neighbours that we support intercountry adoptions. We support intercountry adoptions when it is in the best interests of the child and when appropriate safeguards are in place, aligned with the Hague convention. This government is demonstrating our commitment to helping Australian families adopt by expediting this process and implementing key reform measures that benefit both the child being adopted and the families who have made this brave decision. I am pleased this government has used its heart and mind to formulate these policy measures which will help so many Australians. I commend this bill to the House.

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (20:31): Labor is supporting this legislation but I think it would be fair to say that we do have some concerns about the direction of the legislation. Like the member for Durack, I know many Western Australians, wonderful people, who have adopted children from places like Ethiopia, Zambia, India and Korea. They have been fantastic and committed parents. In many instances it has not simply been a case of people being unable to have children. Many people who have entered into these arrangements have done so after visiting a Third World country, seeing the circumstances of these children, and feeling an enormous desire and moral obligation to assist them. They believe that adopting those children, giving them an opportunity to grow up and be educated and cared for in the secure environment of Australia, is the way to do it. I think we all totally understand the bona fides of the vast majority of people that want to engage in overseas adoption.

I think it is important that we look at the essence of what this legislation does. At the moment Australia is a signatory to the Hague convention on adoption. That convention sets in place a whole regulatory framework about the circumstances which lead to a child being available for adoption. As a result of the participation in the Hague convention, if an adoption process has been approved in that country, then under Australian law, the adopted child
automatically has available to them Australian citizenship and can enter Australia as an Australian citizen.

In addition to the arrangements under the Hague convention, Australia has a number of bilateral arrangements with countries that are not signatories to the Hague convention. The argument that has been entrenched in this bill is: let us provide the same right to those children who have been approved in the countries on the other half of these bilateral arrangements. The existing situation is that, when a bilateral adoption arrangement has been agreed to by the country supplying the child, there needs to be an additional process. That procedure needs to go before an Australian court and will be subject to an Australian court order accepting that adoption. Then Australian citizenship and associated entitlements come with that.

The case that has been put before the government, which the government has agreed with, is that where we have those bilateral arrangements we should put aside that additional requirement and treat the children that are adopted under those bilateral arrangements in exactly the same way that we treat those children that are adopted under the Hague convention.

On the surface of it, this is not an unreasonable proposition. The question is: is there an exact equivalence between the regulatory regimes of those countries that are signatory to the Hague convention and those that are not signatories but with whom we have entered into those bilateral arrangements? I think it is important to understand that, when we entered into those bilateral arrangements, we were conscious that there would be this other process, this other step, that took place. As I understand it, the evidence—particularly evidence that has been given to the Senate in the last month in relation to this bill—would suggest that there is not an entire equivalence between the provisions in the countries that are the subject of bilateral arrangements and the standard of provisions within the Hague convention. So it is not necessarily the case that there is an equivalence. Indeed one of the countries that was the subject of a bilateral agreement was Ethiopia. Eventually, we had to shut down the adoption program in that country, because there were grave concerns about the way in which children were being procured for the program. The evidence before the Senate told us that the families of the children who had been referred for adoption did not understand the adoption process or the consequences of it and, once informed, the children were no longer available for adoption.

There have been many concerns raised—not about the bona fides of the Australian parents wanting to adopt—about the scams and the schemes that are developed for financial advantage in these receiving countries. It is certainly the case that they exist even in countries under the Hague convention. There were a number of examples cited from India, which is a signatory, where children have been made improperly available for adoption. The concern is, by retrospectively changing the legislation and giving the equivalence to bilateral arrangements as Hague convention arrangements, that we must insist that there be strong enough protections.

In the UNICEF evidence in the Senate inquiry, they referred to Hague convention countries having an Intercountry Adoption Technical Assistance Program and a permanent bureau in place which monitors the operation of the convention and the adoption. It is not simply a question of the standards being the same, but is there any enforcement mechanism in place.
that would assist people to recover children that may have been trafficked and improperly made available for adoption?

We know that there is some difference—and it is certainly very difficult for me to assess at this point just how significant that difference is—but, firstly, the provisions and the protection of the Hague convention are not exactly mirrored in those bilateral arrangements; and, secondly, there is no Intercountry Adoption Technical Assistance Program and a permanent bureau that monitors the operation of that convention that then gives parents trying trace their children some capacity, through some agency, to do that.

It is very important to understand that there is always the ability for these arrangements to be scammed, and we have to be absolutely clear that the interests of the child must be paramount. We have to be alive to the differences between the standards that may be there and the institutional enforcements that may be available under the Hague convention that are not necessarily available in those countries with whom we have these bilateral arrangements.

We should not be complacent about this. We have seen the amazing complexities—almost unimaginable complexities—that have emerged with the surrogacy arrangements that have been entered into in Thailand. The very great range of different stories and the availability of surrogacy arrangements in Thailand, legal or otherwise, are not clear. The availability of commercial surrogacy and the degree to which people see a commercial opportunity have created outcomes that very many people are uncomfortable with. I refer particularly to the case of the Japanese man who had 15 surrogate children, nine of whom were in utero at the time the story broke, and the very real concerns about traffic, abuse or perhaps something other than what appears on the face of it to be the provision of a loving family environment for those children.

I understand the overwhelmingly good intentions of people who want to adopt children. Who of us hasn't gone to India or other Third World countries and seen children begging that you would just like to pick up, put in your bag, take home and deeply want to help? In all of these measures we must be very, very alive to the real problems that emerge. We have seen stories of Aboriginal children, children from other countries, children from South America, and Argentina—indeed from Ireland—who have been improperly made available for adoption and the great tragedy not only for the mothers and families who have lost their children but, ultimately, for the receiving parents and most of all the children who have been the subject of these arrangements.

Whilst I understand the motives of this—and the Labor Party will be supporting this bill—I think it is an area in which we should move with great caution.

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (20:45): I rise to speak on the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Intercountry Adoption) Bill 2014 because I think it is a very important bill. Sometimes in the quest for power that is the federal parliament—(Quorum formed) The value of interpersonal relationships are sometimes lost in this place, the place of power, the place where people aspire to great leadership. But, really, what is it that matters? It is family. Family is one of the key statues of Australian society. We have strong families and from those families we build communities and from communities we build countries. But understanding families and understanding the values of families is very important.
One of the things that is very important to families is the upbringing of children. For couples that are unable to have children, it is always a heartbreaking experience; it leaves them somewhat hollow at times. To be able to take the wealth that is in Australia and to be able to provide a safe and secure home to a child from another part of the world that has not had that opportunity is a wonderful thing. To have legislation that is freeing that up is something we should be proud of. It is something I think is a great tribute to our Prime Minister. It is one of the very important pieces of legislation that he personally introduced into this chamber.

This bill amends the Australian Citizenship Act 2007 to allow children adopted under a bilateral arrangement to apply for Australian citizenship in their country of origin. The bill will streamline access to citizenship for children adopted by at least one parent who is an Australian citizen under a bilateral agreement with certain countries. At this time those countries include: Taiwan, south Korea and South Africa as well as past adoptions from Ethiopia. It means that these children will no longer require a visa to enter Australia.

In the words of the Prime Minister:  
For too long adoption has been in the too hard basket.

... ... ...

... adoption is about giving children a better life.

... ... ...

The government wants to make it easier to adopt when it is in the best interests of the child.

... ... ...

It is red tape that impacts on children who legitimately need a safe and loving home and Australians who dream of providing that home.

... ... ...

At present, children adopted under bilateral arrangements require a passport from the home country and an Australian adoption visa to travel to Australia. This imposes additional complexity and cost on adopting families. Under the arrangements to be made by this bill, children will be able to be granted citizenship as soon as the adoption is finalised. They will then be able to travel to Australia on an Australian passport, with their new families, as Australian citizens.

One of the great things about Australia is our diversity. What we have seen out of that diversity is that people are able to adopt children from other countries and are not looked at differently. Intercountry adoption is not looked at with disdain. In fact there are groups around that can offer support and ensure that a child from another country also has some expression and some contact with their own culture as they become a citizen of Australia and get involved with the culture here.

It is the good pieces of legislation that lift the Westminster system. It is the good pieces of legislation that restore belief in the Australian parliamentary system and this is a good piece of legislation. This in time will allow families to grow. It will allow kids to have love that they would never have had and will allow future citizens of Australia to look back at this piece of legislation and say, 'Wasn't it good that there were men of wisdom, men of character and women in this chamber who saw the value of intercountry adoption, saw the value of the great Australian dream of having a family and passed this legislation.' I commend this legislation to the House.
Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (20:52): The member for Mallee is indeed right: this is about families. This process does involve an enormous amount of commitment on behalf of those people that choose, often in very, very different circumstances, to embark on what can be a very drawn-out, complicated and tortuous process—to do something that I think all of us want to instinctively want to be able to do, and that is to be part of a family or to raise a family. Some of us have been very fortunate; others less so.

A number of speakers this evening have talked about priorities. I understand and absolutely respect that, indeed, the interests of the child should be paramount. But also the notion that a loving couple, wanting to raise a child in a family situation in a house where they can experience life and have opportunities that they simply would not have I think is something well worth supporting. Indeed, what could be better than a loving family—of course, with the right and proper checks in place; the right and proper balances to make sure that this process is a rigorous one? Indeed, it is a rigorous one.

I have two stories tonight—both friends of mine, two families that had very different experiences. One is an older couple who spent a very, very long time to adopt two sisters from the Philippines. They adopted the elder sister and then a year or so later they adopted her younger sister. It was a very, very long process for them. It certainly was not a simple process. Indeed, it was a very costly process. Whilst it seems it may not be appropriate to talk about the cost in these situations, nevertheless for some families this is the reality that precludes them, and the financial burden is certainly something that restricts their ability to be able to undertake this process.

Some of the things that frustrated this particular family were the processes involved and what one could loosely described as 'red tape'. Again, it is absolutely critical that appropriate checks and balances are put in place and that the child’s interests are, indeed, paramount. The process that they went through for their first child was almost replicated again for the second child. That included visits to the house and so forth. These seemed at the time, in I guess what was a heightened emotional time for all of them, perhaps a little bit of an overreach in terms of the second daughter and the process there.

Both the families that I spoke to spoke terribly highly of the caseworkers that they had been allocated to support them. Indeed, one of the families pointed out that they have since become terribly good friends with the caseworker that was involved really as much in the process as they were as the new parents.

There was, of course, as I say, what they described as excessive paperwork, particularly in respect of the second child, which was duplicating a lot of the processes that they went through for the first child, which were indeed rigorous. Again, I do not want to dwell on this, by any means, but their first adoption cost them over $40,000—as did the second adoption. In total it took him 10 years for their two daughters to eventually become Australian citizens.

One of the things I also mentioned was the discrepancies that exist from state to state. Whilst it was a long, drawn-out process for this particular family in Tasmania, I understand that in other states that is even more onerous. That is something that COAG, and we as legislators, should certainly look at.

The second family that I spoke to had a very different experience. They already had three children of their own and they chose to adopt a young lady from China. For them it really was
quite a painless process. Those were the words that they used. As they described to me, perhaps they got the system at the right time. Perhaps it was because they had three children of their own. Certainly Georgia, their daughter, who is very much loved, has come into a wonderful home and she will have opportunities that she simply would not have had in the circumstances that she was left as a very young child in China, her birthplace.

It involved six months of hard work in terms of the paperwork. I think the hardest thing for the parents was the six months after that process, having gone through the paperwork, it then took six months until the time that they were able to be advised that they could travel to pick up their daughter. Indeed, that was a very difficult and a very long wait. In their circumstance, their daughter, like so many of the children in the orphanage from which they adopted their daughter, had been left at the post office with only a piece of paper describing her birthdate. That was her. They had no name, no other information. Like so many other children in the orphanage, this was the circumstances with which she came into the world.

They chose China because at the time adoptions from Ethiopia was not available. There have been a number of speakers talk about the situation, and rightly so, and the decision made to cease adoptions at that time from Ethiopia. They chose China as an alternative because Ethiopia at the time was not available. Again, they talked very, very fondly about the local caseworker, the work that they had done and how closely she had worked with them to secure this adoption.

Again, a number of speakers have commented on these situations, but having gone through all the process, having made all the payments that they were required to make, on adoption at the time they were due to pick up their daughter, they were asked to pay an additional US$1,000 right at one minute to midnight. They did not flinch, of course.

The SPEAKER: It being nine o'clock, with great sadness I interrupt the member's excellent contribution, because, I have to admit, I share the passion on this issue.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the House do now adjourn.

Cities Policy

Mr GILES (Scullin) (20:59): A couple of weeks ago the Economist Intelligence Unit announced that Melbourne had retained the ranking of word's most liveable city. I think all Melbournians welcomed this international recognition with a degree a pride. The announcement also highlighted debate about the definitions of both cities and liveability, and what they mean to different people and the importance of talking these things through—after all, the EIU’s report is aimed at wealthy expats whose experience of cities varies quite dramatically from that of, say, a resident in the outer suburbs of Melbourne.

This conversation about cities and liveability was on display last week at the launch of the Parliamentary Friends of Better Cities. This is a tripartisan endeavour, in which the member for Ryan and the member for Melbourne are my co-convenors. I look forward to working with them in broadening this national discussion. Judging by the wide array of stakeholders such as the Bus Industry Confederation, Real Estate Institute of Australia, Property Council, Landscape Architects, Heart Foundation, Cycling Promotion Fund and Australasian Railways Association, who were there along with member and senators, there is a hunger for this debate.
to be had. Everyone who spoke and to whom I spoke agreed that the challenges faced by our cities and the opportunities our cities can, with the right policies, take advantage of require a national response and national leadership.

Overseas, this conversation is on in earnest. Last week, the World Economic Forum released a report titled *The competitiveness of cities*. The report examined cities around the world, providing case studies of cities that had managed challenges successfully and others that had not done as well. This report is but one example of the ever-increasing body of literature and analysis that reinforce the need for governments to take cities policy seriously. Given that we are an urban nation, it is perplexing that the Abbott government has chosen to stick its head in the sand when it comes to our cities. Abolishing the Major Cities Unit and not reconvening the Urban Policy Forum have been retrograde steps. I note the comments by Ross Gittins in today's *The Sydney Morning Herald*, highlighting the important role that governments can and, I would say, must play in getting the most out of our cities.

It is important to state that our cities are much more than CBDs. They are also our suburbs and outer suburbs, coming together as a coherent and connected whole not divided as haves and have-nots. We must concern ourselves with how we connect the people who live in suburban Australia to jobs and broader life opportunities. One tried and tested way to do this is with urban rail. Indeed, as every report both internationally and domestically acknowledges, urban rail is a vital part of managing and making the most of population growth. Yet who could forget the Prime Minister's bizarre comments that the Commonwealth should 'stick to its knitting' when it comes to urban rail and only build roads instead, and that people were 'kings in their cars'. The irony of not spending money on urban rail is that it ends up costing us more in the long run as our cities become less productive.

We have a choice. We can look to the evidence and have regard to lived experience or fall back to prejudice at the expense of productivity as well as liveability, as this government seemingly prefers. As the Word Economic Forum report put it, 'Productivity is about the efficient use of available resources that drives economic growth' and 'Productivity has to be sustainably maintained beyond the short term and in a way that reconciles economic, environmental and social goals.'

Cities policy is about more than just a productivity challenge. It must be concerned with liveability, more broadly defined than by the *Economist*, as well as equity, sustainability and, fundamentally, democracy. Eighty per cent of Australians work in our cities and a similar number live in them. The lives of four in five Australians deserve the attention of our national government and the concerns of urban Australians deserve national leadership. A national cities conversation involves recognising the scope of urban Australia's challenges and opportunities, and asking two big questions. Firstly, what is our vision for Australia's cities? Secondly, how can the Commonwealth help to realise this vision? Let us, in this place, lead this conversation, engaging people in the communities in which they live and see if we can share in a common vision. Cities are places where people come together and where all the benefits of that collectivism are derived. So too I hope that the parliamentary friendship group can bring decision makers and stakeholders together and ensure it is not only Labor that places cities at the centre of our national conversation. Four in five Australians deserve nothing less.
Dawson Electorate: Mining

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (21:04): My constituents in the Mackay region are feeling the pain of a downturn in the mining industry and the extent of that pain can be clearly outlined with a few cold hard facts. Mackay is the predominant service centre for the Bowen Basin mining region. It is the centre where many families in the mining industry choose to live. But there has been a $1 billion drop in mining expenditure in the region, 8,000 jobs have been lost in the mining and services sector, and on today's count there are more than 1,200 properties for rent and close to 2,500 properties for sale on the market. The flow-on effects of the downturn are affecting every area of business in the region.

While we cannot change the coal price or change the new realities of doing business, there is something we can do or, more correctly, something mining giant BMA can do. BMA can stop their geographic discrimination—the destructive practice of operating mines with a 100 per cent fly-in fly-out workforce. This is taking place just a few hours west of a large and experienced workforce in Mackay, which prefer to live on the coastal fringe. At the National Party's Federal Council, which was held over the weekend, the Nationals took a strong stance on this practice—a practice dubbed the cancer of the bush in a report last year to the previous government.

My fellow Nationals MPs, the member for Hinkler and the member for Maranoa, and I backed a motion put forward by the member for Capricornia which stated: That this Federal Council of the Nationals call on state governments to ensure that all mining contracts include requirements to employ locals and prohibit 100 per cent Fly-in Fly-out … workforces, where a local workforce is available.

In June this year the Queensland LNP government took a great step on this issue, when they announced that there would be no more approvals for 100 per cent fly-in fly-out mine workforces. I congratulate them very much, particularly the Deputy Premier, for taking that stance and saying 'No more' to 100 per cent FIFO.

In Queensland, the coal companies were granted permission by the previous state Labor government, under the leadership of the then Premier, Anna Bligh, to initially engage 100 per cent FIFO workforces. It is a destructive legacy of that Labor government and, to the shame of the local Labor member for Mackay, Tim Mulherin, he was in cabinet when that decision was made.

It is a decision that has meant that the seat he represents has lost workers, business and confidence. BMA operates both the Daunia and Caval Ridge mines, west of Mackay, with 100 per cent fly-in fly-out workforces. Workers must fly in from either Brisbane or Cairns. It leads to ludicrous situations like this one. A mine worker, who lives but 15 minutes from the mine site, has to jump on a plane and fly to Brisbane so that he can then jump on another plane and fly back to Moranbah, his hometown, get on a bus and go to the mine site past his home, which he has in that community. He has to stay on that mine site and the mining camp for the entire time he is there. He is not allowed to go back to the family home. That is wrong.

As previously mentioned the Queensland LNP government is to be commended for stating that there will be no more approvals for 100 per cent fly-in fly-out workforces like this one but, just as a council cannot backtrack on a development approval, the state government
cannot backtrack on the original fly-in fly-out approval, which was given by the previous Labor government, for the Daunia and Caval Ridge mines.

However, there is something that the mining giant BMA could do. They could support the communities that have supported them over many years during the highs and lows of the coal industry. They could do the right thing. They could change their workforce-hiring requirements and end the geographic discrimination. Just because the previous Labor government gave BMA permission to operate with a 100 per cent fly-in fly-out workforce at two of its mines, it does not mean that they still have to do it. They could instead return to a mix of options, which has always existed in the mining sector. A fly-in fly-out workforce is an important part of the mix of a mining workforce. Drive-in drive-out is also an important part of the mix of a mining workforce. But a resident workforce is also an important part of that mix.

BMA have been asked to do the decent thing and accept workers from any area, regardless of postcode. They have been asked to give those choices back to workers. In turn, this will return lifeblood to regional towns and cities. I ask them to do that, Madam Speaker.

Corio Electorate: AFL Geelong Cats

Mr MARLES (Corio) (21:10): It is September. The AFL finals are here. Geelong is playing in them and we have secured the double chance. I can report to you, Madam Speaker, that the earth is rotating on its correct axis and all is right with the universe. Indeed, in 10 of the last 11 years Geelong has played in the AFL finals. For eight of them, we have been in the top four. This year we completed a feat whereby Geelong has played the most successful succession of 200 games since the inception of the Victorian Football League in 1897, as measured by a win-loss ratio. This means a lot to those in my electorate. If we make it to the last Saturday of this month, I can assure you that most houses in the electorate of Corio will have some adornment on them which will acknowledge the Geelong Football Club. There is no more socially unifying phenomenon in the city of Geelong than the Geelong Football Club. It houses our identity; it is the repository of our passion. And this year, more than any other year, given the difficulties that we have faced with decisions by Ford and Alcoa, wouldn't it be a grand thing if the Geelong Football Club were able to take away the AFL premiership?

But in this week I want to talk about a piece of lost football history in Geelong and that is the old Corio Oval. The Corio Oval was the home of the Geelong Football Club, from 1878 to 1940. Seven Victorian Football Association premierships were won by the Geelong Football Club when they played at the Corio Oval, seven of them in a space of nine years, from 1878 through to 1886. Three VFL premierships were also won at this ground: in 1925, 1931 and 1937 when Reg Hickey captained and coached that famous team. This is the ground where Edward ‘Cargi’ Greeves played his football, the first winner of the Brownlow Medal. This is the ground where Reg Hickey, the most celebrated person in the history of the Geelong Football Club played his games, from 1926 to 1940. It must have been a majestic moment on 29 August 1925, the year when Geelong won its first VFL premiership, when 26,025 people crowded into watch Geelong beat Collingwood, something that has been a sweetness in the following of football ever since.

But there is one person I particularly want to mention in this context and that is Dave Hickinbotham. He was the captain of the famous Geelong team in 1886, which went through
that season completely undefeated. Indeed, the final between Geelong and South Melbourne, the predecessor of the Sydney Swans, was regarded as the game of the century. Dave Hickinbotham was regarded as one of the great players of the 1880s. He was a centreman. He was aggressive but fair, he had skill and he had pace. He was one of the few people ever to have recorded a place kick which went further than 100 yards, which he did in 1888 at the Brunswick Oval in a match against Fitzroy.

In 1910 he arguably became Geelong's first coach. Coaching was a slightly less-defined function back then than it is now. But, arguably, Dave Hickinbotham was our first coach, coaching the VFL team in the years 1910 and 1911. Come the war, the ground went out of use as the home of the Geelong Football Club. It became a place where greyhound racing occurred. Its last stand was finally demolished in the 1980s. There is now a conference centre in its place and just a single plaque. Rather than being simply named with a number, I am calling on the City of Greater Geelong tonight to rename that specific oval the Dave Hickinbotham Oval in remembrance of a man who would have, just a few metres from that place, run down the centre of the old Corio Oval, creating so much joy for the people of Geelong, just as the Cats are going to do this month.

Trade Training Centres

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (21:15): Given that the Brisbane Lions and the Suns are not in the finals, in the absence of any other representatives here I wish Geelong all the best for the final season. AFL is Australia's game, but tomorrow we launch the parliamentary friends of football world game. We look forward to a new season of the world game coming up shortly with the A-league.

Tonight I would like to touch on some of the achievements of some of the wonderful schools in my electorate of Forde. In particular, I would like to touch on some of the terrific achievements of Beenleigh State High School, Loganlea State High School and Windaroo Valley State High School, who share an alliance under the Futures with Food Trade Training Centre. The teachers at these three schools decided, rather than working individually trying to develop their students' skills and capabilities, they would launch a united program called Futures with Food in the restaurant and hospitality area. Each time I visit these schools, the students are courteous, attentive and well dressed, and their food preparation is second to none. They certainly can compete with many of the local restaurants in our area. They are a tremendous credit to not only themselves but to their teachers and their parents.

Through Futures with Food, students are gaining hands-on experience as well as lifelong skills at events and functions where they participate across various catering roles. The schools have their own individual events. For example, Beenleigh State High School has a weekly 'bean-me-up' coffee morning for staff and also a 'shake shop' for students. Recently I had the pleasure of attending a Beenleigh Yatala Junior Chamber of Commerce breakfast at Beenleigh State High School.

Loganlea State High School has the Camp Fire Dreaming restaurant, which compliments the school's strong links with our Indigenous and business community. At Camp Fire Dreaming students demonstrate their skills in front of their teachers, parents, peers and members of the local community.
Windaroo Valley State High's appropriately named Valley View restaurant is often opened for functions outside school hours, where students participate in roles similar to that in commercial restaurants, thereby gaining valuable experience.

Whether it is a formal occasion, a five-course degustation, an informal lunch, a cultural banquet or a high tea, students fromBeenleigh, Loganlea and Windaroo Valley take it in their stride, producing industry-standard service and cuisine. When I am invited to attend one of the school functions, I, along with many of the other guests, really enjoy meeting the teachers and students involved and partaking of the wonderful food and service. The program gives students a sense of purpose and accomplishment. They show pride in their work and, as a result, have very bright futures ahead of them in the hospitality industry.

I commend the collaboration between all the schools involved in this initiative. The staff at each school work together developing community partnerships and industry links to support structured work placement like school based traineeships. It truly gives our local students who are interested in a career in hospitality a head start. It gives them a tremendous sense of confidence and purpose, knowing that they have the skills, talents and abilities to be part of the workforce in the future.

**Legal Assistance Services**

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (21:19): Over the last year, I have spoken often about the importance of legal assistance services in ensuring access to justice. It is well recognised that the Attorney-General has a special responsibility to uphold the rule of law. Sir Anthony Mason has said that it is 'a responsibility of the first importance' and a responsibility an Attorney-General is obliged to uphold, even against his own colleagues. It is often said, for instance, that an Attorney-General should speak out in defence of the judiciary. Certainly that is true, but the rule of law goes beyond that. As former Federal Court judge the Honourable Kevin Lindgren said, 'The rule of law and a strong independent judiciary are empty ideals if people cannot access the courts.' If the Attorney-General is to truly defend the rule of law, he must foster real access to justice.

To that end, the Attorney-General has been responsible for four types of Commonwealth funded legal assistance providers: legal aid commissions, community legal centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services—ATSILs—and family violence prevention legal services. Sadly, as I have said in this place and across the country in the last 11 months, the current Attorney-General has attacked each of these four vital services. Even before the Abbott government's first budget, in the December Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, Senator Brandis ripped away from Environmental Defenders Offices $10 million in Commonwealth funding that I had provided them as they weathered attacks from conservative state governments. He cut $9.6 million from other CLCs. He slashed more than $13 million from ATSILs but, at the same time, found $2 million to provide support to those opposing native title claims. He cut $6.5 million from Legal Aid and he cut $3.6 million from family violence prevention legal services.

The attacks have continued throughout Senator Brandis's tenure. The budget revealed the government will rip a further $15 million from Legal Aid in 2014-15. The government has taken another $6 million from CLCs in the forward estimates. It has changed the terms of its funding to CLCs in an attempt to prevent them from participating in public debate. Senator Brandis has allowed the FVPLS to be drawn into the remit of the Prime Minister's
department, even though, as legal assistance services, they are properly his responsibility as Attorney-General. And so, almost a year after he took office, the current Attorney-General’s standout achievement is an attack on access to justice—a value he is supposed to safeguard. Almost a year on, I call on the government to actually do something constructive in legal assistance, to take some concrete steps forward on access to justice. The government has ample opportunity to do so. I recently spoke at the National Association of Community Legal Centres conference in Alice Springs. I noted there that, though these are dark times for legal assistance services, there is some cause for hope.

The last Labor has government left Senator Brandis an emerging body of evidence for the utility and cost-effectiveness of legal assistance services in addressing the vast unmet legal need in Australia and how their delivery might be improved. Part of that body of evidence is the ACIL Allen review of the national partnership agreement, which was quietly published by Allen at the beginning of July without any public announcement or response by the government. This review, which cost the government almost $1 million, deserves serious consideration and a formal response from the government. There is also the highly significant inquiry into access to justice arrangements, conducted by the Productivity Commission, which is now being finalised. I sought the commission of that inquiry because I considered it firmly in the interests of access to justice that we develop some solid economic evidence base for the benefits of legal assistance and some idea of how its provision could be improved.

The Allen review and the Productivity Commission inquiry would give a competent, ambitious Attorney-General much to work with. Taken together, they present a rare opportunity to grapple with the nuance and the detail of ensuring access to justice. Almost one year on, it is not enough for the Commonwealth Attorney-General to have done nothing to advance access to justice—a ‘responsibility of first importance’. So far, Senator Brandis has given us nothing but brutal, swingeing cuts to vital services which comprise only 0.14 per cent of total state and federal government expenditure in this country. I call on Senator Brandis to respond to the Allen review and to engage properly with the full breadth of the Productivity Commission inquiry when it gives its final report. We should expect nothing less from an Australian Attorney-General.

**Medicinal Cannabis**

Dr STONE (Murray) (21:24): Imagine that your son or daughter, or your brother or sister, is dying from an incurable terminal cancer and the only treatment offering pain relief and nausea control is medicinal cannabis. This fortunately is not a common situation but that does not mean that we should not look carefully at whether we should continue to refuse access to medicinal cannabis in such circumstances. I believe we should allow it to be medically prescribed by specialists and regulated so that those few who need it can be given relief. Some other advanced countries—for example, Israel, Canada, 20 states in the USA and much of northern Europe—have long ago accepted the scientific evidence that medicinal cannabis has properties that make it a valuable last-resort drug that gives some cancer sufferers relief from chronic pain and nausea where nothing else works. It can also be of assistance with some symptoms of multiple sclerosis and it can reduce the number and severity of fits that can further disable a child with a particularly rare syndrome.

Medicinal cannabis does not give the same ‘high’ as illegal street marijuana—which can, of course, seriously damage a user’s mental health with long term or even shorter term heavy
use. I am not a subscriber to any further decriminalisation of illicit drugs in Australian. Synthetic marijuana is also a dangerous newcomer on the drug market and has recently been the focus of federal regulation to reduce import access. Medicinal cannabis is nothing like these substances; it is in a very different category. It would never 'leak' onto the illegal drug market because it would always be much more expensive. It would only be made available on a medical specialist or expert panel prescription—like so many other pharmaceuticals. We can look to the regulation in Canada, where medicinal cannabis has been available for more than a decade, to see best practice.

I am a co-convener of a bipartisan group of parliamentarians who are trying to tackle the terrible harms from illicit drug use in Australia. This is a serious but separate problem. It is interesting that the drugs doing the most harm to humans through their abuse in Australia are, of course, the legal drugs alcohol and nicotine. Having said that, the use of illegal drugs should not cloud our perspective or our compassion for those who could be treated to help their condition or have their cancer pain and suffering relieved at the end of their life when all else has failed.

I have been contacted by a constituent who has described the cruel suffering of her brother who had cancer. She believes he could have had some relief if he had been able to access medicinal cannabis in the last 12 months of his life. He could not eat. His condition was compounded because, in addition to the terrible pains associated with the disease itself, he literally starved. This constituent said she does not want anyone to ever suffer like that again.

In another case, a constituent has spoken to me of her mental anguish as she watches her partner suffer in the final stages of a terrible cancer that does not allow him to eat either. Being told that medicinal cannabis could help she is, as you can imagine, in a terrible state. She does not know where to get this substance. She has never broken the law in her life. She has no idea who to approach, who sells illegal drugs. Of course, she is worried sick that the marijuana she might buy might not be the appropriate type for relieving her husband's symptoms and could be cut with some foreign substance which would make it a danger to use. She is also terrified that if she did find the illicit marijuana, the illegal substance, in her effort to give her husband some final relief in his suffering, if she was caught buying that illegal drug she could lose her job—and she is the only breadwinner. So here is the extraordinary situation of a woman who has read all the literature, all the research, from 90 countries. This is highly scientific and respected research, particularly from Germany. She knows that medicinal cannabis could help her husband. She would at least like to try it but, in Australia, she cannot.

The key pieces of Commonwealth legislation that are activated by proposals for the introduction of a scheme dealing with medicinal cannabis include the Criminal Code Act 1995, the Customs Act 1901, the Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956, the Narcotic Drugs Act 1967, the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989 and the Crimes (Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances) Act 1990. This list sounds daunting, it sounds almost impossible for us to start to chug through, but members of parliament in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria are saying, 'Enough is enough, it's time we joined other developed countries in looking at decriminalising medicinal cannabis and making it available.'

I know there are many on both sides of the House who share my views. I thank the House.
The SPEAKER: It being 9.30 pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 21:30

NOTICES
Presentation

Mr Thistlethwaite to move:

That this House:

(1) congratulates Dame Meg Taylor on her recent election as the Secretary General of the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat at the recent Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Palau;

(2) recognises Dame Taylor’s tireless efforts over two decades as a servant of the Papua New Guinean Government, including as Papua New Guinea’s former ambassador to the United States, Mexico and Canada and as a senior World Bank official; and

(3) calls upon members of the Australian Parliament to commit to working cooperatively with the new Secretary General Taylor, particularly in promoting the education, and appointment of women to leadership positions throughout the Pacific.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Griggs): took the chair at 10:30.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (10:30): I rise this morning to congratulate Mambourin Enterprises. Mambourin Enterprises was awarded the Australian Disability Enterprises Excellence Award last week by the Department of Social Services. It is one of Australia's highest awards for workplace excellence. This award recognises Mambourin's significant contribution to improving the lives of people living with a disability and also provides the opportunity to build awareness of ADEs being financially viable businesses with high-quality employment options. Mambourin stood out to the excellence award judges due to its strong business partnerships, its Leadership Program for supported employees and its innovative Enterprise Resource Planning system which enables it to manage costs and enhance client outcomes in readiness for the NDIS.

Mambourin Enterprises was born in 1972, from a public meeting held in Werribee. The meeting was called by concerned community members who were expressing their concern at the lack of facilities to assist people with intellectual disability within the area. From these humble beginnings, Mambourin has expanded and has sites at Allara, Altona, Braybrook, Geelong, Melton, Sunshine, Werribee and Werribee South. Its honour roll demonstrates how embedded the organisation is in the local and broader community of the Western suburbs.

The award is recognition that Mambourin lives its values—values of dignity, empowerment, diversity and partnerships. They run a suite of programs. The first, for which the award was won, around supported employment, with types of work including packaging and assembly, light manufacturing and commercial garden maintenance. Locals can see the work of the gardening crews in the streets of Sanctuary Lakes. Mr Brady celebrated the award by saying, 'Our supported employees are paid at award wages,' meaning they take home fair pay for a fair day's work. They also run a day service program for over 350 people over 18 years of age, with individualised programs that focus on physical, emotional and cognitive needs. Clients can learn life skills, gain vocational experience or simply have fun.

They have post-school transition programs of which I can speak firsthand. These are for young people with intellectual disabilities transitioning from school. They run a STEP program, the Supported Transition to Employment Program, and a Get Ready program—get respect, empowerment, achievement and development for youth. I have known students who have undergone these programs and can speak firsthand to the way the staff work with families and clients to make them feel safe, welcome and challenged.

I congratulate all involved, CEO Rohan Brady, Board President Cathy Jeffkins, all past and current board members who give their time and expertise, the committed staff and most importantly the clients of Mambourin, who prove every day just how able they are. (Time expired)
Goldstein Electorate: Multiculturalism

Middle East

Mr ROBB (Goldstein—Minister for Trade and Investment) (10:33): While the recent conflict between Israelis and Palestinians can be expected to prompt emotive responses, there is no place for anti-Semitism. Yet there is a palpable level of concern regarding rising anti-Semitic incidents across Australia. This is true within the community I represent in Goldstein. Thankfully Australia is not seeing the same degree of activity that is sweeping Europe, where there have been riots outside synagogues, chants of 'gas the Jews' and the smashing of windows in Jewish shops and restaurants, stirring memories of pre-war Europe. There are, however, ominous signs in Australia and vigilance is very much required.

In recent weeks we have seen some highly-publicised events. We saw in Sydney that young Jewish students were subjected to vile threats and abuse when six young men boarded a bus transporting a group of Jewish students aged 5-12 years old, shouting 'Heil Hitler' and 'kill the Jews,' while threatening the young students with violence. There was an attack on a rabbi and his assistant in Perth. There has been a spike in anti-Semitic graffiti; so much of it can be seen around Melbourne that was not there until recently.

