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FORTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FOURTH PERIOD

Governor-General
Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, Companion of the Order of Australia

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Mr Harry Alfred Jenkins MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Peter Neil Slipper MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke MP, Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry Adams MP, Ms Sharon Leah Bird MP, Mrs Yvette Maree D’Ath MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Ms Kirsten Fiona Livermore MP, Mr John Paul Murphy MP, Mr Peter Sid Sidebottom MP, Mr Kelvin John Thomson MP, Ms Maria Vamvakou MP

Leader of the House—Hon. Anthony Norman Albanese MP
Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Stephen Francis Smith MP
Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP

Party Leaders and Whips
Australian Labor Party
Leader—Hon. Julia Eileen Gillard MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Wayne Maxwell Swan MP
Chief Government Whip—Hon. Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP
Government Whips—Ms Jill Griffiths Hall MP and Mr Ed Husic MP

Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Opposition Whip—Hon. Warren George Entsch MP
Opposition Whips—Mr Patrick Damien Secker MP and Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

The Nationals
Leader—Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP
Chief Whip—Mr Mark Maclean Coulton MP
Whip—Mr Paul Christopher Neville MP

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Members of the House of Representatives

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<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washer, Malcom James</td>
<td>Moore, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilkie, Andrew Damien</td>
<td>Denison, TAS</td>
<td>Ind</td>
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<tr>
<td>Windsor, Anthony Harold Curties</td>
<td>New England, NSW</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyatt, Kenneth George</td>
<td>Hasluck, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zappia, Tony</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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### PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; LNP—Liberal National Party;
CLP—Country Liberal Party; Nats—The Nationals; NWA—The Nationals WA; Ind—Independent;
AG—Australian Greens

### Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—B Wright
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—A Thompson
**GILLARD MINISTRY**

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<td>Hon. Julia Gillard MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister, Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon. Wayne Swan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government</td>
<td>Hon. Simon Crean MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations and Leader of the Government in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Chris Evans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth</td>
<td>Hon. Peter Garrett AM, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Stephen Conroy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Hon. Kevin Rudd MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade</td>
<td>Hon. Dr Craig Emerson MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Defence and Deputy Leader of the House</td>
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<td>Hon. Chris Bowen MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and Leader of the House</td>
<td>Hon. Anthony Albanese MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Health and Ageing</td>
<td>Hon. Nicola Roxon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Hon. Jenny Macklin MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities</td>
<td>Hon. Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Finance and Deregulation</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Kim Carr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney-General and Vice President of the Executive Council</td>
<td>Hon. Robert McClelland MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism</td>
<td>Hon. Martin Ferguson AM, MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Privacy and Freedom of Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Sport</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Mark Arbib</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State for the Public Service and Integrity</td>
<td>Hon. Gary Gray AO, MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Supranannuation</td>
<td>Hon. Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Minister for Defence Materiel</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon. Mark Butler MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Hon. Gary Gray AO, MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Small Business</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Nick Sherry</td>
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<td>Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Justice</td>
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<td>Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC, MP</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon. David Bradbury MP</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary for School Education and Workplace Relations</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport and</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Community Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Urban Water</td>
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<td>Minister Assisting on Deregulation and Public Sector</td>
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<td>Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM, MP</td>
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<td>Minister Assisting the Minister for Tourism</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Nick Sherry</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency</td>
<td>Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC, MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Ministry Role</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon. Tony Abbott MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for</td>
<td>Hon. Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<td>Foreign Affairs and Shadow Minister for Trade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader of the Nationals and Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</td>
<td>Hon. Warren Truss MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Employment and</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow</td>
<td>Senator Hon. George Brandis SC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney-General and Shadow Minister for the Arts</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training</td>
<td>Hon. Christopher Pyne MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>and Manager of Opposition Business in the House</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Deputy Leader of the Nationals</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Nigel Scullion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government</td>
<td>Senator Barnaby Joyce</td>
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<tr>
<td>and Water and Leader of the Nationals in the Senate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Finance, Deregulation and Debt Reduction</td>
<td>Hon. Andrew Robb AO, MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>and Chairman, Coalition Policy Development Committee</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Energy and Resources</td>
<td>Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator Hon. David Johnston</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Communications and Broadband</td>
<td>Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
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<td>Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
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<td>Hon. Kevin Andrews MP</td>
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<td>Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Productivity and Population and Shadow</td>
<td>Mr Scott Morrison MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry and Science</td>
<td>Mrs Sophie Mirabella MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food Security</td>
<td>Hon. John Cobb MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Small Business, Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs</td>
<td>Hon. Bruce Billson MP</td>
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*The above constitute the shadow cabinet*
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Shadow Minister for Employment Participation
Hon. Sussan Ley MP

Shadow Minister for Justice, Customs and Border Protection
Mr Michael Keenan MP

Shadow Assistant Treasurer and Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation
Senator Mathias Cormann

Shadow Minister for Childcare and Early Childhood Learning
Hon. Sussan Ley MP

Shadow Minister for Universities and Research
Senator Hon. Brett Mason

Shadow Minister for Youth and Sport and Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House
Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP

Shadow Minister for Indigenous Development and Employment
Senator Marise Payne

Shadow Minister for Regional Development
Hon. Bob Baldwin MP

Shadow Special Minister of State
Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP

Shadow Minister for COAG
Senator Marise Payne

Shadow Minister for Tourism
Hon. Bob Baldwin MP

Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel
Mr Stuart Robert MP

Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader of the Opposition on the Centenary of ANZAC
Senator Hon. Michael Ronaldson

Shadow Minister for Regional Communications
Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP

Shadow Minister for Ageing and Shadow Minister for Mental Health
Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells

Shadow Minister for Seniors
Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP

Shadow Minister for Disabilities, Carers and the Voluntary Sector and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate
Senator Mitch Fifield

Shadow Minister for Housing
Senator Marise Payne

Chairman, Scrutiny of Government Waste Committee
Mr Jamie Briggs MP

Shadow Cabinet Secretary
Hon. Philip Ruddock MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition
Senator Cory Bernardi

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance
Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Roads and Regional Transport
Mr Darren Chester MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Attorney-General
Senator Gary Humphries

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Tax Reform and Deputy Chairman, Coalition Policy Development Committee
Hon. Tony Smith MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Education
Senator Fiona Nash

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern and Remote Australia
Senator Hon. Ian Macdonald

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government
Mr Don Randall MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Murray-Darling Basin
Senator Simon Birmingham

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Materiel
Senator Gary Humphries

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Defence Force and Defence Support
Senator Hon. Ian Macdonald
SHADOW MINISTRY—continued

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Primary Healthcare
Dr Andrew Southcott MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health Services
and Indigenous Health
Mr Andrew Laming MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Supporting Families
Senator Cory Bernardi

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Status of Women
Senator Michaelia Cash

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment
Senator Simon Birmingham

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Settlement
Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration
Senator Michaelia Cash

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Innovation, Industry, and
Science
Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Forestry
Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Fair
Competition
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The SPEAKER (Mr Harry Jenkins) took the chair at 10:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Reference to Main Committee

The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 41(g), and the recommendations of the Selection Committee, I present copies of the terms of motions for which notice has been given by the members for Sturt, Fowler, Hughes, Blair, Calare and Bass. These items will be considered in the Main Committee later today.