My colleague the education minister has written of anti-Semitic incidents at some of our leading universities, including Monash, where Jewish students have been targeted physically and verbally. There has also been what is described as a torrent of anti-Israel abuse across the realm of social media. Professor Mark Baker, Director of the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation at Melbourne's Monash University, said:

There has been a seismic shift …

Another Melbourne academic, Danny Ben-Moshe, said:
The collective well-being of Australian Jewry has been adversely affected … Jews are neither as free nor as safe as they were prior to this war.

Hallely Kimchi, the editor of the Israeli newspaper Eton, has been living here for 19 years but admits there has been a shift and is quoted in an online article:
'This is the first time that I actually feel that my identity is a problem,' she said.
'Something new has happened' since the Gaza war, Kimchi added. 'It's never been like that. The anti-Semitism in Australia is much more than in the past.
'The kids are afraid, that's the bottom line,' she said. 'I know the community here is more alerted.' Much has also been written regarding the usually biased and negative media slant taken against Israel in much of the global media reporting, including some key media outlets in Australia. In times of international conflict, our community needs leaders and institutions who prompt tolerance rather than inflame base prejudices. (Time expired)

Steel, Mr Kurt

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (10:36): It is fair to say that political staffers do not get a lot of love in the Australian public debate. But we who have the chance to serve in this place know how invaluable staffers are. It is not just the many long hours they give us; it is that many of our staff are impressive in their own right. They crack jokes, read deeply, love ideas and use their spare time to do community service or travel the world. Kurt Steel, the media adviser to ACT Deputy Chief Minister Andrew Barr, was such a man. Kurt was Canberra through and
through. He attended Melrose High, Canberra College and the University of Canberra and barracked for the Raiders.

Anyone involved in ACT politics at the federal or territory level knew Kurt. He worked first for New South Wales parliamentarian Steve Whan, before switching to work with Andrew Barr. Within the ACT, Kurt seemed to be at every committee meeting, trivia night and party event. My enduring memory of him is the man with a smile, looking for the next problem to solve. As Andrew Barr put it:

Kurt was a professional, highly respected and dedicated leader …

On Saturday, Kurt died in a bus crash in Bolivia, aged just 25. He had been on a six-week trip around South America—a trip that he had more than earned by dint of working many long hours and weekends.

Kurt's death has shaken the whole Labor family. Opposition leader Bill Shorten spoke of his 'truly awesome' passion for the Labor cause. ACT Chief Minister Katy Gallagher has remembered him as a person who 'always went beyond what was required of him'. ACT Labor Secretary Elias Hallaj has called him 'one of our brightest stars'. National ALP Party Organiser Nathan Lambert said, 'Kurt was so valuable in the last national campaign, we had already begun working out how to poach him—again.' As the face of the Right faction at ACT Labor conferences, I know Kurt would have got a chuckle out of the fact that tributes to him have come not only from ACT opposition leader Jeremy Hanson but even from the Left faction of the Labor Party.

Many of his friends have told me how much they will miss him and how strange it is to look at Facebook updates from his trip and realise they will not be able to share a beer with him ever again. Many in the media have also added tributes to Kurt, with whom they worked closely. I extend my condolences to Kurt's siblings, Chris and Yasmin, and to his parents, Jayne and Phillip. As Mark Parton tweeted:

Kurt Steel seemed like one of nature's true gentlemen.

Adam Collins tweeted 'such a lovely and happy bloke'. As Kurt's friend Todd Pinkerton put it over the weekend:

Heaven has gained one hell of a community organiser today.

**Swan Electorate: Como Hotel**

Mr IRONS (Swan) (10:39): I rise to update the House about the Como Hotel in my electorate. First, I would like to acknowledge the contributions that the member for Goldstein and the member for Fraser just made. Kurt Steel was part of not only the Australian community but parliamentary life. It is important that we recognise the people who are involved with our parliamentary lives and the contribution they make to make it easier for us as we act as members of parliament.

The important issue in my electorate which I am about to talk about is the Como Hotel, which falls within the City of South Perth's local government area. It is an iconic heritage listed site in Como. I have been campaigning along with many members of the community and other local elected members to help preserve this heritage listed facility. It was not a small campaign. Residents banded together to form a community group called the Save the Como Action Group to formally oppose the redevelopment of this site.
Although the redevelopment was a concern for local residents who want to see the hotel's art deco character maintained, the real controversy was an associated development to build a large-scale Dan Murphy's liquor store next to the hotel to replace the current BWS. Many people have referred to these liquor stores as 'booze barns' and say it will become a destination booze outlet. Not only is this an unnecessary development, it flies in the face of a recently launched state government program to reduce alcohol consumption in the community, with the purpose of this development being to facilitate greater access to and consumption of lower priced alcohol. It is clear that this large-scale liquor store would adversely impact on the community and is completely unnecessary, with 12 existing outlets being within reasonable proximity and five within close proximity to the proposed development.

As members in this place would know, the development of large-scale liquor stores often correlates with increased crime rates and has a negative impact on the amenity of that suburb and surrounding areas. Concerns were also raised that the development would create additional traffic pressures and increase the crash risk on the site's surrounding roads, which have previously been identified as crash risk areas. These concerns were reiterated by the City of South Perth council, Main Roads WA and my state government colleague, the member for South Perth, John McGrath, who noted that the developer had claimed traffic impacts and parking for the development were manageable based on a peak hour traffic survey conducted at 4.30 pm on a Friday. I know many members in this place might not have been lucky enough to visit my electorate of Swan, but I am sure you would agree that peak hour in your own electorates is from at least 5 pm onwards. This was a win for the community and a win for the government's efforts to reduce Australia's binge drinking culture across Australia. The fight is not over yet, because it has to go to SAT and one other court of appeal, but I support the outcome. (Time expired)

Souths Cares

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (10:42): I wish to congratulate Souths Cares, the charity arm of the mighty South Sydney Rabbitohs, on the recent launch of their Indigenous Employment Program, Ngalya Banga. The South Sydney Rabbitohs charity arm Souths Cares has a proud history of helping those in need in my electorate of Kingsford Smith and the broader South Sydney region. On 8 August this year, I was fortunate to attend the launch of their Indigenous Employment Program Ngalya Banga, which means 'working together' in local Gadigal language. It was launched at the NRL headquarters in Moore Park and promises to continue wonderful work, with the aim of providing employment opportunities for the local Indigenous community.

As we all know, there is still a long way for Australia to go in closing the gap of disadvantage between Australians and our Indigenous brothers and sisters. In terms of employment, unfortunately in Australia in August 2011 it was reported that just 56 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of working age were participating in the labour force, and one in six of those people was under-employed. This program represents Souths Cares doing its bit to close the gap on Indigenous employment. With the support of experienced Souths Cares Indigenous mentors, as well as the Rabbitohs corporate family and local employers, Ngalya Banga seeks to guide Indigenous job seekers through the journey of securing, fulfilling and rewarding long-term employment.
With a primary goal to arm job seekers with the necessary skills to attain gratifying long-term employment, the program is also about spreading the word to other potential employers who stand to benefit from employing keen and capable Indigenous job seekers, as well as rebates, benefits and support that the new program can offer to those involved.

There are currently 48 participants in the scheme, working with 11 local employers and achieving great results. At the launch, Kellie Geddes, a former student of Matraville High School, spoke of the confidence she has gained having gone through this particular employment program. Upon its completion, the program will have provided employment for 60 Indigenous job seekers from our local area, with 30 general employment places—10, importantly, apprenticeships and 20 traineeship positions—available.

I wish to commend Souths Cares on this wonderful program that they have recently launched but also the other charity work that they do, particularly with local schools in transition-to-work programs, the importance of remaining at school and healthy lifestyle programs, and I thank them for their continued advocacy for the Indigenous community.

(Time expired)

Parkes Electorate: Drought

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (10:45): I would like to rise here this morning to speak about the drought that currently has in its grips north-western New South Wales and western Queensland. I would particularly like to talk about the area in western New South Wales that is in the electorate of Parkes. It is an area that is bounded by Coonamble, Pilliga, Walgett, Lightning Ridge, Weilmoringle, Goodooga and Brewarrina.

This particular area is going into its third year of drought now. I would ask anyone in this place, or anyone else, how they could possibly manage to handle not having any income but actually having increased expenditure over a period of that length of time? What we are starting to see now is the devastating effect that this drought is having on these communities. The machinery dealer in Walgett has reduced his staff from 23 down to 10. The real concern is that those people, when it does rain, may not come back. That is a real concern.

I would like to acknowledge in this place the work that the coalition government has done on drought, following on from the visit of the Prime Minister earlier in the year and the great work done by the Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce. The Prime Minister did organise some rain and took a lot of relief off in that Bourke area, but unfortunately the rain did not extend across the whole area that he visited. So we have seen around 3,000 farmers now receiving household support and quite a few taking up the concessional loans, and many farmers have taken advantage of the water infrastructure. But there is more to do. There is more to do; I understand that the agriculture minister is organising another visit with some of his senior colleagues to the drought affected area, but this is now in a more-than-100-years drought. This is the worst drought now since white settlement. And indeed, this will be a drought that many farmers will not recover from.

In closing, I have actually written to the Australian Bankers' Association twice. I was not asking for anything major. I understand that they are working well with the farmers and, indeed, there are not that many on the stressed list on their books. I was asked for a bit of a cash donation to help Brendan Farrell, from the south of the state, who has been organising fodder drives and taking hay. He has taken thousands of bales of hay to the north. I thought it
might have been appropriate for the Banks' Association—the individual banks, I should say—to help contribute to some of the fuel for those people who are donating their trucks. As yet, not only a negative response I have not received a reply. I think that is less than satisfactory. (Time expired)

Isaacs Electorate: Transport

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (10:48): I recently conducted a public transport survey in my electorate focusing on the needs of residents in Keysborough and Dandenong South. I am often told about the need for new bus services linking residents and businesses with trains, schools, work, sporting venues and places of worship. With an increase in residential development in these areas and a growth in the number of businesses located in the new industrial estates in the City of Greater Dandenong, the need for connectivity of our transport infrastructure is becoming increasingly important.

The Eastern Transport Coalition in Melbourne is conducting a survey on the need for better buses. While acknowledging that new rail lines in the east are included in Plan Melbourne, they state that these lines remain unfunded and therefore uncommitted. Adding to the backlog, there has been no increase in local bus services.

The Treasurer has cut all federal public transport funding from the budget and claims that poor people do not drive cars, or do not drive as far, and because of that they would not be as hard hit by a rise in fuel excise. But my constituents are making it quite clear to me that because of the lack of public transport infrastructure they are forced to drive their cars every day. The Abbott government's unfair petrol tax will further stretch their ability to fill their tanks and meet the cost of living.

I want to share with the parliament some of the comments made by my constituents. A local business said, 'Many apprentices cannot get to work without being driven by their parents or getting a taxi.' 'Everywhere we want to go we have to drive.' 'I've got a concession card which gives me a discount on buses but not petrol.' 'I'd rather use buses but there aren't any.' 'After school my child takes a bus to Parkmore and from there he has to walk for 20 minutes with little or no footpath to Somerfield because of the lack of access to bus services.' And lastly, 'My children have to be in after-school care until I or my husband finish work to be picked up. If we had buses they could come home and do their homework and relax after a heavy day's work.'

To date, I have received over 450 responses to my survey, all requesting better public transport links with our rail system. I have been working with the City of Greater Dandenong and the state member for Keysborough, the Hon. Martin Pakula, on this issue, but we need government to act. It is time that the Abbott government and its state Liberal counterpart took the need for improved public transport services seriously. The Abbott government's cuts to public transport funding are an insult to those members of our community who live in areas not well serviced by public transport. Its hike in petrol tax is an insult to those who must run a car and who struggle with the cost of this. I will continue to advocate for my community to obtain improved access to public transport.

Herbert Electorate: 3rd Brigade

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (10:52): Residents of Townsville lined The Strand and Jezzine Barracks on Saturday afternoon as the community marked the centenary of the 3rd
Brigade with a freedom of entry march. Fifteen hundred soldiers marched on Saturday. Brigadier Roger Noble, Commander of the 3rd Brigade, said at the time, 'I don't think there is a better place to march in the country,' as the soldiers before him stood at ease in perfect lines in Strand Park, facing Cleveland Bay with Castle Hill behind them and the newly created Jezzine Park just down the road. He went on to say, 'It is special as never before has the freedom of entry to the city been given to a brigade. So, at the centenary of the First World War and the 100 years of this brigade, Townsville is the first place to do it.'

The 3rd Brigade was first formed in 1914 under the initial command of British officer Colonel Ewen Sinclair-MacLagan. I note that the first commander and I share the same first name and it is spelled the same—a coincidence, I think not. The brigade was made up of the 9th Battalion from Queensland, the 10th Battalion from South Australia and the 11th Battalion from Western Australia, and the 12th Battalion was made up of Tasmanians, South Australians and Western Australians. For this reason, the brigade was also known as the 'all Australian brigade'. The brigade is well-known for leading the landing at Gallipoli. By the time the 3rd Brigade was withdrawn for reinforcement, half of the 4,000-strong force had been lost.

The 3rd Brigade was involved in World War II in the Pacific, based in Darwin and Townsville. However, it was not until 1967, when Lavarack Barracks was built, that the 3rd Brigade found a permanent home in my city of Townsville. Since then, the brigade has represented the ADF in many combat and peacekeeping roles, including Vietnam, Fiji, Operation Solace in Somalia, Bougainville, the horrors of Rwanda, Rhodesia and Zimbabwe, Uganda, Cambodia and the first Gulf War. 1999 saw combat units sent to East Timor, and in recent years deployment to Iraq, Afghanistan and the Solomon Islands as part of RAMSI.

The 3rd Brigade represents over 4,000 soldiers at Lavarack Barracks in Townsville. The brigade forms an integral part of our community. They have families, they play sport, they volunteer and of course contribute immensely to the local economy. Townsville enjoys a fantastic relationship between the city and the ADF. The 3rd Brigade is a major part of that, along with the RAAF base in Townsville. But it has not always been that way. It was not until we sent personnel to Somalia that they went from 'Army jerks' to 'our boys'. Credit must go to three parties: the ADF, who made the commitment to be part of the city; the mayor at the time, Tony Mooney, who led the charge to bring them into our hearts and lives; and the Townsville Bulletin, which pushed and moulded public opinion. Those three offices still hold great responsibility, and may that always be so.

**Memorial Oak Tree Ceremony**

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide) (10:55): Hundreds of thousands of Australians would have wandered past the beautiful old oak tree out the front of Adelaide Oval but few would have recognised its significance. On Friday I had the opportunity to attend a ceremony outside Adelaide Oval at the old oak tree which I would like to update the House on. Few people would know that this oak tree was actually planted just 25 days after war was declared between the UK and Germany in 1914. As such, it is the oldest memorial which was planted to commemorate World War I. That tree has now grown over the hundred years since and on Friday we had a ceremony, along with the students of Sturt Street and Gilles Street primary schools, to recognise the 60,000 lives that were lost. This tree was planted a century ago so that people would never forget those lives. I can only think that those people who stopped to
plant that tree would know that they had succeeded when they saw primary school students from two different schools studying the lives of those who had been lost.

We also undertook another important development on Friday at this ceremony when an acorn which had fallen off this century-old tree was planted. We will have a second oak tree growing outside Adelaide Oval so that local Adelaide residents will never, ever forget the lives that were lost in World War I. We know that, with the students each laying a wooden cross with the names and details of a life that had been lost, as well as poppies, around the new tree to mark the occasion, each and every one of these students recognised their significance and knew that they would carry this story forward. In future everyone who goes along to see the mighty Adelaide Crows, or to watch perhaps a test match at Adelaide Oval, will have the opportunity to recognise the huge significance of this local and beautiful tree in Adelaide.

I would like to particularly pay tribute here today to the founder and organiser of this event, Mr David Lawry OAM, whose vision is to commemorate the war with an avenue of trees. As a result of David's commitment, passion and dedication, hundreds of people recognise the significance of this tree. We will each continue to spread the word so that this story lives on, not just for years, not just for decades, but for generations to come.

I would also like to congratulate the students and teachers of Sturt Street and Gilles Street primary schools for their very active role in the commemoration of the war. I know that, with the centenary of Anzac Day, there is no more fitting time to recognise this and to recognise the beautiful 100-year-old oak tree in Adelaide.

**Industrial Hemp**

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (10:58): On behalf of the many agricultural producers in my electorate, I raise the subject of industrial hemp and the unacceptably long delay nationally in deciding whether to legalise its cultivation for human consumption. Producers in my home state of Tasmania in particular, but also in most other Australian states and in New Zealand, have been campaigning for the development of this industry for more than a decade. Hemp is already cultivated in Australia and New Zealand under strict licensing arrangements and is used to make fibre, textiles, paper and building materials.

The removal of prohibitions on the production of hemp seed and oil products would provide farmers with a greater range of viable markets for a crop that we have known for many years grows particularly well in the southern regions of Australia and New Zealand. It would also encourage more farmers to consider growing it commercially. It provides, as I understand it, an excellent rotation crop between poppies.

The hold-up has been the decision required by state and federal health ministers to legalise the cultivation of hemp for human consumption. I have written recently to state health ministers and the federal health minister, Peter Dutton, urging them to push for an early resolution to this matter sooner than the next meeting of the Council of Australian Governments' committee responsible for the decision, which is not scheduled to meet until January next year. The committee again deferred a decision on hemp for human consumption at its June meeting and asked for more information, even after Prime Minister Tony Abbott called for a report on the matter to help expedite a decision.
The case for industrial hemp for human consumption has long been argued and is well-known. What is not needed is more information to be sought for a meeting that will not take place until the new year. What is needed are forthright state ministers to make a decision now so that farmers know whether or not this can become an exciting new industry for them once and for all. It is indeed important to protect public health. There is a responsibility of the ministers and government generally to protect public health, but there is confusion, I believe, in this instance about the difference between industrial hemp and medicinal cannabis. Industrial hemp is low or nil THC. It looks to me indeed more like bureaucratic bungling than process to deliver good public policy.

I pay tribute to Phil Reader from my electorate of Lyons who lives at Bishopsbourne. As a constituent he has been over many, many years an extremely strong advocate to see industrial hemp used for human consumption—and also Tim and Pip Schmidt from Red Hills. And I pay tribute to others in their efforts to see industrial hemp grown for consumption in Tasmania and more broadly around this great country.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones): Order! In accordance with standing order 193 the time for constituency statements has concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS
Australian Red Cross

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11:01): I move:

That the House:

(1) notes that:

(a) 2014 is the Centenary year of Red Cross in Australia, a significant milestone in the social history of the nation and commemorating 100 years of humanitarian service to the people of Australia;

(b) most Australians have shared a personal connection with Red Cross, from its humanitarian role during two world wars, to preparing, responding to and recovering from natural disasters, or helping vulnerable people and communities overcome disadvantage, and through its world class national blood service; and

(c) for 100 years the Australian Red Cross has enjoyed a unique auxiliary status to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, working in partnership with governments of all political persuasions, in Australia and internationally, to alleviate suffering in a voluntary aid capacity whilst adhering to its principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality;

(d) Australian Red Cross is part of the world's largest humanitarian movement, with tens of millions of volunteers working in 189 countries, united by the fundamental principle of preventing and alleviating human suffering, without discrimination, wherever it may be found in times of war, conflict, disaster or personal crisis;

(2) recognises that:

(a) today the Australian Red Cross has a network of over one million volunteers, members, staff, donors, aid workers and supporters; and

(b) through this network, the Australian Red Cross mobilises the power of humanity to work right across the country in local communities in every state and territory, and further afield, to help transform the lives of vulnerable people in need, whoever they are; and

(3) calls on all honourable members to:
(a) join the Australian Red Cross in celebrating the 100th anniversary of its founding on 13 August 1914, nine days after the outbreak of World War I;

(b) congratulate generations of Australians for their extraordinary contributions through the everyday work of Red Cross; and

(c) continue to support the independent, neutral and impartial humanitarian mission of Red Cross to work with and assist the most vulnerable people in need, both in Australia and internationally.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones): Is the motion seconded?

Ms Hall: I second the motion.

Ms PLIBERSEK: The Australian Red Cross is a remarkable community organisation that has served this nation with distinction for 100 years. Its work has grown and changed over the century, but its core purpose has remained the same. In the words of the motto chosen to celebrate its centenary, the Australian Red Cross is an organisation of "people helping people".

The Australian Red Cross grew from an international body, created as the International Committee for the Relief of the Wounded in 1863. Its founder, Henry Dunant, had been appalled by the terrible deaths and the appalling state of the men maimed in battles he had seen in the struggle for Italian unification. He was shocked by the inadequacy of food and by the lack of medical help. He enlisted women from Castiglione, a local town, and urged them to make no distinction between nationalities. The women responded with the phrase "tutti fratelli"—all men are brothers.

In Australia, the Red Cross was founded in 1914, nine days after the outbreak of World War I, by Lady Munro Ferguson, the wife of the Governor-General, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson. Lady Helen centred the work of the Australian Red Cross in her own home. She said it was women's work and she wanted the organisation to have women in leadership roles at all levels. The organisation has retained that character of being predominantly a women's movement throughout its history in Australia. Today, almost three-quarters of the staff and four in five volunteers and members are women.

During World War I, young women who had limited access to the workforce were able to participate more actively in the war effort. They were trained in first aid and home nursing and carried out domestic and nursing duties in military hospitals and convalescent homes. At the Red Cross headquarters in Lady Helen's home, Government House in Melbourne, the ballroom became the central depot, factory and warehouse—receiving, creating and dispatching food parcels and other goods. Hundreds of volunteers came to work there every day throughout the war.

Of course, the Red Cross's role expanded in World War II and, by 1944, towards the end of the war, the Red Cross had 450,000 members; one in every 12 Australian women were members. It was the largest women's organisation in Australia during the war years and probably ever. I certainly remember being a member of the Junior Red Cross in primary school, like I am sure many members of parliament were.

After World War II, the organisation changed its focus to providing humanitarian assistance at home and overseas, helping care for returned soldiers and their families, and for millions of displaced people throughout Europe. Today, again, we see a change in the role that the Australian Red Cross has set for itself. The leader of the Australian Red Cross, Robert...
Tickner, gave a terrific speech on 21 May, talking about wars, laws and humanity. He described the work of the Red Cross in Australia in addition to the fantastic blood service provided by the Red Cross. He said there is 'international work with a priority but not exclusive focus on the Asia-Pacific area'. Secondly, there is work on international and domestic disasters and emergency. Thirdly, they are working with asylum seekers and refugees—and he says that the Red Cross currently have approximately 12,000 clients in that area. Next, he said they are:

... working in programs in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; tackling the social exclusion faced by so many marginalised groups ranging from older vulnerable people living in the community to young offenders or former offenders and the families; and an increasingly place based focus on shifting our work to the most vulnerable communities where social problems have proven so intractable over time.

Robert Tickner also spoke very strongly about international humanitarian law, where Australian Red Cross has become one of the global leaders. Their work is raising awareness that even wars have laws, that civilians should be spared during conflict.

The Australian Red Cross has become a leader in arguing the case for the complete banning of nuclear weapons—some of the most destructive weapons known to humanity. He makes the point that 'As a global community we have acted against chemical and biological weapons, anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions,' but that nuclear weapons still exist.

I give my congratulations to all of those volunteers and staff of the Red Cross for the wonderful work they do. It is very disappointing to note that this year, for the first time, the $5 million grant that the government has given every year to the Red Cross has not been paid to the Red Cross. This is an annual grant that started under the Howard government, was continued under the Rudd and Gillard governments and for the first time, this year, has not been paid.

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (11:06): It is my pleasure to speak on this motion celebrating the centenary of the Red Cross. As the previous speaker pointed out, it was just a little over a week into World War I that the Red Cross established itself. As a local member of parliament, I want to focus on the local story in my electorate, which encompasses the Yarra Valley. On that very day that the Red Cross was established, on 13 August 1914, the local branch of the Red Cross was established in Lilydale in the heart of the Yarra Valley. It had its first meeting at the Athenaeum Hall, which would later become the Athenaeum Theatre that it is today.

Those who formed the first committee included some of the great volunteers of the Lilydale community. The first President, unanimously elected on that day, was Nellie Melba, the renowned opera singer, who lived just up the road in Coldstream. She would go on to lead that branch and raise more money than anyone else in the Red Cross—more than 100,000 pounds. She sung at concerts in the Athenaeum Hall. The Athenaeum Hall was the place, the Red Cross remind us today, where all the work went on. In fact, it spilled over into the shire offices next door, where the mayor essentially vacated the premises for the greater good. This local history that we are seeing with the Centenary of Anzac is very important. The local history with the Red Cross is a very good illustration that a century ago the entire nation mobilised.

Of course, there was an international tradition to this, but there is a particularly Australian part as well that I do want to dwell on a bit this morning. In the Yarra Valley—you can
imagine, Mr Deputy Speaker, because your electorate would be much the same—the women volunteering at the Red Cross 100 years ago were not leaving households during the day while their husbands were at work to volunteer at the Red Cross. They were running farms. They were responsible for so much while those nearly 400,000 men were away, first at Gallipoli and then on the Western Front. It was a phenomenal contribution.

Of course the contribution in our Allied countries was just as great. For a young nation just federated, there was something different and special—they felt very much part of the new nation. That was reflected in the fact that from 1902 women had the vote in Australia—ahead of the United Kingdom and ahead of the United States. They were voting before the war and all the way through the war. It is part of that egalitarianism and democratic tradition where we were ahead of some of the older democracies.

In the case of Melba, her contribution went on beyond the war years. As I said, she had concerts in the Athenaeum Theatre, and together with her committee she was a pivotal force behind so much of the fundraising in the Lilydale area. You can just imagine weekends in Lilydale 100 years ago—you would not have been able to go anywhere without seeing the Red Cross and the great work that they did. While Melba was there ringing the bell to signal the start of the Red Cross in Lilydale 100 years ago, she was literally there at the end of the war ringing the bell declaring the armistice, because she knew someone in military service who had phoned through to her at Coombe Cottage to let her know the armistice had been signed. She went down to the Lilydale main street and grabbed the fire bell and rang it, and that was how she let the people of Lilydale know that the war had ended.

I am pleased to be associated with this motion. It is a great opportunity for all of us to reflect on the local history of the Red Cross.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (11:11): I join with the Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party, Tanya Plibersek, in congratulating the Australian Red Cross on its 100 years of service to our nation and to humanity. The Australian Red Cross is part of the world's largest humanitarian organisation, which plays a leading role in lending much-needed assistance during periods of conflict and poverty and also during national disasters. The Australian Red Cross works under the banner of the International Red Cross framework but focuses on areas particularly prioritised by our country and also throughout our region. The organisation provides assistance to asylum seekers and refugees in Australia, and through its international network it conducts activities throughout the Pacific region, including working closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There is a strong focus by the Australian branch of the Red Cross on natural disasters and emergencies as they occur throughout our region. There is also a growing focus on tackling social issues common to Australian communities, including social isolation for older and vulnerable people, and assisting young offenders and their families to integrate back into society.

My personal connection with the Red Cross is primarily through the Red Cross Blood Service, which is now supported by more than half a million voluntary donations each year. The Red Cross provides a vital service in many areas of the health industry including, obviously, blood transfusions, as well as organ and tissue donation, tissue typing for transplantations, research into blood and blood products, and donor and product safety. I would like to use this opportunity to encourage all Australians to consider donating blood. Regrettably, one in three Australians will need blood at some point in their lives. In stark
contrast, only one in 30 Australians donate blood. A single blood donation, whilst it might take a half an hour of your time, has the potential to save up to three lives. Donating blood is a great way of giving back to the community—after all, it is impossible to predict when we or those close to us may need someone's assistance through a blood donation. The role Red Cross plays in encouraging and facilitating vital blood donations is exceptional and deserving of the highest praise.

Red Cross is part of the fabric of Australian life. So many Australians have been impacted through the assistance of the Red Cross, be it in cases of emergency or through lifesaving first aid, blood donations or a simple phone call checking on the wellbeing of elderly citizens. Red Cross provides vital services to all Australians.

It therefore comes as a great surprise to me that this government has recently informed the Red Cross that it will no longer be receiving the $5 million general purpose grant this year. Red Cross has traditionally enjoyed undisputed bipartisan political support and has received the general purpose grant every year since 2006. Scrapping the grant will greatly impair the ability of Red Cross to provide vital services. It has already been forced to scrap some programs since 30 June this year. This funding cut will inevitably affect other programs and diminish the ability of Red Cross to provide support for hardworking staff and, most importantly, the volunteers.

It is particularly disappointing that the cut comes during the 100th anniversary of Red Cross, when we should all collectively be not only celebrating but recognising and praising the achievements of this great and important organisation and what it has done over the last century. I praise the efforts of the tens of thousands of staff and volunteers working around the world, including the many aligned with Red Cross here in Australia. They work incredibly hard with the joint aim of alleviating human suffering in various circumstances. I also encourage the government on this occasion to reassess its position on supporting Red Cross and reinstate the funding under the general purpose grant.

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (11:16): I rise to support this motion on the Red Cross. This organisation is fantastic and has great bipartisan support. I say to the member for Fowler that I know secretly he would have been behind the scenes opposing the waste of $667 billion of taxpayers' money putting us into debt. There would be plenty of money for every organisation. It is just that we cannot find on the record where you opposed all that wasteful spending, but please feel free to in the future.

This motion is so important because there is bipartisanship about a great organisation working on humanitarian issues. I congratulate the member for Sydney for putting forward this motion, because it gives me the opportunity to say that 100 years is a significant achievement for any community organisation. Particularly in Australia, Red Cross has had some remarkable achievements and been a remarkable success. Citizens working for the betterment of other human beings is the best model and Red Cross, of course, has been a key humanitarian partner for Australia for the last 100 years.

The Australian aid program has a partnership agreement with the Australian Red Cross. That means that the government is providing $9 million in funding this year to support humanitarian training, disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction activities in disaster prone countries in the region. In addition, we fund the Australian Red Cross to implement development projects throughout the region, such as health services in Afghanistan and water,
sanitation and hygiene in Bangladesh and Nepal. During humanitarian crises, Australians regularly channel additional funding to Australian Red Cross to assist vulnerable and disaster affected people. It is a fantastic model that ensures money is well spent by an effective agency like Red Cross.

For example, in response to the floods we saw in the Solomons, Australians provided $250,000 for humanitarian supplies, including tarpaulins, blankets, mosquito nets, kitchen sets and hygiene kits. In response to Typhoon Haiyan, the ARC provided more than one million people with food, water, household items and emergency shelter material, assisting 75,000 families with cash grants and immediate needs and supplying 41 emergency workers. When you think about the success and the generosity of Australians there, it is an amazing record of achievement. The Australian Red Cross is also the managing partner of the Australian Volunteers for International Development program. This program places Australians overseas to share skills and build relationships.

It is important to note today that the network of one million volunteers, members, staff, donors, blood donors, aid workers and supporters over the years has made this organisation into what it is. When I reflect on the 100 years of achievement, I think about all of the local branches across the country which we have heard about from so many members today. I would add the Red Cross branch of Castle Hill.

It is also the centenary of Red Cross at Kellyville-Rouse Hill, with the Kellyville-Rouse Hill Red Cross branch being formed on the same day—13 August 1914—as the British Red Cross Society was formed. It was amazing, in an era when they did not have internet, emails, texts or mobile phones, that they managed to form on the same day—and something of minor miracle—with most meetings occurring in the schoolroom of the home of the Rouse family, which is today known as Rouse Hill House and Farm.

I really want to commend my local branches, particularly the Kellyville-Rouse Hill branch, for their commitment to serving humanity. The Castle Hill Red Cross branch is the largest fundraising branch, I am told, in New South Wales and perhaps Australia. It was formed at the beginning of September 1914. At its first meeting at St Paul's Church it raised 10 pounds and 18 shillings and promptly arranged to kit out six soldiers' bags and one hospital bag.

The generosity of our community continues to this day. The Castle Hill branch has often raised the most money in Australia during Red Cross Calling and other appeals. I want to acknowledge the generosity of the people in the suburbs of Mitchell, who often appear at the top of the charitable donor lists in all kinds of charities, not because we are an extremely wealthy community—we do not have the wealth and privilege of the North Shore or the eastern suburbs—but because we have people who are very dedicated to serving other people. I really acknowledge the generosity of my community for consistently being at the top of so many charitable giving lists. It is a great culmination of community spirit.

I want to congratulate, in particular, Mrs Jean Swayne and all of the men and women of the Castle Hill branch, and our long-term committee members such as former president Ann Coupland, who have ensured that this branch's dedication to serving humanity is continuing a century later. When I visit these branches today, that same dedication that was there 100 years ago is still there today; that same concern for common humanity, for decency, is still the driving principle. For an organisation to be able to sustain its principles—not just from 100 years ago, but to sustain it over the course of that 100 years—and to be capable of
modernising and presenting to a world the same values but in a new, current, contemporary format is a real and significant achievement. We ought to thank everyone who has been involved in Red Cross, not just in Australia but in the world, and particularly all those generous people who have given so much.

Debate adjourned.

**Competition Policy**

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (11:22): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that the first major root and branch review of competition policy in more than 20 years, as promised by the Coalition, is being delivered, and:

(a) is being conducted with a focus on the current laws and competition framework, to ensure that efficient businesses, both big and small, can compete effectively and have incentives to invest and innovate for the future; and

(b) will provide a framework for delivering durable benefits to consumers by building a productive and competitive 21st century Australian economy;

(2) recognises the plans of the Government to support efficient markets which deliver lower prices and better services for Australian consumers; and

(3) commends the Government on its approach to this important economic reform.

I come to this place with a fundamental belief in small government. I also believe in the importance of free trade and a free and fair market. In fact, I believe it is a fundamental role of government to provide that fair and even playing field, a platform that will allow business to innovate and to flourish. It is for this reason I bring this matter to the House. I commend the minister for getting on with the job with a root and branch review of the competition policy. I commend the minister for getting this policy review underway.

The last comprehensive review of competition policy, the Hilmer review, was in 1993, more than 20 years ago. Hasn't the economy—hasn't the world—changed in that 20 years? This root and branch review delivers on a key election commitment. The review is sure to identify ways to build and promote the Australian economy and promote investment, growth and jobs creation. The competition review will examine not only the current laws but also the broader competition framework to increase productivity and efficiency in markets, drive benefits to ease cost of living pressures and raise the living standards for all Australians. We need competition laws for the 21st century. In the words of Professor Harper, who is leading the review, 'We need a modern, responsive competition policy framework that strengthens our economy today and positions us for the new opportunities and challenges we face in the decades to come.'

Good and sound competition policy should enhance innovation, create new goods and services and develop new ways to do business. Ensuring a fair playing field is good for consumers and business alike. Competition has the power to boost growth, enhance our standards of living and drive productivity. I was raised in a small business family and my dad, who at various times throughout his career found new ways to do business and moved into new franchising models, always said, 'Competition doesn't kill you. It makes you stronger. It makes you find new ways to do business.'
More than ever, we live in a changing environment and a changing economy. Our economy is most definitely dynamic. In the years since the last review, the FMCG market alone within our major supermarkets—both Coles and Woolworths—had a market share of about 40 per cent. Today their market share is in excess of 80 per cent, and I expect my good friend the member for Hughes will touch on these exact points. These two competitors are changing not only the face of our FMCG environment but also hardware, fuel, insurance, liquor, pubs—which I am sure the member for Reid will also discuss today—and changing the way business and consumer goods right across our economy are being purchased and acquired.

Also since the last review we have seen the advent of the internet, with social media alone changing the way all consumers communicate, how we do business and how we acquire goods and services. It has also changed the retail experience for all Australians and shoppers right around the world. The World Internet Project's latest report has found that Australia's online shopping grew by 46 per cent between 2011 and 2013, far outpacing the growth of bricks-and-mortar retailing. Last year Australians spent over $14 billion on online retail and 6.5 per cent spending in bricks-and-mortar retail, according to the NAB Online Retail Sales Index. Industry estimates indicate that the growth trend will continue. According to Frost & Sullivan for example, 'Online retail sales will grow by around 13 per cent, year on year, in the next five years.'