PETITIONS

Mr MURPHY: On behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, and in accordance with standing order 207, I present the following petitions:

Marriage

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

This petition of Parishioners of Saint James Church, North Road Brighton Vic 3186 and as members of the federal electorate for Goldstein draws to the attention of the House our petition on our position on the meaning of marriage.

We therefore ask the House that you protect the unique institution of marriage as traditionally understood and actually lived as the complementary love between a man and a woman.

from 1 citizen

Potato Imports

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

This petition of members of the Australian vegetable and potato industries, initiated by AUSVEG, the national peak body representing around 9,000 vegetable and potato growers around Australia, draws to the attention of the House:

Concern from the industry that potatoes from New Zealand infected with Zebra Chip disease complex — a devastating potato disease which has caused millions of dollars worth of damage worldwide — will be allowed into Australia if a current New Zealand request for market access is approved.

AUSVEG has grave concerns that if this market access request is approved, it will put the Australian potato industry at extreme unnecessary risk, as it is highly likely that a proportion of the potatoes that come into Australia from New Zealand will be infected with Zebra Chip disease complex.

We therefore ask the House to:

• Take steps to ensure that Australia, via the relevant governing body, rejects the application by The Ministry of Agriculture Biosecurity New Zealand for market access, which would allow them to import fresh potatoes into Australia for processing under a Quarantine Approved Premise arrangement.

from 26 citizens

Marriage

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

This petition of concerned citizens, in support of marriage as currently defined in the Marriage Act 1961 (Cth) draws to the attention of the House:

• that on 8th November 2010 the House of Representatives endorsed a motion that said "That this House calls on all parliamentarians, consistent with their duties as representatives, to gauge their constituents' views on ways to achieve equal treatment for same sex couples including marriage."

• that marriage is currently defined in the Marriage Act 1961 (Cth) as being "... the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life."

• that each element of the definition of marriage is essential to its integrity, particularly with respect to the welfare and wellbeing of children;
• that marriage is a "keystone" institution on which our society rests;
• that marriage provides for a stable family structure and is the ideal environment in which children are raised and nurtured; and
• that marriage is worthy of ongoing protection and support.
We therefore ask the House to maintain support for marriage as currently defined in the Marriage Act 1961 (Cth) and reject any proposal to amend its definition.
from 120 citizens

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

We, who sign below on this petition, do not agree with the proposal to recognise same sex marriage as being a lawful part of the Marriage Act of Australia.

We therefore ask the House to keep the Marriage Act of Australia as it is and make no change.
from 35 citizens

National Bowel Cancer Screening Program
To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of concerned citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the continued lack of full implementation of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP).

National Health & Medical Research Council approved Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Prevention, Early Detection Management of Colorectal Cancer strongly recommends biennial screening for bowel cancer for the Australian population over 50 years of age.

Since the launch of the NBCSP five years ago, Australia still lacks a comprehensive program which provides biennial screening for Australians over 50 years of age. These delays continue to result in unnecessary deaths from what is essentially a preventable disease.

Over 14,000 Australians — men and women, young and old—are diagnosed with bowel cancer each year.

• One in 12 people will develop bowel cancer in their lifetime. The disease kills over 4,000 people each year—more than breast cancer or prostate cancer.
• If caught in time, around 90 per cent of bowel cancer cases can be successfully treated. Screening has been estimated to save around 30 lives per week.

We therefore ask the House to do all in its power to ensure the implementation of a comprehensive National Bowel Cancer Screening Program - biennial screening for the population aged 50 and over, together with a public awareness campaign informing people of the purpose and relevance of screening for this preventable disease.
from 5,081 citizens

Member for Fisher: Travel Expenditure
To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

We, residents of the Sunshine Coast, are concerned about the extraordinary expenditure of taxpayers' money by the Member for Fisher, Peter Slipper. There is particular concern about his level of use of ground transport and air travel outside his electorate and during times when parliament is not sitting.

We request a full audit of Mr Slipper's entitlement claims made during the past decade, requiring that he explain the detail of parliamentary and electoral business that led to them being incurred.

We request that any audit by the Department of Finance be overseen by the National Audit Office to assist with recommendations that may produce expenditure guidelines in line with community expectations.

We further request expenditure provisions be tightened to require all Members to give detail of the parliamentary or electoral business that led to an expense being incurred.
from 2,696 citizens

Syria
To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives
This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the call by Foreign Minister Mr Kevin Rudd for the United Nations Security Council to refer President Bashar al-Assad of Syria to the International Criminal Court. We believe that it is not in Australia’s interest for Mr Rudd to jump to conclusions about President Assad and his government’s handling of the current upheaval in Syria. We are aware that there have been calls from peaceful demonstrators in Syria for reform and that in response President Assad has announced significant reforms. We are also aware that there is evidence of sectarian violence and the killings of soldiers, police and innocent people by armed civilians presumably intent on undermining and overthrowing the Syrian government. We reject the notion that political freedoms can be achieved through violence. We know that the largest demonstrations across Syria occurred on 25 March 2011 and were in support of President Assad and reform. In these circumstances, we therefore consider it inappropriate and ill-considered for the Australian Foreign Minister to make a call to refer President Assad to the International Criminal Court.

We therefore ask the House to request the Minister of Foreign Affairs to desist from making any further call for President Assad to be brought before the International Criminal Court and we request the Minister make an effort to seek a more informed and balanced view of current events in Syria.

from 2,683 citizens

Petitions received.

Responses

Mr MURPHY: Ministerial responses to petitions previously presented to the House have been received as follows:

Live Animal Exports

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 10 June 2011 about a petition submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding live animal exports from Australia to the Middle East. I regret the delay in responding.

The Middle East region is a vital group of live export markets for Australia. High standards of animal welfare throughout the entire live export chain including post arrival are essential for long term trade sustainability.

The Australian Government shares the Australian community’s concerns about the abuse of animals and is taking action to ensure exporters can assure the Government that cattle, sheep and goats will be managed through the supply chain in accordance with international animal welfare standards.

Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, has asked Mr Bill Farmer AO to undertake an investigation examining the whole live animal export supply chain, from paddock, to export and up to and including the point of slaughter, for all markets that receive Australian livestock. The review will support greater transparency across our export markets, provide recommendations on reforming the trade, and will contribute to the design and application of new safeguards for animal welfare.