In such a dynamic world and an innovative economy, such changing environments also present so many challenges for policymakers and regulators. This is why I am so proud to be part of a government that is meeting these demands and stepping up to the plate to review our competition policy—to have a competition policy that will be right, into the future. Our last competition policy is over 20 years old. It is time we review our competition policy to continue to provide that fair and even playing field for all Australians. I commend this motion to the House.

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (11:27): I am pleased to rise to speak on the important issue of competition as Labor's shadow minister for competition. We, on this side of the House, have a proud tradition of reforms in the competition space. Through the long salad years of the Menzies government, little was done on competition policy. The Restrictive Trade Practices Act was regarded as relatively weak and it was not until the Whitlam government that Australia, for the first time, had a Trade Practices Act. As Kep Enderby said in introducing that bill to the House for the first time, 'The effect of empowering consumers themselves to take private action to enforce their rights.' And it was a Labor government, under Paul Keating, which put in place national competition policy. As Mr Keating said in 1992:

It is no accident that Australia's most efficient and commercially successful producers have been those which have been subject to strong competition. And the most stringent competitive standards are those in world markets....

That was a Labor government, like the Hawke and Whitlam governments before it, that recognised that bringing down the tariff walls was a necessary part of competition reform in a nation like Australia. The Hilmer competition reforms eventually resulted in putting in place a National Competition Council and an Australian Competition Commission, now the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. Those reforms were absolutely vital for
ensuring that Australian consumers were better off, and they were of a piece with Labor's tariff reforms, which put thousands of dollars back into the pockets of ordinary households. That should always be the test of competition reform. The question is not, 'Does it assist competitors?' the question is, 'Does it assist consumers?'

The government has been all things to all people, promising a competition review which will simultaneously lower prices and assist suppliers. These are Liberal and National parties with no great track record on the issue of competition policy. While we on this side of the House can claim the Trade Practices Act, the Competition and Consumer Commission and the National Competition Policy as our legacy, those on that side of the House can claim the Birdsville amendment—an amendment apparently conceived in the Birdsville pub.

As Craig Emerson, a great Labor competition reformer, put it:

... Labor's guiding philosophy of economic reform has been a commitment to markets and competition—a commitment reaffirmed by Julia Gillard as Prime Minister. Of course there can be a role for government intervention to correct for market failure, including anti-competitive behaviour and inadequate private incentives for research and development. But the presumption must be that competition is good, more competition is better and markets are better than governments in allocating scarce resources among competing commercial uses.

This philosophy has guided past Labor governments, and that philosophy is why Labor opened up Australia, bringing down the tariff walls. It has been done with the assistance of members of my former profession. Great Australian economists such as John Crawford, Heinz Arndt, Max Corden, Richard Snape, Ross Garnaut and many others have worked to open up the Australian economy.

We can have reasonable discussions on competition policy. There are a variety of approaches internationally on competition policy and we should be open to improvements in the act. But our test must always be: what will assist the vast bulk of Australian families? We must always take the approach that we are for the many rather than for the few. Certainly as a Labor member of this House, I am happy to stand firmly on the side of consumers. Lower grocery prices are a great boon to Australian households. I remember as a little kid my parents needing to save up to buy a pair of school shoes, an item whose price was the doubled or tripled by tariffs but which can now be purchased for $10 or $20 from a department store. The benefits of lower prices flowing to consumers are one of the things that we in this House should defend.

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (11:32): I would like to commend my good friend the member for Lindsay for putting this motion forward. I always like following those opposite. I will pick up on the member for Fraser's love of the family. If you look at the small business sector over the last six years—and I notice the member for Fraser went a long way further past that—employment numbers decreased by 500,000, taking it from 55 per cent of the employment in this country to 43 per cent. I have always thought that the best form of help you can give a family is to ensure that the people in it could get a job. But, then again, what would I know? I have only done it. I do not teach it. My father has always said, 'Those who can do it do it, and those who cannot teach.' I have been out there doing it and then I found my way here.

I would also like to congratulate the Minister for Small Business, Minister Billson, for his achievement in establishing this vital review. As the motion notes, it has been over 20 years since the last major review of this area has been undertaken. This review is an important part
of the government's Economic Action Strategy and a key element of the government's plan to increase productivity and reduce the regulatory burden on Australian business, big and small. Chaired by Professor Ian Harper, one of Australia's best known economists, and with an eminent panel of business leaders and competition policy experts, the Harper review promises to be a comprehensive look at the competitive environment. The review will be looking at the broader area of competition law and will include related issues such as regulatory impediments, government involvement in markets and dealings between small and big business. The review will also focus on concerns in concentrated markets within the Australian economy and Australia's long-term competitiveness, among other areas.

As has been stated in various policy debates recently, Australia's economy is at a pivotal point where decisions and actions must be taken to ensure continued economic growth and a prosperous future for all. This means we need to look at ways to achieve long-term competitiveness, promote investment, increase productivity and achieve higher real wage growth for all Australians. The original competition policy introduced in the 1990s increased GDP by 2½ per cent and resulted in lower prices and improved services in numerous sectors of the economy. This review we are undertaking will help to lay the foundations for a more productive and competitive 21st century economy and a more prosperous Australia.

Competitive domestic markets will also help facilitate the international competitiveness of Australian exporters accessing the global marketplace. Two weeks ago I had the Treasurer in my electorate, at a company called Rode Microphones. They are taking on the world and exporting 97 per cent of what they produce in a factory in Silverwater. These businesses should be encouraged to take risks—to take on debt, employ people and tackle the world head on—and we as government should work out the best way to get out of their way and allow them to do it. Accordingly, the review has been given a broad mandate to consider competition policy, regulation, and restrictions and their impacts on the Australian economy at all levels of government. Consideration of these matters will feed into and support the government's deregulation agenda. It is good that the member for Lindsay starts to raise these discussions we are having today, because, for the last 105 or 106 days, we have focused on the expense side of our national profit-and-loss statement, the budget. We need to move on to the revenue side. I applaud the member for Lindsay for raising this motion because the key area that this review will cover can deliver relatively substantial benefits to productivity by examining and removing barriers to competition.

There are sectors of the economy in which competition can be improved despite the substantial progress of national competition policy reform to date. Examples can be found in the retail sector, professional services, passenger and commercial transport and other markets. Due to the relatively small size of Australian markets and our geographic isolation, Australian markets have been prone to concentration and oligopolistic—that is hard to say!—market features. Small businesses benefit from competition and the exposure to incentives to innovate and reduce costs; however, they can be in a poorer position than many to risk this, and can be adversely affected by an inequality of bargaining power in dealing with larger businesses. Small business groups have frequently voiced concerns in my electorate about the impact of concentrated markets, suggesting they are negatively impacted by an abuse of power by big business that is not adequately captured by competition laws. I applaud the member for Lindsay; I rise in support of this and I applaud the Minister for Small Business.
Ms O'NEIL (Hotham) (11:37): I appreciate the opportunity to make some comments on what is a really important policy debate that the member for Lindsay has ignited today with this motion. I want to congratulate her for doing that. Looking broadly at the member for Lindsay's motion, I have to say there is not a lot here that most people could disagree with. I rise largely to commend the idea of competition as a general principle in policy. There are some issues about the level of optimism expressed about what this government will be willing to do on competition policy, and I will come to speak about those issues.

But I want to spend a little bit of time first discussing the central tenet here, and that is that competition policy is really important. It really matters. As policymakers, I do not think we have done the best job of explaining what competition policy means and why it is important to everyday people. In part I blame the economists—present company excluded—because we hear a lot in these discussions about 'consumer surplus'. Most people probably cannot really tell you what that means. When macro-economists talk about productivity, what they are really talking about is competition. In everyday language this is really a question of how hard we drive private companies to fight for consumers to take on their goods and services.

When you think about the everyday person, have you had a bad experience with a mobile phone company? Have you received an exorbitant bill and not been able to do anything about it? Have you had an experience where you have been frustrated with your bank because they have not passed on an interest rate cut? How do you decide where you do your grocery shopping? Is it because your grocer offers great goods and services and terrific value, or is it because you really do not have a lot of choice in the matter? Do you find it difficult to compare electricity prices and find the plan that is best for you and your household? Inherently these are all questions about competition. They are, in a sense, the top layer of decisions that are made in rooms like this one right around the country, where we decide regulations, rules and laws that will govern the way markets work. For me, competition policy is one of the most important things we can do—outside the context of perhaps a financial crisis—to drive strong economic growth and so on. Broadly, as I say, I am supportive of the sentiments of the member for Lindsay's motion.

That takes us through point 1 and part-way through point 2, but where I start to diverge is around point 3, where we start to commend the government on the excellent work done that it has done in this area, because I have to say it is much too soon for me to say that there is any indication of deep commitment by the Abbott government to doing anything serious about competition policy. We have heard a lot of talk but seen very little action so far.

I say this for two reasons. The first reason is that, as I say, we have heard a lot of rhetoric, and we are hearing a lot of rhetoric from the other side today, but what has the government really done? They have put in place a review, with, I have to say, a scope that is absolutely tremendous. They are asking a small committee of people to basically review the entirety of the Australian economy, including sectors, competition law, small business, regulatory institutions, and the role of government in the economy. They have given that committee less than a year to come up with its final recommendations, so we have final recommendations due here in the next three or four months, and all we have from this committee so far is an issues paper, which—if any of you have had the time to look at it—speaks largely at the level of principle. I will be very interested to see, when the rubber hits the road, what we actually get out of the review process.
I will make a brief digression here to illustrate the lack of real, deep commitment by this government to deep policy thinking. We have these guys saying that they are committed to competition policy, but they then throw together a review and give that review only a year to come up with recommendations that could potentially transform the Australian economy. There have been worse examples, though—the $7 GP co-payment, the GP tax, which did not have any modelling associated with it before it was announced by that government, is one. This is how these guys do policy and I have to say, from all of my training in public policy, it is not best practice.

The second reason I question the commitment of the government to following through with its big talk on competition policy is that, when we look at other areas of policy where they have had the opportunity to put markets and competition at the centre of what they do, they have fundamentally failed to do so. The biggest example that we can point to is around the issue of carbon pricing, where Labor has for years been advocating for a market-based competitive solution that will drive the Australian economy into a lower pollution future while we still grow. What we have seen from the other side, however, is the exact opposite of the tenets that are in the submission today—a policy which is about a cash splash to the biggest companies in Australia. Labor, alternatively, has the runs on the board. I believe that we are the party with a true commitment to competition policy, and I look forward to continuing this discussion. Thank you.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (11:42): I would like to commend the member for Lindsay for putting this motion together. Firstly, I am a great believer in free markets. I believe that the free market is the greatest force that we have ever had in human history to create opportunity for the working class, to create a middle class, to uplift the poor, to create prosperity and to grow wealth. I am someone who, probably more than anyone in this parliament, believes that too many times government regulation gets in the way of that free market and actually has adverse effects. But there is one exception: what we here in Australia call competition law or what they call antitrust law in the USA. Unless we get competition law right, all the workings of the free market, all the benefits that we have from the free market—we simply miss out on. So, perhaps paradoxically, I believe that we need strong competition law, we need stronger antitrust law—to make sure those regulations are effective, to make sure that we get the benefits from the free market.

I believe that, for the last several decades, we in this country—on both sides of the House—have got competition law wrong. We have had too many people long on theory but short on practice deciding what is best for Australian competition law. We have seen an ideology that sometimes big is better, that there are these endless economies of scale. But of course, as history tells us, that is the same mistake Stalin made.

Perhaps nowhere did we get this more incorrect than in the Dawson inquiry. The Dawson inquiry got many things wrong. Firstly, they got wrong the basic concepts of predatory pricing, price discrimination and geographic price discrimination. They simply did not understand those concepts and they simply failed to understand the history of those provisions—how they came about, the reasons why they were there.

Most of all what they got wrong was, firstly, they said that consumers are benefiting from competition. At that time, if anybody had looked at the grocery industry—which was one of
the most discussed during that time—and had taken the opportunity or the time to look at the inflation figures from the OECD, they would have discovered that the rate of food inflation in Australian supermarkets was higher than in just about any other developed country in the world. Prices were accelerating at Australian supermarket checkouts faster than anywhere else in the world, and yet the previous review said there were no problems.

What the Dawson inquiry also got wrong was that they said that section 46 of the old Trades Practices Act, the misuse of market power provision, was 'the appropriate means to tackle anti-competitive price discrimination'. Several cases after that showed that conclusion was completely wrong. I would like to quote the comments of Justice Kirby dissenting in a decision:

With respect, the result of the analysis in the joint reasons in this Court does not protect or promote competition or the competitive process. It stifles it.

… … …

This is the third recent decision of this Court (Melway and Boral Besser Masonry … being the other two) in which a majority has adopted an unduly narrow view of s 46 of the Act …

In my view, the approach taken by the majority is insufficiently attentive to the object of the Act to protect and uphold market competition. It is unduly protective of the depredations of the corporations concerned. It is unrealistic, bordering on ethereal, when the corporate conduct is viewed in its commercial and practical setting. The outcome cripples the effectiveness of s 46 of the Act … The victims are Australian consumers and the competitors who seek to engage in competitive conduct in a naive faith in the protection of the Act.

Justice Kirby was exactly right, because the current act does not protect consumers. We have the highest rates of food inflation and, by any logical international comparison of our basic food prices—whether it be a bottle of Coca-Cola, a jar of Vegemite or a tub of margarine—Australian consumers are paying much, much higher prices.

The simple reason is that we allow price discrimination in this country. We have no effective provision against price discrimination. So what happens in this country, which would be unlawful in many other jurisdictions in the world, is that large companies are able to go to the suppliers and demand rebates. The rebates only go to the two largest suppliers in the market. The rebates simply become a cost of doing business which then gets added onto the wholesale price, which is the reason why we have the highest prices. Just look at a bottle of Coca-Cola. It is $4 in Australia; it is half the price almost everywhere else in the world. That is because of the rebates and anti-competitive price discrimination. (Time expired)

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (11:47): A few weeks ago someone alerted me to a problem they were experiencing accessing, of all things, an e-book. The e-book had been purchased in the US using an account the person had set up when they lived there. They have now moved back to Australia and in the course of downloading their apps to a new tablet discovered a problem. This person has a US account for the book app and an Australian account. On attempting to download their US purchases, a blunt warning appeared saying the device is already associated with a US account and if you download purchases with this account you cannot auto-download or download past purchases for 90 days.

Remember the days when you could buy a book, read it and pass on a good read to someone else? The only time you had to wait 90 days for that book is perhaps if you were shipping it from overseas. But in the digital age what has happened to reading a book and
doing with it what you wanted? In the information age, things are actually happening to make it harder to access and distribute information. Things like the terms and conditions underpinning e-books have meant the rights and privileges previous consumers enjoyed with a paperback have ended with e-books. You can only enjoy permission to access the book; you do not own the book in any physical sense. The authors in the creative sector will tell you it is a way of clamping down on the serious problem of internet piracy, and I can sympathise with the argument to a degree, but the sellers have monetised data, squeezing more for their product—and competition law and international trade treaties let them do this. The overreach now appears to extend to people who have legitimately purchased data. They have exchanged currency, they have purchased an item, they have ownership and they are still denied access to what they own.

Now, some may argue that this is a copyright issue and we need to loosen the ‘digital handcuffs’. That is a term coined by my colleague and friend the member for Throsby, Stephen Jones, when we were sitting on the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications inquiry into IT pricing, which generated a lot of attention, especially from Australian consumers, who felt they had been taken for granted and complained about delayed access to new digital products relative to consumers in other countries while being slugged up to 50 per cent more for the privilege.

Copyright, as I have mentioned, could be the culprit, and there is something to be said about competition law because today, nearly a year after seeing this government of slips, trips and fumbles come to office, it is patting itself on the back for launching yet another review, this time into competition law. But let us look at its track record on freeing up restrictions on digital products.

The report that I am referring to, *At what cost? IT pricing and the Australia tax*, delivered recommendations to fight this consumer rip-off, and both the electronic and paper versions sit with the Minister for Communications. It urged that competition law be amended and it dealt with some of the things that are in this resolution. Mr Turnbull, the minister, agrees that these types of practices are unfair. He has said:

I think that as we move into more of a … global digital economy, the ability to have different limits on rights and licences from one jurisdiction to another is becoming more futile …

Given his apparent support, he has been nudged for a response by the *Financial Review* and *The Australian*. When asked to respond, he said he would do it within the first anniversary of the report. That anniversary was on 29 July. We still do not have a response.

Instead, the government is busy doing the bidding of big business. It is obsessed with internet piracy while not taking a look at why Australia tops the chart for piracy. Why not take a look at another chart we top, digital product prices? As Communications Alliance, the industry body, advised the committee, artificial barriers to content, such as geoblocking, are ‘a classic generator of online piracy’. Where the big players have made products easier, safer and more price sensitive, you have seen ample evidence of positive changes in consumer behaviour. The best response to piracy is a market led response, but consumers stand aghast as the market skews towards business. Business will always give a full-throated call for deregulation as long as it can game competition and copyright regulation in its favour.

Considering this, my message to the government, on behalf of millions of frustrated consumers, is: stop seeing everyone of these consumers as an internet pirate; respond to the IT
pricing inquiry report; and ensure competition and copyright law can unshackle the digital handcuffs on Australian consumers. It is time that there were a fairer deal for the consumer. That time is well and truly here. Australian consumers have suffered long enough. If you want to be fair dinkum about competition policy and competition law reform, act on the matters that have inhibited consumers getting a better deal, some of the things that even the member for Hughes referred to in dealing with price discrimination. If you are fair dinkum about that, you will act rather than talk.

Debate adjourned.

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (11:53): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) was established in 2012 after external inquiries in 1995, 2001, 2010, Parliamentary committee reviews, issues and discussion papers, exposure drafts and consultations with experts, and is operating efficiently and effectively, helping charities, donors and taxpayers;

(2) acknowledges that:

(a) the vast majority of submissions to the Senate Economics Legislation Committee’s inquiry into the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Repeal) (No. 1) Bill 2014 speak positively of the ACNC’s work and urge the Government to retain the charities commission as a one-stop shop;

(b) the evidence to this inquiry provided by eminent Australian, Mr Robert Fitzgerald AM, strongly supports the retention of the ACNC;

(c) in a survey, four out of five charities support keeping the ACNC, while only 6 per cent like the Government’s idea of returning the regulation of charities to the Australian Taxation Office;

(d) in an open letter, more than 40 charities, including Lifeline, Justice Connect, ACOSS, Social Ventures Australia, Save the Children, St John Ambulance Australia, Community Colleges Australia, Sane Australia, the Sidney Myer Fund, the Myer Foundation, Danks Trust, the RSPCA, Youth Off the Streets, the Ted Noffs Foundation, Music Viva Australia, Wesley Mission Victoria, the RSPCA Australia, World Vision, the Australian Conservation Foundation, Odyssey House, the McGrath Foundation, the Australian Council for International Development, Changemakers Australia, Volunteering Australia, YWCA Australia, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, the Consumer Health Forum of Australia, Hillsong Church, Churches of Christ Victoria and Tasmania and Wesley Mission Australia, called on the Government to keep the ACNC; and

(e) the Australian Capital Territory and South Australian governments are already working to reduce the paperwork burden on charities and not-for-profits by cooperating with the ACNC to reduce duplication in reporting;

(3) notes that some of those who the Minister for Social Services claims to have consulted with have written to the Government to make clear that they have never been consulted on the ACNC repeal; and

(4) calls on the Government to drop its ill-considered and unpopular plan to axe the ACNC.

On 16 June, this House debated a motion quite similar to the one that is before us today, and it is a mark of the deep concern among many members of this House that the selection committee has seen fit to choose this motion for debate so soon afterwards. As the famous line goes in Monty Python's Life of Brian:

… what have the Romans ever done for us?
What has the charities commission ever done for Australia? There are only three things it has done: it has benefited donors, benefited charities and benefited taxpayers. In the short time since this House last debated the charities commission, there was an important minority report brought down by Labor members of the Senate Economics Legislation Committee which said:

The Labor members found the evidence in favour of retaining the ACNC compelling—not only because of the sheer numbers of charities and other organisations that strongly supported the work of the ACNC but because of the soundness of their arguments.

It noted the 'strong support for the ACNC' right across the sector. Indeed, in a Pro Bono Australia survey, four out of five Australian charities wanted to keep the charities commission. The survey asked, 'Would you like charities regulation to return to the tax office?' Just six per cent of Australian charities thought that was a good idea. That is right: Minister Andrews is pursuing a solution supported by only six per cent of all charities. Eminent Australian, Productivity Commissioner Robert Fitzgerald has noted that the Abbott government is inconsistent in pursuing other royal commissions while abolishing 'the mechanism that actually gives transparency to the rest of the charitable sector'.

The charities commission is less than two years old and is doing valuable work. More than 60,000 charities are listed on its publicly available register. I have stood up with relevant charities ministers in the Australian Capital Territory and in South Australia—with Andrew Barr and with Gail Gago—both of whom are committed to reducing reporting duplication for Australian charities. That is why this charities commission is good for charities. It means they spend less time doing paperwork and more time supporting the vulnerable. And yet the government are putting out an options paper which ignores the only option that not-for-profits really want. They are asking the question, 'What should come after the charities commission?' and ignoring the strong support from charities for keeping the existing commission.

An open letter to the Prime Minister has been signed by more than 40 charities, calling on the government to keep the charities commission. Supporters of the charities commission include Lifeline, Justice Connect, ACOS, Save the Children, St John Ambulance Australia, SANE Australia, the Sidney Myer Fund, the Myer Foundation, Danks Trust, Youth Off The Streets, the Ted Noffs Foundation, Musica Viva Australia, Wesley Mission Victoria, the RSPCA Australia, the Australian Council for International Development, Changemakers Australia, Volunteering Australia, the Hillsong Church, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, Churches of Christ Victoria and Wesley Mission Australia. All of these associations and many more have called on the government to drop its blinkered ideological approach to the charities commission.

The charities commission proved its worth for donors and for taxpayers when it recently revoked the charity status of more than 240 associations which had not reported themselves as being proper charities. They include organisations which had failed to respond to repeated requests from the charities commission to meet their reporting requirements. By deregistering charities that do not meet the requirements, Australian taxpayers are respected. We provide scarce taxpayer subsidies in the form of tax deductibility for Australians who give to charitable organisations, but if charities are not true charities then they are undercutting the good work that so many of our proper charities are doing. There is also a small number of scams—people who go door to door pretending to be representing good community...
organisations but in fact are simply looking to line their own pockets. Without a charities commission Australians cannot have the confidence that scams will be cracked down upon. Good charities, taxpayers and donors support the charities commission, but Minister Andrews, who has previously tried to throw Australian charities' law back to the 1600s, wants to get rid of it. He should worry less about ideology and more about good public policy.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones): Is the motion seconded?

Ms Hall: I second the motion.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Government Whip) (11:58): I appreciate the opportunity to stand in the House and speak once again on an issue that touches me deeply. Before coming to this House I was a state board director of Lifeline Queensland and spent many hours compiling and centralising the governance procedures for Lifeline Queensland. I know only full well, as does the other side of the House, that our state and our nation benefit enormously from the very diligent work of those who volunteer in our communities. If we were to put a price on those who volunteer in our communities under the banner of 'non-for-profits', it would be somewhere in the vicinity of $14.6 billion. If you were to capture all of our surf-lifesaving clubs, all of our rural fire brigades, all of the charities that are more well known, that $14.6 billion would be amortised across local, state and federal levels, if they were to cough up. Our nation is a richer place for ensuring that we have a vibrant and cost-effective charity and not-for-profit sector.

In the electorate of Wright, I am hosting the Wright Community Contribution Awards. We will be asking those in our community who do volunteer to nominate a person that they work alongside to be recognised. I know that people who volunteer in the community do not do it because they seek recognition; they do it because they want a stronger and a better community.

When the ACNC bill was introduced into the House it was heavy-handed. We opposed it when it was put up by the then Gillard government. We must remember the environment when this bill was introduced. It was introduced when the dysfunctional Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government was in office. It was introduced around the time of the $2.1 billion pink batts installation program, where half of the program was spent on putting batts into ceilings and the other half of the program was spent pulling them out. That was hardly a sensible platform for making rational decisions about cutting red tape. This bill was fostered and grew at a time when the budgeting and forecasting capacity of those on the other side of the House was normally out by about $20 billion every year. A totally dysfunctional time for the government.

I spoke on this bill when it was first put up. We spoke about the heavy-handedness of the bill. I want to draw the House's attention to some of the comments about concerns about the bill that were made by stakeholders. Predominantly, the majority of them went to the fact that the premise of this bill was that we were going to cut red tape. In order to cut red tape we were going to create another bureaucracy. Then that bureaucracy would talk to another bureaucracy, the state bureaucracies, who would then be required or asked to reduce their compliance levels. It is absolutely barbaric! I will take you to the comments of the Housing Industry Association. It considered that it is:
... conceptually difficult to reduce red tape by adding red tape, which is what adding new Commonwealth regulation on top of existing State regulation will do. Only if States vacate the field is there any hope of reducing the administrative burden on Charities and NFPs.

To date no state or no territory has signed up to reducing or letting go their compliance measures. So, by default, this bill has not and can never reach its objectives. Yes, we have two in-principle supports: one from the state of New South Wales and the other one from the Northern Territory. But the previous speaker's own territory, the ACT, has not signed up to this. They are not prepared to forgo their entitlement as a state to regulate in some of these sectors in order for the Commonwealth to reduce the red tape. The Independent Schools Council commented:

Independent schools will be required to report much of the information to the ACNC that they currently report to the Department of Education and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), as well as to state education authorities. Setting aside the issue of duplication with state authorities, if an information-sharing agreement is not reached between the ACNC and DEEWR the ACNC will effectively serve as an additional layer of regulation and red tape for independent schools …

I cannot see how, by any definition, this has been a practical piece of legislation.

In closing, this piece of legislation was fundamentally flawed from the word 'go'. We went to an election saying that we would get rid of it. None of the states have signed up to it. None of the states are going to sign up to it. We will be moving to get rid of the ACNC.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (12:03): The previous speaker spoke about dysfunctional government. I have to say that Australia now has the most dysfunctional government it has ever had in its history. The Abbott government cannot even get its budget through the parliament, four months after the budget was brought down. It is still the No. 1 talking point in the community, in the electorate I represent, because it is so unfair; because it is cruel and because it failed to consult. That is really relevant in relation to this motion before the House. The member's motion notes very strongly the failure of this government to consult. When the previous government introduced a bill into this House, and it was passed through the House, the bill went through a very long consultation process. It established external reviews, parliamentary committees, issues and discussion papers, exposure drafts and consultation with experts. It has been operating very efficiently. I can say that I have had only support for it within my electorate. As recently as the week before last I had an organisation come to me to talk about problems that existed. I will be sending a referral off to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. Hopefully they will get a chance to look at it, because it is a really important issue.

It is also interesting to note that four out of five charities support keeping the ACNC, while only six per cent support the position of those on the other side of the House. These are charities like Lifeline, Save the Children, the Myer Foundation, Sane Australia, Youth Off the Street, RSPCA, World Vision and the Australian Conservation Foundation. These organisations are all very influential and have contributed an enormous amount to Australia over the years. But, instead of that, this government is going to repeal the legislation and a commission that is working so effectively in the community. Their repeal of this legislation will take us back to where we have come from.

Charities incorporated as companies limited by guarantee want the arrangement to ensure they do not have to go back to annual reporting to both ASIC and the ACNC. The
arrangements to report once only have been put in place. That is good news. That is cutting red tape. This government wants to bring back red tape. Certain philanthropic funds did not want their details published. In this way they could avoid unsolicited requests. The commissioner has exercised her discretion to ensure that nondisclosure of key information can occur. These are all really important points for companies working in the not-for-profit sector. The result is that key beneficiaries of the repeal of the ACNC are really only those organisations that do not want independent public accountability or transparency, which the ACNC delivers and the Australian community benefits from.

I believe this is a really important issue. It is an issue that goes to the heart of accountability and transparency. It is an issue that really is about the government listening to those organisations that are actually affected by the ACNC or are listening to big business or the big end of town. They are taking notice of the big end to town, as opposed to those organisations, like World Vision and Lifeline, who are working on a day to day basis in our community delivering real solutions to real people. I really believe this government stands condemned for its intention to get rid of the ACNC, and it really demonstrates just what a dysfunctional government they are. (Time expired)

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (12:09): There has never been a level of bureaucracy Labor has not loved. This one is no different. First and foremost, I think the job the not-for-profit sector does should be recognised. Let me be as mercenary as possible here. Every government, regardless of ideology, loves the not-for-profit sector, because we get such good value for money out of the sector—$14.6 billion annually in services provided. If a government had to provide that you could probably treble the cost.

We know that people who work in this sector do so primarily because they love the people they assist and the role the organisation plays. They are prepared to deliver long after they have finished being paid, if they are paid at all. They worry not so much about the bottom line but about the delivery of the service—and that is the difference with these organisations. The Salvation Army boss in Townsville, David Twivey, is always telling me that 81½ cents in every dollar is delivered to the customer, the person in need. A major goal for everyone, especially in this place, is being able to push in there and get the best value we can for the taxpayer.

The one thing that these organisations have in common is their service to the community. Not one organisation or individual chooses to become involved in this sector to do paperwork or submit forms. These forms take many forms. The thing they have in common is that they are keeping some public servant somewhere in Australia busy. They take valuable resources from the provision of services to complete, compile, format, authorise correctly, send off and correct if necessary, and then the next cycle must start. As an example, there is an aged-care provider based in Townsville. There are similar groups in Ayr and Ingham, which are about one hour either side of Townsville. They were struggling with their administration in both of those places, so they were brought under one roof for administration purposes—three organisations with one administration. They sent their returns away to the last government and received a notice back saying that only one return had been received. They said, 'That's right: we're one organisation.' They were told, 'No, you've got three organisations: the one in Ingham, the one in Ayr and the one in Townsville.' They said, 'No, there are three organisations that are administered locally by one administration.' They were told, 'No, you
have to do returns for the three organisations.' They said, 'But the return will be exactly the
same for the three organisations,' to which the reply came, 'We don't care. You have to submit
the returns.' So they submitted the returns and they got three letters back, posted individually,
all the way through to get the thing done. That is a ridiculous notion.

Kevin Andrews visited my electorate for a series of forums with the not-for-profit sector.
We asked at every turn, 'Who loves to do paperwork?' No-one put their hand up. We asked,
'Who wants to spend their time in the office doing administration?' No-one put their hand up.
We asked them who wanted to do the provision of service to the people in most need. They
all put their hands up. That is what we are trying to achieve here. It is all about the service
delivery.

We should be getting out of the way. If someone is going to do the wrong thing, they will
do it. Every system has a way through it, and someone who is going to commit a crime will
do it. But loading up the entire sector with tonnes of red tape and paperwork which invariably
never gets read is no way to police this sector. There is a story going around about one of the
big finance companies in the US who, for one calendar year in the early eighties, approved
everything. They did not worry about credit checks or anything like that; they just approved
everything. Their delinquency rates were exactly the same as if they had put everyone through
their credit scoring system. It is a stretch to connect the tw
o things, but people are generally
honest. Generally speaking, people are honest. If you have a system and someone wants to
create some mischief, they will do it, but, by and large, they are one in every 100,000 people.
What the previous government did with the ACNC was load up a sector with millions and
millions of dollars worth of paperwork to get that one person in every 100,000. It is wrong to
do it. Both sides of this parliament love the not-for-profit sector, but only one side trusts it. I
thank the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Randall): Before calling the member for Werriwa, I alert
the chamber to the fact that there could be a division before too long. The question is that the
motion be agreed to.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (12:14): A previous government spokesman on
this debate cited his work with Lifeline. It is a pity that, on the way through, he did not come
to the knowledge that Lifeline joined the RSPCA, the Myer family foundation Victoria and
virtually 80 per cent of charitable organisations of any repute in this country in opposing this
legislation. Indeed, the debate is very one-sided. On one side we have the minister who speaks
of the unnecessary and ponderous compliance burden on the sector—the same minister who,
despite his public statements, failed to discuss the issue with the constituency. He might have
discussed it with his adviser, Mr Lapkin, a former research officer with the IPA, but he
certainly did not discuss it with the charitable sector. Despite this supposed burden, despite
this supposed horrible impost on the charities of this country, they actually support this
regulation.

For every instance that the previous speaker can cite with regard to compliance, there are
people who can cite concerns. The Advertiser newspaper in South Australia on 19 April had a
review of those 22 charities involved in the cancer sector. They concluded that only 55 cents
of every dollar collected by those 22 charities actually ended up where its predicted recipient
should be. In one case they received 23 cents in the dollar. It is interesting to note that Ann
O'Connell, professor of law at the University of Melbourne, could comment:
The Commission has said it decided on a “light touch” approach to regulation and compliance, starting with the presumption that charities act honestly and prudently, although it recognised it would be necessary at some stage to deal with those who use charities to obtain private benefits or who engage in fraudulent activities.

Despite that light touch, 240 charities have faced revocation of their rights. It is a situation where Ann O'Connell could also comment that, according to a pre-election survey—

_A division having been called in the House of Representatives—_

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON:** When interrupted, I was about to cite Ann O'Connell again, a law professor with some credentials in this field, who noted of the previous situation:

Under the ATO regime, there were no annual or other reporting requirements for charities, although the ATO could revoke endorsement if it became aware of wrongdoing. Realistically, the Tax Office did not have time or resources to regulate the activities of charities. So, in one sense, some regulation is the price these organisations pay for access to the tax concessions.

And whilst we have heard the minister on one side and members of the government putting their views, I go to some other credible sources who do not have an interest in the matter—and in some senses it is surprising that they do take this position. We have recently had the sixth International Charity Regulators Forum, and whilst they might not be able to agree about the future of Scotland, two commentators were very supportive of the previous government's legislation on charities. Kenneth Dibble, Chief Legal Officer of the Charity Commission of England and Wales commented:

_The ACNC has a mature relationship with the sector as a standalone regulator outside of the revenue office. It is flexible and sensitive to its constituency's needs in a way that allows the sector to thrive._

David Robb of the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, equally supportive of the Australian commission, noted that it has done a wonderful job 'learning from the international experience'. In other words, it is up there with the standards around the world for what should be happening. He went on to say, 'They have put together cutting edge practice … and achieved a lot in a short space of time.' So there we have people involved in the regulation of charities—in ensuring that people have transparency, they know the money is going to the right cause, they know they are not being ripped off, they know the charity is not undertaking practices it should not be. Those regulators in both England and Scotland are supportive of it.

Tim Costello, equally, commented in an article that the organisation had 'boosted confidence' and, most importantly, kept regulation out of the hands of the ATO. So virtually all the charities in this country support it. As I noted in a previous speech, the only interest group in this country very opposed to it are those private corporations that have control of charitable trusts around this country—usually corporations—that are very concerned that there might be increased intervention in this area to reduce the amount of money they are taking out each year from these charities. They are on the record as the main opponents of this. What we have seen is a lot of slogans about regulation. It is ironic that the people who are supposedly facing these burdens actually support the regulations. They see the need to be respected by the Australian people, they see the need to convince people that they are legitimate, and they do not mind this regulation.

Debate adjourned.
Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (12:45): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that on 3 September 2014 ('Australian National Flag Day') we celebrate the
(2) 113th birthday of the Australian flag; and
(3) notes that:

(a) Australia's flag was the first in the world to be chosen in an open public competition, and this flag
design competition brought forth the pride of a newly formed nation by attracting entries from 1 per
cent of our population at that time;

(b) on 3 September 1901, Lady Hopetoun, wife of the first Governor-General of the new
Commonwealth of Australia, formally opened the Commonwealth Flag and Seal Exhibition and
announced the names of the successful competitors;

(c) the winning design was a Blue Ensign including the Union Jack, along with a Southern Cross and
a six pointed star;

(d) this latter star (the 'Commonwealth Star') was changed to the seven pointed star we are familiar
with today in 1908, to signify the Territory of Papua and future Territories; and

(e) the new flag represents a design by the people, for the people, and since it was first flown in
1901, has become an icon of our shared identity.

I rise today to celebrate the 113th birthday of the Australian national flag on Wednesday, 3
September, and I thank the member for Bass for his support. The
Australian flag represents us
as a free and democratic people and symbolises our heritage, traditions and identity. Our flag
is indeed unique. It is the only flag to fly over an entire continent. It is also the first ever to be
chosen by an open public competition, with more than 32,000 designs entered by men,
women and children.

On 3 December 1901 our flag was flown for the first time. The six colonies had united to
form the Commonwealth of Australia, and our flag became the symbol of this union. Lady
Hopetoun, the wife of the first Governor-General of the new Commonwealth, announced the
names of the successful competitors. Equal first place was given to five almost identical
designs belonging to Australians from different walks of life. They were an artist, an
optician's apprentice, an architect, a ship's officer and a schoolboy. Each symbol on our flag
has a special meaning, representing our history, our unity as a federation and our geography.
The Union Jack acknowledges the historical links we have to Great Britain. The
Commonwealth star represents the six states, with a seventh point added in 1908 to signify the
territories. And the Southern Cross, a constellation only seen in the Southern Hemisphere,
represents our location in the world. However, more importantly it acknowledges the first
people of Australia, as the Southern Cross is a significant part of most Aboriginal stories of
the Dreamtime.

Our nation has changed and grown since the beginning of Federation, and our flag
continues to unite all Australians. It has become an icon of our shared identity. As a life
member of the National Flag Association of Australia, I wholeheartedly believe in the
importance of our flag, and I commend the ongoing advocacy by Allan Pidgeon and his
dedicated committee. It unites us as a nation in good times as we celebrate the achievements
and successes of our countrymen and countrywomen, and it keeps us strong in times of
tragedy and sorrow, reminding us we have the support of a whole nation. For more than 100 years Australian men and women have served under our flag, sacrificing their lives for the good of our nation. It is important that we recognise the significance of our flag as a symbol of the bravery and courage of our service men and women, and that we pay tribute to them every time it is raised.

This is done not only in Australia but also in other parts of the world. Our flag is raised every morning in the village of Villers-Bretonneux in France in memory of the thousands of Australians who lost their lives while liberating the village during the First World War. Our flag is a constant symbol and reminder of what it means to be Australian, and signifies the Australian traditions of mateship and courage. Our unique traditions were formed under our flag, and we acknowledge the sacrifices made and the hardships the generations before us went through to make Australia the safe and free country it is today. Our flag serves as a reminder of the contributions of past and current generations, and the significance of this will be passed on to our future generations. One of the co-designers of our flag, 14-year-old schoolboy Ivor William Evans, believed the representation of the Southern Cross was a symbol of Australia’s bright future as a leading nation. He showed great foresight, as we are now privileged to call Australia a world leader, and the upcoming G20 summit is an example of this. It is excellent when we see our younger citizens showing pride and respect for our national symbol. Our youth of today are just as passionate about the significance of our flag, which was designed generations ago.

Earlier this year I received a letter from the very proud grandfather of one of my young constituents, David Cameron. It included David’s assignment on the importance of the Australian flag and why we should keep it unchanged. This reiterates the significance and importance of our flag to young Australians and displays the respect shown for our national symbol. Our flag was designed by the people and belongs to the people. It is an important expression of national pride.

Today we celebrate pride in our flag and our nation and celebrate the symbol that binds us all. We are a country that continues to flourish, and it is with great privilege that we do this under our flag created by Australians over 100 years ago. I encourage all Australians to make a special effort to fly or display our flag, especially on its 113th birthday, next Wednesday.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is this motion seconded?

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

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (12:50): Today I rise to speak on the importance of 3 September, Australian National Flag Day. This year marks the 113th birthday of our national symbol. It is a day for communities and individuals, local organisations, schools and businesses to celebrate the anniversary of our flag.

In 1901, to mark Australia’s Federation, Australia’s first Prime Minister, the Rt Hon. Sir Edmund Barton, announced an international competition to design a flag for the new nation. It attracted some 32,823 entries. Five new identical entries were awarded equal first prize and the designers shared in the 200 pound prize. Since it was first flown over the Exhibition Building in Melbourne on 3 September 1901, the Australian flag has been the dominant symbol for all of us in times of adversity, in hardship, in war and peace and throughout our nation’s prosperity.
The original design of the Australian flag has been changed three times since 1901, according to Ausflag. First, in 1903 the design was changed so that all but the smallest star in the Southern Cross had seven points, to improve the ease of manufacture. In 1906, Australia acquired the territory of Papua, and to indicate—

*A division having been called in the House of Representatives—*

**Sitting suspended from 12:52 to 13:05**

Mr MITCHELL: In 1906 Australia acquired the Territory of Papua and to indicate this the number of points on the Federation Star was increased to seven in 1908. This, the second design change, was also gazetted on 22 May 1909. Our flag symbolises our optimism for a common future together. In fact, as was pointed out previously by the member for Ryan, it is the only flag in the world to fly over one entire continent.

In recent years communities across the electorate of McEwen, whom I represent, have known more than most the strengths and uniqueness of our flag. You only have to look at our communities that were affected by the bushfires on Black Saturday in 2009 and the bushfires that rushed through other parts of our electorate and townships in February this year. Flags were flying proudly from anything left standing—fences, trees, cars and the remains of homes. In the supporting towns they stood as a call to arms at our local halls, sporting clubs and community centres, which were turned into relief centres. Our flag symbolised our spirit and strength that we would never give up hope. It is our spirit; it is our nation; and it is our Australia. Flying our flag was a symbol that all was not lost. It was a sign that we are down but not out and that the strength, unity and mateship our country has become synonymous with still beats in our hearts. Whether on the fields of battle, the fields of sporting triumph or in the aftermath of disaster, we know that our flag is a symbol of a proud Australia. The Australian national flag is a symbol of the common pride we have in our nation. No matter where you go in this world our symbol is a sign that you are home, that friends here for you.

Over the past couple of months we have been across the electorate replacing flags in schools and community organisations across our community, places such as: Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Sunbury fire and police stations, Wallan fire and police stations, Mount Ridley College in Craigieburn, from our scouts in Doreen, to RSL branches right across the electorate, in Seymour, Romsey/Lancefield, Puckapunyal Primary School, Kilmore, Primary School, Killara Primary School and Sunbury Downs College—and even as late as Saturday, at the Kilmore Bowling Club.

I proudly display the Australian flag in my office here in parliament and also in the electorate office in Craigieburn. I encourage individuals, community organisations, local authorities, businesses and schools to join in the celebration by flying or displaying the Australian national flag. Of course we have several other official Australian flags: the Australian Aboriginal flag, the Torres Strait Islanders flag and the ensigns of the Australian Defence Force. All can be proudly on display for everyone to see. And of course we do not have to limit our flag-bearing to 3 September. The Australian flag can be flown every day of the year, not to mention on other important occasions like Australia Day and Anzac Day.

I also wish to remind everyone in our community that if you require an Australian national flag, an Australian Aboriginal flag or Torres Strait Islander flag, to contact your local federal member of parliament and we will happily provide one to you. Australian National Flag Day
is an important date in our national calendar. We are all proud to be Australian and what better way to show that pride than standing together and flying our national symbol proudly.

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (13:08): I thank the member for Ryan for bringing this motion to the House just ahead of National Flag Day which commemorates the original unfurling of the Australian national flag on 3 September 1901. It gives me great pleasure with the members for McEwen and Hasluck to support this motion as something very close to my heart and to Tasmanian hearts—Australia's principal national emblem, our national flag and the renewed importance of continuing to honour it.

Residents of Tasmania have special reason to celebrate the Australian National Flag Day on 3 September given the role of some of its citizens in creating the flag, a role that was both pivotal and enduring. In 1849 a group of Launceston women made a large silk flag to a design by local Minister John West for the Tasmanian campaign to end the transportation of convicts from Britain. That design comprised the British blue ensign with the stars of the Southern Cross. Thereafter, Reverend West took the flag to an anti-transportation conference in Melbourne in 1851 where it was accepted as a symbol of unity of the Australian colonies.

Remember, this was 50 years before Federation and the competition that would eventually select the Australian national flag. That competition, in 1901, saw nearly 33,000 entries received, and the Australian flag was created from five similar designs. It was noted at the time that the composite winner bore a remarkable resemblance to the silk flag produced by the Launceston ladies 50 years earlier. The stars on the Southern Cross were coloured yellow, but the similarity was remarkable and clearly highlighted the fact that the flag produced by those Launceston ladies 50 years earlier had found its way into the hearts of many across the Australian colonies. The Launceston-design flag was presented to the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in 1896, where it now resides, and I had the very great privilege of seeing this rare, original flag displayed at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston just two weeks ago. As the curator unrolled it, many metres long, there was no doubt of the lineage and connection of this flag, produced 50 years earlier, with the one our country selected in 1901. Launcestonians should be justifiably proud of this lineage and connection. Parochially, I see this as yet another case of Tasmania and Tasmanians punching above their weight in terms of enduring national influence.

The winning flag from the 1901 competition was unfurled for the first time on 3 September 1901 above the Royal Exhibition Building in Melbourne, which was then the seat of the federal parliament. It is a flag that continues to stir the soul whenever it is displayed in Lions and Rotary clubs, RSLs and schools right around the country or when it rises in celebration of yet another Australian sporting victory. On a more personal note, our national flag is a daily reminder to me of its ability to unite and inspire all Australians, regardless of race, creed or background. It is a very tangible symbol of collective Australian unity in arguably the most efficiently functioning multicultural democracy in the world. Daily media reports about troubles in other lands seek only to highlight and reinforce Australia's unique international standing and good fortune. Truly Australia remains the lucky country.

I came to Australia and Australian citizenship from Europe in May 1965. Almost 50 years later, amongst my proudest boasts as an Australian citizen are and will always remain the opportunity to, with my wife, Christine, raise a family of three children in this wonderful and free country and the opportunity and privilege to serve for over three decades as an officer in
the Australian Regular Army and to lead our soldiers in both peace and war under this flag, now in its 114th year. May it continue to fly proudly above us for another century and more. On that note, I close by encouraging everyone to fly the Australian flag on 3 September as a reminder of the common pride we have in our nation, our unique connection to its origins and a collective countenance to ensure that our best days under this flag lie ahead of us.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (13:13): I rise to speak today on this motion put by my good friend and colleague the member for Ryan ahead of Australian National Flag Day this Wednesday 3 September. I endorse the words of the members for Bass and McEwen on the same issue.

National pride is hard to define and encapsulate. It is something different for everyone. For me it is epitomised on Australia Day and many other occasions, when we see Australians from all walks of life proudly flying the flag and witness new Australians taking the oath of citizenship and enjoining in our nation. The sense of pride that I get when I welcome new citizens and see them wave their Australian flag is unparalleled. This sense of pride is felt across the nation when we compete as Australians in sporting events such as the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games. Again, the common icon here is the Australian flag and, equally, the Southern Cross, which is a reflection both of contemporary Australia and of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in whose stories the cross plays a significant part.

Who can forget moments such as when Australians stand on the dais to receive their gold medal at the Olympics and the Australian flag lowers above them as the national anthem is sung? Our flag has been with us as a nation and as a people through the best of times and the worst of times. It is that stable, recognised encapsulation of Australia and what it means to be Australian.

When I drive around the electorate of Hasluck, it is becoming more and more noticeable how many residents are proudly flying the Australian flag in front of their homes on a flagpole that they have installed. It is also great to see many businesses fly the flag out the front of their businesses as well. One that comes to mind is WestWide Auto Recyclers, in the industrial area of Maddington. Every year they come to my office and request a new flag for their flagpole—and they do not just get a regular sized flag either; they request one of the largest sizes possible and, when people drive past their business, it is incredible to see this huge flag flying next to the road. It has become somewhat of a landmark in the area, as people know it as ‘the car place with the huge flag’. It certainly grabs your attention and thoughts when you see it.

This brings me to a good point. Not many people know that they can get an Australian, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander flag from their local members to fly proudly either in their homes or within their businesses. I encourage everyone to make use of this resource and opportunity, and look forward to many from my electorate of Hasluck contacting my office to request a flag.

As the motion has indicated, Australian National Flag Day is this Wednesday and, to commemorate that, I visited Dawson Park Primary School in Forrestfield last Friday. I took the opportunity to address the school assembly about National Flag Day and to present the school with a new Australian flag so they could fly it proudly.
A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 13:06 to 13:32

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Griggs): The Federation Chamber is resumed.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 13:32 to 16:01

Debate interrupted.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Coal Seam Gas

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (16:01): I am pleased to report to the House that at the recent New South Wales state Labor conference an urgency motion was unanimously passed supporting a coal seam gas mining free North Coast. This is a vitally important step, as it means that the choice now is so very clear. We in the Labor Party will protect our region from the harmful impact of CSG mining. It will be off limits to coal seam gas and unconventional gas industries. This is in stark contrast to the National Party, who want to actually expand CSG mining on the North Coast. In passing this urgency motion, the state Labor conference noted that (a) on the North Coast of New South Wales there is overwhelming community opposition to coal seam gas and unconventional gas mining and mining operations, (b) the community's concerns relate to the harmful effects of CSG mining on water quality, farmlands, the environment, communities, residents' health and tourism, (c) the CSG industry has no social licence to operate on the North Coast, (d) the North Coast has unique environmental qualities and (e) CSG mining is incompatible with our employment sectors.

The conference further condemned the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals government's pro CSG, fracking, drilling and expansion agenda. The conference also supported an immediate moratorium on CSG activities and licences within the boundaries of the state parliamentary seats of Lismore, Ballina, Clarence and Tweed. The conference supported a declaration that those same state seats therefore be off limits to CSG and unconventional gas industries. The fact is, only those of us in the Labor Party will stand up for a CSG-free North Coast. The National Party never will. They have abandoned the people of our region.

Mayne, Mr Bryson

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (16:02): Bryson Mayne, a young well-loved member of the local community of Rolleston, was only 29 years of age when he was tragically killed while cross-loading cattle from a road train at Gracemere cattle yards last Tuesday 26 August. Bryson was a much-loved member of the Mayne family, a family with generational connections to the Rolleston district. Bryson was born and bred in Rolleston, attended the local primary school in Rolleston and attended Rocky grammar for his secondary education, following his skill when he returned to Rolleston to work on cattle properties in the Rolleston area. Bryson was working as a truck driver for a local transport company at the time of his accident. The Mayne family loses a father, partner and son. Bryson leaves behind a fiancee, Amanda Golding, and an 18-month-old son, Wyatt. I extend my sympathies to Amanda and Wyatt as well as to Bryson's parents, Kim and Karen Mayne; his brothers, Ashley and Bear; his grandparents, Gerald and Fay Mayne; and the community of Rolleston. Rest in peace, Bryson.
Gellibrand Electorate: Uruguayan Community

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (16:04): Recently I had the pleasure of attending and addressing the Uruguayan-Australian cultural community during their celebrations of Uruguay's independence day. I was particularly pleased on this day to see the new president of the Uruguayan Social Club, Mr Idilio Suero, and vice-president, Mary Touron, as well as many committee members. It is important to celebrate these occasions, not only to reflect upon the sacrifices of those who fought for that independence but as a reminder to us all that democracy is precious, something we must never take lightly and that we must guard and protect for the future. With so many democracies around the world in flux at the moment, Uruguayans can take pride in the fact that over the past three decades their country has become one of South America's leading democracies.

This independence day, marking 30 years since those first national elections returning Uruguay to democracy, gave even more meaning to that simple fact. Uruguayans have taken this democracy and created one of the most culturally progressive countries in South America—one that celebrates cultural diversity. It is one where new approaches to complex problems are welcomed and where the many different cultures that make up the Uruguayan national identity are encouraged and not dismissed. Australia's multicultural community allows our nation to benefit from the best of all the world's cultures. Uruguayans' passion for democracy—a hard-earned passion—is something we can all learn from. The Uruguayan community has contributed to our society in so many different ways for the past 100 years, and they are an invaluable part of Australian history and culture. I should also note that those of us in Melbourne's west are proud that we can call the first Uruguayan-born member of an Australian parliament, Mr Telmo Languiller, one of our own. I greatly appreciate the work of the Uruguayan community in my electorate. I know that we will continue to look to Uruguay as a source of democratic inspiration for many years to come.

Higgins Electorate: Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (16:05): During the winter recess, on 4 August, I, like many members in this place, paused to remember the centenary of the beginning of World War I. There is no doubt that the next four years, as we commemorate the Centenary of Anzac, will be one of the most significant national periods of commemoration in Australia's history. The spirit of the Anzac generation is, of course, one that defines our nation with their courage, bravery, mateship, determination and sacrifice. I am therefore pleased that the government's Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program will assist local community groups to memorialise this historic moment through the allocation of $125,000 in available grants to each electorate. To date the government has confirmed funding for a number of memorials in the Higgins electorate. I would like to congratulate two local community groups.

St John's Anglican Church in Toorak has been supported through funding of $1,490 to facilitate the promotion of a series of public events to mark anniversaries over the course of the First World War. The first event, on 3 August, was a successful choral Evensong to mark the eve of the First World War.

In addition, the Villa Maria Society will be helped through a grant of $830 to commemorate the war with a new granite memorial plaque in the rose garden of their Prahran aged-care residence. The memorial will provide a quiet place for reflection to, particularly, remember those servicemen and servicewomen who resided in the Villa Maria Prahran in the
latter part of their lives. We thank those people who served our society and our community through their service during the war. We will never forget them.

**Shortland Electorate: Australian Red Cross**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:07): On Saturday night I attended the 100th anniversary celebration of the Red Cross in Belmont, in my electorate. Belmont Red Cross has a proud history of working within the community and has worked with me on many community events. They were very visible during the fundraising that took place within the Shortland electorate in relation to the bushfires in Victoria. They are a very committed group of volunteers who work very hard and have worked very hard over a number of years. Over the last five years they have raised $60,000. Each and every week you see the Red Cross volunteers out in the local shopping centres raising funds for the Red Cross. They are totally dedicated to the Red Cross. They are a group of women and men who range in age up into their 90s. They have been working in the Shortland electorate in Belmont for over 25 years. On Saturday night they also released a book about 25 years of the Red Cross in Belmont. It goes through all their achievements and it pays tribute to a number of their volunteers that have worked tirelessly for Red Cross. Congratulations to Belmont Red Cross. You do a great job and the whole of the community is proud of you!

**Matterson, Mrs Norma**

Mr HOGAN (Page) (16:08): I want to talk about a woman who retired from the Lismore Base Hospital last Friday. Her name is Norma Matterson. She began work there on 5 July 1964—I am sure you were not born at that stage, Madam Deputy Speaker; I was just a few months old. Fifty years she has been working at the Lismore Base Hospital. She self-titled herself, with great affection, the 'switch witch'. She was known as that very affectionately.

When I told her I would like to talk about her today, she very much wanted me to comment about the fact that she has loved the 50 years that she has worked at the hospital—every single minute of it. A colleague, Joy Stieger, said of Norma, after spending 30 years next to her—she worked with her for 30 years in the same job sitting next to her—that Mrs Matterson was an unbelievable woman.

Also, as an aside, when I was talking to Norma today I discovered that her husband had a stroke, quite a severe stroke, in 1995. Over the next 10 years she and her daughter Michelle cared for their father-husband. Norma would get up every morning, shower herself, dress herself, and do the same for her husband before her daughter Michelle would come and look after him once Norma went to work. They are a lovely caring family and she is a wonderful woman, and I acknowledge her for the 50 years that she gave the Lismore Base Hospital.

**Firefoxes**

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (16:10): I rise today to acknowledge, thank and congratulate the Firefoxes group. I am so proud to be your representative in parliament and I am grateful to you for the work you do to make your communities, especially in Murrindindi, better places to live. Congratulations for the many awards you have won. Firefoxes—Women Rising Together From Black Saturday—began following the 2009 fires as a way to support women in the Kinglake Ranges community and give women a voice. It is a grassroots organisation and members typically get together for a monthly dinner.
Over the years, the group have grown in their skills and knowledge of community development and resilience and they now share these skills with communities all around Australia who have been affected by disaster. The community dinners are social, fun, entertaining and a way to share information and connect people. On Friday night, I had the honour of meeting and being inspired by this wonderful group. We talked about challenges and strategies, about what women can achieve within their communities when they work with a common goal, about blooming where you planted and about being the change you want to see in the world.

I would like to thank everybody for a wonderful night, particularly my dinner companions—Margaret, Irene, Jude, Dorothy, Tania, Kate, Jemima and Michelle—and for your wonderful hospitality.

**Townsville Football Cup**

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (16:11): The Townsville Football Cup was held in Townsville over the last nine days. We had four teams. Three teams from the A-League—Brisbane Roar, Sydney FC and the Newcastle Jets—joined the National Premier League side, the Northern Fury, in nine days of absolute football. The winner—almost incidental because it was such a great nine days—was Sydney FC. Graham Arnold, the Sydney FC coach, said he would like to have it every year. It is a warm-up, pre-season camp for those guys in the A-League, but also it is a fantastic opportunity for the Premier League guys to test themselves against the best players in the country and improve their own skills.

The National Premier League is a new tier of football in Australia. Its aims are to provide an opportunity for the development of players, to showcase local talent and to improve the management and financial position of the state leagues. I would like to congratulate Rabieh Krayem and the Northern Fury, and Townsville football, for nine days of football excellence. The visiting A-League players went on hospital visits and school visits, did clinics and made themselves available. They integrated themselves into the community. They had a fantastic time. The fact that a New South Wales team won the competition is no good to anybody, but they will be back next year!

Blashki, Mrs Patricia OAM

Mr GRIFFIN (Bruce) (16:13): I rise today to acknowledge the passing of a wonderful Australian. Patricia Blashki, or Pat as she was to her friends, was an absolute stalwart of the Springvale community for more than half a century. To list some of the things that she was involved in: Royal Children's Hospital Appeal calculator operator for 52 years; Secretary of the Bush Church Aid Society at the Church of the Ascension, Springvale for 42 years; convenor and organiser for World Day of Prayer for 42 years; member of the board of management for Springvale Hospital for 17 years; and volunteer driver and craft work assistant with Vision Australia for 32 years. Also, with the Springvale Benevolent Society, she was an absolute pillar of strength, again as a volunteer, over many years. Her activities were acknowledged with an Order of Australia in 1995 and she was a City of Greater Dandenong Living Treasure.

She was so much more than all of that. She was married for 69 years to her loving husband, Albert Blashki, who has survived her and I know will be struggling with the very great loss.
Albert was mayor on repeated occasions and a councillor for the City of Springvale for many years. I had the honour of succeeding him to that council in 1991.

She was also the mother of six children, the grandmother of 16 grandchildren and the great-grandmother of 14 great-grandchildren, and there is still more on the way. She was a great Australian. She is someone who her family can be very, very proud of. I know she leaves many friends behind who will look back and say, 'This was a woman of great character and great care.'

Green Army Program

Dr HENDY (Eden-Monaro) (16:15): I wish to refer the House to the government's Green Army program and its potential to bring large benefits to rural and regional areas. It is what I call practical environmentalism. In addition, these projects provide skills training for young people between the ages of 17 and 24 years of age. They will be able to obtain certificate I or II qualifications to help them prepare for the workforce or improve their career opportunities. So it is also a jobs program.

Recently I was pleased to announce two Green Army projects in my electorate. One will be at Gulaga National Park near the town of Central Tilba. It is a walking track upgrade and weed control eradication project. I recently was able to see the sight of this project when I had the opportunity of talking to Lyndall Magnussoon and Mal Dibden of the far south coast.

I was also pleased to announce the Queanbeyan River restoration project. Queanbeyan Mayor Tim Overall has taken me on site inspections and given detailed briefings on this important project. In addition, I recently went down to Eden Cove and talked to John Walker and Mike Stebbings about their plans for a pathway project around Lake Curalo, which will link up with the Bundian Way Indigenous project, which recreates the ancient pathway from the coast to Mt Kosciusko. This is a potential Green Army project.

In conclusion, I look forward to working with the community to get as many Green Army projects as we can for our region. (Time expired)

Australian Red Cross

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (16:16): Earlier today the House debated a motion celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Red Cross in Australia. I was not able to speak in that debate, but I associate myself with the comments of those who spoke. In my electorate of Makin, the Tea Tree Gully branch of the Red Cross is one of only seven branches in South Australia to chalk up 100 years of continuous service. To mark and celebrate the occasion, a morning tea was hosted by the branch on 19 August, at the Tea Tree Gully RSL clubrooms. Dozens of people attended, including Beryl Wilson, Jill Hay and June Benger, who between them have given 155 years of service to the branch, and they are still giving.

The work of the Red Cross is widely understood and valued throughout the world. Indeed, the Red Cross is possibly the most respected and recognised symbol in the world. I take this opportunity to thank and commend all of the people who over the last 100 years have contributed to the international and local efforts of Red Cross, through their work with the Tea Tree Gully branch of the Red Cross. I also thank immediate past president Marlene Swinstead and incoming president, Bev Christerson, and their current committee for organising a wonderful centenary celebration morning tea.
Wright Electorate: Bryce Lee-Bennett, Australian Student Prize

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Government Whip) (16:17): Recently, my office was advised by none other than the Hon. Christopher Pyne MP, Minister for Education, that Bryce Lee-Bennett, a school lad from my electorate, is a more recent recipient of the Australian Student Prize. Bryce has picked up a certificate. The correspondence also says that he is the recipient of $2,000 in prize money. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate the outstanding local person, recently announced as the recipient of the Australian Student Prize. The prize is a prestigious award giving recognition for exceptional academic achievements over the course of 2014. It is an award given to only 500 students across the country, and winners represent fewer than 0.5 per cent of the total year 12 population, making the recipients of this award truly the best and brightest of our nation.

It is an honour to be able to acknowledge Bryce Lee-Bennett from Greenbank, who attends Stretton State College. He has demonstrated hard work, dedication and focus in his academic studies, and he is now reaping the rewards.

I do not subscribe to the fact that every child should win a prize. I subscribe to the fact that hard work brings rewards. With that I would like to acknowledge a well-done job and good luck for the future. I am confident that young Bryce, no matter which route he takes after school, will be fulfilled either in a financial respect or in some other way. He is a great lad and he will go a long way. (Time expired)

Lalor Electorate

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (16:19): After what can only be described as a horror budget, which has dominated the talk in my electorate for months, it is nice to speak today about some positives, about some wins in my local community. Victoria's Father of the Year has been named as Wyndham Vale resident Adam Strathairn, recognising his commitment to being involved in his children's lives and including them in his. I congratulate his children, who nominated him for Victorian Father of the Year.

The Wyndhamvale Football Club's senior women's team yesterday won the grand final by five points against Whitehorse under the captaincy of Jess Heath and Andrea Cameron and the guidance of senior coach, Kerry Saunders. Well done the Falcons. I would just like to say that I have been to watch the girls play in a few games this season and they are playing some fantastic football and now have been rewarded for that.

Like the member previously, I would like to congratulate students Young Ye and Ifrah Rehan who were announced as recipients of the Australian student prize for 2013. This award, obviously, speaks to their talent and commitment.

Finally, I would like to mention the Wyndham Community and Education Centre, which has won the excellence in creating local solutions in the learn local awards for 2014. Jenny Barrera and her team do great work across education and community strengthening services at the centre.

No doubt there were other sporting winners across the week and I look forward to hearing of more winners from Lalor. The achievements speak to the resilience, commitment and talent of the people of my community.
Leichhardt Electorate

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (16:20): Last Saturday, 30 August, I had the honour and the privilege of opening the redeveloped Jones Park. The redevelopment was achieved through a $3.5 million federal government grant and that was out of a total of $3.95 million for the total project. The funding enabled the construction of new fields, lighting, spectators’ stands, a new clubhouse, a new building for training administration, plus a whole lot of work done under the ground that you do not see that makes these parks work.

Today I would particularly like to pay tribute to a number of people who helped make this redevelopment happen. First of all, the Jones family. They are the descendants of Jack and Harry Jones who generously gifted the land, a former dairy farm and piggery, at a peppercorn rate when they could have got a lot of money for it, but they had a vision for junior sports. Jack Seary, who is considered the father of junior rugby league in Cairns, was a driving force behind the establishment of this back in the 1960s.

Members of both the Seary and Jones families were there and certainly appreciated what we were able to achieve. Warren Pitt, the Chairman of Jones Park Board of Management, and Chris Van Dorssen, the President of the Cairns and District Rugby League Club, were also there. There was a great attendance from a whole raft of sporting identities from Cairns. I am certainly going to continue to work with Warren Pitt and Chris Van Dorssen, together with other levels of government, on continues funding for the project. We certainly need a grandstand. That is the next thing—(Time expired)

Asbestos

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (16:22): Around 700 deaths a year occur as a result of exposure to asbestos, a number which is increasing and projected to peak in the next decade. Asbestos is a class 1 carcinogen and there is no safe level of exposure. It has been banned since 2003. In Canberra, over 1,000 residents have been affected by the use of loose-fill asbestos by the Mr Fluffy company, and yesterday hundreds of affected families joined for a barbecue on Federation Mall on the lawns of Parliament House. While I was there I spoke to a constituent of mine. She and her husband have two adult sons, one of whom has a disability. They have been forced to move out of their house. They are housesitting for friends next week, but they do not know where they will be the week after.

The gathering heard from many speakers, including the indefatigable Brianna Heseltine, Katy Gallagher and Jeremy Hanson. The member for Canberra was there, as were Senators Lundy and Seselja. We recognised the launch of FOR Renewal. I commend FOR Renewal’s co-founders, Natasha Parkinson, Elisa Thompson, Lisa Ziolkowski, Priya Reddy, Annabel Yagos and Brianna Heseltine. We recognised the stress that the families are going through during this difficult time. I commend the ACT government's work, through its task force, to deal with this extremely difficult issue for Canberra residents, and I hope also for Queanbeyan residents.

Swan Electorate

Mr IRONS (Swan) (16:23): On 19 August I had the pleasure of presenting at the Juniper Outreach and Wellness Program at the Rowethorpe aged-care complex in Bentley within my electorate of Swan. The Outreach and Wellness Program is open to seniors in the south-east metropolitan area and provides free health education and monitoring services, as well as a
low-cost podiatry service. Within Swan, rate payers in the local government areas of Belmont, Canning, Gosnells, South Perth and Victoria Park are eligible to participate in the program. Also included in the program are the wellness seminars which allow various organisations and community groups to present to outreach program participants with a focus on seniors' health and wellbeing. Past topics have ranged from heart disease to yoga. I was there to discuss and to properly explain the budget, particularly the measures that affect seniors and changes to the aged-care system. I am pleased to report that I was easily able to allay most of the fears that those in attendance had. During the question time after I had spoken to them for about three-quarters of an hour, it was obvious that the questions that were asked were from misinformation spread by the opposition and the media regarding a number of our measures. The participants were relieved to hear that their pension will continue to rise in March and September each year, that the energy supplement will continue to be paid and that a safety net, in the form of a 10-cap visit, will apply to the GP co-payment for pensioners. It was a great afternoon. I would like to thank Juniper for hosting me that day.

Steel, Mr Kurt

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:25): It is with the heaviest of hearts today that I rise to pay tribute to a wonderful young Canberran, Labor Party member, political staffer and friend—Kurt Steel. Kurt was tragically killed in a bus accident in Bolivia over the weekend, aged just 25. In his all-too-brief life, Kurt made a significant contribution to our nation, the Canberra community and the Labor cause. Kurt grew up in Torrens and attended Melrose High and then Canberra College. He studied at the University of Canberra, where he was president of the student association. Kurt loved Canberra and dedicated his life to making our city a better place.

He was also a dedicated and enthusiastic member of the ACT Labor Party. As well as being the media adviser to ACT Deputy Chief Minister Andrew Barr, Kurt was on just about every committee imaginable. He was also active in the sub-branch that he and I both attended, Canberra South. He will be remembered as professional, dedicated and hardworking—but, more importantly, as enormously funny, friendly, eternally positive, always smiling and full of potential. I am proud to have known Kurt, to have worked with him and to have called him my friend. My deepest sympathy goes to his parents, Jayne and Phillip, his sister, Yasmin, and his brother, Chris, as well as to Kurt's many, many friends. Rest in peace, Kurt; we will miss you terribly.

Banks Electorate: Roads

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (16:26): I was pleased to meet with residents of Connells Point and Kyle Bay in my electorate over the weekend. We met at Donnelly Park in Connells Point to launch a petition in order to address the issue of speeding on Kyle Parade. Kyle Parade is a winding road that runs through the suburbs of Connells Point and Kyle Bay. Many residents are concerned about the danger posed by speeding cars using this road. This has been an issue for the local community for many years. But a recent accident has put the issue in the spotlight again.

Residents would like to see traffic control measures put in place: potentially a roundabout, speed humps or chicanes. I will continue to advocate on behalf of residents in seeking to ensure that this issue is addressed with the road being fixed to discourage speeding. I will be encouraging Kogarah Council to address this issue so as to seek to ensure that incidents like
the one we have seen recently do not occur again. I would like to thank everyone who came to Donnelly Park on Saturday to launch this petition. In particular, I would like to thank the Connells Point Progress Association President, Jim Colquhoun, and Treasurer Paulette McFarland. The Connells Point Progress Association does fantastic work for the residents of our local community. I look forward to continuing to work with the association on this important issue.

Griffith Electorate: Seton College

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (16:28): Like a former contributor, I am pleased that, in amongst all of the talk about the rotten budget and the changes to the pensions and the GP tax, we can at least talk about some good news in this place. An example of that good news that I wanted to mention today is that Seton College, which services my electorate and is in Mount Gravatt East, on Friday night celebrated its 50th anniversary—a remarkable achievement for a school that is as wonderful a part of the community as Seton College is.

We were very fortunate that, at the celebration of the 50th anniversary, one of the former principals of the school, Sister Marie, who had been a principal of the school from 1977, had flown up to Brisbane from Sydney to address the gathering and to talk to us about the things that had been done at the school during her tenure. I met and spoke with a couple of the former students of Seton on Friday night, and they told me what a special, loving and caring school it had been.

So it is a great pleasure to be able to congratulate Seton College on their 50th anniversary. My congratulations particularly to the present principal, Chris Raju, who opened a fantastic ceremony by pointing out that the newest building was being opened that day and by pointing out that further funding was required for a fifth stage of the funding and the building of the school. I would also like to thank Pam Betts who is the Executive Director of Catholic Education for the Archdiocese of Brisbane. (Time expired)

Petrie Electorate: Roads

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (16:29): Last month a petition was handed to the Brisbane City Council calling for improvements to the corner of the Lacey Road and Beams Road intersection in Carseldine. The peak hour traffic heading in both directions on Beams Road is heavy and cars on Lacey Road wanting to turn right into Beams Road towards Gympie Road have to compete with this heavy traffic. This has caused numerous accidents over the years and a cry from locals for this notorious intersection to be upgraded.

I call upon the Brisbane City Council to ensure that this intersection is given a high priority. As the local federal member of parliament, I have asked for Black Spot funding to fix the problem. In addition, the Liberal National governments have already upgraded the Telegraph Road overpass, which is great for Bracken Ridge, Bald Hills and other suburbs in the southern end of my electorate. The federal government is working hard to improve the Bruce Highway and we are seeing major improvements in main roads around the Petrie electorate, which is helping to get local traffic moving and to make people's journeys faster, easier and, most importantly, safer.

Hallett Cove Meals on Wheels

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (16:31): I rise today to recognise the work done by the Hallett Cove Meals on Wheels branch who recently celebrated their 22nd year of delivering
meals to those in our community who cannot easily shop or cook for themselves. The Hallett Cove Meals on Wheels provide their clients with affordable, nutritious meals but also, very importantly, that friendly social contact for those in the community who may feel otherwise isolated. The friendly volunteers support their clients so that they can continue to live independently at home.