The Industry-Government Working Group on Live Sheep and Goat Exports has been established in addition to the Industry-Government Working Group on Live Cattle. The working groups will focus on traceability and supply chain assurances for all live cattle, sheep and goat exports.

Both Industry-Government Working Groups will be reporting to the Government at around the same time as the independent review into Australia’s livestock export trade (the Farmer Review) at the end of August 2011. This will provide the Government with comprehensive information for considering the future policy direction for live animal exports.

Thank you for bringing the petition to my attention.

from the Minister for Trade, Dr Emerson

Live Animal Exports

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 6 June 2011 on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, forwarding a petition regarding live animal
exports from Australia to the Middle East. I regret the delay in responding.

The Middle East region is a vital group of live export markets for Australia. High standards of animal welfare throughout the entire live export chain, including post arrival are essential for long term trade sustainability.

The Australian Government shares the Australian community's concerns about the abuse of animals and is taking action to ensure in future that cattle, sheep and goats will be managed through the supply chain in accordance with international animal welfare standards.

I have asked Mr Bill Farmer AO to investigate the entire live animal export supply chain, from paddock to export and up to and including the point of slaughter, for all markets that receive Australian livestock. The review will support greater transparency across our export markets, provide recommendations for reforming the trade and will contribute to the design and application of new safeguards for animal welfare.

The Industry-Government Working Group on Live Sheep and Goat Exports has been established in addition to the Industry-Government Working Group on Live Cattle. The working groups will focus on traceability and supply chain assurances for all live cattle, sheep and goat exports.

Both Industry-Government Working Groups will be reporting to me at around the same time as the independent review into Australia's livestock export trade (Farmer Review) 31 August 2011. This will provide the Government with comprehensive information for considering the future policy direction for live animal exports.

I will release the reviews along with the government response in due course. Thank you again for bringing this petition to my attention.

Kingsford Smith Electorate:
Kensington Post Office

Dear Mr Murphy

Petition - Kensington (NSW) Post Office

Thank you for your letter dated 7 July 2011 concerning a petition submitted for the Committee's consideration regarding the possible closure of the Kensington Post Office. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding.

Under the Australian Postal Corporation Act 1989 Australia Post is responsible for the day-to-day running of the organisation, including all decisions relating to its operational network. As a Government Business Enterprise, Australia Post does not receive any funding from taxpayers and, as far as practicable, it is required to perform its functions in a manner consistent with sound commercial practice.

Australia Post has advised that it has had discussions with relevant stakeholders about the decline in customer numbers at the Kensington Post Office and the ways in which the financial position of the outlet could be improved. However, I understand there are no plans to close the outlet.

Australia Post has also advised that it recently renewed the lease at Kensington and will continue to operate from the current premises. Both full counter and post office box services will be provided.

I trust this information will be of assistance.

from the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Ludwig

Racial Discrimination

Dear Mr Murphy


The petition calls for the Australian Government to commit to the bipartisan development of a long-term National Action Plan to Close the Gap in disadvantage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. I acknowledge that the
petition contains 38 signatories who are concerned about the continuing gap in life opportunities experienced by Indigenous Australians.

I also acknowledge the 2010 Report of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the comments contained therein. I would like to assure you that the Australian Government is strongly committed to closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage and improving the life chances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Government is currently working to turn around decades of under-investment and has marshalled unparalleled resources and agreements across governments to work towards closing the gap.

In 2007-08, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to six ambitious targets for closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage through the National Indigenous Reform Agreement. These targets focus on making improvements in life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational attainment and employment outcomes.

The Government is investing $5.75 billion over the next three years to reduce Indigenous disadvantage. Significant reforms have been forged through National Partnership Agreements with state and territory governments to improve outcomes in Remote Housing, Early Childhood, Health, Education and Economic Participation.

Under these agreements, governments have been working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians in a sustained effort to close the gap.

In the 2010-11 financial year, 490 new houses and 2,288 refurbishments were completed in remote Indigenous communities across Australia. This exceeded the ambitious target of 463 houses and 2,012 rebuilds. The Australian Government has also invested $100.6 million in the Tackling Smoking initiative to reduce Indigenous smoking rates.

In addition, achievements under mainstream initiatives include assisting 47,000 Indigenous Australians through the Family Support Program to provide help and support for families dealing with relationship problems and separation issues, and placing 58,950 Indigenous jobseekers in jobs.

Improving the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people is a high priority for the Government, but it cannot be achieved in isolation.

As a signatory of the Close the Gap Statement of Intent, I am aware of the importance of this document and its commitments. The Close the Gap Statement of Intent is consistent with the work that the Government is carrying out across Australia to improve the life chances of Indigenous Australians and represents a united effort of the Australian people to achieve important reforms.

I am aware that the petition calls for the Government to develop a long-term National Action Plan to Close the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The Close the Gap Statement of Intent refers to this Action Plan as one which should aim to address the existing inequities in health services in order to achieve quality of health status and life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians by 2030. Currently, the Government is implementing Indigenous health plans which share the very same goals.

The National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2003-2013 (the Framework) was developed using the 1989 National Aboriginal Health Strategy as a foundational document. The Framework seeks to address contemporary approaches to primary health care and population health within the current policy environment and planning structures.

The Framework clearly articulated that health gains cannot be made in isolation. Therefore, it adopted a multi-sectoral approach to improve housing, education and employment to support and sustain improvements in health. The Framework commits governments to monitoring and implementation within their own jurisdictions, working together at the national level and working across government on joint initiatives between health departments and other portfolios.
COAG agreed to the $1.6 billion National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes in 2008 (the NPA) to contribute to the first of the Closing the Gap targets — to close the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation.

The Government is providing $805.5 million over four years for an Indigenous Chronic Disease Package as its contribution to the NPA. This Package will reduce chronic disease risk factors, encourage earlier detection and better management of chronic disease in primary health care services, improve follow-up care and increase the capacity of the primary care workforce to deliver effective health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.

These overarching Indigenous health plans are due to expire in 2013. The Government is currently considering options for arrangements beyond 2013. All governments will continue work in this area through their commitment to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement. Closing the gap will take time and demands perseverance from all of us. The Government is committed to this national priority which is essential if we are to build a future where each and every Australian is valued and included. I appreciate efforts made by individuals and health professionals towards reducing Indigenous disadvantage.

Thank you again for providing me with the opportunity to comment on this petition.

from the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Ms Macklin

Ballarat Electorate: Mobile Phone Services

Dear Mr Murphy

Telecommunication services in the Hepburn Shire

Thank you for your letter dated 30 May 2011 concerning a petition submitted for the Committee's consideration regarding telecommunication services in the Hepburn Shire. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding.