The 22nd year for Hallett Cove Meals on Wheels has been a busy year with steady growth in both clients and volunteers. The branch currently delivers between 230 and 250 meals per week to clients in the community. They have impressively achieved over 210,000 meals since the branch was established.

Congratulations to all those volunteers including Doreen Hodgeman who received a reward for 15 years of service and Kaye August who received the Premiers Award for her ongoing and dedicated service to the branch. There were many others who received awards. Indeed, there were five volunteers who received their 10-year service award, three volunteers who received their five-year service award and nine volunteers who received their one-year service award. I would like to thank all the members, the new and returning members, of the committee. I cannot go through all their names but these volunteers really ensure that those in our community who are most vulnerable do get the support they need. These volunteers are very selfless and I congratulate them all. (Time expired)

Edith Cowan University: Professor Kerry Cox

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (16:32): May I take this opportunity to place on record that Professor Kerry O. Cox, the Vice-Chancellor of Edith Cowan University within my electorate, will retire from his position on Saturday, 6 September 2014. During Professor Cox’s tenure over the past eight and a half years, the university has made outstanding progress which has seen the rapid development of ECU into a quality university. Under his prodigious leadership, the university has built its reputation across many areas including: engagement, increased participation in higher education, research and development capacity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reconciliation, and health and wellness. His achievements have positioned the university well for the next stage of its development.

It was recently announced by Dr Hendy Cowan AO, Chancellor of Edith Cowan University, that the University Council has appointed Professor Steve Chapman as the next Vice-Chancellor. Professor Chapman is currently the Vice-Chancellor of Heriot-Watt University based in Edinburgh, Scotland. Professor Chapman's career achievements to date combined with his commitment to higher education make for an exciting future at ECU. Importantly, this appointment will position the university extremely well to build on the outstanding leadership and contributions of Professor Kerry Cox.

Scullin Electorate: University of the Third Age

Mr GILES (Scullin) (16:34): On Friday, 21 August, I was thrilled to be able to attend the annual general meeting of the Whittlesea University of the Third Age at Epping Memorial Hall. I was even more thrilled to see such a full room of active and engaged members present. I take this opportunity to congratulate the newly elected members of the executive: Joe Felice as president, Kathy Lizio as vice-president, Bill Palmer as secretary, and Margaret Mitten as treasurer. I congratulate them on their election, but also on their ongoing selfless contribution to a wonderful organisation. I was struck at the meeting by how frankly the executive
members dealt with managing the challenges of their success to date—an organisation attracting hundreds of members—the challenges of finding suitable space to organise and then run such a wide range of activities that really do provide so much meaning and involvement for so many people in the Scullin electorate and in the wider communities of the city of Whittlesea. I look forward to working with the new executive, and all members of the Whittlesea U3A, in keeping people engaged in lifelong learning, keeping them socially connected and making an enormous difference to so many lives. I look forward to when I see them next not having to compete with a chocolate demonstration as well.

Iraq

Mr BROUGH (Fisher) (16:35): I applaud the Prime Minister for his statement to the House today on the developments in Iraq. In doing so I put on the public record my full support for us to do whatever is required to assist the humanitarian needs. However, I wish to go a lot further. I think that appeasement and containment is never going to be enough for people who have extremist views, who wish to dominate the world, and to dominate what our western values are. If we wish to protect western values I would ask the Australian government that I am part of to use our position on the Security Council to advocate to the Western world to say, once and for all, that we will stay the course as long as these extremists do. They have no intention to have a holding pattern, or to put people back into a box. Their aim is to destroy everything that we stand for. Unless we give an unequivocal demonstration that we are not just about humanitarian relief, not just about containment, but we are also here to eliminate this threat, we will continue to have Australians moved to these places to be radicalised and in doing so they can and will disrupt our life.

The Western world stands at a crossroad. Now is the time for us to act decisively, to act with strength, to act with commitment and to act together. That is the way we will protect our values. That is the way we will protect Australia, and nothing less will do.

Parramatta Electorate: Fashion Designers

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (16:37): You could not help noticing, if you lived in Parramatta and you walked down the streets or attended the local markets, the growing number of fashion designers that are springing up in our community that are producing some really wonderful work. You cannot talk about fashion design in Parramatta without starting with Anna Bourke who has been designing and selling her work for over 20 years in Parramatta. But there is now a whole range of new ones: Ruth Fattal, who occupies one of the pop-up stores that Parramatta council provides, and a group of young African women who are drawing on African fabrics and African design—Wachenya, Lesem and Wanyka—all of whom do wonderful creative work. Then there is Seewa Creations who designs here in Australia but has her jewellery manufactured by the Maasai women in Kenya. There is Dream N Art, who I am wearing today—I only discovered them on the weekend—designed in Seven Hills and manufactured in their first country of Nepal. Then of course there is Precious Pieces up in Castle Hill in the electorate of Mitchell. She makes really quite extraordinary jewellery in both the modern and traditional forms. They are all wonderful designers, and when you see them together you realise what an extraordinarily diverse and talented community it is in Western Sydney. I congratulate them all. They are the shining light of Western Sydney and I wish them all the best.
Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (16:38): I rise to address an important issue in the Australian olive oil industry. Last week I visited Boundary Bend olives with the Treasurer. This business is one of the Geelong region's great success stories. Boundary Bend produces Cobram Estate olive oil and is the largest Australian manufacturer of extra virgin olive oil in the country, producing around 55 per cent of the market. Boundary Bend has recently been awarded Geelong's business of the year in our recent business excellence awards. Like the rest of the Australian olive oil industry, Boundary Bend is concerned about the unlevel playing field to which it is subjected. Currently, imported olive oils are not required to meet the Australian standard for olive oils and olive pomace oils. As Camilo Olives' Joan McGovern told me, there is a real issue about consumers being able to identify fresh, healthy olive oils.

The industry is concerned that many people have no idea that light and extra light oils are no less fatty than extra virgin olive oil or that they have none of the health benefits of extra virgin olive oil; nor do many consumers understand that anything other than extra virgin olive oil and virgin olive oil is a refined and inferior product. As a result there are a large amount of misleading and deceptive claims in the industry from overseas producers, and local producers are being forced to compete with imported oils, which go to great lengths to conceal the true state of their inferior products. The solution is a mandated standard and a level playing field.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:40): I rise to pay tribute to long-time Red Cross volunteer Marie Adams, who devoted her life to charitable causes. Marie, who was 81 years of age, died very recently. She gave most of her spare time to charitable work. She was always in my office talking to me about the Red Cross. She was totally dedicated and one of the longstanding members of Belmont Red Cross. She began volunteering there in 1983.

Marie held many executive positions over 30 years worth of service, including presidency seven times, secretary six times and treasurer five times. She was also involved in scouting. Within the Red Cross she was involved with Telecross and the blood bank. In 2013 she was recommended by her fellow members of Belmont Red Cross for the Red Cross distinguished service award for her decades of dedication to the Red Cross. She was announced winner of the award, which was presented by Marie Bashir in the New South Wales parliament.

Marie was a role model for everyone in our community. I thank her and her family for allowing her to devote so much time to the Red Cross and to her community. (Time expired)

Sheepvention

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (16:41): I rise this afternoon to congratulate all those who are involved with Sheepvention this year at Hamilton. Sheepvention is the largest agricultural fair for sheep and the wool industry in Australia. It was a terrific Sheepvention this year, in 2014. I would like to congratulate the president, the committee and all those involved.

Two events in particular were fantastic. The fashion parade showcased the latest in fashion. We had a terrific line-up of models, a terrific line-up of the latest in woollen fashion, whether it be suits, skirts or dresses. The latest initiative is that we are putting wool back into Australian Rules football apparel. I had the particular honour of being able to parade down the catwalk a Richmond football jumper with wool in it. I am wearing my Richmond tie today to celebrate what was a great effort by the Tigers on Saturday.
Could I also mention the Wooly West Fest, where regional communities put together their own sheep using different handicrafts. It was a terrific initiative which brought the regions into Hamilton for Sheepvention. Over 20,000 people came through the gates, and I commend them all. *(Time expired)*

**Let's Go Greek Parramatta**

*Ms OWENS* (Parramatta) (16:43): On Saturday I attended an extraordinary event in Parramatta—extraordinary for two reasons. The Let's Go Greek festival was extraordinary because of the amazing number of people who turned up and the great community spirit down in what was the old workers club in George Street. It was also extraordinary because that old workers club is no longer the old workers club. On 20 June it changed hands. It was bought by the St Ioannis parish. They sold their St John's Church in Hassall Street, which was too small and where parking was not available, and bought an extraordinary block of land down on the Parramatta River, where they will be able to build a new church. Because their church is named after St John the Baptist, being able to build so close to the Parramatta River and in view of the river has special meaning for them. It is an extraordinary site. It already holds a very large premises, which operated as a club for a long time, with a number of rooms and places where the community can meet, a large car park out the back and sufficient room at the front to build a new church and hold the kind of community events which we saw so beautifully staged on Saturday.

I congratulate the entire Western Sydney Greek community. It was an amazing event. As soon as I arrived at the festival and saw that it was called Let's Go Greek, I thought I might go Greek myself. I suggested to some of them that I would and they said that Greeks are very welcoming and that any time I wanted to be Greek they would welcome me with open arms. Thank you very much. It was a great day.

**Gold Industry**

*Mr WILSON* (O'Connor) (16:45): On 6 August I was honoured to represent the Prime Minister at the 2014 Diggers & Dealers conference in Kalgoorlie—the unofficial gold capital of Australia. This conference is a renowned mining industry conference held annually. The participants are made up of mining and exploration companies, brokers, bankers, investors, financiers and mining service industries. While speaking with delegates, it was heartening to observe the improving sentiment in the mining and resources industry. We all know that the industry is cyclical and that with the highs come the lows. I dare to hope that the renewed confidence means we are on an upward trajectory again. However, the state government's review of gold mining royalties is creating uncertainty in the industry. At the recent WA Liberal Party state conference in Perth, the Kalgoorlie branch moved a motion to oppose any gold royalty rate increase. I fully support it, and so did the WA Liberal Party. I commend the Kalgoorlie branch for putting it forward. Clearly, any royalty increase will have a significant impact on the goldfields. According to a report by Deloitte for the Gold Royalties Response Group, over the past six years the average cost of gold production in WA has doubled, from $511 an ounce to at least $1,100 an ounce.

The gold industry employs more than 25,000 people, making it the second largest employer in the resources industry. Many of these people live in my electorate of O'Connor. We cannot keep hammering our productive industries. I will oppose any move that places more pressure...
on the gold industry. There is a long way to go before we can say that we are near the top of
the cycle, but the renewed confidence I observed at Diggers & Dealers is encouraging.

Debate adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

South Sea Islanders

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (16:46): I move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges the 20th anniversary of the Australian Government's recognition of Australian-born
South Sea Islanders as a distinct ethnic group in Australia;
(2) expresses deep regret
   (a) over the cruel treatment of the approximately 60,000 South Sea Islanders, mainly young men,
who were blackbirded (or essentially kidnapped) or lured onto ships and then transported to Australia
for the purpose of indentured labour; and
   (b) that a number of discriminatory acts followed, chief among these being the forced repatriation of
Pacific Island labourers back to their place of origin in 1906, in many cases against the will of those
being repatriated;
(3) acknowledges the considerable economic contribution of Australians of South Sea Islander descent
to the establishment of the sugar industry in the state of Queensland, and other agricultural and
industrial development in the north;
(4) celebrates the contributions of so many Australians of South Sea Islander descent to Australian life
in every field of endeavour, from the football field to the political sphere; and
(5) calls for consideration of measures to ensure that Australians of South Sea Islander descent can
achieve equity and assistance in this present day through:
   (a) inclusion on the national census as a separate people group, by the simple addition of an extra
question;
   (b) access to diabetes treatment in the same way this is available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islanders; and
   (c) access to assistance in all areas of disadvantage such as health, housing, education and training.

On the banks of the Pioneer River in Mackay there is an impressive piece of public art called
Sugar Cubes. While the average man on the street may not know what it represents, there are
about 3,000 people in the area who do, and these are the descendants of South Sea Islanders
brought to our shores by force, coercion or bribery more than 150 years ago. Sugar Cubes—a
semicircle of tall piles of cubes crafted out of steel—tells the story of their ancestors. This
period of our history—the blackbirding era—is the closest thing Australia has had to a slave
trade. About 63,000 South Sea Islanders were brought to Queensland, and each sugar cube
bears the name of a trade ship that carried human cargo as well as the name of the plantation
they were sent to work on. These workers came mainly from the Solomon Islands and
Vanuatu. In one year alone—1881—1,789 people were brought to Queensland in 31 ships; 15
of those ships came directly to Mackay, sometimes at a rate of one each week, and their trade
continued for 40 years.

Many are familiar with what happened, but I suspect that few have stopped to consider the
sheer number of people who are affected. Many died during the long voyage to Queensland,
and more died after arrival from diseases like dysentery, pneumonia and tuberculosis. You
could probably call the next sad chapter of their story 'Discrimination by legislation'. The dawn of Federation in 1901 brought with it the push from the union movement for a white Australia, and thousands of South Sea Islander labourers were deported under the Pacific Island Labourers Act. Other racist legislation followed, like the 1905 Sugar Bounty Act, which rewarded producers who used white labour, and the 1913 Sugar Cultivation Act, which required islanders who wanted to grow cane to be able to read and write 50 words in any language. Between 1900 and 1940 there were at least 40 pieces of discriminatory legislation on the statute books. There were restrictions on voting, land ownership and fishing for pearl shell. South Sea Islanders were even banned from employment in butter factories. This was a bitter pill to swallow, particularly in relation to the sugar industry, because their labour in the cane fields and their contribution to the establishment and ongoing success of the sugar industry was significant.

And this is another chapter of the story that is rarely told. In 1902 about 84 per cent of labourers in Queensland sugar were non-white workers. Another source states that since these islanders performed all the fieldwork connected with the sugar industry it is probable that without them the initial enterprise would not have been forthcoming and very few of the old mills and plantations would have seen the light of day.

It was a significant contribution for one of the state's most significant and enduring industries, which accounted for 1.7 per cent of total exports in 1900 and grew to 25 per cent by 1980. More chapters in the story have unfolded throughout the lives of many Australian South Sea Islanders who have contributed to our culture. Rowena Trieve from Mackay and Joe Leo from Rockhampton are both OAM recipients. Mal Meninga has made a legendary contribution to the sport of rugby league. Faith Bandler, who championed recognition long before others, was made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 2009.

Proud Australian South Sea Islanders did not shirk their duty when it came to serving their country. Sadly, Mackay man, Frank Fewquandie, was the first Australian killed in the Vietnam War. And Percy Mooney Senior, who still lives in his family home at Habana, enlisted and served in World War II. Others who made significant contributions in Mackay include Cedric Andrew, Greg Sutherland, Jeanette Morgan, Christine Andrew, Winnie Boah, Kay Fatnowna and the late Noel Fatnowna.

There is no doubt that the day of official recognition in this parliament on 25 August 1994 was a landmark moment, and I want to pay tribute to the efforts of former member for Dawson, Ray Braithwaite, who pressured the Keating government at the time to respond to the call for recognition. Mackay's Greg Sutherland, who is also chair of the National Australian South Sea Islanders Governance Working Group, remembers the day well. He said, 'A lot of us were excited and pleased to be finally recognised for our heritage and our contribution to the state, and I guess we were hoping a bit more would come from it'.

At the time of recognition it was noted that the government of the day needed to assess how it was servicing the needs of Australian South Sea Islander people. Twenty years on, the time is right to again take stock as the next chapter of their journey unfolds. Why is it that proud Australian South Sea Islanders cannot tick a box on the national census forms acknowledging their distinct heritage? And why is it that Australian South Sea Islanders in need of special treatment for conditions like diabetes need to deny their heritage in order to access what is readily available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders? These questions
need to be answered, and as chair of the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, I will call for a roundtable to give full and proper consideration to those issues.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr PITI (Hinkler) (16:52): I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to. I call the member for Shortland.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:52): I would like to congratulate the member for Dawson for bringing this motion to the House. This is a sad period in Australia's history, and one that not a lot of people know and understand. I also acknowledge that the member for Hinkler, as a Northern Queenslander, and a member who has sugarcane and sugar farming within his electorate, is here to speak on this piece of legislation today.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence in the chamber of members of the Australian South Sea Islanders (Port Jackson) Limited group. It is fantastic that you could be here today to hear us make our little tribute towards the South Sea Islanders in Australia, and their contributions to our country.

As I was preparing this speech, I went through a lot of information and it reminded me just how cruel and brutal the treatment of South Sea Islanders was in Australia. They were used as slaves in their indentured labour. The member for Dawson was, I think, a little bit generous when he said it was the closest we came to slavery, I actually think that those South Sea Islanders working there were, in effect, slaves. They had no rights and they did not receive the same wages as other workers. It is a blight on the history of our country. The White Australia policy contributed to this also. The simple fact that South Sea Islanders were deported, were treated even more appallingly after 1901, is another blight on our country.

But I would like to make some positive statements about the enormous contribution that South Sea Islanders have made to our country. There have been many fields and many endeavours in which they have made positive contributions, but none more so than rugby league. As a proud member of parliament coming from the Newcastle region, I have to say that the South Sea Islanders have made a fantastic contribution. Last Sunday the Newcastle Knights defeated Parramatta and at the forefront of that defeat were three outstanding people from Australian-Samoan origins—there was Leilua, who scored one try, and the Mata'utia brothers, who are sensational football players. They really show what South Sea islanders can do for the game of rugby league. These are two young brothers that have spent the whole of this season basically in junior football, and because of injuries they have been elevated to first grade, and between them they scored not one try, not two tries, but five tries. To top it off their brother Peter Mata'utia plays for St George, and he is also a sensational player. These young guys were brought up in a household where there was no money, where they talked about having to eat bread to survive, and despite that disadvantaged background they have managed to be sensational rugby league players. So I think we need to pay real tribute to South Sea islanders, particularly in the area of rugby league and rugby union.

The point I would like to finish on is around diabetes. Diabetes is a disease that has a really big impact on the community. It is a disease that I do not think your community has come to terms with. South Sea islanders really are affected by diabetes, probably more than just about
any sector of the population, and I think there is a need for programs and education directed towards combating diabetes in your community.

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (16:57): The northern end of my electorate is completely flat. From the air, the cane fields look like a giant patchwork quilt. There is only one blemish on the otherwise flawless landscape—it is an extinct volcano known today as the Hummock. Just 96 metres above sea level, the Hummock lookout offers ocean views to the east, to the west cane fields encircle the city of Bundaberg, and then there are the smokestacks that belong to the sugar mill and of course the rum distillery. The beaches are covered in volcanic rock but if you look closely you can see the fields have been cleared.

Dotted across the landscape are stone walls that were built by South Sea Islander labourers who worked the district’s plantations. These walls serve as a physical reminder of the blood, sweat and tears South Sea Islanders shed for the establishment of Queensland’s sugar industry. Most Australians have no idea that, even some 30 years after the Emancipation Proclamation in the United States, slavery was still rife in this country. Between 1863 and the early 1900s, South Sea Islanders as young as 12 were ripped from their communities to work on Australian farms.

There is not enough time here today, in this place, for me to provide a detailed chronology of political and cultural events, but research shows about 60,000 South Sea Islanders were blackbirded and in 1902 about 84 per cent of Queensland sugar labourers were non-white workers. It is widely regarded that, without Kanakas, very few of the old mills and plantations would have seen the light of day. In Queensland there are at least 40 pieces of discriminatory legislation on the statute books between 1900 and 1940—this includes the White Australia policy that resulted in many of them being forcibly repatriated. The practice of blackbirding was at one point rebranded indentured labour, to circumvent the slavery laws of Britain.

Australian South Sea Islanders were not officially recognised as a distinct ethnic minority group by the Commonwealth until 1994. The Queensland parliament only formally recognised Australian South Sea Islanders in July 2000 and in August last year the New South Wales parliament passed a motion acknowledging the ASSI community’s contribution to the state. As I understand it, the government in Vanuatu is now granting dual citizenship to Australian South Sea Islanders. Their blackbirding history is now taught as part of the Vanuatu school curriculum. Australian South Sea Islanders are defined as being those who are the descendants of the South Sea Islanders brought to Australia as blackbirds or Kanakas. There are thousands of Kanaka descendants living in Australia, many in my electorate. Sadly, an official number has not been established.

This motion supports calls by the Australian South Sea islander community for a specific question in the Australian census to count them as a unique ethnic group in a similar method to questions 18 and 19 on some Centrelink forms. There is widespread confusion among many Australian South Sea Islanders about how they should identify themselves on paper. In many cases, such as question 7 on the 2011 census, their only choice is between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. ASSI community leaders say this has resulted in many people slipping through the cracks. Without the necessary statistics to create a demographic, social and economic profile, government programs and services will not be as well targeted as they otherwise could be. Community leaders are working to finalise a national ASSI association constitution. In 2012, they held their inaugural conference in Bundaberg. I congratulate Matt
Nagus, Joe Eggmolesse and Emelda Davis and many others for their efforts in seeking recognition for their people.

I worked in the sugar industry in Bundaberg from a young age both as an electrician and as a cane farmer. I grew up hearing stories about Kanakas and the backbreaking work they did in very difficult conditions. I have moved some of those rocks! To give the House some understanding of what they endured, I will read from a local newspaper clipping dated 4 October 1884: 'John Arthur, the white man who put an ounce of lead through a Kanaka recently at Bingera, has been acquitted on charges of murder brought against him because Polynesian witnesses who were to give evidence could not be made to understand the nature of an oath or declaration.' The report goes on to say: 'Arthur made 12 Kanakas share a single ration,' which was one pound of meat per man per day. The potatoes he gave them were not fit for pigs.

There are unmarked Kanaka graves on farms right across my electorate, and I have seen them. In some cases, they were buried right where they died in the field. The former member for Hinkler, Brian Courtice, fought to have 29 graves on Sunnyside farm heritage listed for protection. His family purchased the farm in the 1920s from local businessman Edward Turner. Turner financed the slave ship Ariel to bring South Sea islanders back to work on the local plantations. Brian continues to be an effective advocate for recognition of Australian South Sea islanders. A memorial garden and community centre is being created at the unmarked mass grave site on Johnston Street near Bundaberg cemetery.

It is important that we continue to ensure ASSI graves across the district, and indeed the country, are preserved. The contribution Australian South Sea islanders made to Queensland's sugar industry and Bundaberg's social fabric is extraordinary. Their story is one that is so little known but it deserves to be recognised for what it is—that is, an integral part of Australia's history and its future.

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (17:02): I also rise to speak on the motion, acknowledging the 20th anniversary of the Australian government's recognition of Australian-born South Sea islanders as a distinct ethnic group in Australia. I commend the member for Dawson for bringing the motion before the House. I also recognise the member for Hinkler and the constituents from his electorate who have made the long journey to Canberra—we hope you survive the cold weather while you are here. South Sea islanders came to Australia in 1863, not as immigrants seeking a new life; instead, enticed onto ships and in some cases kidnapped, in what was often classified as blackbirding, to work on sugarcane fields in Queensland. Indeed, as many speakers have said, they were not enticed to work; it was slavery.

I too express deep regret at the treatment in bringing the islanders to Australia and the subsequent discriminatory acts that followed. In 1901, the Pacific Island Labourers Act ordered the recruitment of Pacific islanders to cease up to 1903. In 1906, after enduring decades of hardship and discrimination, the Pacific island labourers were forcibly deported back to their place of origin, leaving behind a life they had built and a country they now called home. At this time, roughly 10,000 who identify as South Sea Islanders remain in Australia. From 1909 until 1942, the remaining South Sea islanders living in Australia experienced considerable hardship. Legislation prohibited their employment in the sugar industry, unions registered their employment elsewhere and they could not obtain financial
assistance from banks. An example of the discrimination acts that South Sea islander women had to ensure was being relegated to the black ward at Rockhampton base hospital which was separated from the main maternity section and overlooked the morgue. What a terrible way to treat women giving birth to children.

After decades of discrimination, in 1991 the Congress of the Australian Council of Trade Unions committed itself to assisting South Sea islanders to be recognised as a group in their own right and we are continuing that journey today. The Australian government, in response to The call for recognition report, officially recognises the South Sea islander community as a distinct ethnic group in Australia with its own history and culture. But we still have not managed to get it on the census, in recognition and acknowledgement by the Australian government of the injustice of the indentured labour system and the severe disadvantage suffered by the South Sea Islanders and their descendants, as well as their contribution to the culture, history and economy of Australia. Australia is a migrant nation, and this is another great subset of that migrant identity. It should be celebrated for what it is. The response included a number of initiatives especially designed for the Australian South Sea Islander community, including several projects to strengthen community membership awareness and pride in their culture. We acknowledge the 20th anniversary of this recognition that the economic and cultural contribution made by the first Australian South Sea Islanders and their descendants should not be forgotten.

I know it is slightly different, but I have visited the communities on Christmas Island and on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and it is a very similar story. They were taken from their homelands. On Christmas Island it was the Malays who were taken to work there and now their descendants who are there. And of course on Cocos (Keeling) they were taken by Clunies-Ross to literally work as slaves in the coconut plantations. There are incredible cultures that we need to nurture, and we need to recognise that that is what makes Australia the great place it is today.

I have also had the distinct honour of working with the parliaments of Australia and the Pacific island nations in our parliament partnership program, trying to encourage more women into parliaments around the Pacific. This initiative is taking female parliamentarians from Australia and various Pacific nations. I have just returned from a visit to Tonga where I met some amazing women throughout the South Pacific who are attempting to get into parliament. One of my friends whom I met there is attempting to stand and be elected in the upcoming Fiji election. This woman was amazing. Another woman I met, who was from Samoa, is also seeking election. I took her out doorknocking in Melbourne before the last election. When I complained about the rain, she told me about taking her canoe down crocodile-infested waters. I applaud these amazing cultures, these amazing natures, and what they strive for.

We have a phenomenal relationship with those from the South Sea islands who have called Australia home since 1901 and should be recognised. I deeply regret the cruelty and I endorse the motions moved in this to ensure that the census is updated so this additional question can give recognition to this specific group.

Debate adjourned.
Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (17:07): I am very pleased to be speaking on the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill 2014, which is part of Labor's proud record in supporting our Defence Force personnel. We cannot exaggerate what we owe our service personnel, and ensuring they are properly supported when they return from service, especially in the case where there is an injury or illness, is one of the most important responsibilities of government. This bill will enable a relatively minor technical correction. It will enable the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission to retrospectively apply the methodology for calculating permanent impairment compensation to claims that have been the subject of claimant-initiated reconsideration by the commission, a review by the Veterans' Review Board, or a review by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

But this is part of a much bigger reform process that is about ensuring the government is providing appropriate support and compensation to Australia's veterans and ex-service personnel. As I have mentioned, the bill we are now debating is part of a reform process initiated by Labor, and I commend the government for continuing these reforms. On 8 April 2009 the then Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, announced that there would be a review of military compensation arrangements to ensure the government is providing appropriate support and compensation to Australia's veterans and ex-service personnel. The review was conducted by a steering committee chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Ian Campbell PSM. The review report was released on 18 March 2011 and found the military compensation system to be fundamentally sound but noted that certain improvements could be made, particularly to permanent impairment compensation.

Labor's response to the review was announced in the 2012-13 budget. Labor committed $17.4 million over four years to implement 96 of the 108 recommendations of the review. The majority of these changes were implemented from 1 July 2013. They delivered improvements to the arrangements for compensation in health care, increased financial compensation for eligible members and families, and improved training for those who provide advice to veteran communities on entitlements. These were important reforms and I am pleased to say that they have maintained bipartisan support throughout. They were aimed at ensuring a more holistic and timely approach was taken to the support provided to veterans who are wounded or otherwise injured during their service.

What does this legislation do? When the commission commenced its review of transitional permanent impairment calculations to apply the new methodology, a technical barrier in the existing legislation was detected. This barrier had the effect of preventing the retrospective recalculation of transitional permanent impairment compensation in certain circumstances. The provisions of this bill operate so that the commission is able to retrospectively apply the methodology for calculating permanent impairment compensation to claims that have been the subject of claimant initiated reconsideration by the commission, a review by the board or a
review by the AAT. I commend the Abbott government on this bill and in continuing the important reforms that Labor started in this area.

The government has a fundamental role in maintaining and enhancing the wellbeing, physical, financial and emotional, of veterans and their families. As a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade in my first term, I was involved in the inquiry into the care of ADF personnel wounded and injured on operations. The inquiry was a comprehensive body of work which involved hours and hours of discussions and hearings with people from all over Australia—with families, with veterans, with medical professionals, with public servants and with serving soldiers. Most importantly, we heard evidence of terrible hardship and unhappiness among our service personnel. These are people who have fallen through the gaps, despite the best efforts of the ADF, the DVA and the Department of Defence. Participating in this inquiry had a profound impact on me and I am now acutely aware of the challenges surrounding the treatment of personnel wounded and injured on operations, their repatriation to Australia, their ongoing care, their return to work or their transition out of the Australian Defence Force, and the impact on their families. That is why this legislation we are debating today is so very, very important.

On Friday night, I had the pleasure of attending the first major fundraiser conducted by Soldier On, at the Hyatt Hotel in my electorate. It was just extraordinary. I have had a number of conversations and meetings with Soldier On over the years since its formation, but it is extraordinary to see the transformation of that organisation. The first Soldier On event I went to was the launch event. About two years ago—from memory, it was in the middle of winter—I went to that event, in a tent on the site of what was the old Canberra Services Club in Griffith. Canberrans will remember it was burnt down a few years ago and now it is just a big patch of dirt with an old cannon out the front. It was almost like the phoenix rising because there was this patch of dirt with this tent pitched on it, as I said. It was freezing cold and that was the launch of Soldier On.

When attending this event, I did not know anything about Soldier On; in fact, most of us in the tent did not really know anything about Soldier On. My colleague the member for Lingiari, who was a minister at that stage, was also present, as was, from memory, the former member for Eden-Monaro. We were all standing around saying, 'What does this Soldier On group do?' The group had spoken about the fact that returned soldiers, particularly wounded soldiers, need support. We asked, 'Isn't that support already being provided?' So it was with great interest that we all went to this event. From memory, we also had to pay for our drinks because there was no money around. After that night, I had a very clear understanding about what the organisation was designed to do. It was set up to provide empowerment to those who had returned who were suffering from PTSD and other conditions—those who had been wounded.

In two years, from those very humble beginnings, Soldier On has gone on to become an absolute powerhouse. The Prime Minister has taken part in a number of their bike rides. Their bike ride around France was showcased at the event on Friday night, which was one of the gala events of the Canberra calendar—as I said, from those very humble beginnings to this extraordinary gala event. The CDF was there, the minister was there, the assistant minister was there, there were a number of VCs there, and there were a number of medal winners there. It was quite an extraordinary night.
Again, I take the opportunity to commend Soldier On for the great work they are doing. And the transformation in just two short years has been extraordinary, from having very little money—if no money—to now being very strongly supported by the community right throughout Australia, not just here in Canberra, and not just financially but also through other support services. I take my hat off to the team at Soldier On, because it is quite extraordinary, what they have managed to do. What is most important is the fact that they have provided incredible support to returning soldiers. On the evening, we heard from two soldiers. One of them was actually at my table. His name is Chad, and he talked about the fact that before he got involved in Soldier On—and, from memory, he was in the Army, but he is no longer in the Army—he was quite broken and was in a very fragile state. He started to cycle and then got involved in the Soldier On cycling, and he took part in this tour around France. He said that before and even during the tour of France he had a very bushy beard, which he hid behind. It was a way of covering his identity, because he was in such a fragile and broken state. At the conclusion of that bike ride through mountains and valleys—and it was pretty arduous, from what I could gather—he either went to a barber or did it himself, I am not sure, but he shaved off that beard and revealed his new self, his transformed self, his empowered self. That is what Soldier On did for him; it empowered him and gave him the strength to face life as his former self, as his clean-shaven self, and not to hide behind a beard anymore but to get out there and face the world without this beard, without this disguise, without this front.

So, it was an incredibly powerful speech. I sat next to his wife. They are the proud parents of a beautiful new baby. It was quite extraordinary seeing this man's transformation, thanks to Soldier On. Again, I take my hat off to Soldier On. I thank all the volunteers who worked with Soldier On on that night who made it possible—the hours and hours of work that Soldier On has obviously done for that fundraiser on a shoestring. Again, I commend them for their wonderful work.

On PTSD, I am sure that there were many in this room, as there were many in Canberra, who went to see The Long Way Home, the production by Belvoir. It was late last year, from memory, or early this year. Again, it was a very powerful production that profiled a number of soldiers who had just returned from Afghanistan, men and women. The beauty of the production was the fact that it did not expose us just to the torment that these soldiers were going through but also to the torment and the difficulty that the families go through and that the wives and the girlfriends and the friends go through and experience. I think that is something that Soldier On is very aware of. That is something that I know the Defence department is very aware of, that DVA is very aware of—the fact that quite often the warning signs are first read or heard or felt by those families, by the wives, the partners, the husbands of those who have returned.

Those signs can come in many different forms, like someone drinking too much, trying to drug themselves—basically, trying to tune out life through too much alcohol or drugs. Quite often, they can get abusive. Quite often, people just remove themselves from engagement in society, as one of the individuals featured in this production did. It is so important that families act on those warning signs, because quite often the soldiers, sailors, air men and women involved are not capable or willing to acknowledge the difficulty that they are going through. Again, I take my hat off to the families in these difficult circumstances, because they do do it tough.

FEDERATION CHAMBER
My father-in-law is a Vietnam vet, and I know that my late mother-in-law went through quite a bit of trauma and hardship when he returned from his tour in Vietnam. She had been left alone with, I think, five kids at that stage. She was left alone with four boys—four Uhlmann boys!—and a daughter, and she did it on her own. She did it tough. She also got a man back from Vietnam who, as she said, was very different to the one who left. She dealt with that in the stoic and strong way that she always did. I know that wives, girlfriends, husbands and boyfriends throughout Australia now face those same circumstances, although from a different war, but in a similarly stoic and strong fashion.

Before I conclude, I want to acknowledge that I attended the annual dinner of the Defence Families of Australia national conference on Thursday night. The Assistant Minister for Defence was also there. The spouses are largely women but there are also a number of men—extraordinary people who move around Australia constantly as a result of postings. They have to pick up and start new lives in different cities every two or three years, and settle the kids, who are quite often traumatised by having to move, into new schools. They are extraordinary women, all of them incredibly strong and articulate. It was incredibly powerful and it was a real privilege to spend the evening with them, hearing about their lives, hearing about their ambitions and hearing about how they want to improve the lot of Defence families—and doing it in a very positive way. They were not there to criticise. They were not there to complain. They were there to come up with solutions to the challenges that they face, from moving from not just Defence housing but also schools to immunisations and a whole range of other issues. Again, I take my hat off to those Defence families, particularly the husbands, the wives, the girlfriends and the boyfriends who are constantly supporting Australia through their support for members of the ADF.

Ms PRICE (Durack) (17:23): I am pleased to speak on the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill, which is important within my very large electorate of Durack and throughout our nation, where men and women from communities small, large and far-flung have served the citizens of Australia as well the citizens of the world in operational theatres of war, in peacekeeping missions and in peacetime defence service. Today I acknowledge the 100-year anniversary of World War I, all Australians who served in that war and all other wars, and peacetime defence services.

The legislation before us will benefit members and former members of the Australian Defence Force and relates to transitional permanent impairment compensation. The compensation payable under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act is assessed taking account of conditions accepted under the Veterans’ Entitlements Act and/or the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act to ensure that any compensation paid is assessed on a whole-of-person basis. This compensation is referred to as transitional permanent impairment compensation.