The Australian Government understands the importance of mobile telephony to Australians. In recent years the mobile phone carriers have significantly expanded their terrestrial mobile networks. Vodafone Hutchison Australia claims its networks currently cover more than 94 per cent of the Australian population. Optus claims its 3G network provides services to 97 per cent of the Australian population. Telstra claims its Next G network now provides mobile coverage to 99 per cent of Australians.

For the most part the recent extension of mobile coverage across Australia has been based on commercial decisions by carriers. In making a decision to extend coverage to a particular area, carriers will consider a range of factors, including site availability, cost structures, likely levels of demand from users and overall economic viability of the service.

Residents of Hepburn Shire may wish to contact Telstra, Optus and Vodafone Hutchison Australia to make their needs known. I have enclosed the contact details of the carriers for reference. It can be useful to involve local government in identifying potential demand for mobile services in the area. Information such as projections of population growth, visitors to the region and records of traffic volumes can be helpful in assisting carriers to make informed decisions about whether to extend coverage to certain areas.

Sometimes commercial barriers to improving coverage are insurmountable. New tower sites in mountainous terrain are often more difficult to justify than proposals for towers on flatter, cleared ground. As mentioned in the petition, the mobile phone signal in this terrain is often blocked by the mountains and therefore does not travel as far. Carriers often find it difficult to justify new towers in this situation as the number of users who can access any given tower is very limited.

Mobile phone services in emergency situations

While mobile phone services improve communications in everyday situations, experience from the 2009 bushfires in Victoria is that terrestrial mobile phone towers are not 100 per cent reliable in emergency situations. Being located at the top of prominent hills for the best geographical coverage of the area, they are
extremely vulnerable to bushfires, attendant power outages and are often at high risk of being destroyed or damaged during these events.

In consideration of the bushfires and other recent natural disasters, there has been an increased focus on emergency communications and response systems. Due to the risk that the networks themselves might be impacted by the emergency, telephone-based emergency warning systems are only a supplement to, and not a replacement for, the range of measures currently used to warn the public of emergencies.

There are many ways of conveying information and warnings during an emergency including television, radio, public address systems, door knocking, sirens and signage. In addition, emergency warnings are transmitted via telephone land lines, terrestrial mobile phones and satellite phones.

Given this, the residents of Hepburn Shire may wish to consider using a satellite-based means of communication. In contrast to terrestrially based mobile networks, the infrastructure for satellite mobile telephony is predominantly located in space, and so is less subject to disruption from bushfires. Satellite mobile phone services cover the entire Australian landmass and population and are available from a number of providers.

**Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme**

The resident of Hepburn Shire and surrounding areas may be eligible to apply for a subsidy under the Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme (the scheme). The scheme improves the affordability of mobile communications for people living and working in areas without terrestrial mobile coverage, by providing subsidies for the purchase of satellite phone handsets.

The scheme provides up to $1000 for eligible applicants who live in areas without terrestrial mobile coverage or up to $700 for eligible applicants who live in areas that have coverage, but spend more than 180 days across a two year period in non-coverage areas.

Under the scheme's rules, those eligible to apply include individuals, small businesses, community groups, not-for-profit organisations, Indigenous corporations, emergency service organisations, health organisations and educational institutions.

The application form for the scheme is available from the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. Visit [www.dbcede.gov.au/satphone](http://www.dbcede.gov.au/satphone) for further information. An information kit can be obtained by contacting the scheme administrator on 1800 674 058 or via email at satphone@dbcede.gov.au.

**Other technology for requesting assistance**

In emergency situations, an alternative to telephone communications is the use of distress beacon units, such as an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) or Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs). These devices are designed to assist in an emergency by alerting rescue authorities and indicating location.

More recent models incorporate Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) technology, enabling much more accurate determination of the location compared with earlier models. These devices are not as limited by terrain as mobile phones and, by providing the location, will speed up any rescue effort. A variety of providers around Australia offer these for sale or hire.

Thank you for bringing the petition from the citizens of Hepburn Shire to my attention. I trust this information will be of assistance.

from the **Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Conroy**

**Kooyong Electorate: Balwyn Post Office**

Dear Mr Murphy

**Petition — closure of Balwyn Post Office**

Thank you for your letter dated 6 June 2011 concerning a petition submitted for the Committee's consideration regarding re-establishing post office services in Balwyn. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding.

Under the **Australian Postal Corporation Act 1989** Australia Post is responsible for the day-to-day running of the organisation, including all decisions relating to its operational network. As a Government Business Enterprise, Australia Post does not receive any funding from taxpayers and, as far as practicable, it is required to perform its
functions in a manner consistent with sound commercial practice.

Australia Post has advised that in determining whether additional retail postal outlets are justified, it takes a number of factors into account including the location and viability of existing outlets and the volume of business likely to be transacted. The corporation also has a national Community Service Obligation performance standard that in metropolitan areas at least 90 per cent of residents should be within 2.5 kilometres of a retail outlet.

Australia Post has reviewed the distribution of postal outlets in the general area around Balwyn. The Balwyn Newsagency offers core postal services and there are five retail postal outlets within a 2 kilometre radius: the Yooralla Licensed Post Office (LPO), 1.08 kilometres from the former Balwyn LPO; Canterbury LPO (1.27 kilometres); Surrey Hills North LPO (1.4 kilometres), Camberwell East LPO (1.47 kilometres) and Deepdene LPO approximately 1.48 kilometres distance.

Australia Post is unable to support the request for an additional postal outlet at this stage. Australia Post believes that the reasonable needs of the community are being met by the current mix of postal outlets.

I trust this information will be of assistance.

from the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Conroy

Brisbane Electorate: Ashgrove Post Office

Dear Mr Murphy

Petition — Ashgrove Post Office

Thank you for your letter dated 4 July 2011 concerning a petition submitted for the Committee's consideration regarding the closure of the Ashgrove Post Office, Queensland.

Under the Australian Postal Corporation Act 1989 Australia Post is responsible for the day-to-day running of the organisation, including all decisions relating to its operational network. As a Government Business Enterprise, Australia Post does not receive any funding from taxpayers and, as far as practicable, it is required to perform its functions in a manner consistent with sound commercial practice.

Australia Post has advised that the Ashgrove Post Office, which closed for business on 21 January 2011, had experienced a steady decline in customer numbers in recent years and was no longer commercially viable. There are four postal outlets located within a 2 kilometre radius of the former Ashgrove Post Office: Ashgrove West Licensed Post Office (LPO) (1.4 kilometres); Newmarket LPO (1.7 kilometres); Red Hill LPO (1.7 kilometres); and Paddington Post Office (1.9 kilometres).