The bill will enable the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission to retrospectively apply new methodology that will maintain or increase transitional permanent impairment compensation payable to persons with a condition accepted under the Veterans' Entitlements Act and/or the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, where permanent impairment compensation resulted from a review by the Veterans' Review Board or the Administrative Appeals Tribunal or from consideration by the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission.
The amendments in this bill are an example of the ongoing fine tuning and continuous improvement that is necessary to ensure that the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act continues to serve the needs of those who serve. Importantly, the amendments will result in beneficial or neutral outcomes only. No person will be disadvantaged by the retrospective application of a new methodology to calculate compensation. Where the application of the new methodology would result in a lower amount of permanent impairment compensation, the existing amount of permanent impairment compensation will continue to apply until a new determination results in a change in the amount of compensation payable.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the RSL in supporting those injured while serving their country. The Returned and Services League of Australia, more commonly known as the RSL, evolved as a direct result of the camaraderie, concern and mateship shown by the diggers for the welfare of their mates during and after the First World War. In June 1916, the Conference of Returned Soldiers Association recommended the formation of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia, and in September 1916 the first RSSILA Congress was formed, with delegates from Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria attending. New South Wales was admitted to the league in 1917, followed by WA in 1918. And 1927 saw the formation of the ACT branch. After several name changes over the years, September 1990 saw the league adopt the name the Returned and Services League of Australia Limited, and the ideals and objectives which categorised the initiation of the first state associations in 1916 were correlated and finally adopted as the aims and objectives of the league.

The RSL has the motto 'The price of liberty is eternal vigilance'. It aims to uphold loyalty to the nation and its sovereign and to uphold the Westminster system of government and the Constitution of the nation. The RSL has an expectation that the Australian government will provide compensation, income support, where necessary, medical treatment and rehabilitation to all members and ex-members of the Australian Defence Force whose service has been the cause of disablement. The RSL maintains that income support should be provided on the basis of age to qualified veterans, regardless of disablement. Bearing in mind the nature of military service, the RSL seeks for the government to maintain the present policy of ensuring that veterans' benefits are more generous than those granted to civilian employees. I think that all of us in this House would agree with that.

The RSL and the service women and men of Durack continue to be extremely active and innovative, providing invaluable services to the community. Geraldton, in the seat of Durack, is the largest centre. It is a port city, around 400 kilometres north of Perth. According to a local Geraldton web-based media outlet called Everything Geraldton, a Geraldton ex-servicemen is among the first group of WA military motorcycle riders to complete veterans' welfare counselling training. After completing the course conducted by Legacy and funded by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the counsellors will assist veterans with basic welfare needs.

Greg 'Doc' Smith, a veteran of East Timor in 2001, said that during a casual chat with the Geraldton RSL he discovered that they did not have a welfare officer. He had recently moved from Perth to Geraldton and transferred to the local RSL. He mentioned that he was doing the course and they secured his services straight away. His role is to provide initial support for
veterans who need help with welfare issues. That mostly involves putting them in touch with the right service that can assist them, whether it is medical, financial or perhaps emotional.

Those completing the veterans' welfare counselling training are in the community to provide assistance to veterans, which is a big step to ensuring their welfare. The club's new counsellors will be spread around Western Australia, with one in Kununurra in the Kimberley, which is also in the electorate of Durack.

I commend those who have completed and those who are completing the veterans' welfare counselling training. I believe the counselling services provided will be an important tool in the lives of many veterans.

When next in Geraldton, you will be able to visit the 11th Battalion AIF and the recreation of a Gallipoli trench. The 11th Battalion was the first unit in Western Australia to be trained at Helena Vale camp, and, on 25 April 1915, was the first battalion to hit Anzac Cove. The 11th Battalion AIF is a living and commemorative group that is researching and representing Western Australia's first battalion and, as they claim, finest battalion. Quoting from their web site:

The group is also embarking on a major project, recreating a living Gallipoli Trench complete with sound systems, actors and all the paraphernalia of war to make the experience for visitors as real as possible. Planned to be completed in time to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Great War and Australia's almost legendary entry into it on 25th April 1915, the trench will be an authentic replica of a captured Turkish trench as taken by the 11th on the night of 31st July 1915 and named for the commander who led the attack, Capt R. L. Leane.

As described by the group, it was what the Anzacs called a 'please shoot me' stunt:

On the night of 31st July/1st August 1915 200 men of the 11th Battalion waited for a series of explosions from mines laid by the engineers to detonate … before charging over the dark void to engage in brutal hand to hand combat. In a tit for tat engagement of bombs and bayonets, blinded by dust and choked by incendiaries, weary and suffering from dysentery and food shortages, the men of the 11th finally secured the trench, soon christened Leane's Trench after the commander of the attack, Capt R L Leane, and were relieved at 1400hrs by the 12th.

24 hours later the 11th were back in the front line and on 6th August were again engaged in extremely heavy fighting when the Turks launched a counter attack. The 11th held on, suffering 154 casualties in the process. And there they remained in continual battle with a tenacious Turkish army until 16 November 1915 when they disembarked for Mudros, never to return.

Leane's Trench was an obvious choice for recreation. It is intrinsically linked to the 11th Battalion and therefore Western Australia. When completed, it will be 120 metres long and two metres deep, filled with the equipment and the noise of the battle, introducing the visitor to a world that only their grandfathers and great-grandfathers knew.

They are seeking donations and funding to complete this project, and are always looking for volunteers to help to man the trench once it is completed. Well done to members Stuart Adamson, Tim Rust, Chris Cox and the rest of the team for progress so far on this very exciting and worthwhile project.

In closing, and having provided examples to highlight the exemplary qualities of our veterans, I reiterate my support for the bill, which will enable the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission to retrospectively apply new methodology that will maintain or increase transitional permanent impairment compensation payable for person with a condition
Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (17:33): The Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill 2014 results from a review initiated by Labor, under former Minister of Veteran's Affairs the Hon. Alan Griffin, to ensure that veterans and ex-service personnel were receiving the appropriate level of support from the Australian government. That review was released in March 2011, and it found improvements could be made to permanent impairment compensation. In summary, a new and fairer methodology for assessing compensation was proposed, and it was put into effect by Labor on 1 July 2013. This particular legislation overcomes a technical barrier detected after 1 July 2013 that has the effect of preventing the retrospective recalculation of transitional permanent impairment compensation, in certain circumstances.

This was indeed a Labor initiative, and of course we therefore support this legislation. It deals effectively with a technical amendment to ensure the intent of the legislation can proceed.

I note that several government MPs have spoken to this bill and have referred to it as though it were an Abbott government initiative. I just want to make it clear that it is not. It arises from the work of the previous government. I also recall the number of government MPs who rushed into the chamber earlier this year to speak about the new indexation for DFRB and DFRDB veterans' payments. I spoke on that bill myself, and I supported it. However, none of the government MPs have said a word about the Abbott government's budget, which was handed down in May, that unfairly targeted veterans by firstly taking away from veterans' pensions the very indexation that members opposite argued for with respect to the DFRB and DFRDB recipients earlier this year; secondly, by leaving veterans on the CPI-indexed figure those veterans will be worse off; thirdly, the government has also axed the three-month backdating of veterans' disability pensions for new recipients, costing new recipients up to $8,405; and in some cases they have also cut the $870 senior supplement for veterans. In an unbelievably and very miserly move, the Abbott government also wants to cut $217 in annual payments for children of war veterans.

It seems quite a contrast to the stance I see from members opposite when you look at the facts. You look at the cuts being made to the entitlements of veterans, then you hear the rhetoric that comes from members opposite and the rhetoric that even comes from the government itself. With respect to the pension index used, I have been contacted, as I expect other members of this parliament have been, by many veterans who are understandably angry at the inconsistency relating to the indexation methodology used for different payments. One of the people who contacted me was Mr Leon Eddy, president of the TPI Association of South Australia. In a letter sent to me earlier this year, Mr Eddy states: 'There should be one common percentage adjustment rate for all pensions. None is less deserving than the next. The type of pension and base rate of that type is determined by different criteria, but once a type of pension has been determined, it must be adjusted by the same percentage as any other, or it will be eroded away.'

Mr Eddy's letter was supported by a letter I subsequently received in respect of this matter from Mr John Wilson, who I recall was a strong advocate of the DFRDB recipients as well.
He wrote to me and met with me during the course of that earlier campaign. He also includes in his letter to me a letter from the Defence Force Welfare Association, and within that letter, signed by Colonel David Jamison, the same arguments are placed. That is, that the indexation that should apply to all pensioners, and certainly to war veterans, is the indexation that was used earlier this year for DFRDB and DFRB recipients. More specifically, it should not simply be the CPI figure that was previously used, and which we all agreed was not a fair reflection of the increases in costs of living that are incurred by people once they are relying on a government payment.

I make that point and I make it very strongly, because had we not changed the indexation methodology earlier this year for one group, then I could understand the consistency that is being applied by the government. But when members opposite and the government came into this place only earlier this year and argued as a matter of principle that a specific methodology should be used then, only a few months down the track, changed that methodology, it just makes those who argued for the change in the first place absolute hypocrites.

There is a second matter I want to refer to in respect of military compensation, and that is the matter of getting accurate and comprehensive war service records from the defence department. In my time in this place, I have been approached by several veterans within my electorate. There is a consistent theme in the matters that they come to me with, and that is that they are unable to get accurate records of their service within the department—be it Navy, Air Force, or Army. As a result of not being able to get the accurate records, they are being denied their rightful entitlements. Sometimes all they are looking for is recognition by way of a medal which they would otherwise be entitled to, if they could prove that they carried out the service for which that medal was issued. But they cannot. I can understand that at times some of the defence activities and military activities of the day may well have been secretive. In one case where the person had a problem getting the information he wanted, this was exactly the case. He believed that it was a secretive operation. Therefore there were no records and he could not prove what he needed to in order to get what he believed he was entitled to.

In my view, that becomes a barrier for many of the veterans. One particular veteran, Noel Muller, who I have met with and spoken with on more than one occasion in my office, has been having a debate with the department for years—in fact, prior to my being elected to this place. He has been trying to secure the proof he needs that he performed the duties that he did, which in turn led to the injury that he has and therefore should entitle him to compensation—which he is not receiving. I have not spoken to Noel now for some time, but the last time I did he was still having this argument with the department. I note that the minister is in the chamber and I bring this case to his attention because I have met with Noel, I have seen the documentation that he has and I have no reason to disbelieve what he tells me. It all stacks up in terms of the material that he is able to present to me, but there are some gaps in the documentation that he has.

The third matter that I want to raise is in respect to this very issue. Earlier this year I met with a veterans' advocate. He himself is a former veteran. He understands the system very, very well. He has become an advocate for his colleagues because he understands the difficulty that they have in navigating the processes that are required of them by the department when they are seeking compensation, or even a medal. He made the point very strongly to me that
from his experience, quite often, the staff within the department are themselves not fully conversant with all of the entitlements and how veterans are expected to go about making claims and the like. The departmental officers are not always able to provide the veterans with the kind of information that they need in order to progress their claims or in order to get the full assistance that they are entitled to. Again, I do not single out any particular officer or any particular department, but that is an experience brought to me by a person who seems to be dealing with veterans on a regular basis and who simply asks that maybe there ought to be some effort made to ensure that the staff who are providing veterans with advice are themselves fully briefed and fully conversant with all of the options available to them and the veterans.

I bring these matters to the minister's attention because, as I know he would understand, many of the veterans that we all deal with today are veterans that served in the Vietnam war or subsequent to it, including more recently Afghanistan and Iraq. These are veterans who, as we also all know, quite often suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and therefore are not necessarily in the best mental state to manage their own affairs. They rely on advice they get from the department or from the local RSL association that they might be associated with, or they might rely on advice from the type of person whom I referred to earlier: a veteran advocate. These people suffer enough. They should not have to be further disadvantaged because either they are not able to access the records they need or they go to a department that is not as supportive as I believe it can be. If we are going to genuinely support our veterans, those are things that we can do. I can accept that saving money might be one issue, but, if we are going to assist veterans, there are things that could be done better than they are currently being done. I stress to the minister, who is in the chamber, that we ought to look at the package of support required for veterans, not just the dollar amounts, because quite often it is the package—that is, the support that they require—that means more to them.

I conclude where I began. This legislation arises from an initiative of the previous Labor government. Members opposite quite often claim that they are the friends of veterans throughout Australia. I state quite clearly that this legislation arises from Labor and, in my time in this place, Labor has consistently listened to and responded in a fair way to the needs of the veteran community. It will be interesting to see how the minister responds to the matters I have raised, because these are matters that will not go away and, I have no doubt, will be brought to my attention when I return to my electorate. More importantly, regarding the letters from the two defence organisations—from Mr Wilson, which I referred to earlier, and from the South Australian TPI Association—those members are waiting anxiously to see what the response of the government is to their submissions and their inquiries to MPs around Australia.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Minister for Defence) (17:46): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to sum up the debate before there is a substantive motion to return the bill to the House. I thank all those from both sides of the House for their contributions to the debate and for the warm reception the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill 2014 has received. The bill will benefit members and former members of the ADF. It will enable the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission to retrospectively recalculate certain permanent impairment compensations using a new methodology, thereby removing a technical barrier in the existing legislation. The new
methodology resulted from a review of the military compensation arrangements and is to be used where a person has a MRCA injury or disease and an injury or disease already accepted under the Veterans' Entitlements Act, the VEA, or the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, the SRCA.

As the House would appreciate, anything we can do to make life a bit easier for our veterans, particularly those with eligibility under multiple acts, is a positive thing. In the situation where a person has a MRCA injury or disease as well as an injury or disease under another act, the compensation payable under MRCA is assessed, taking account of conditions under the other two acts, the VEA and/or SRCA, to ensure that any compensation paid is assessed on a whole-of-person basis. No person will be disadvantaged by the application of this new methodology. Where the new calculation would result in a lower amount, the person's permanent impairment compensation will be maintained at the existing amount. There is no disadvantage.

The Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission began calculations in January of this year, and this is what highlighted the technical barrier in the existing legislation that prevented the retrospective recalculation of transitional permanent impairment compensations in some circumstances. These circumstances are where the person's claim for permanent impairment compensation was a subject of a claimant initiated review by the Military Rehabilitation and Conversation Commission or a review by the Veterans' Review Board or the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, the AAT. Under the existing legislation, the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission has no power to reconsider these decisions. The bill will enable the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission to complete these reviews for the benefit of members and former members.

It is a good bill. It is a no-disadvantage bill. It seeks to provide better care for our veterans. In that light, I was surprised, I must say, by the accusation by the member for Batman, the shadow minister for veterans' affairs, amongst other things, when he had the temerity, the audacity and the blatant effrontery to say this government has no policy direction in the area of veteran affairs. I may have taken the member for Batman with a modicum of seriousness if indeed the Labor Party had had a veterans policy at the last election, but it did not. So forgive me, Mr Deputy Speaker, if I just excuse the comments by the member for Batman as simply vacuous air with no substance. The coalition has a strong veterans policy. It has a strong commitment to our fighting men and women. Our indexation of DFRDB and DFRB superannuants is testimony to that strength of our concern for veterans. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

A message from His Excellency the Governor-General has announced recommending appropriation for the purposes of the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: If no member wishes to consider the bill in detail, I will put the report question forthwith. The question is that this bill be reported to the House without amendment.

Question agreed to.
Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

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

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House condemns the Government’s inaction on multinational tax avoidance that has seen tax breaks being given to multinationals, while households are slugged with higher taxes and cuts to essential services."

Dr HENDY (Eden-Monaro) (17:51): I rise to support the International Tax Agreements Amendment Bill 2014 and completely reject the disingenuous proposed second reading amendment from the shadow minister, the member for Fraser. I do not seek to speak at any length on this bill as it is an uncontroversial piece of legislation and, given that it is an uncontroversial bill, I think it is bizarre that the shadow minister has moved such a juvenile and hypocritical second reading amendment when there is supposedly bipartisan support in this parliament for dealing with multinational tax avoidance.

Simply put, this bill will amend the International Tax Agreements Act 1953 to give the force of law to the new tax treaty signed by Australia and Switzerland on 30 July 2013 during the term of the last government. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer said in his second reading speech on this bill:

Tax treaties facilitate trade and investment by reducing barriers caused by the double taxation of residents in the two countries.

He noted that Australia has 44 bilateral tax treaties. As he said:

The new treaty will fulfil Australia's 'most favoured nation' obligations, contained in the existing tax treaty with Switzerland, to reduce its withholding tax rates on dividends, interest and royalties paid by Australian residents to Swiss residents.

The new treaty will also modernise the bilateral taxpayer information sharing arrangements and permit, for the first time, the exchange of taxpayer information for the purpose of preventing tax evasion. This greater transparency includes access to Swiss bank information that could help Australia better enforce its tax laws.

This bill gives me an opportunity to reflect on the international taxation agenda of the government and the upcoming G20 meeting which Australia is hosting in Brisbane on 12-14 November this year. International tax evasion is a scourge that needs the direct attention of world leaders.

The G20, or group of 20, is essentially the 20 largest economies in the world representing 85 per cent the world's economy meeting to cooperate on economic issues. As Chair of the G20 Finance Ministers Group this year, the Treasurer, the member for North Sydney, has done a particularly good job of keeping international tax harmonisation at the forefront of the agenda. My New South Wales parliamentary colleague Senator Bill Heffernan has also done an exceptional job of raising this issue in Australia and I commend him for the work he has been doing in this area. I also want to acknowledge the work of community groups in Australia who have worked in collaboration with international groups like Transparency International on such matters.
Not very long ago, I had the pleasure of meeting Carol Bartlett and Gail Talbot from Micah Challenge in my Bega electorate office. Micah Challenge is a worldwide Christian movement for increasing foreign aid to countries that need help. This year their work has a focus on tax evasion. They particularly referred me to the work of Transparency International and I undertook to add my voice to this part of their campaign in parliament. Transparency International seeks effective work from the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group, which was set up in 2010. They point out the obvious fact that many of the biggest losers from international money laundering and other evasion are the poorest nations around the world, such as African nations. They argue that, if these matters could be dealt with effectively, it would reduce the level of international development aid that these poor nations require to help sustain their populations.

As the Treasurer stated in a speech on this topic to the Institute of International Finance in Brisbane on 20 February 2014:

Businesses are adopting new ways of doing business. That is due in part to the increasing integration of financial systems and economies around the world, as well as to the phenomenal growth of the internet and other technologies.

The international tax framework has not kept pace with these changes. Our tax systems were built for a world where business was predominantly confined to national borders. This is not the reality of the twenty-first century.

As a consequence, we have seen the erosion of domestic tax bases resulting from international tax planning that takes advantage of the gaps in our current taxation systems.

And citizens expect a comprehensive response from the G20 on this, given the inefficiencies and unfairness apparent in the current system.

That encapsulates the problem in a few sentences.

In signs of progress, the communique from the meeting of G20 finance ministers and central bank governors in Sydney on 22 and 23 February 2014 said:

We are committed to a global response to Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) based on sound tax policy principles. Profits should be taxed where economic activities deriving the profits are performed and where value is created. We continue our full support for the G20/OECD BEPS Action Plan, and look forward to progress as set out in the agreed timetable.

By the Brisbane summit, we will start to deliver effective, practical and sustainable measures to counter BEPS across all industries, including traditional, digital and digitalised firms, in an increasingly globalised economy. We endorse the Common Reporting Standard for automatic exchange of tax information on a reciprocal basis and will work with all relevant parties, including our financial institutions, to detail our implementation plan at our September meeting.

In parallel, we expect to begin to exchange information automatically on tax matters among G20 members by the end of 2015. We call for the early adoption of the standard by those jurisdictions that are able to do so.

We call on all financial centres to match our commitments.

We urge all jurisdictions that have not yet complied with the existing standard for exchange of information on request to do so and sign the Multilateral Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters without further delay.

We stand ready to give tougher incentives to those 14 jurisdictions that have not qualified for Phase 2 of the evaluations.
We will engage with, and support low-income and developing countries so that they benefit from our work on tax. This is all very important work because of the billions of dollars that have been siphoned off around the world into the black market.

Australia wants to work in collaboration with other nations in this endeavour. If we were to go it alone on this issue, it would disproportionately impact on investment and jobs in Australia. We therefore want to work with others. We really need a global solution. I wish the Prime Minister and the Treasurer all the best in the negotiations they undertake over the course of this year. The government's international tax agenda has the potential to help not only Australians but many millions of people across the world. In the meantime, we are focusing our attention on helping Australians with our schedule of bilateral tax agreements. This bill represents the latest instalment. In conclusion, I commend the bill to the House and reject the proposed second reading amendment of the member for Fraser.

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (17:59): Labor welcomes the government's implementation of legislation to give effect to the revised Australia-Switzerland tax treaty, which was signed on 30 July 2013. The revised treaty was a result of hard work by the previous Labor government. From the perspective of a Labor member, it is important to take opportunities to speak about moves and measures aimed at, among other things, stamping out tax evasion. Labor cares about tax evasion, because tax evasion is fundamentally a question of fairness. It is a question of people making the appropriate contribution to the community in which they live and to the community in which they do business. One reason that we are fundamentally concerned with stamping out tax evasion is that taxation is an important concern when considering issues of inequality in society.

We know that here at home Australian society has become more unequal. Callum Pickering, in an article entitled 'Australia's inequality shame can no longer be ignored', wrote on 22 January this year:

There is a balance to be had between inequality and opportunity and we have failed to get that balance right.

... the share of national income accruing to the top 1 per cent of income earners has increased significantly over the past three decades ... Australia had the second highest increase in inequality.

... ... ...

The top 1 per cent of income earners account for almost 10 per cent of Australia’s annual income. In addition, the biggest gains in income share have been concentrated in the top 1 and top 0.1 per cent of income earners. Remember that for the income share of any of these groups to go up another group has to go down ...

... ... ...

The actual level of income growth over the past thirty years is quite extraordinary and really reinforces how well the ‘elite’ have done compared with the working class. Real income for the bottom 90 per cent of the income distribution rose by just 34 per cent between 1980 and 2010. By comparison, the top 1 per cent has enjoyed income growth of around 178 per cent.

You can see that inequality is a concern for the Labor Party, because we care about equity and fairness. There are some really important reasons why modern societies should be concerned about extreme inequality. In their briefing paper Working for the few: political capture and economic inequality, Oxfam wrote in January this year:
Extreme economic inequality is damaging and worrying for many reasons: it is morally questionable; it can have negative impacts on economic growth and poverty reduction; and it can multiply social problems. It compounds other inequalities, such as those between women and men. In many countries, extreme economic inequality is worrying because of the pernicious impact that wealth concentrations can have on equal political representation. When wealth captures government policymaking, the rules bend to favor the rich, often to the detriment of everyone else.

The paper goes on to quote US Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis as famously having said, ‘We may have democracy, or we may have wealth concentrated in the hands of the few, but we cannot have both.’

The question of combating inequality goes to the fundamental fabric of a society. Of course, we know that there is also a correlation between inequality and peacefulness in the world, so it is a serious issue to try to combat inequality and it is a task that Labor takes very seriously. In the briefing paper, Oxfam further said:

The particular combination of policies required to reverse rising economic inequalities should be tailored to each national context. But developing and developed countries that have successfully reduced economic inequality provide some suggested starting points, notably:

• Cracking down on financial secrecy and tax dodging;

and a number of other things, including, interestingly in the present Australian context, investment in universal access to health care and education as a means of improving inequality.

I note that in the House today we heard the Minister for Education claim that the idea of deregulating higher education fees and imposing real interest as well as cutting funds to universities might somehow help more students get to university. That is a nonsense, and I think the minister is aware of that. As I say, the usefulness of combating inequality is something that is really evident if you consider the effects of inequality. Oxfam has spoken about the importance of financial transparency and cracking down on tax evasion to deal with some of the causes of inequality in society.

Like the previous speaker, I was visited earlier this year by young people representing Micah Challenge in their Shine the Light campaign on international tax evasion, particularly in the context of the G20 agenda this year. The Micah Challenge representatives who visited me told me that tax avoidance and tax evasion drains developing countries of vital revenue that they need for development and for reducing poverty. Their advice is that multinational companies cheat developing countries out of at least $160 billion a year in tax revenue, according to research undertaken on just two types of tax avoidance by UK aid and development agency Christian Aid. Aid and development agencies have a strong concern around tax evasion as well, because foreign aid, as important as it is, is not enough. We also need to have international tax justice so that developing countries have the money to which they are lawfully entitled so that lives can be saved, so that countries can develop, so that appropriate moves can be made and can be funded for development of developing countries.

That is why Labor will always take the opportunity to speak on laws that aim to assist in cracking down on tax evasion. This bill is, as I said, the government's implementation of legislation that will give effect to the revised Australia-Switzerland tax treaty that was signed in July 2013 as a result of hard work by the previous, Labor government. The revised tax treaty between Australia and Switzerland will enhance the already-strong economic
relationship between the two countries by aligning the bilateral tax arrangements more closely with current Australian and international treaty policy settings. It will also strengthen administrative assistance between Australian and Swiss revenue authorities, in particular by permitting them to exchange taxpayer information, including information held by banks and other financial institutions, in order to address tax evasion. We know that part of the issue with tax evasion is the transparency of information provided by companies and by taxpayers, because what you cannot measure you cannot manage, to use a management truism. You have to be able to see what is being paid, and how, in order to better understand and manage tax obligations and tax policy settings.

So, the bill reflects both countries' commitments to a fair tax system and is consistent with ongoing international efforts, including, within the G20, the base erosion profit-shifting agenda that has been spoken about, to improve tax system integrity globally. The revised treaty will enter into force after both countries have completed their respective domestic requirements. We welcome the government's move to give effect to the treaty through this legislation. However, we are still greatly concerned with the government's inaction on multinational tax avoidance through profit shifting and transfer pricing. Since coming to government, the coalition has provided over $1 billion in tax breaks to multinational firms. And, as I said, we know there is an international move through the G20 process, through the OECD, to counteract base erosion and profit shifting, to counteract tax evasion. The OECD actually has an action plan on base erosion and profit shifting, which has stated as follows:

Globalisation has resulted in a shift from country-specific operating models to global models based on matrix management organisations and integrated supply chains that centralise several functions at a regional or global level. Moreover, the growing importance of the service component of the economy, and of digital products that often can be delivered over the Internet, has made it much easier for businesses to locate productive activities in geographic locations that are distant from the physical location of their customers. These developments have been exacerbated by the increasing sophistication of tax planners in identifying and exploiting the legal arbitrage opportunities and the boundaries of acceptable tax planning, thus providing MNEs with more confidence in taking aggressive tax positions. The result of that is that multinational enterprises have increased opportunities to minimise their tax burden by shifting profits across borders, and this has significant flow-on effects not just for our economy but for all economies in the world and for developing countries as well. Those ramifications of course place constraints on government's abilities to invest in important areas, like health and education. That is why we say, and that is why it is recognised internationally, that base erosion and profit shifting undermine the integrity of the tax system. I think the Australian community is aware through the media that large multinational corporations are sometimes not paying their fair share of tax despite the often very healthy profits companies can enjoy. It is worth noting that part of the national interest when it comes to tax collection is in ensuring that we are collecting an appropriate amount of tax to fund our services.

The way that we can manage our tax evasion directly affects the budget, as we have been talking about to date. This government has tried to manufacture a budget emergency. They have now downgraded that to a so-called budget mess, but the fact is that when you come to office and you take about a year to start to address tax evasion people are going to raise their eyebrows when you claim that there are expenditure problems in the Australian budget. I think Australians are alive to that issue.
We strongly support any moves to increase the integrity of the tax system, and we do not want to see large and powerful taxpayers avoiding taxation in a way that then puts more pressure on smaller taxpayers and causes taxation collection to be conducted in a way that is unfair, particularly given the rising inequality I mentioned earlier.

Unfair tax arrangements also have a distortive effect on investment decisions. They create a perverse incentive to invest overseas, limiting local firms' access to capital and constraining their ability to grow, which of course affects their ability to create jobs and to further contribute to tax revenues here in Australia. As I have already said, tax avoidance is a grave problem internationally because of the direct relationship between poverty in developing countries and international tax evasion and profit shifting.

I, and I believe everyone in this place, would like to see real advocacy and real change when it comes to cracking down on tax evasion internationally. This year there is an opportunity to take a leadership role in the issue, in the context of the G20. My colleague the shadow Assistant Treasurer, Dr Leigh, has said:

Multinational companies can take advantage of slow-moving tax laws by shifting profits to low-tax countries.

This has obvious implications for tax revenue: companies avoiding their fair share of tax mean higher taxes or reduced services for you and me. Equally important, however, is the disadvantage incurred by local businesses which lack either the savvy or the scale to implement these complex taxation avoidance schemes.

In other words, the more power you have, the more sophistication you have and the more you are able to avoid paying your tax, then the less you pay your fair share. That is not a fair thing in a country of the sophistication and modernity of ours.

I mentioned to you that Micah Challenge had come to see me earlier this year. They have identified three critical measures to tackle tax dodging. I will mention those to you, because these are important issues for cracking down on international tax evasion. The first is the automatic exchange of information between tax authorities, which is about sharing information between revenue collection authorities. They have told me that when Denmark sent out 1,100 letters informing Danish taxpayers about information that had been shared automatically, 40 per cent reported foreign income that year that they had not previously reported. So clearly just the act of making information transparent encourages willing compliance, or more-willing compliance, with taxation obligations.

Second, beneficial ownership disclosure through a public register. In other words, some public means of ascertaining the beneficial owners of assets, not just the legal owners of assets. Of course, when complex trust structures are set up, it is very difficult to really have a clear picture of the wealth of a particular taxpayer.

Finally, they have raised with us country by country reporting for multinational corporations. So instead of aggregating all of the tax paid internationally in a global report, country by country reporting increases the transparency for multinational corporations, again, to better shine the light that Micah have spoken to me about on taxation collection.

While welcoming this bill, the government stands condemned for inaction on multinational tax avoidance that has seen tax breaks being given to multinationals—(Time expired)
Mr Hogan (Page) (18:14): I rise to support the International Tax Agreements Amendment Bill 2014. I am also against the amendment moved by the shadow Assistant Treasurer. Let us get the essence of what this bill is about. This bill, like any international tax agreement, is about improving trade and investment opportunities between two countries. This bill is certainly doing that, and I will go through it in greater detail to say specifically why this bill is going to increase trade and investment between the two countries, which obviously is a good thing for both.

The amendment that was moved by the shadow Assistant Treasurer is quite bizarre. They were in office for six years and suddenly, after being in office for not even a year, we are getting called on inaction over something they had six years to do. When you talk about inaction, we have a G20 summit coming up. I know the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer, the finance minister and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance have been doing a lot of work on making sure tax evasion, in the way that it was mentioned in the amendment, is very much a priority of this government. As I am sure the learned people on the other side know, any action on global tax evasion needs a global solution. A global solution means the G20 summit is going to be a wonderful opportunity for us to get to the nitty-gritty of those types of things and to come up with global solutions so we can stop and limit tax evasion as best we can. I agree with some of the things the member for Griffith just said. What she is saying is right—governments do want multinationals to pay the tax that they should pay. When they are shifting money around because of different tax scales, and doing that with transfer of pricing or whatever means they use, that is not okay.

But let us come back to this tax agreement bill. Not only will it increase the trade investment between the two countries; it will also help to limit tax evasion, so this tax agreement is at least acting on that in this bilateral agreement. As previously said, this bill amends the International Tax Agreements Act 1953. A revised treaty was signed in Sydney last July and, once enforced, it will replace the existing Swiss treaty which was signed in 1980. The revised treaty will update the existing bilateral tax arrangements between Australia and Switzerland to align them with current Australian and international tax policy settings. As I have said, one of the main reasons we have these agreements is to encourage trade and investment, which will further enhance economic relations between Australia and Switzerland.

The revised treaty is expected to reduce taxation barriers to bilateral trade and investment, primarily by reducing source country taxes on cross-border payments of dividends, interest and royalties. In this regard, the revised treaty will fulfil Australia's most favoured nation obligation contained in its existing tax treaty with Switzerland to reduce its withholding tax limits on such income paid to Swiss residents. The revised treaty will also benefit the bilateral economic relationship in other areas, and there are many examples—I will just go through some of them.

The revised tax treaty will strengthen both countries' ability to tax profits from things like construction activities, immovable property and business profit derived through trusts—which is another area where people can evade tax. So this is going to strengthen our ability to get taxes from those types of sources. It will help remove double taxation of transactions between associated entities, again while maintaining the ability of both countries to enforce their transfer pricing laws. Again, it is going to the issue of tax evasion. It prevents a double...
taxation of fringe benefits, prevents tax discriminations against Australian and Swiss nationals, provides taxpayers with the option of referring unresolved tax disputes to independent arbitration and clarifies the Swiss tax treatment of income earned by temporary residents of Australia. Again, what this type of agreement does is to create certainty. When people are operating on an international level, the one thing they want is to be very clear about the rules and regulations they are operating under. This is going to make the rules and regulations clearer, and everyone will be very clear about what they are supposed to do and how they will be treated.

It will also enhance the tax system by authorising for the first time—given the amendment, this is interesting—the exchange of taxpayer information to help address tax evasion. We are trying not only to increase trade and investment but also to address tax evasion. In this regard the Swiss treaty is consistent with ongoing international efforts, supported by the G20, to improve tax transparency—and we will hopefully see a lot more of that later this year in Brisbane. The revised treaty will establish a legal framework under which the Commissioner of Taxation will be able to seek taxpayer information from the Swiss revenue authorities for tax compliance purposes, including information held by Swiss banks. This will help to enhance the integrity of Australia's tax system, which is good news for us all.

The revised treaty will enter into force following the last notification that both countries have completed the domestic requirements, which, in the case of Australia, includes enactment of this bill. Once in force, the Swiss treaty will take effect in Australia in four stages, as per the dates set out in article 27 of the treaty.

Finally, this bill will also amend the International Tax Agreements Act 1953 to clarify the meaning of the term 'immovable property' for the purposes of both the revised treaty and any further Australian treaties that also use that term. This will align the term 'immovable property' with Australian domestic law and provide for consistent treatment of incoming gains derived from such property across Australia's tax treaty network.

Once in force, the Swiss treaty takes effect in Australia in four stages: with respect to fringe benefits tax, on fringe benefits provided on or after 1 April next following entry into force; with respect to withholding tax and income derived by residents of Switzerland, on income derived on or after 1 January next following entry into force; with respect to other Australian tax on income, profits or gains of any income derived in the income year beginning 1 July next following entry into force; and with respect to the exchange of information that relates to taxation or business years in course on, or beginning on or after, 1 January next following entry into force.

This bill is going to be a good thing between Australia and Switzerland. This is going to increase trade and investment between the two countries. It is going to provide greater certainty. The rules are going to be much clearer. Importantly, given the amendment that was moved by the shadow Assistant Treasurer, it is clamping down and making it easier for both countries to come down on those entities that are trying to evade tax. I commend this bill.

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (18:22): I also rise today to speak on the International Tax Agreements Amendment Bill 2014 and the amendment moved by my colleague the member for Fraser. I commend my colleague the member for Griffith for her characteristically high-quality contribution to the debate a few moments ago.
Mr Deputy Speaker Goodenough, as you know from our work on the Standing Committee on Tax and Revenue, how we set up our international tax arrangements is very topical at the moment and is very important for us to consider. This bill brings into force the revised Australia-Switzerland tax treaty, which was worked on under the last Labor government and signed on 30 July 2013, before the change of government last year. As the member for Page was saying, the laws will align the bilateral tax arrangements more closely with international tax treaty policy settings and will strengthen the administrative assistance between the ATO and its Swiss equivalent. Labor will certainly support any legislation that makes international tax arrangements easier and fairer.

It is certainly true that some of the complexities of international tax are not everyone's cup of tea. They are hard to grasp. They do not set the front pages on fire with their newsworthiness, but they are very important, because they boil down to a crucial issue, which is that the more companies and others pay their fair share of tax, the less tax that ordinary punters in our community have to pay. Our interest as a parliament and as Australians should be making sure that we are closing down, where we can, the various loopholes in the corporate tax system, because if those loopholes are not closed down, either there is a cost to services that are provided in our community or people with less capacity to pay have to pay higher rates to fill in the holes. So it is a really crucial principle at stake here, and this is why it is important that the amendment moved by the member for Fraser broadens this issue out beyond the Australia-Switzerland agreement to more fundamental issues of international tax, including profit shifting and base erosion.

When we speak about international tax arrangements, we cannot ignore the government's inaction in other areas. I have a lot of time for the member for Page, who spoke to this chamber a moment ago, but he is wrong to say that the government is blameless when it comes to some of the loopholes in our tax system—and I will go into a bit more detail on that shortly. It is a fact—it is not an opinion—that Labor had taken measures which have been subsequently wound back by the current government. So, while the G20 is rightly considering all of these issues and while the OECD and other sorts of credible economic institutions are also working on these issues and heading in one direction, the government in that respect of the section 25-90 change is unfortunately heading in the other direction, and that does have costs for our country, which I will come back to those in a minute.

It is again fact, not opinion, that the last Labor government, particularly the former Assistant Treasurer, David Bradbury, who was the former member for Lindsay, did a lot of good work in this area to tighten up loopholes in multinational profit shifting. I think you can take as evidence of the good work that David Bradbury did, that upon leaving this place, involuntarily I should say, he was picked up, snapped up, by the OECD and he is now a tax specialist in Paris at the OECD. It is a very technical, specialised role for which he is ideally qualified, and I think that shows just how skilled he is in this area. He did a lot of good work during the last Labor government, working with others in the economic portfolios, whether that be Chris Bowen, Wayne Swan or any of the others who did economic jobs in that government.

We believe that action on multinational profit shifting is important for two really crucial reasons: firstly, because the scale of profit shifting currently undertaken is a threat to our corporate tax base; and, secondly, because it is simply not fair for big multinational
companies to profit from business undertaken here but not pay their fair share of tax here. They benefit from our infrastructure, from our services and from our education system. It is important that we tighten up these loopholes where we can so that the companies who benefit from a first-class, first world economy and all that that entails are also kicking in to maintain that first-class, first world economy. We are all familiar with the example of Google. Google, of course, is a really impressive and important company. It is bringing a lot to change our economy. Ordinarily, I would be a big supporter of Google but it has been well publicised that their tax bill is probably out of whack with community expectations. I think they paid about $75,000 in tax in 2011, when they earned about $1 billion in revenues. It means that Australia is missing out on millions of dollars of tax revenue as a result of the complicated tax arrangements that companies like Google can put in place. This is money that Australia could be using to finance better schools, better hospitals, better roads or an improvement to the budget bottom line. There are lots of examples. I do not mean to single out just Google. There was another one in the paper today involving a big furniture manufacturer. There are a number of companies who are doing this legally, but this is because of an arrangement in our tax system that I believe is inadequate, and this is what the member for Fraser's amendment is all about.

This is also the point made by the Micah Challenge people. My colleague the member for Griffith also mentioned it. We have all met with the Micah Challenge people. They do fantastic work in our community and they are worried about this. They came and saw us. I think I see the member for Makin nodding. He probably had a meeting with them as well in June, when we all did. They have done some really important work to show the consequences and the costs that happen when multinational companies shift their profits. It has a particularly adverse impact, unfortunately, on developing countries who do not have the means to chase down these corporate tax dollars. So what we see in the developing world, particularly around Asia, and in Australia as well is that a lot of countries are being sold short by this practice. I think it was a point well made by our friends at the Micah Challenge.

No government wins out of this race to the bottom in the era of profit shifting. For this reason Labor did seek to close multinationals profit-shifting tax loopholes to make it easier for profit made in Australia to be taxed in Australia. This was not easy to do. David Bradbury and others took risks to implement a scheme of this nature and there was a rigorous debate, as there always is when it comes to tax policy in Australia; but it was the right thing to do, even if it was not the easy thing to do. And Labor introduced a suite of transfer pricing, offshore banking and thin capitalisation reforms that would have made international tax arrangements fairer and would have netted the budget something like $1.8 billion. In December last year, unfortunately, this government wound back most of those reforms to thin capitalisation and the offshore banking unit at a cost of $700 million to the budget bottom line, and in the May budget a further $443 million worth of tax loopholes were reopened. The result of this is $1.1 billion less towards the budget bottom line and $1.1 billion back into the pockets of multinational companies overseas.

And it is worth mentioning—and you were probably there, Mr Deputy Speaker Goodenough—that we asked the tax commissioner, the guy who runs the Australian Taxation Office, about this at a committee hearing. He said that some of these arrangements are the only place in the tax system where you can get an exemption for exempt income. That was
one of the things that we were trying to close down, and unfortunately the current government has reopened that situation, that unusual situation, which only benefits some of these big multinational companies. It is a shame. The member for Page was unhappy that we had accused them of being inactive. Unfortunately, it is worse than inaction; they have wound back some of the very sensible measures that we had put in place.

People who know their stuff in the fiscal world and the economic world have pointed to the fact that Australia has had a shortfall in revenue over the past few years. The Labor years were the lowest-taxing years, and that is because there are holes in our corporate tax base. There is a whole range of other reasons—the global financial crisis is one, of course. But corporate taxation did not recover as much as most people had hoped. Whether it is the Treasury Secretary or others, they have all said that Australia does have to look at its revenue base if it is to fund the sorts of services that people have a right to expect in a good country like ours. It is good to see that the government have said that they will make this a priority at the G20 meeting. Unfortunately, the G20 is heading in one direction while so far the government has been heading in the other direction. But we hope, for the sake of the country, that they change course. We hope that they reinstate some of the sensible measures that Labor had so that they can show the international community that they are actually serious about some of the things they have been saying about profit shifting and base erosion.

Unfortunately, it does go to the priorities of the government that they will cut money from higher ed, they will cut money from schools and hospitals and they will cut money from pensions at the same time that they are willing to forgo $1.1 billion from some of the biggest companies in the corporate tax system. One example, just to give people a sense of the scale of this $1.1 billion, is that if they held on to that $1.1 billion they would not need to cut the $1.1 billion they are taking from the childcare system. That is just one example of the sorts of things the government is doing and what their priorities are. I could go through a whole range of these sorts of opportunity costs, but I think my colleagues get the point.

So, in conclusion, Labor will of course be supporting the International Tax Agreements Amendment Bill 2014, but we cannot do that without recognising the government's substantial backward steps in the area of multinational profit shifting, and that is what the very sensible amendment of the member for Fraser goes to. Australia, as the host of the G20 meeting this year, must take a leadership role in improving the fairness of the international tax system. It is disappointing to see this government unwinding some good reforms to profit shifting here at home.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (18:33): On the issue of the International Tax Agreements Amendment Bill 2014, I do not think anybody could doubt the Treasurer's commitment to international tax issues. He has put it fairly and squarely on the table for the G20 meeting. He has made it a priority and has certainly shown a great deal of leadership in relation to international tax avoidance. Even in the *Sydney Morning Herald* he was quoted as asking how he could talk to a small business person in Sydney, competing against a multinational that does not have to pay tax, while they have to pay tax. He was quoted as saying so. And the Treasurer is determined to get real action on this issue. I support this bill that amends the International Tax Agreements Act 1953 to give effect to the convention between Australia and the Swiss Confederation for the avoidance of double taxation with
respect to taxes on income and its protocol. As we said, this is about trade, investment and opportunities.

The convention, also known as the Swiss Convention, was signed in Sydney in July 2013. It applies to taxes on income, and the coverage is explicit in that existing taxes imposed by each country are specifically listed. Australian taxes covered are income tax, fringe benefits tax and resource rent taxes. Swiss taxes covered are federal, cantonal and communal taxes on income. The new convention, when in force, will replace the agreement between Australia and Switzerland for the avoidance of double-taxation with respect to taxes on income and protocol. This is the existing Swiss agreement, which came into force in 1981.

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade—and this is why this is significant—Switzerland was Australia's fifth largest source of foreign direct investment, at AUD $23 billion, and sixth largest investor overall, at AUD $49 billion in 2012. These are not insignificant amounts. This is so important. Australia's total foreign investment in Switzerland amounted to $27.5 billion in 2012. There is a real two-way issue here. Notable Swiss companies with a base in Australia—and not everybody thinks of them—are mining giants like Glencore and Xstrata. There are pharmaceuticals and financial services companies like Credit Suisse. As well as being our fifth largest investor, Switzerland is also a significant trade partner. DFAT tells us that the merchandise trade between the two countries was worth $3.6 billion in 2012. Total merchandise exports from Australia were $681 million and imports were $2.89 billion. The major Australian export to Switzerland, interestingly, was jewellery, followed by gold, meat, excluding beef, and pharmaceutical products. Major Australian imports were pharmaceuticals, gold, watches and clocks—that would not surprise anyone! DFAT also identifies that two-way services trade amounted to around $1.8 billion in 2012. Switzerland is a significant investor in Australia.

This new treaty, when enforced by this legislation, will fulfil Australia's most favoured nation obligation contained in the existing tax treaty with Switzerland. This will reduce withholding tax rates on dividends, interest and royalties paid by Australian residents to Swiss residents. There will no doubt be a cost to this, but it is expected that this will not be significant and will be covered by changes introduced in this bill. This includes provisions in the new treaty that will modernise the bilateral taxpayer information sharing arrangements, and for the first time permit the exchange of taxpayer information for the explicit purpose—as we have heard so much about—of preventing tax evasion. That is what this bill is doing. This greater transparency includes access to Swiss bank information that could help Australia better enforce its tax laws and reduce tax evasion. We heard a lot about that, too, and that is in this bill.

It is this aspect in particular that will assist in raising revenue and providing balance in the financial impacts of this legislation. In addition, the new treaty will help remove double taxation of transactions between associated entities; prevent the double taxation of fringe benefits provided to employees; prevent tax discrimination against Australian and Swiss nationals; and provide taxpayers with the option of referring unresolved tax disputes to independent arbitration. So we are talking about increased trade and investment and we are talking about the issue of limiting tax evasion.

Another part of the legislation before the House today identifies that so-called dual-resident individuals—for example, individuals who are residents of both Australia and Switzerland,
according to the domestic taxation laws of each country—are to be treated for the purposes of the Swiss Convention as being resident of only one country. The convention deems that the person or other legal entity like a corporation to be a resident of the country in which its place of effective management is situated. Business profits are generally taxed only in the country of residence of the recipient unless they are derived by a resident of one country through a permanent establishment located in the other country, in which case the other country may also tax the profits. Importantly, these rules will also apply to business profits derived through a trust. As we know, the use of trusts as a legal entity is common in Australia, but is used to hide or rearrange fund distributions for taxation purposes. The inclusion of trusts in this legislation is really an important step.

This bill will also prescribe time periods for the purpose of deeming whether certain business activities constitute the business to be a permanent establishment. We are starting to see how this is going to work in practical terms. The rules will also prescribe the range of circumstances in which Australia can tax business profits derived by Swiss residents from construction and mining activities—I mentioned those companies earlier—and the operation of substantial equipment in Australia. This bill will also clarify the tax arrangements of agricultural business profits.

According to figures from PRDnationwide Research, Swiss investment included 74,448 hectares of crop and livestock properties scattered throughout NSW and the total Swiss investment in agriculture in 2010-11 was $150 million. Income from immovable property—including income from agriculture and agroforestry, both of which are common in the electorate of Forrest—may be taxed by the country in which the property is situated. Subject to that rule and some other property rules, all other capital gains will be taxable only in the country of residence.

In relation to transport companies, profits derived by an enterprise of one country from the operation of ships and aircraft in international traffic are only taxable in that country. This brings us to a key component of the bill, which is that is the treatment of so-called related entities and associated enterprises. These terms can have an extremely broad meanings and it can be difficult to identify corporate linkages, let alone categorise them. Under the proposals in this bill, profits of associated enterprises may be adjusted by the Australian and Swiss revenue authorities for tax purposes where transactions have been entered into on terms other than at arm's length. No source country tax is payable on intercorporate dividends where the beneficial owner of those dividends is a company that holds, directly or indirectly, at least 80 per cent of the voting power in the case of Australia or the capital in the case of Switzerland of the company, subject to certain conditions.

A 15 per cent limitation applies to most other dividends with some exceptions, such as a five per cent limitation on intercorporate dividends where the owner of those dividends is a company that holds directly at least 10 per cent of the voting power or the capital of the company paying the dividends. Dividends, interest and royalties may generally be taxed in both countries, but there are limits on the tax that the country in which they are sourced may charge on such income flowing to residents of the other country who are the beneficial owners of the income. In relation to the mining industry, which is the source of considerable Swiss investment throughout Australia, the rate limit set on source country taxation of royalty income is five per cent.
There are some smaller impacts that I would like to mention. Payments made from abroad to visiting students or business apprentices for the purposes of their maintenance, education or training will be exempt from tax in the country visited. Directors' remuneration may be taxed in the country in which the company of which the person is a director is a resident for tax purposes. Pensions, social security payments and annuities will be taxable only in the country of residence of the recipient, unless the recipient is not liable to tax in that country in respect of that income. In those cases, such income arising in the other country may be taxed in that other country. Subject to certain conditions, pensions paid from government funds of a country in respect of services rendered to that government will be taxable only in that country.

As I said, the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance are very focused on the issue of tax evasion not only in G20 but also in general. What is contained in this bill will certainly address the issues of tax evasion and assist in that process of addressing the issues. It will increase transparency, which we are looking to increase. Australia, as we know, is open for business to improve the trade and investment in both countries and to certainty for both Australia and Switzerland in that process. The issue of strengthening that relationship cannot be underestimated. I really do support this particular bill but the tax evasion issues, which we have heard so much about, are certainly a focus of the Treasurer and the Finance Minister. This bill is one example of that.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (18:45): I speak in support of the amendment moved by the opposition in respect of the International Tax Agreements Amendment Bill 2014. This bill gives effect to a revised tax treaty between Australia and Switzerland, as other speakers have pointed out—a treaty that was signed in July 2013 and that effectively replaces the existing agreement which came into force in 1981. I particularly note that the revised treaty will strengthen administrative assistance between Australia and Swiss authorities by allowing the exchange of information, including information held by banks and other financial institutions in order to address tax evasion. I expect that the exchange of information will also be of assistance in pursuing criminal and terrorist activities, where large sums of money are required and transferred around the world. I suspect that, indirectly, the benefits of this agreement will cover more than just tax evasion. However, I will focus my remarks on the issue of tax evasion and how the exchange of information, in conjunction with other measures, can make an important difference in preventing tax avoidance and tax evasion in a globalised economy.

Tax payments can be a major financial outlay by business and so it is not surprising that, just as any business would seek to reduce their overheads and the business costs, they will also seek to reduce their tax obligations. It is not uncommon that taxpayers, both individuals and entities, use clever accounting methods to minimise or even avoid paying their fair share of taxes. Closing tax loopholes is difficult to do when it occurs within Australia or within any single jurisdiction, but it is much more difficult to do when dealing with entities that operate across more than one jurisdiction. It is difficult to follow the money trail but even more so where different tax regimes and tax rates apply between different countries. It makes perfect sense for a taxpayer operating across more than one jurisdiction to organise their affairs so that profits are made and declared in the lowest taxing jurisdiction—it may not always be ethical but, if it is legal, it makes sense. That is what has been happening. Over the years several high profile cases of tax avoidance have been the subject of media reports here in
Australia. It is a problem that is faced by all countries around the world and one that is regrettably growing. Indeed, it is now the subject of international attention and of attention by human rights groups and justice advocates around the world.

The member for Rankin referred to the Micah Challenge earlier on in his remarks on this bill. Earlier this year I also met with representatives from Micah Challenge who were in Canberra to raise awareness about their Shine the Light campaign. Micah Challenge is a non-government Christian organisation that draws attention to global poverty, injustice and human suffering around the world whilst simultaneously campaigning strongly in support of the Millennium Development Goals. In recent years their advocacy has been invaluable in securing additional aid funding. Not surprisingly the young people I met with were disappointed that aid funding had been cut by the Abbott government by $7.6 billion over the next five years in the 2014-15 federal budget. The decision by the Abbott government to cut aid funding not only breaks previous promises and expectations created by the Prime Minister, but is another example of the Abbott government's callous policies where the most disadvantaged are hit even harder. The government's claim that aid funding has been poorly administered, even if true, should be not an excuse for cutting funding but rather a reason for better management of it. There is indeed a budget deficit, but there is no budget crisis. And unlike Conservative UK Prime Minister David Cameron, who said the government will not 'balance the books on the backs of the poorest people in the world', Prime Minister Abbott shows no such empathy.

I refer to these cuts because they relate directly to this bill. In anticipation of the funding cuts, Micah Challenge has offered an alternative funding source for global aid. Indeed, the funding source would not only enable Australia to meet the millennium development goals but also go a long way towards cutting Australia's budget deficit. Micah Challenge are referring to the additional tax revenue that could be generated by closing down tax dodging and even corruption in global tax evasion. This is what Micah Challenge wants to shine the light on. Tax Justice Network, a UK-based global non-government social justice organisation, estimates that between $21 trillion and $32 trillion is hidden by the world's wealthiest people in around 70 global tax havens. The tax that would be paid on the earning of that money is estimated at between US$190 billion and US$280 billion annually. Unethical multinationals and wealthy individuals use transfer pricing to rort the tax system, and then stash away funds in secretive bank accounts within low-tax regimes. Indeed, I note that one of those low-tax regimes is Switzerland, so I am pleased we are entering this revised agreement with them.

There are no uniform tax obligations around the world in the same way as we have trade obligations through the World Trade Organization, and taxation competitiveness between countries further encourages transfer pricing and other tax avoidance practices. The tax evaded is estimated to be in excess of the amount expended annually on global aid. I repeat that: the tax evaded is in excess of the amount expended annually on global aid. If we were able, throughout the world, to simply collect the tax that is evaded—this is not increasing taxes but collecting the taxes that should rightfully be paid—there would be no need for global aid, because it would be funded from that source. These tax rorts also occur in very impoverished countries, and this is one side of this issue I find hard to deal with. The very countries to whom the aid is given are also affected by tax losses that they incur because of
tax evasion by multinationals or individuals. The amount of tax losses those very countries incur quite often exceeds the amount they in turn receive annually through global aid budgets from other countries around the world. Again, if we were able to close down the tax evasion that occurs within many of the developing countries, there would be no need for additional global aid from Australia or other countries, because the money would be there from their own sources. I think it highlights the callous attitude of some multinationals that are prepared to avoid paying their fair share of tax to those very developing countries where the need is so great.

Australia is not immune from those very tax losses. Much, if not all, of the tax evasion and rorting of tax systems can, over time, be stopped if there exists an international will to do so. And it does require an international will, because we operate in a global economy. As Micah Challenge rightly point out, Australia is now in a unique position to show some leadership on this issue. As chair of the G20 summit in Brisbane in November, Australia should place the issue on the agenda and initiate international action. I note that other speakers have said that we will be doing that, and I commend the government for doing so. I hope that it is not simply a talkfest of some kind but rather that G20 leaders make a genuine attempt to do something about this, because quite frankly it affects all of their countries as well. It is in the interest of their national economies. At a time when so many other countries are also struggling to pay for the needs of their own people, it seems to me that this is one matter that should be dealt with, because it will resolve the problems of so many countries. Hopefully, the pressure on governments as a result of the global economic recession that we have had will be such that they will now want to do something and act in a very constructive way at the G20 meeting.

I accept, and I think we all accept, that not all jurisdictions will cooperate. Some jurisdictions will do whatever they can to remain part of the tax havens and the tax avoidance industry. Some countries, it seems to me, almost survive from this very immoral industry. But there are also some countries that are showing leadership, and we should applaud and support them.

Amongst the many actions that could be taken, Micah Challenge is calling for Australia not only to seek agreement to raise the matter at the G20 meeting but also to seek agreement on three critical matters. I will refer to those very briefly. Firstly, they want the G20 to reach agreement on the automatic exchange of information between all tax authorities. While some intergovernmental agreements already exist, including with Australia, they do not exist with all countries. Secondly, there needs to be beneficial ownership disclosure through a public register that lists the true owners and beneficiaries of companies, trusts and foundations. This would make it much easier for authorities to follow the money trail. Currently, no such register exists in Australia. Thirdly, there must be country-by-country reporting for multinational corporations. This is what Micah Challenge are asking Australia to take a lead on. I understand that the US and the European Union have already taken the lead in country-by-country reporting requirements, but Australia is still lagging behind.

These measures may be seen as moderate steps against a tax avoidance industry that is rife throughout the world, because regardless of what laws are in place tax accountants and lawyers will always find ways around them. It is the super-rich and the multinationals that control huge sums of money who benefit from international tax avoidance schemes and secretive tax havens. They are also the people who can afford the best lawyers and best
accountants in the world, yet they are also the people who can most afford to pay more tax. By not paying their fair share of tax, they add to the tax burden of low-income people, small businesses and others who have no opportunity to avoid or evade tax.

Micah Challenge's aim is to shine a light on and expose those engaging in tax-dodging and corruption. I applaud them for doing so. If we can do so, we will in turn reduce the opportunities for tax avoidance. As I said, it is not about making profit makers pay more tax; it is not a tax-increasing measure. Rather, it is about making them pay their fair share of tax. The G20 meeting is a terrific opportunity for Australia to show some genuine leadership on this.

Lastly, I make the comment that this is a problem for Australia regardless of what happens at the G20 meeting. I note that in another report the Australian Taxation Office has identified some 86 companies that it considers may be engaged in substantial transfer pricing. I would be very surprised if transfer pricing or profit shifting is limited only to those 86 companies, but I understand the difficulties in trying to trace and follow the money trail. I applaud the ATO for at least making an effort to do so.

As the Tax Justice Network has reported, collectively, we are talking about billions if not trillions of dollars around the world. So I will applaud any measures that we can take, whether small or large, here in Australia to close down the opportunities for those people that want to avoid paying their fair share of tax.

I am disappointed that the government has decided not to proceed with some of the measures that we were hoping to introduce in the last parliament under Labor, measures that would have perhaps raised $1.1 billion of additional measures. Nevertheless, this is a step in the right direction. I support the general thrust and I support the amendment moved by our side of parliament.

Mr John Cobb (Calare) (19:00): The International Tax Agreements Amendment Bill 2014 is about integrity—the integrity of Australia's tax system—but it is also about fairness. I do not disagree with most of what I have heard this evening. The tax treaty between Australia and Switzerland, which is one of the oldest unamended tax treaties, will be updated to permit the exchange of taxpayer information for the prevention of tax evasion. It does not take a lot of common sense to realise that if you do not share information with the other countries you deal with you have absolutely very little hope of getting to the bottom of what it is a global company in particular is doing with its books.

The new Swiss treaty will enable the Australian Taxation Office to seek, for the first time, taxpayer information from Swiss tax authorities for the purpose of addressing tax evasion. This includes Swiss bank information. The inclusion of these rules will provide a significant deterrence to taxpayers who may have sought to take advantage of Swiss bank secrecy laws. The revenue cost of the new treaty is minimal and will be offset by the revenue gains arising from enhanced tax system integrity through the establishment of effective exchange of information arrangements with Switzerland.

Tax evasion is a significant issue for Australia internationally and domestically. As recently reported, the ABS estimates up to $225 billion each year is being used on the black market and effectively evades the tax system. These are the cash-in-hand jobs that may seem harmless but collectively they are making Australia's taxpayers who do meet their obligations
contribute much more to fill the gap by those making use of the black market, as it were. In response, the ATO has indicated that it will be targeting businesses that operate in the cash-only black economy—I hope it is more successful than it has been in the past—including but not limited to builders, restaurants, cleaners, et cetera.

Tax treaties are the mechanism by which Australia can participate in the global economy and cooperate with tax authorities in overseas countries largely through the sharing of information, as we have said. We now have 44 bilateral tax treaties and, as I mentioned, the treaty with Switzerland is one of the oldest, dating back 34 years. The new Swiss treaty will update the existing bilateral tax arrangements to align them with current Australian and international tax policy settings.

The treaty is expected to encourage trade and investment, which will further enhance economic relations between Australia and Switzerland. Switzerland was Australia's fifth largest source of foreign direct investment, at A$23 billion—and I will talk about this later—and sixth largest investor overall, at A$49 billion, in 2012. Australian total investment in Switzerland amounted to A$27½ billion two years ago. The Swiss treaty is expected to reduce taxation barriers to bilateral trade and investment, primarily by reducing source country taxes on cross-border payments of dividends, interest and royalties.

I mentioned integrity earlier. This amendment shows the government is committed to ensuring that the integrity of our taxation system is maintained and has already taken action to ensure that multinationals do pay the appropriate amount of tax in Australia. The government has endorsed key elements of the former government's integrity package, taking into account potential harmful impacts on genuine business activities, which, in my experience of taxation offices, they quite often say you have to watch.

These measures address profit shifting by preventing the excessive allocation of debt to the Australian operations of multinationals. The issue is one which Australia and other G20 nations need to work together on to ensure that companies pay fair tax in the country in which they produce and not where they can shift the profits. We also need to ensure our country is getting a fair deal in these treaties.

As previously mentioned, the G20 is looking at this, and the OECD are working to have something to bring back to those countries by December 2015. It is essential that they do. Our country is currently enjoying large investment. I do not think there has ever been more investment in Australia. There has also been good investment and we have always needed it, but there is a question mark about agricultural investment—in land and agribusiness. We have a lot of investment in mining and various things.

I believe that most investment in Australia is for investment, but there are some who invest in Australia because they want the product rather than the profit it might generate. So they have to be seen and they have to pay tax—not necessarily where they want to realise the profit. It is not that hard in this multinational world that we live in for them to realise the profit in the country of lowest taxation—which almost certainly will not be us. It may be a country that is not a member of the G20 which, desperate to have jobs and one thing and another, will have low taxation just to attract a certain level of business. If a global company can realise its profit in that country rather than where they generate what they are growing or producing—whether it is in agriculture or mining—we have to be able to ensure that we have a system that allows us to get what is our fair share. The fairness we are talking about is
fairness to the Australian taxpayer. As I mentioned earlier, domestically, the black tax side of things means that those of us who do meet our obligations pay far more than we should have to because, as I said, there are over $200 million a year that is missing.

This bill, which deals with our treaty with Switzerland, is probably an example of what we have to do around the world. December 2015, when the OECD report back to all those member countries with what they think should be done, cannot come soon enough. I have no problem with investment in Australia. I do have a problem if the companies that invest here do not pay the tax they should, and I think this really is something that everybody should be mindful of. It is one thing for someone to invest here; it is another thing to ensure that they pay what they should. As I said earlier, there is a lot of interest today about people from overseas investing in Australia housing and investing in Australian agriculture. The one that concerns me is agribusiness—because, if you lose the agribusiness, you lose control of the product that it deals in. I have no doubt that most of those people are investing because they want to diversify their portfolio from overseas and Australia is seen as a safe place to do that—and I certainly I hope that it is. I welcome their investment in that sense. But, if they want to take the product out, they must pay what is due in Australia on the profit that is generated, even if it is not actually realised here. I hope in the future that is what happens.

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (19:09): I thank those members who have contributed to this debate on the International Tax Agreements Amendment Bill 2014. This bill, by amending the International Tax Agreements Act 1953, gives effect to the revised tax treaty between Australia and Switzerland. It also clarifies the meaning of the term 'immovable property' for the purposes of the revised Swiss treaty and for any future Australian tax treaties that also use that term.

In modernising the existing tax treaty with Switzerland, which was signed in 1980, Australia has negotiated improvements to the bilateral tax arrangements which will enhance tax system integrity and transparency. The revised treaty provides a legal basis for the exchange of taxpayer information, including Swiss bank information, between the tax administrations of Switzerland and Australia for the purpose of preventing tax evasion. This is not possible under the existing treaty with Switzerland.

The revised treaty and this bill also ensure that Australia's tax treaty network continues to support Australia's economic relationships with its major trade and investment partners. In updating the rules concerning the allocation of taxing rights between the two countries, the revised treaty with Switzerland will remove a number of taxation obstacles that might otherwise impede bilateral economic activity.

The amendment moved by the opposition is as stunning in its hypocrisy as it is wrong. The amendment is not supported by the government. This government is committed to ensuring the integrity of our taxation system is maintained and is taking action to ensure that multinationals are paying the appropriate amount of tax in Australia. We have legislation before the parliament to tighten the thin capitalisation safe harbour limits and ensure the foreign non-portfolio dividend exemption for Australian companies only applies to returns on equity. These measures address profit-shifting by preventing the excessive allocation of debt to the Australian operations of multinationals and I commend the bill to the House.

Question negatived.
Original question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.
Ordered that this bill be reported to the House without amendment.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Debate resumed:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Griggs) (19:12): The question is:
That grievances be noted.

School Attendance

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (19:12): Firstly I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for his contribution. It is a bit of a pity he could not read out the second reading speech in his hand today; nevertheless, that is a past event.

I want to talk about the failure of the Commonwealth government's measures on school attendance in the Northern Territory and note that the minister responsible—the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Scullion—has now vowed to impose sanctions on parents in remote Indigenous communities whose children do not attend school. He would know that there is a program he could be using as a model, which is not as punitive as he would like, but nevertheless does take action against parents in particular circumstances. I refer to Labor's School Enrolment and Attendance Measure, or SEAM, where the parents come within the scope of Centrelink when the child has 10 absences over a 10-week period. This seems to me to be an appropriate trigger to cause Centrelink to look at what is happening in terms of that school attendance.

That is not what is being proposed here, though. This is far more arbitrary and it appears to be policy on the run. What it does demonstrate is how the strategy from the minister, to boost remote school attendance in the more remote communities without sanctions, has failed to significantly improve attendance. The South Australian Minister for Education, Jennifer Rankine, has described Senator Scullion's plan to withhold welfare payments from parents of truants as 'policy on the run' to cover 'his embarrassment over his failure to improve attendance rates'.

The Northern Territory's latest available figures for 2014 show a decline in attendance after the initial spike. Santa Theresa was above 70 per cent and is now less than 70 per cent, and other communities in central Australia—Yuendumu and Tennant Creek—have gone backwards; Alekarenge, Ntaria and Santa Theresa have gone backwards, and $46 million has been spent on this program so far. At the time it was introduced I, along with others, said that it would not work. We said it would not work for a range of reasons, not the least of which was the then Northern Territory government's policy of cutting expenditure on education and getting rid of classroom teachers at the very same time the Commonwealth had committed money for 200 extra teachers to teach in the bush. So what we had was the Commonwealth putting money in at the front end and the Northern Territory government taking money out at the back end, and taking school teachers out of classrooms in the bush, where they are most needed.

What we need to do—and we said this and continue to say it, and it has now been reinforced by very prominent educators I know in the education system—is encourage

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parental responsibility. The SEAM program would do that. Also, we need to identify community factors that negatively impact on attendance; use kinship connections to enhance attendance; maintain and make more inclusive programs like the Clontarf program for boys in schools, and develop an equivalent program for young women; and better management of the impact of increased attendance on classrooms. In regard to the latter, we know that what has happened in the past is that people who have been disengaged from the education system and come back into the education system after having not been there for some years, and in some cases not having been at all, are sometimes disrupting the whole way in which the school operates. We also need to staff remote community schools on enrolments and not on attendance, which is standard practice in all other states. This is so that teachers are not forced to attend to the higher needs and behaviour management of the irregular attendees, but have support in the classroom to work with them. We need to get additional classroom resources; get higher quality research into the classrooms and the remote communities in the Northern Territory, and other places, to see first-hand the current setup that guarantees failure through gross direct funding discrimination.

Experienced teachers with students in remote communities are telling me about their concerns with the current effort by the federal minister, Senator Scullion, to improve attendance in remote schools. One teacher told me that they undertook research into school nonattendance over 20 years ago and discovered that attendance at the time was a worrying 70 per cent on average across the remote schools in the Northern Territory. The current situation appears to be little better. The teacher now informs me that they work in a school with a good history of attendance in the mid-70 per cent range. It is one of the schools that is involved in the urgent program involving the use of Commonwealth funded attendance officers, and it is now running below 70 per cent. This is a concern to all staff in the school and people generally in the school community.

The teacher discussed the concerns of that staff at the school, which he said were as follows. Who has determined that the attendance officers have the appropriate cultural linkages within the community? What training has been provided for these attendance officers? Who has determined the specific role they will undertake? What are the parameters of their day-to-day operations? Who will determine that it is acceptable that the attendance officers will force the re-entry of uninterested truants into effective classrooms, to the disadvantage of the regular attendees? What consideration has been given to the impact on ongoing programs? These questions have been raised by an experienced practitioner at the chalk face—to use an old school teaching term that I am very familiar with, but when I attend a classroom now I cannot find a chalk board or a duster, which makes me a little confused!

An honourable member: You probably cannot find a slate!

Mr SNOWDON: No slate and no abacus! What is more important for the future of communities—a well educated interested group of regular attendees, or a group made up of students who have been forced to participate and for whom attendance is not only a chore but also a chance to misbehave and disrupt an already effective program delivery?

Is a process of potential parent fines for student nonattendance going to make a difference without a strategy to re-engage those non-attenders through a transitional return to the classroom? We all want to see these young kids at school. We all want every young person in Australia to come out of the education system with a good educational outcome, which sets
them up for opportunities in life, either for further training, so that they can get into the workforce, or to go off to university or wherever it is they might go. The important thing to understand is that this measure has yet to work. The problem is that the minister seems unwilling to accept the criticism and come up with changes that might be beneficial. I also might add that he has been less than able to confront the hideousness and the obduracy of the Northern Territory government in its attitude to the funding of school programs in the Northern Territory.

A lot more needs to be done certainly on the ground in classrooms from the teachers' point of view and we know that the current government's new thought bubble lacks any real coherence and any detail. We do need to do a lot more work with families and communities to encourage children to go to school. We do need to make sure that these young kids get the opportunities they richly deserve. But they ain't going to be helped by the Northern Territory government potentially taking a decision to cease high school education in a large number of schools in the Northern Territory, which is their plan. What they are effectively attempting to do will be to turn the clock back prior to the election of the Labor government in 2001 in the Northern Territory when they introduced for the very first time years 11 and 12 in remote schools in the Northern Territory.

Some might argue that it has not been very successful because we have not had high numbers of kids getting on to university. The fact, though, that they have got kids continuing in school to year 12 is a really positive outcome. What we are going to see now are kids at the end of year 6 or 7 potentially going into a post-primary education facility where there will be no coherence. They will end up effectively being alienated from the education system and, like the generations before them who were in that same situation, they will end up without any reasonable educational outcome or any real opportunity to get a job or move on to further training or a higher education.

We know that this government has done other things which go directly against their stated objective of getting young kids to school. They have abandoned the 38 family and children's centres, and by not renewing the MPA to fund them the government risks kids getting to school without the benefit of early childhood education and they are at a higher risk of falling behind from the beginning and disengaging from their education.

We all know what the education theorists tell us—engage young people as young as possible. We are hearing people talk about early childhood education and early childhood health and continuity and managing health and education through life. But what we are seeing with this government is a disengagement strategy for young kids so that when they get to school they are not properly prepared.

I just say to the government: rethink this strategy about remote education. Look very carefully at the SEAM project which was introduced by Labor. Do not take punitive measures which will actually disaffect communities and make families turn off the education system. We need to be attracting kids into school, not alienating them. (Time expired)

Food and Fibre Production in Australia

Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa—Deputy Speaker) (19:22): I rise tonight to speak about an issue which, in my view and that of many others, threatens to suffocate the resilience of our food and fibre producers in this country. This section of the agricultural sector is very
much in Northern Australia and is part of my electorate. It is an issue that concerns their future in seeing themselves through this extreme drought while dealing with the implications of the ban on the live cattle, which was imposed by the previous government, and their prospects for rebuilding when the rains come.

People listening tonight: if you eat food I would ask you to put your hands up. Maybe you would be out of order if you did that in this chamber, but if you eat food I have got to plead with you and say that you should be engaged in this debate. It is a very serious debate we are looking at. It is a very serious issue with ramifications right across this country.