In ensuring minimal inconvenience to post office box customers, Australia Post relocated the Ashgrove suite of post office boxes to the Ashgrove West LPO. The address details of all post office box holders remained the same. Customers were also able to lease a post office box at an alternative outlet if they wished, with the offer of a free six-month redirection. Customers who did not wish to have their post office box transferred to an alternative outlet could have their mail delivered to their household or business via the street mail delivery service. Again, these customers were offered a free six-month redirection service and free 'Change of Address' cards to assist with the process.

Australia Post's customers were first alerted to the proposed closure in November 2010 and again in early January 2011. During this period Australia Post has advised that it had widespread community consultation including with Ms Teresa Gambaro MP, State member Ms Kate Jones MP and Councillor Geraldine Knapp.

Australia Post is unable to support the request for post office facilities to be located in the Ashgrove shopping precinct. Australia Post believes that the reasonable needs of the community are being met by the current mix of postal outlets.

I trust this information will be of assistance.

from the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Conroy
Pharmaceutical Services

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 4 July 2011 regarding a petition recently submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions requesting the facilitation of an additional licence to dispense medicine in Glen Gala Shopping Centre Sunshine West, Victoria, to improve accessibility, competition, affordability and choice for the members of the communities of Glen Gala, Sunshine West, Ardeer, Derrimut and The Avenues Estate.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain the approval process for new pharmacies under the Pharmacy Location Rules (the Rules). For a pharmacist to be approved to supply Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines at particular pharmacy premises, he or she must make an application to the Secretary of my Department (delegated to an officer in Medicare Australia). Applications are considered by the Australian Community Pharmacy Authority (the Authority) against the requirements specified in the Rules.

The Rules are intended to promote community access to PBS medicines by ensuring that a viable and appropriately located pharmacy network is in place. They do this through location based criteria that encourage an appropriate geographical spread of pharmacies, whilst ensuring that pharmacies do not become too closely clustered together, which could lead to some pharmacies having insufficient volume of work to allow efficient and viable operation.

The Authority considers applications against the relevant criteria in the Rules and is unable to consider other issues outside the Rules. If the Authority finds that an application satisfies the requirements of the Rules, it must recommend that the application be approved. The Authority cannot recommend approval if the requirements of the Rules are not met.

Unless an application is lodged for consideration by the Authority, it is not possible to determine whether or not that application would be successful.

In situations where the Secretary's delegate has rejected an application and the applicant believes there are exceptional circumstances that may result in a community being left without reasonable access to PBS medicines, an applicant can request that I exercise my discretionary power under the National Health Act 1953 to approve the pharmacist to supply PBS medicines. Such a request must be made within 30 days of receipt of advice that an application has been rejected.

I can only exercise my powers if I am satisfied that:

- a. a decision not to approve an application will result in a community being left without reasonable access to PBS medicines supplied by an approved pharmacist; and
- b. it is in the public interest to approve the pharmacy.

I trust that the above information is of assistance.

from the Minister for Health and Ageing,
Ms Roxon

Decentralisation Program

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 4 July 2011 concerning a petition recently submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions concerning the decentralisation of population from cities to towns. I apologise for the delay in replying. In accordance with Standing Order 209(b), I would like to make the following response.

The Australian Government is committed to improving both the liveability of our urban areas and effectively building our regions in order to enhance the wellbeing of all Australians. To this end, Sustainable Australia — Sustainable Communities: A Sustainable Population Strategy for Australia aims to enhance opportunities of current and future generations through more effective anticipation, planning and responses to the impacts of a changing population on our economy, environment and communities. This includes managing the impacts of a changing population, particularly in our urban and regional areas.

The Strategy's focus is to ensure that we have in place the necessary policy settings and governance arrangements to deliver improvements in our wellbeing at the local,
regional and national levels into the future. Australia's regions will be better connected with the rollout of the National Broadband Network, which can enable internal migration through facilitating more widespread access to health services, education and specialist services that are typically found in major cities. The National Broadband Network will also facilitate more opportunities for people to engage in teleworking — broadly defined to include work undertaken at home, use of mobile devices in transit or at a different place of business or telecentre.

Effort and coordination is required across governments, portfolios and sectors to secure our economic prosperity, improve the liveability of our cities, suburbs and regions and protect our environment. Among the most important things we can do to take pressure off our major cities is to ensure that regions are more attractive places to live, work and build a future. State, territory and local governments have critical roles in the provision of infrastructure and services that impact the sustainability of the population. The varied ways in which population changes impact across Australia demands effective policy and program responses from all levels of government that can be precisely targeted to specific communities, be they national, regional or local.

My Department's Promoting Regional Living program builds on the success of the Evocities initiative with $11.5 million provided over four years to support non-capital cities implement strategic and targeted marketing strategies, to promote the benefits and opportunities of living and working in those cities. Cities that have strategies in place for future growth needs will also be eligible for support.

Priorities that may have particular relevance to these cities include: access to critical transport infrastructure; current skills base and future skills needs; new opportunities for private sector participation and partnerships; opportunities to maximise the use of broadband for the purpose of expanding business enterprises and the delivery of services; opportunities to attract new and recent migrants; social inclusion; water and energy efficiency; affordable housing options; and climate change and environmental adaptation and management.

Similarly, my Department supports the Regional Development Australia committee network, which is made up of local leaders who volunteer their time to work with government, business and community groups to help address the economic, social and environmental issues affecting their communities. A key priority for many Regional Development Australia committees is to consider how to attract people to move to live in their regions, particularly from major cities. This can be encouraged by the region offering diverse employment opportunities, good transportation links, a good standard of community facilities and a wide range of services.

I understand that the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship is writing separately to the Committee on matters raised in the petition that fall within his area of responsibility.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

from the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government, Mr Crean

Flynn Electorate: Digital Television

Dear Mr Murphy

Petition about digital television reception in Miriam Vale and district, Qld

Thank you for your letter dated 4 July 2011 in your capacity as Chair of the Standing Committee on Petitions. In your letter you referred to a petition from the residents and citizens of Miriam Vale and Districts, Queensland, about digital television reception in those areas. You sought my response to the petition by way of a written response to the Committee.

The petition asked the House to 'ensure that the Miriam Vale community has access, free of charge, to quality digital TV and to ensure the services provided are local and not relayed from a satellite. The community wishes to access its TV signal via terrestrial means via a ground based transmitter.'

The petition also drew the attention of the House to 'the unsatisfactory position with regard to the changeover from analog TV to digital TV. The community has a high number of retired residents who are unable to sustain the cost of transition.'

Digital television services in Miriam Vale
I am advised by the Digital Switchover Taskforce that most viewers in the Miriam Vale area are currently likely to be receiving their analog television services from the Miriam Vale/Bororen transmission site, which is located about 10 kilometres east of Miriam Vale. I understand that the three commercial services and the SBS are provided from this site as self help retransmissions, and the ABC provides its services in both analog and digital.

In January 2010 I announced that under an agreement between the government and commercial television broadcasters across Australia, broadcasters will upgrade a number of existing regional analog self help transmission sites to operate in digital.

These site upgrades are being carried out by broadcasters. No funding is being provided by the government for the upgrades and therefore the choice of sites to be converted is a matter for the broadcasters to determine. I am advised that broadcasters have decided not to upgrade the Miriam Vale/Bororen site to digital.

The Australian government understands the importance of free-to-air television to people living in regional Australia and has introduced policy and legislative measures to maximise viewers' access to digital television services. Providing equal television services to viewers throughout Australia is a central feature of the government's digital switchover program.

To ensure that viewers in areas where there is poor or no access to terrestrially broadcast digital television services, such as in the Miriam Vale area, the government is investing $375.4 million over twelve years to provide transmission of digital free-to-air services from a new satellite platform known as the Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST) service.

By providing funding for the VAST service, the government aims to ensure that anyone in Australia who cannot receive digital terrestrial services will have access to a reliable and professionally operated free to air service, now and into the future.

The VAST service is a first class direct to home digital television satellite service which covers all of Australia. It provides technically high quality viewing of the same number of television channels that are available in capital cities in both standard definition (SD) and high definition (HD).

Viewers in the Miriam Vale area who currently receive their analog television services from the Miriam Vale/Bororen self help site, and who are not able to receive an adequate signal from another transmitter serving their area, will be eligible to move to the VAST service.

They will also be eligible to receive assistance under the government's Satellite Subsidy Scheme. More detailed information about the VAST service and the Satellite Subsidy Scheme is provided below.

Some viewers in the Miriam Vale area are likely to eligible to receive assistance to switch to digital television under the government's Household Assistance Scheme. More detailed information about this Scheme is also provided below.

**Viewer Access Satellite Television service**

The VAST service features channels carrying programs sourced from Southern Cross Seven, Imparj a Nine and Ten network. It also includes the main national broadcaster services, ABC1 and SBS ONE, together with SD digital channels ABC2, ABC3, SBS TWO, 7TWO, GO!, Eleven and the HD channels ABC News 24, SBS HD, 7mate, GEM, and ONE HD.

The VAST service also provides viewers with access to the local regional news services currently broadcast by the commercial broadcasters in their terrestrial licence areas.

This means that viewers in the Miriam Vale area will be able to receive WIN News from Rockhampton and Bundaberg, Seven Local News from Rockhampton and Wide Bay, and the Southern Cross Queensland news. The regional news services are provided through dedicated news channels.

The news services of the national broadcasters, the ABC and SBS, are also provided. ABC news is available through ABC 1 on a state basis, so Miriam Vale viewers will receive ABC1 Queensland.
Satellite Subsidy Scheme

Viewers moving to the VAST service because they live in areas served by analog self-help sites that are not being upgraded to digital, and who are not able to receive an adequate signal from another transmitter serving their area, will be eligible to receive assistance under the government's Satellite Subsidy Scheme (the scheme).

Under the scheme, the government will contract with satellite installers experienced in domestic satellite dish installation to provide a subsidised installation package to these households. Eligible households will pay a predetermined co-payment to the installer which is fixed as part of the contract between the government and the service providers. Households will be clearly advised of this co-payment in advance of the installations taking place. In regional Queensland the household co-payment is $220.

To ensure a flat co-payment across large areas, the government provides a subsidy of $400 per household in defined 'standard' areas, $550 per household in defined 'very remote' areas and $700 in defined 'far north tropical' areas.

The scheme pays for the conversion of one television set per household to the VAST service. People with more than one television who move to the VAST service will have to install additional cabling and set-top boxes at their own expense, although the same dish can be used for a number of televisions. This is not substantially different to what people with more than one television in metropolitan and regional areas throughout Australia who receive their television services terrestrially will have to do to receive digital television.

Applications for assistance under the scheme opened for Queensland on 30 May 2011 and they close on 2 October 2011. Households in the Miriam Vale area may apply for assistance under the scheme online by going to www.digitalready.gov.au and then scrolling down the page to 'How to apply' under 'Govt assistance/Satellite Subsidy Scheme'. Viewers may also apply by calling the Digital Ready Information Line.

The situation for tenants in state or local government housing is that provided they are Australian citizens or permanent residents aged 18 years or over, either the owner/landlord or the tenant of the dwelling where the satellite television equipment is to be installed is eligible to apply for the scheme.

Tenants opting into the scheme on behalf of their landlord will need to have received their landlord's permission for the installation to be carried out. There will only be one installation per dwelling.

Once an applicant (either the landlord/owner or tenant) has applied successfully for the scheme, their dwelling will not be eligible to apply for additional subsidies, and the applicant will be required to pay the household co-payment. Tenants and landlords will also need to agree about ultimate ownership of the equipment installed.

The government has funded the scheme in recognition of the investment made by households in communities with analog self-help terrestrial retransmission facilities in establishing and running their own analog self-help towers, and to ensure that the cost for households to install VAST reception equipment is minimised.

The scheme is restricted to householders who live in or own an eligible residential dwelling, and is not available to non-residential dwellings. Places of business are excluded from the scheme as they are not residential premises. The government is not subsidising the conversion of businesses to digital more generally.

People living in permanently located cabins and caravans within residential parks are eligible to participate in the Scheme as long as they can provide evidence of a valid residential park site agreement, residential park tenancy agreement or long term holiday site agreement. Permanently located caravans or cabins occupied under these types of agreements are considered to be residential dwellings for the purposes of the scheme.

Household Assistance Scheme

The Household Assistance Scheme will, at no cost to eligible households, supply, install and demonstrate a HD set top box specifically chosen...
to meet the needs of the elderly or those with a disability, and carry out any cabling and antenna work where necessary. Households eligible for assistance under the Household Assistance Scheme located in areas unable to receive terrestrial digital television signals will receive satellite reception equipment.

A person may be eligible for assistance under the Scheme if they live in a switchover area that is due to switch to digital, own a functioning television, do not already have access to digital television on any of the televisions they own and they receive the maximum rate of one of the following payments:

- Age Pension
- Disability Support Pension
- Carer Payment
- Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) service pension
- the DVA income support supplement payment

Eligible customers in the Miriam Vale area would have received a letter inviting them to participate in the Scheme in April 2011. A person eligible to receive assistance under the Household Assistance Scheme may not also receive assistance under the Satellite Subsidy Scheme.

Thank you for bringing these matters to my attention.

from the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Conroy

Pharmaceutical Services

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 4 July 2011 regarding a petition recently submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions requesting that the Australian Community Pharmacy Authority (the Authority) location rules are maintained in the Glen Gala, Sunshine West, Derrimut and the Avenue Estate communities, Victoria.