I come to this debate with a life's experience on the land—bringing up my own family on the land, running my business on the land in a mixed farming enterprise, dealing with droughts and with how you educate your kids, having to send them away to university 700 or 800 kilometres away. And you have to deal with the vagaries not only of the weather but also the international commodity prices. So I come to this debate with a true understanding but also a passion as to how we can help people through this drought and make sure that this nation has food and fibre producers into the future. They are an essential element of any government's responsibility in my view and we must ensure that we have them into the future.

I want to place these figures on the public record. The Reserve Bank tells us that rural debt now exceeds some $64.3 billion. If you put that against gross rural production in Australia, that is something like $46 billion gross value of production, and it is a figure that represents 139 per cent of the gross value of rural production.

Tim McGavin has an MBA, is from the land, is involved in commodities and finance and still holds rural enterprise assets. As he said, with rural debt to gross value of rural production in Australia today running at 130 per cent, that is the sort of number seen in Greece and Spain during the GFC, when they had to address the serious issues they were confronting with their debt to GDP ratio. So Australia's rural debt to GDP ratio is in a similar stratosphere.

James Walker, a fellow Nuffield scholar, is a pastoralist near Longreach whose family's history in the area dates back three generations, to the pioneering families in the area. James Walker held the Drought Finance Future—Industry Renewal Summit a couple of weeks ago, on 21 August, in Longreach. A case study involving a fictitious property called Kidworth was used to represent a troubled pastoral business. The case study was put together by two accounting firms with rural practices, one from Brisbane and one from a rural community. There was also input from the Australian Farm Institute. Although the property was fictitious, it represented a typical property in central western and north-western Queensland. Kidworth's net equity position at the end of 2013 was $1.7 million. But back in 2007, it had $4.3 million. Those are the sorts of losses that people are confronting. That puts landholders in a situation where their debt-to-equity ratio is such that the banks can no longer continue to support them and so may hold them as being at risk or put them on notice. These are very challenging times for people on the land.

The challenge at this summit for the invited guests, including CEOs from as far away as Melbourne and Brisbane, was to come up with a business model that might work for the agricultural and pastoral sector in the future. One of the interesting speakers there was Professor Roger Stone, a climatologist from the University of Southern Queensland. He outlined quite clearly the fact that Australia has the most variable rainfall pattern in the world. He also said that we are confronting a probable El Nino event, though it is not fully
developed. His presentation of the climate science suggested that the worst impact would be in central western and north-western Queensland—the very areas that have been impacted by the ban on live cattle exports, which has caused a loss of capital value and an inability to continue regular seasonal production, with many properties having to default on their loan agreements.

This government recognises the situation in many parts of the drought affected areas of Northern Australia. About 75 per cent of the land mass of Queensland is drought declared. I acknowledge that the Minister for Agriculture will very soon be taking the Treasurer out to Western Queensland. He has stated that publicly on the record, and that is a very positive step forward. I thank the Treasurer for agreeing to go with the minister. I think the Treasurer himself has land in North Queensland—probably in a more favourable rainfall area. It is great to see that the Treasurer, despite his busy schedule, is going to take time, at the invitation of the agriculture minister, to go out to Western Queensland. Importantly, the Minister for Agriculture is going to put on a roundtable on 23 September where he is inviting the banks to discuss this very challenging issue—one that we must find solutions to. It is a positive step forward, but it is important that all of the banks that lend in rural Australia be there, because the messages I am getting—and I am sure the minister has been receiving them too—are that, while we are putting financial counsellors in play to assist people with their books and doing financial models to see a way forward when it rains, in some cases banks are prepared to forgive some debt providing they can get accommodation at another bank. In that position, with some debt forgiven, the debt-to-equity ratio looks reasonable, and even some banks are saying, 'That looks okay.' Then they put it to their head office, and they say, 'Because you have had debt written off, or forgiven, we are not prepared to take you on,' notwithstanding that their model would look as though it would be financed in any normal circumstance.

The other thing I am concerned about is that when the rains do occur is that the old model that used to occur, which I am sure the member for Grey would understand, is that, when the rains came in the past, the stock and station agent would provide the carry-on finance to provide the money for seed or, in the pastoral areas, provide the money to restock—to buy cows or buy sheep. The pastoralists did not have to worry about it—the finance was there, available. They took a mortgage on the stock and took brokerage fees when the stock were sold. But it is a model of the past; it is no longer there. The stock and station agents of today are not going to do that in the future, and they have not been doing it for some time. What was there in the past will not work into the future.

I remind those who are listening tonight of why this is such an important debate. During the height of the GFC, when Australia had one quarter of negative growth in this country, had we gone into the second quarter of negative growth we would have been in technical recession. The sector that prevented that was the agricultural sector—everything else was in decline, including the mining sector. Why? We had better seasons, we had reasonable prices and the agricultural sector's export performance was increasing. Because of that we prevented Australia from going into a technical recession. So I say to this chamber, and to the people of Australia who are listening: if you eat food, you need to be engaged in this debate. If you do not eat food, I am sure you are not interested. I just say this is a serious debate, and one that I am going to continue. I thank the agriculture minister for what he is doing as we lead into this
meeting with the banks, and I am looking forward, if I am invited, to being there to hear their story. *(Time expired)*

**Education**

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (19:32): I rise to condemn the Abbott government for their approach and the damage they are proposing to do to our nation's education system. From the cradle to emeritus professor level, this government is seeking to withdraw funding and to undermine the equity and fairness of our education system. We are all aware of the commitment the Prime Minister gave to the people of Australia two days before the election when he said: 'No cuts to health, no cuts to education, no changes to the pension, and no cuts to the ABC or SBS.' On the *Insiders* program on 1 September 2013, Tony Abbott gave another commitment—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Griggs): Please refer to him as the Prime Minister.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE: The Prime Minister gave another commitment to the people of Australia when he said: 'I want to give people this absolute assurance: no cuts to education.' They are the Prime Minister's own words. That was his commitment to the people of Australia about education. But what we have seen is that commitment, that promise, broken in the most dramatic of circumstances. In all areas of education, from preschools and child care through to schools, through to universities, TAFE colleges and higher education, this government is proposing to make it harder for young Australians to get a decent education and to improve their opportunities in life. This government has announced cuts to funding for preschools—reducing guaranteed hours for kids; and cuts to numerous programs for schools. The most dastardly of those is the $100-million-dollar cut to support for kids with disabilities in our community. Vocational training positions—cut; the Tools for Your Trade scheme—cut, and replaced with an opportunity for students to go into more debt; and in higher education—the deregulation of university fees, allowing universities to charge what they want for courses, and reductions in subsidies. All of these are undermining the educational opportunities for our kids, and removing the ability for our kids to have fair access to education, regardless of their parents' bank balance, their ethnicity, their background, or where they live.

My Labor colleagues and I pledge to fight these cuts. At every level of education, this government is trying to make it harder for families to help their kids get a good education. In early childhood education, this government is refusing to guarantee federal funding for preschools and kindergartens. The Minister for Education has said that this is the responsibility of the states; it is not the deal of the Commonwealth to be involved in ensuring that our kids get a good start in education when they are in kindergarten or preschool.

Subsequent to these cuts, a number of preschools in my electorate of Kingsford Smith do not know whether they can continue to guarantee the minimum of 15 hours of early childhood education for kids before they start school. We have had $1 billion cut from childcare support for families through this latest budget, and $235 million of that is from the Child Care Benefit—which for some working families is the difference between having a kid in child care and not having a kid in child care. For people on wages as low as $48,000 a year, this vital assistance is proposed to be cut.

Turning to schools, the Labor Party has estimated that $30 billion is going to be cut from education—from funding for schools—over the next 10 years. In my electorate of Kingsford...
Smith, this equates to $144 million being cut from our schools over the next 10 years. That will result in a dramatic decrease in the quality of education that schools in my community will be able to deliver to students. And there is not only that wholesale cut to education but also cuts to some specialist programs that are provided to help disadvantaged kids in our community; the most dastardly and the most despicable of these cuts is the $100 million proposed to be cut from support for kids with disabilities. This was an interim program to ensure that we could support kids until the disabilities loading was enshrined in the Australian Education Act. Before that important loading under the Gonski reforms was put in place, the previous Labor government provided this $100-million program to give those kids the education and the opportunities that they deserve. This government has cut that program—you would not want to hear of a lower act, than cutting funding in schools for kids with disabilities. But this government will stoop to the lowest depths.

It does not stop at that: $450 million cut from the out-of-school-hours care program; $20 million cut from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership; $1.3 million cut per annum from the ABC Digital Education program; $7.2 million cut from the Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowships; $38 million cut from the National Plan for School Improvement; and half a million dollars cut from the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools program. We talk about the importance of Australia in the Asian century. This is a program specifically aimed at providing support for our kids to be able to communicate with Asia. And what is this government's approach? It is to completely wipe that program out.

There has been $37 million cut from the trade cadetships program. There has been $950 million cut from the trade training centres. There will be no more trade training centres built in our nation. There will be no more opportunity for kids to begin their trade whilst they are still at school. The schoolkids bonus is being cut. It provides important funding for low-income families to support their kids at school. Of course, we have seen the total destruction of the Gonski funding model. To say that the architect of that model, David Gonski, is disillusioned is an understatement. When he was informed of the cuts to the program in the recent budget, he said:

This is unfortunate.

...  ...  ...

I sincerely hope that in the period between now and 2017, the Federal Government will change the presently-budgeted position.

He went on to say:

To say that many of the schools in the state systems needed further assistance, both in money and tender loving care, is to me an understatement.

This is the person who, in recent months, conducted the most comprehensive review of our education system, and he, a well-respected businessman, is condemning this government for what it is doing to education in our schools.

But the government does not stop at school education. This government is completely rewriting the whole basis of our higher education system by introducing fee deregulation. What this will mean is that $100,000-degrees will not be out of the question. I draw the Deputy Speaker's attention to Universities Australia's modelling, which said:
At the medium fee increase scenario, and with a four per cent interest rate, an engineering graduate working full-time faces a HELP debt of between $98,952 and $113,169 and would repay it over a period of 20-25 years.

A nursing graduate under a medium fee increase scenario who works part time for six years after working full time for six years will pay off their student loan of $51,620 over 20 years …

This is what we are saying to people about their aspiration to get a degree in our community. We are condemning them to a life of debt. This will mean that people who come from poorer backgrounds, from low-income families, will simply not get the opportunity to undertake higher education in our community, because they will not have the capacity to pay off the debt. This government says, ‘Well, they can just go into debt and they’ll pay it off over their working life.’ But studies are showing that that is not the case. If you are talking about a nurse taking 20 years to pay off her studies, she simply will not undertake the study. This is the greatly unfortunate circumstance of this government. (Time expired)

**Shipping**

**Mr RAMSEY** (Grey) (19:42). A little over two years ago in this place we were debating changes put forward by the previous Labor government to the coastal shipping act. I gave a speech at the time in which I raised a number of issues that I feared would lead to a loss of Australian competitiveness and ultimately jobs. Now, some two years later, it is worth examining what has happened as a result of the changes that the Australian parliament made at that time.

Let me bring to the attention of the parliament a medium sized mining operation based at Kevin, quite near to Penong, which is on the coast and in the far west of my electorate; it is just before the beginning of the Great Australian Bight. Kevin is a gypsum mine owned and operated by GRA. GRA is a joint venture between CSR and Boral. They employ about 60 people directly at the mine and another 40 more indirectly in the rail, trucking and loading of the gypsum at Thevenard, about 80kms away, where the gypsum is loaded on small ships, up to about 25,000-tonne capacity, bound for CSR, Boral and Knauf manufacturing plants based in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. It is an amazing fact that the Kevin mine has, until quite recently, been supplying the gypsum to make about 90 per cent of the nation's plasterboard requirements; it also makes a significant contribution to Australian cement production. Recently, imports have reduced that amount by a moderate portion; but, either way, it is quite an effort, even though few in the country have ever heard of the Kevin mine or have any idea where it is.

GRA are compelled by the Coastal Trading Act to use the Australian shipping if possible. In GRA’s case, they have a long-term contract with CSL shipping, which is a subsidiary of Canada Steamship Lines, as the only current operator on the Australian register with a suitable ship. The mandatory use of Australian shipping is presenting new challenges to GRA. Simply put, it is now cheaper to bring product from Thailand—15 days steaming time away from the market—than it is to ship product from Thevenard, which is a mere four days away. GRA is virtually compelled to use CSL's shipping capacity. While technically GRA could apply for a temporary licence to engage overseas flagged vessels, CSL has been granted the ability to block the granting of such a license.
GRA recently went through just that process to access temporary license for shipping. When CSL was unable to meet a contract, CSL objected and the license was not granted. It is worth pondering: CSL prevented the use of an overseas flagged carrier even though they were unable to meet the demand. As freight is such a big part of the final tender process, the sales were lost to Thailand. The Coastal Trading Act did not save Australian jobs; it lost them. In fact, for a voyage from Thevenard to Brisbane under current arrangements, the freight is likely to be the biggest part of the supply cost. Prima facie, the changes have virtually eliminated the possibility of users of Australian coastal shipping contracting international vessels in the event that the local operator cannot accommodate cargo demand.

At first glance, this may seem to make sense that we would use Australian-crewed ships to move product within our borders, but that proposition only makes sense if Australian businesses are able to absorb the costs. In fact, if the businesses cease to operate, then not only do those workers lose their jobs but also so do those who work for the shipping company. In the case of GRA, loss of contracts mean loss of jobs, which in turn dictates that increasing supplies of gypsum come from overseas. It is like cutting off your nose to spite your face.

Further, there is a certain amount of interdependence around the Thevenard port. It is also an essential grains, salt and mineral sands terminal. I can tell you that the grains industry on Eyre Peninsula is the most important industry there. If we were to lose the port at Thevenard, farming on the western 20 per cent of Eyre Peninsula would become uneconomical. Any reduction in total tonnage of the Thevenard port—and GRA is responsible for about 1.5 to two million tonne per annum—threatens the future of essential port upgrades. It is also worth noting that GRA's contribution to coastal shipping represents almost 10 per cent of Australia's total volume. Just for interests sake, that total is about the same as one iron ore port in WA moves in about three weeks. It is not a big shipping program, yet the Coastal Trading Act is causing real harm to local industries.

In summary, GRA has lost about 10 to 15 per cent of the Australian markets to imports in recent times. That has already cost five jobs at Kevin mine and there is nothing that GRA can do to fix the problem. They are simply being priced out of the market by a totally uncompetitive freight cost, which is sometimes three to four times higher per day than their competitors encounter when they import from Thailand. If GRA are competitive on freight, they are likely to win the contract. If they are not, they will continue to lose market shares and the end result of that is totally predictable. It is not a pretty picture for my constituents in Ceduna, Thevenard and Penong, where the workers for the Kevin mine come from. Australia should stand up for its workers. If the current laws are not changed in the medium term, it is likely that the 100 workers associated with the GRA mine are likely to lose their jobs. The sheer stupidity of it all means that the sailors on the CSL vessel may lose their jobs as well. It simply does not make any sense. This is not easy reform for this government to make, but we simply cannot ignore the facts in front of us. Either we have to negotiate better operating conditions with our local fleet or we need to find a way of allowing our local businesses to access world-competitive shipping rates. Otherwise, we shall see companies like GRA and their operations at the Kevin Mine near Penong, South Australia, go to the wall and then they will not supply that 90 per cent of Australian gyprock—it will all come from Thailand.
I rise tonight to speak about the impact of the budget on rural, regional and remote Australia—or rather the lack of information to understand what that impact will be. In the past there has been far too little short-term planning for the needs of regional communities and too much short-term thinking and attempted short-term solutions. As a consequence the quality of health care, education, communications, transport and infrastructure has been allowed to fall behind other parts of the nation, leading to continued urbanisation and discontent in rural, regional and remote areas.

Tonight I call on the government to rectify this by quantifying, documenting and reporting on the impact of budget measures on rural, regional or remote Australia next year and every year thereafter. There has been a ministerial statement on regional Australia accompanying every budget since at least 1996-97; essentially, until the 2010-11 budget they summarised specifically rural, regional and remote budget initiatives. The nature of the regional statement was changed in the 2011, 2012 and 2013 budgets. The government's agreements with the independents who held the balance of power included a commitment to a more formal and rigorous assessment of the impact of the budget on regional Australia. This involved dividing estimates of the proportion of the expenditure under, say, industry programs that would be spent in regional Australia.

There were no regional statements provided with the current budget and no reason for not producing them. In fact, there was no ministerial statements accompanying this budget. In previous years there has been a statement about overseas aid and about women and a statement about closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. They also ceased. Why does this matter? Why is it problematic? I believe one of the key instruments for creating the pathway to the future lies in the budget. The ability of the community to understand the strategies and vision behind it lead to community acceptance of, for example, higher rates of taxation, a budget levy, changes to specific payment levels. Without that understanding and engagement, the result is a loss of trust. The process of effective governance, the process of engaging with the electorate and the process of setting a vision is underpinned by the community understanding and accepting the logic of the budget. The budget is one of the key tools available to parliament to help make the pathways to the future. The people who live in rural, regional and remote Australia have a particular interest in knowing that the government considers their interests when designing the budget.

This year, specifically the people of Indi, whom I have the honour of representing in this place, feel aggrieved that this explanation was not offered. As an example of the type of impact areas that could be considered in a statement, let's consider the National Australian Development Index. It is a framework that covers the following areas: children and young people's wellbeing; community and regional life; culture, recreation and leisure; governance and democracy; economic life and prosperity; education, knowledge and creativity; environment and sustainability; justice, fairness and human rights; health; Indigenous wellbeing; work-life budget; subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction.

Madam Deputy Speaker, without a process of understanding and measuring the impacts, and without clear strategies, there will be unintended consequences on rural and remote populations. One example I would like to draw your attention to is the recent report by Victoria University entitled *Educational disadvantage and regional and rural schools*, which...
presents a bleak picture for education in regional areas. Students at public schools in Melbourne and Geelong consistently have higher attendance rates and better educational outcomes than students in rural Victoria.

The report finds that the gap in educational outcomes is not explained fully by the fact that rural parents are less likely to be formally educated. Rural schools are disadvantaged by having fewer resources and a shortage of specialist teachers to offer a variety of subjects. The report says that no rural or remote government school teaches classes in environmental science, philosophy, sociology or classical studies, and any changes to educational funding must take into account disadvantages to ensure that changes which may appear to impact in a minor way on city schools do not have a major impact on rural schools.

Another example of the differential impact of budget changes on rural and regional Australians is the proposed GP co-payment. Here I quote directly from the National Rural Health Alliance statement impact of a GP co-payment on out-of-pocket health care costs on rural and remote areas. Average out-of-pocket costs per GP service are higher in regional and remote Australia than in the major cities. In 2012-13, the average out-of-pocket cost for each Medicare rebated GP service, by geographical area, was $5.01 in major cities, $5.62 in inner regional areas, $5.63 in outer regional areas, $6.08 in remote areas and $4.55 in very remote areas.

Assuming all other things remain unchanged, under the proposed new arrangements there would be a doubling of average out-of-pocket costs for each GP consultation in all geographical areas. The new average cost to patients would be $11.67 per service in major cities, $12.21 in inner regional areas, $12.24 in outer regional areas, $12.71 in remote areas and $11.28 in very remote areas.

These findings have to be seen in the context of the fact that rural people already postpone or avoid medical consultation at higher rates than people in the cities. While 17 per cent of those in major cities had skipped a medical service or medication in the past year due to cost, the percentage increased with remoteness to over 20 per cent in regional areas and to almost 35 per cent in remote areas. Importantly, it is likely that the impact will be more serious in regional and especially remote areas. Notwithstanding the enjoyment and satisfaction of living outside of major cities, people living in rural and remote areas tend to have lower incomes, pay higher prices for basics, pay the same rates of tax and have lower levels of access to services related to health care, public transport and education. These two examples in differences between regional and city populations in the areas of education and health illustrate what can happen when we are not deliberate in measuring impact.

Finally, it is not enough to have a rural and regional budget impact statement. We must also be accountable to what it shows. These are not new concepts. Previous independents from rural and regional Australia have stressed the importance of measuring and reporting mechanisms. Better reporting of the picture of regional Australia needs to be provided by reporting regional expenditure in the budget and in individual portfolio budget statements. This will improve the accountability of government to regional Australia.

The finance department needs to develop a spatial accounting model which will provide greater visibility into government spending and service delivery—what was spent and where it was spent and the location of Commonwealth government positions, including forward
estimates assumptions reported by regional location. This will be done—this needs to be done—for mainstream service delivery portfolios such as education, health and transport.

A website targeted with this information would make it easy for people to see the results of improved budget reporting for their region and would provide interactive opportunities for the community to find out more and make inquiries. Other public indicators of service performance and social, economic and population outcomes should also be reported.

In closing, there will always be differences between the way things work in the country and the needs of rural people. That is why I will call on the government to reflect this by ensuring that a rural and regional budget impact statement is the core part of the budgetary processes next year and every year after that.

Women

Dr STONE (Murray) (20:00): The Commission on the Status of Women reaffirms:

… that the promotion and protection of, and respect for, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women, including the right to development, which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, should be mainstreamed into all policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty, and also reaffirms the need to take measures to ensure that every person is entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development and that equal attention and urgent consideration should be given to the promotion, protection and full realization of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

I think we would all be in furious agreement about this. It is not a contentious issue. I think we would even get bipartisan support for this. But the trouble is that, when it boils down to what is really happening in countries, this grand statement just does not ring true, even in developed countries like our own.

For example, we have just had the sad fact delivered to us that in Australia the gender pay gap—pay for the same work done—has risen to 18.2 per cent. It was only 17 per cent some time ago. Ten years ago it was about 14 per cent. If you disaggregate data in Australia to look at women's enjoyment of life, at their health and at their freedom from violence, you would see that our Indigenous women are not living in the way that we would want anyone to experience.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 20:02 to 20:20

Dr STONE: As I was saying before the division, all of us should have a huge respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women, including the right to development. We believe all the indivisible, interdependent and interrelated issues should be mainstreamed into all policies and programs aimed at eradicating poverty.

I was just going on to say that Australia is a developed nation and we have a welfare budget aimed at capturing those who need a safety net, whether because they have a disability, because they are suffering from extreme poverty or because they are disadvantaged in having been born a long way from where jobs are. But the reality is that there are some around the world who suffer indignities and poverty that we, in a country like Australia, can only imagine—unless we are visiting some of our remotest Indigenous communities where, yes, women are amongst the most likely, of any population in the world, to be assaulted. Women in those communities suffer extraordinarily from drug and alcohol related violence.
and from their own drug and alcohol dependency. Some of the highest rates of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder are found in their communities—the highest of anywhere in the world.

The Millennium Development Goals were an amazing achievement for their time, nearly 15 years ago now. They were expected to help bring about the eradication of poverty and the eradication of discrimination. They were expected to address gender bias and bring us a new world order. But, as we come to the 15th year after the commencement of the Millennium Development Goal era, we find there has not been a complete elimination—or even a significant elimination—of gender inequality or discrimination against women and girls. There is in fact a feminisation of poverty globally and it is not abating. Inequalities in life experience and opportunities for all girls and women continue, as I said before, in most developing countries, but also in some developed nations. We are all aware, for example, of the plight of some of the guest workers in Singapore. We are also all aware of some of the nations which now boast huge middle classes but which have women and girls living in dire poverty.

The Commission on the Status of Women has expressed concern that the Millennium Development Goals do not adequately address some of the critical issues relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women, particularly the issue of child marriage, which is one of the real scourges in the world—young girls as young as 14 and 15 being forcibly married off, usually to older men. Death rates among those young girls when they give birth are amongst the highest in the world for any group of adolescents. We have also failed to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of universal education at the primary level. While some statistics suggest that we have had an extraordinary increase in the number of young people enrolled to attend school, when you look at how many of those girls or boys—particularly girls—complete their primary education and achieve literacy, numeracy and employability in the formal economy, all many countries can really boast about is the increase in the number of enrolments.

When you combine issues like child marriage and the capacity for girls to attend school and receive an education—and therefore get themselves out of a lifetime of impoverishment—you have to despair at things like how in 2012 Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia expelled from school any of unmarried girls who became pregnant. In those countries marriage is allowed at a very early age indeed. Even though the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child explicitly recognises the rights of a pregnant girl to an education, those countries I have just mentioned still expel girls who become pregnant. Obviously, if you are expelled from school and you are a child bride with a young baby—or even a child who has had a baby out of wedlock—your chances of breaking out of a life of extreme discrimination, poverty and ill-health are very poor. But countries such as Kenya, Zambia, Botswana and Malawi have now explicitly recognised the right of girls to re-enter education after childbirth. I think that is incredibly important given that, in a country like Tanzania, the law still allows a 14-year-old to marry.

The millennium goals need to condemn problems like child marriage. Just last week in this parliament, along with Plan International Australia and Anti-Slavery Australia, we launched the Plan International report on child marriage. The report looked at the extraordinary consequences when a young girl—too young to have a baby, given her own physical development—is forced out of school, is often subject to extreme violence in her relationship,
usually with a much older man, is burdened with caring for the first of often many children from the age of 14 or 15 and becomes a victim of intergenerational poverty and violence. Besides child marriage, of course, there are significant health, nutrition and other factors which stop girls going to school. For example, anaemia following adolescence can mean girls are too fatigued to attend school. Nutritional levels in the most impoverished countries are often very low, and boys are often given preferential food access. If girls are anaemic they may experience poor concentration and lower cognitive function and reduced capacity to compete with others. Maybe our millennium goals should focus not only on universal access to primary and secondary education for girls but also on ensuring that girls are properly fed in school so that they can, in fact, learn but also so that there is an incentive for their families to have them go to school where they can take home rations or at least have a meal a day.

For example, in Ghana the World Food Program runs a school feeding project which combines school meals with take-home rations. These are conditional on school attendance—that is, at least 85 per cent attendance and 99 per cent retention rates. These measures have been supplemented with school gardens to give a nutritious meal a day to both girls and boys. Girls' enrolments surged by 46 per cent in one year alone with that World Food Program funded school meal project.

We have to look hard at our MDGs and realise that, despite their very best intentions, we have not seen significant reductions in poverty across the globe—particularly for women and girls. We have to understand that we need to set zero tolerance targets for problems like child marriage. We also have to understand that the statistics which relate to school attendance are not in any way meaningful unless they relate to the quality of the education delivered—for example, at least basic literacy and numeracy being an outcome. We also have to understand that some national data in fact disguises the unsatisfactory opportunity and progress for disadvantaged minorities, so we need things like equity-adjusted measures that look at the poverty level of a student's family, at their location and at their ethnicity. That data also should be tracked, rather than presented as a general, national statistic, which can disguise the huge inequalities and disadvantages buried within a developing country. We have to understand that the distance to school can make a huge difference to a child being allowed to attend, given that often school based rape and sexual harassment are factors that lead to girls not finishing school in many developing nations. I want to see the UN General Assembly resolution to end child marriage and to support married girls come about. I want to help make that happen.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Porter):** The debate is now adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

*Federation Chamber adjourned at 20:28*
QUESTIONS IN WRITING
Trade Skill Shortages
(Question No. 213)

Mr Zappia asked the Minister for Industry, in writing, on 14 JULY 2014:
What trade skill shortages currently exist within Australia?

Mr Ian Macfarlane: The answer to the honourable Member's question is as follows:
The Department of Employment researches and develops the Skill Shortage List: Australia, from
which the following list of trade occupations in national shortage is taken.
This list reflects research undertaken to 31 December 2013, and was published 28 February 2014.
Numeric references are codes defined under the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of
Occupations.

3. Technicians and Trades Workers
31. Engineering, ICT and Science Technicians
   3129-13 Mine Deputy
32. Automotive and Engineering Trades Workers
   3211-11 Automotive Engineer
   3212-11,12,13 Motor Mechanics
   3212-14 Small Engine Mechanics
   3222-11 Sheetmetal Trades Worker
   3233-13 Locksmith
   3241-11 Panel beater
33. Construction
   3311-12 Stonemason
   3332-12 Solid Plasterer
   3333-11 Roof Tiler
34. Electrotechnology and Telecommunications Trades Workers
   3421-11 Airconditioning and Refrigeration Mechanic
   3422-11 Electrical Linesworker
35. Food Trades Worker
   3511-11 Baker
   3511-12 Pastrycook
   3512-11 Butcher or Smallgoods Maker
   3513-11, 3514-11 Chef/Cook
36. Skilled Animal and Horticultural Workers
   3622-12 Arborist
   3622-13 Landscape Gardener
Manufacturing Jobs

(Question No. 215)

Mr Zappia asked the Minister for Industry, in writing, on 14 JULY 2014:
Since 7 September 2013, how many manufacturing jobs have been lost?

Mr Ian Macfarlane: The answer to the honourable Member's question is as follows:
Data on manufacturing employment is available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Please refer to catalogue number 6291.0.55.003, which is accessible online at http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6291.0.55.003.

Manufacturing Businesses

(Question No. 216)

Mr Zappia asked the Minister for Industry, in writing, on 14 JULY 2014:
Since 7 September 2013, how many (a)(i) small, (ii) medium, and (iii) large, manufacturing businesses have closed, and (b) manufacturing businesses have opened.

Mr Ian Macfarlane: The answer to the honourable Member's question is as follows:
Data on business counts is available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Please refer to catalogue number 8165.0, which is accessible online at http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/8165.0

Renewable energy industry

(Question No. 219)

Mr Zappia asked the Minister for Industry, in writing, on 14 JULY 2014:
How many manufacturing jobs are associated with Australia’s renewable energy industry?

Mr Ian Macfarlane: The answer to the honourable Member's question is as follows:
It is not known precisely how many manufacturing jobs are associated with Australia’s renewable energy industry. The manufacturing of renewable energy products is undertaken by a number of companies that also manufacture other products. The Australian Bureau of Statistics advises that the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification system does not have a class solely or mainly allocated to manufacturing of renewable energy products. The Department of Industry is also not aware of any industry estimate of the number of manufacturing jobs associated with Australia’s renewable energy industry. As a result, the Department of Industry is unable to indicate how many manufacturing jobs are associated with Australia’s renewable energy industry.

Climate Change

(Question No. 223)
(Question No. 224)

Ms Parke asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 14 July 2014:
In respect of the view of the world's scientific community, including the Joint Science Academies, that if carbon emissions continue at the current rate, global temperature will rise above 2 degrees Celsius (and likely as high as 4 degrees Celsius) this century,

(a) in what ways does Government policy (particularly environment and economic) take this into account, and
(b) what kind of economy is the Government positioning Australia for in a world that is warmer by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius.
**Mr Hunt:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Australian Government accepts the science of climate change and supports national and global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Government is firmly committed to reducing Australia's emissions to meet its target of five per cent below 2000 levels by 2020.

The Emissions Reduction Fund is the centrepiece of the Government's policy suite to reduce emissions. The Government has committed $2.55 billion to the Fund to invest directly in Australian businesses that reduce their emissions.

The Emissions Reduction Fund will provide the impetus for businesses and the community to improve practices, invest in new technologies, and reduce emissions.

The Government believes that there is a better way to reduce emissions than by imposing taxes or emissions trading systems that increase energy costs for businesses and households. That is why the Government committed to repeal the carbon tax and replace it with the Emissions Reduction Fund.

The Emissions Reduction Fund is a practical policy that will reduce Australia's emissions at low cost, without adding to household and business energy costs. It will support Australian businesses and communities to enjoy the benefits of economic growth, increased productivity and a cleaner environment.

**Eye Health**

(Question No. 248 and 249)

**Dr Southcott** asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 17 July 2014:

Under Medicare in (a) 2011-12, (b) 2012-13, and (c) 2013-14, what number of (i) patients received cataract surgery, and what was the cataract surgery rate, (ii) Indigenous patients received cataract surgery, and what was the cataract surgery rate, (iii) patients were on a waiting list for elective cataract surgery for more than 90 days, and what proportion (as a percentage), (iv) Indigenous patients were on a waiting list for elective cataract surgery for more than 90 days, and what proportion (as a percentage), (v) people with diabetes had a retinal examination within the previous 24 months, and what proportion (as a percentage), (vi) Indigenous patients with diabetes had a retinal examination within the previous 12 months, what proportion (as a percentage), (vii) patients with diabetes received laser treatment for diabetic retinopathy, and what proportion (as a percentage), (viii) number of Indigenous patients with diabetes received laser treatment for diabetic retinopathy, and what proportion (as a percentage), (ix) patients had an eye examination, and what proportion (as a percentage), and (x) Indigenous patients had an eye examination, and what proportion (as a percentage).

**Mr Dutton:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) (i) In the 2011-12 financial year 105,398 patients received cataract surgery under Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item 42702, 0.46 per cent of the Australian population.1

ix. In the 2011-12 financial year 3,259,725 patients received a comprehensive eye examination under MBS item 10900, 14.34 per cent of Australia's population.1

(b) (i) In the 2012-13 financial year 108,335 patients received cataract surgery under MBS item 42702, 0.47 per cent of the Australian population.1

ix. In the 2012-13 financial year 3,347,384 patients received a comprehensive eye examination under MBS item 10900, 14.47 per cent of Australia's population.1

(c) (i) In the 2013-14 financial year 112,033 patients received cataract surgery under MBS item 42702, 0.48 per cent of the Australian population.1

(ix) In the 2013-14 financial year 3,405,394 patients received a comprehensive eye examination under MBS item 10900, 14.47 per cent of Australia's population.1
It is not possible to provide statistical information on the following:

(iii) Medicare data is only available after an eligible service has been provided, claimed from Medicare, and the rebate paid. State and Territory governments are responsible for public hospital elective surgery waiting lists.

(v) It is not possible to identify Medicare services for patients with specific conditions, such as diabetes. This can only be done where there is a specific MBS item for a specific patient group.

(vii) It is not possible to identify Medicare services for patients with specific conditions, such as diabetes. This can only be done where there is a specific MBS item for a specific patient group.

Questions: (ii); (iv); (vi); (viii); and (x), of each a, b and c also cannot be answered. It is not possible to satisfactorily provide answers to the questions about ophthalmology services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the option to identify as Indigenous with Medicare, using the Voluntary Indigenous Identifier, the nomination rate is low in older populations. Older people typically have cataract surgery services. Therefore, any estimate of the proportion of services provided to this group would not be reliable. In addition, it is important to note that Medicare data will not capture services provided through other funding sources, including public hospital services.

1 Estimated Resident Population (ERP)

Source: ERP for financial years Prior to 2013-14 based on the ABS catalogue 3101.0 Australian Demographic statistics, table 51 to table 59, released 19 June 2014

ERP for financial year 2013-14; using population figures, based on the ABS catalogue 3222.0 Population Projections, Australia 2012 (base) to 2011, table B1 to table B8, released 26 Nov 2013

National figures include other territories comprising Jervis Bay territory, Christmas Island and CoCos (Keeling) Islands.

Figures in the tables are based on June quarter population.

ERP is used as denominator to calculate statistics for Number of services per capita, benefit paid per capita and patients as percent of population.

Minor variations in per capita statistics might occur compared with the statistics published previously due to the update of ERP figures by the ABS.

Lalor Electorate: Health Care
(Question No. 253)

Ms Ryan asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 17 July 2014:

(1) Is he aware that in the electoral division of Lalor there is a General Practitioner bulk billing rate of 93.5 per cent, and that Lalor families access bulk billing services more than 1.5 million times each year. (2) Can he advise if the Government has a figure, or an estimated figure, for what the additional out of pocket costs to residents in Lalor will be as a result of the additional co-payments announced in the 2014-15 budget. (3) Can he guarantee that the General Practitioner bulk billing rate will not fall during his term in Government.

Mr Dutton: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) My Department provides me with information about bulk billing rates across Australia. This includes information about the bulk billing rates for Lalor.

(2) It is not possible to estimate future out of pocket costs for residents in Lalor as all General Practitioners (GPs) are currently able to set their own fees and this will continue after 1 July 2015 when the Budget measure comes into effect.
(3) The Government has no authority to control the amount that GPs charge for their services, which also means that no guarantee can be provided about whether GP bulk billing rates will rise or fall in any electorate, including that of Lalor.