The Pharmacy Location Rules (the Rules) are a fundamental component of the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement (the Fifth Agreement) between the Australian Government and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia. This Agreement commenced on 1 July 2010 and terminates on 30 June 2015.

Applications by pharmacists for approval to supply Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines are considered by the Authority against the requirements of the Rules. The Authority cannot recommend that an application be approved if the requirements of the Rules are not met.

In situations where an application is rejected and the applicant believes there are exceptional circumstances that may result in a community being left without reasonable access to PBS medicines, an applicant may request that I exercise my discretionary power under the National Health Act 1953 to approve the pharmacist to supply PBS medicines.

A review of the Rules was undertaken in 2010 as required under the Fourth Community Pharmacy Agreement, and the findings of that review are currently being considered by Government.

I trust that the above information is of assistance.

from the Minister for Health and Ageing, Ms Roxon

Medical Research

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 7 July 2011 to the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, regarding a submission requesting that the House of Representatives does not support a reduction in medical research funding.

Your letter has been referred to me as the Minister responsible for health and medical research. I apologise for the delay in responding.

There has never been more money invested in health and medical research in this nation than there is today, right now, under this Government.

The Gillard Government has reconfirmed its commitment to health and medical research by maintaining the all-time high levels of funding to the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in the 2011-12 Budget. The Budget commits $746.1 million to the NHMRC for health and medical research. That is an increase of 4.3% on last year's funding of $715.5 million.
The Government recognises the importance of health and medical research. The Government is also aware of the pressure for research institutes, universities, hospitals and health services to work more closely together. The disease burden continues to change with the growth of chronic diseases and the impact of ageing. It is critical that research be translated into improved clinical practice quickly, and that these imperatives are seen as part of the broader health reform agenda.

To this end, the Government has commissioned an independent strategic review of health and medical research (the Review), which will focus on optimising Australia's capacity to produce world class health and medical research to 2020. Stakeholder participation will be critical to the Review, and there will be a broad range of consultations to ensure key stakeholders are able to engage in the process. Further information on the Review, including draft terms of reference, will be made available through the Department of Health and Ageing in the coming weeks.

I appreciate your interest in health and medical research.

from the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Mr Butler

Malabar Headland

Dear Mr Murphy

I refer to your letter of 22 August 2011 to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, the Hon Tony Burke MP, concerning a petition recently submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding ongoing public use by horse riders on the Malabar Headland, New South Wales.

As the matter you have raised is the responsibility of the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, Senator the Hon Penny Wong, I have referred your letter to her office for attention.

from the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Mr Burke

Statements

Mr MURPHY (Reid) (10:05): Today I have presented 10 petitions that the Petitions Committee has found to comply with the standing orders. I want to repeat a remark that I make from time to time. The committee may or may not agree with the contents of a petition but its role is not to decide whether a petition is acceptable for tabling on the basis of the members' personal beliefs; rather, the Petitions Committee's role is to consider whether a petition complies with the rules of the House in terms of its form, content and language. If it complies, the committee will authorise its presentation. This approach reflects the historic nature of petitions, the committee's role as a conduit between the people and the House, and the House's respect for freedom of speech.

I would also like to point out that, in addition to House standing orders which govern petitioning, the Petitions Committee—and indeed all proceedings of parliament—are also guided by broader foundations of parliamentary practice. These foundations lay down some fundamental expectations of all who participate in the work of the parliament. This is something that petitioners need to consider when preparing petitions.

The right of petitioning the Crown and parliament is not a modern activity; it has existed in the Westminster system since the 13th century. Petitions are essentially requests by citizens or residents for action by the House of Representatives. Petitions set out the issue that gives rise to the petition and then make a request of the House. For example, petitions may ask the House to: introduce legislation or appeal or change existing legislation; take action for a certain purpose for the benefit of particular persons; or redress a personal grievance, such as correction of an administrative error.

Back in the days of King Edward I, the petitioning process was primarily used to redress personal grievances. Over the
centuries, the basis of petitioning has evolved and developed such that petitioning now focuses less on individual grievances and more on issues affecting the collective. One of the reasons for this change is that there are now many other avenues for individuals to pursue the resolution of a personal grievance—for example, through approaching their local member of parliament.

Agencies today that may also be relevant for Commonwealth matters include the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman and bodies such as the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The petitioning process is therefore not usually the first port of call for petitioners to seek a resolution or a solution to personal grievances, given that other often more specialised avenues exist to raise these matters. Engaging in the petitioning process, like any engagement an individual or a group of individuals undertakes with the parliament, should be undertaken in a considered and respectful manner.

Finally, petitions are a powerful tool for the general public to air their views or issues with the possibility of influencing policy or causing action to be taken. Even if no action results immediately, one of the most valuable results of the process is that members and the government of the day are informed in a formal and public manner of the views of certain citizens on a given matter. Parallel to this ability is the expectation that petitioners will treat the process with care and respect, ensuring that petitions comply with the letter and spirit of the requirements of the House.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Regional Australia Committee

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (10:09): Good morning. Today I am happily representing the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, which is currently conducting an inquiry into the use of fly-in fly-out—FIFO—and drive-in drive-out—DIDO—workforce practices in regional Australia. It has come at the behest of a number of communities throughout Australia and from members in this parliament. The member for Capricornia, for example, who is in the House at the moment, has been interested in this workforce practice for some time and was instrumental in having it referred to the regional Australia committee.

We are inviting—indeed welcoming—responses from throughout Australia about the various aspects of fly-in fly-out and drive-in drive out workforce practices. In the main, people normally associate it with mining, but it affects many other rural and regional areas of Australia as well. The committee has adopted the following terms of reference, which I would like to share with the House, in order to give a framework for people to respond:

The Standing Committee on Regional Australia will inquire into and report on the use of ‘fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) and ‘drive-in, drive-out’ (DIDO) workforce practices in regional Australia, with specific reference to:

- the extent and projected growth in FIFO/DIDO work practices, including in which regions and key industries this practice is utilised;
- costs and benefits for companies, and individuals, choosing a FIFO/DIDO workforce as an alternative to a resident workforce;
- the effect of a non-resident FIFO/DIDO workforce on established communities, including community wellbeing, services and infrastructure;
- the impact on communities sending large numbers of FIFO/DIDO workers to mine sites;
- long term strategies for economic diversification in towns with large FIFO/DIDO workforces;
- key skill sets targeted for mobile workforce employment, and opportunities for ongoing training and development;
provision of services, infrastructure and housing availability for FIFO/DIDO workforce employees;
strategies to optimise FIFO/DIDO experience for employees and their families, communities and industry;
potential opportunities for non-mining communities with narrow economic bases to diversify their economic base by providing a FIFO/DIDO workforce;
current initiatives and responses of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments; and
any other related matter.

The concept of fly-in fly-out, drive-in drive-out—indeed, float-in float-out, literally, by those who arrive at work sites by boat—is a phenomenon which began in the late 1940s in the offshore oil sector in the Gulf of Mexico. As the offshore oil industry—the gas industry et cetera—developed, so FIFO expanded with it. Indeed, figures I have recently seen estimate that, for instance, in the late 1980s, with the developments in the North Sea, something like 60,000 workers were working in the North Sea as FIFOs. That of course has now developed throughout the world, particularly in the resources sector and more so in Australia. The idea of establishing a mine and then a town around the mine—and I use as an example the west coast of Tasmania, which is part of my electorate—and the town becoming a mining town meant there was a robust community of long-term economic development and a very close association between that community, the workforce and the mine. In many cases that is now breaking down.

So, we wish to discover, if this is a fact of life, what strategies exist, what strategies can exist to make that a better association and behaviour, and what are some of the detriments and strategies we can use to combat these. These are just some of the issues we will be looking at in the inquiry.

Mr HAASE (Durack) (10:15): I rise today to make a statement about the inquiry of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia into the use of fly-in fly-out and drive-in drive-out workforce practices in regional Australia. The committee adopted this inquiry on 23 August 2011 after the matter was referred to the committee by the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government. There has been significant public and media interest in the inquiry. Many regional members in this chamber will be familiar with work practices commonly known as FIFO, where workers are flown to a work site—most commonly a mine—for a shift lasting up to several weeks and are then flown home for a break of some days or weeks. The practice has been in place in Western Australia for many years, it is rapidly expanding in Queensland, and it is being introduced as DIDO—drive-in drive-out—across New South Wales.

While this is not a new practice, it has expanded in recent years with such rapidity that it is time that the community, industry and government gained a better understanding of the impact of the practice. It is for this reason that the Standing Committee on Regional Australia sought to have this inquiry. The committee is hoping to gain a thorough understanding of the extent of FIFO/DIDO work practices and the impacts they have on both the towns that host these mobile workforces and the 'home base' towns that see many of their residents coming and going for long work shifts. We want to understand what the costs and benefits are for individuals, families and companies that choose a FIFO/DIDO work practice over developing a resident workforce as well as what impacts the practice has on communities.
The committee has a blank sheet of paper. It has no predetermined idea of what the outcomes of this inquiry will be; however, we do know that we are looking for ideas to strengthen regional Australia and for long-term strategies for economic diversification in those towns that host large FIFO/DIDO workforces. The committee also wants to find out more about skilling: what skills are targeted for FIFO/DIDO employment and how individuals access further training and development. Is there a skills drain being felt in some areas as people take up FIFO/DIDO employment, and what can be done about this? The deputy chair of the committee, the member for Braddon, reports that Tasmanian workers are being tempted by FIFO jobs in South Australia, leaving his electorate looking for skilled tradespeople. Clearly, this is an issue that needs a 'big picture' examination.

The terms of reference for this committee are wide ranging. Already we have heard concerns about air safety, health funding, taxation, family and relationship breakdown and the loneliness of the FIFO bachelor. The cost of housing, antisocial behaviour and how to optimise the FIFO/DIDO experience for families are also on the committee’s agenda. In my electorate of Durack, 51 per cent of the mining workforce are already working on a fly-in fly-out or drive-in drive-out basis, and this is of great concern. It turns out to be almost a love-hate relationship. The practice suits some incredibly well and it does not suit others. The drain of skills out of rural communities to FIFO and DIDO workforces is causing major problems in some areas and yet, for those who are developing resources in Western Australia, often the only way is to deploy a FIFO workforce.

I would encourage members of this place to get involved in this inquiry. The committee can, of course, have supplementary members appointed; however, I would ask those members whose electorates are impacted in any way by FIFO or DIDO work practices to let their constituents know about this inquiry and encourage people to make a submission. The committee secretariat has some resources that members can distribute, post on their websites or distribute with newsletters. Submissions close on 7 October and after that the committee will be deciding on a public hearing schedule. We have already been invited to travel widely through Western Australia and Queensland and the committee will also focus its attention on other areas of the country where the practice is having an impact.

I sincerely hope that we hear from as many people as possible who are impacted by FIFO/DIDO work practices in order to inform the committee and also future governments about how this practice can be used to strengthen regional Australia.

The SPEAKER: The time for statements has expired. I wish the committee well in its endeavours.

BILLS
Constitutional Corporations (Farm Gate to Plate) Bill 2011
First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Katter.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (10:20): In presenting this bill to the House I commend and congratulate the senator from South Australia who is often referred to as the farmers friend and the voice of the village. In this case, the village is paying twice what they should be paying for their fruit and vegetables in Australia and the farmer is getting half. In other words, the people in the middle are arguably getting 400 per cent more than they should be getting. Let me be
very specific. These figures were compiled by Senator Xenophon and his staff. They were not very hard to compile because the markets give you a market quotation for the value of an orange every day in the markets. So anyone can find out what the farmer is getting paid. And of course you can find out what the consumers pay by simply walking into the supermarket. So it is not very profoundly hard to get these figures. It was profoundly hard for the ACCC—those people who assure us of no competition. Let me quote figures—and these are just ordinary, everyday fruit and vegetable items: apples—the supermarket pays the farmer $2 and charges the consumer $5.98; oranges—18c a kilogram to the farmer, $1.98 to the consumer; potatoes—35c to the farmer, $2.98 to the consumer; broccoli—$1 to the farmer, $1.92 to the consumer; and cabbages—55c to the farmer, $2.38 to the consumer. That is 199 per cent on the first item; 1,000 per cent on the second item; 751 per cent on the third item; 92 per cent on the fourth item; and 333 per cent on the fifth item.

How long is this parliament going to continue to accept the oligopolistic pricing regime in the supermarkets of Australia? I have said continuously in this place, wasting my breath, because no-one here seems to care: within three years, Australia will be a net importer of food. Every four days—I have not seen the latest figures, but two or three years ago these figures were from a comprehensive report—a farmer commits suicide in Australia.

Seven years ago we became a net importer of pork, thanks to the decisions taken by the LNP in this House. Four years ago we became a net importer of fruit and vegetables—the items I am talking about here. We cannot feed ourselves in fruit and vegetables. Two years ago we became a net importer of seafood. The projections for this year are that 72 per cent of our seafood will be bought into this country, so we cannot feed ourselves in seafood. So it is not remarkable for those who have been following this story to know that within three years we will be a net importer of food.

The *Fin Review* already claims that we are now a net importer of food. I can use different statistics which might push it out to nine years, but there is not the slightest doubt in any set of statistics you want to use that this country will not be able to feed itself within three years. Who is to blame? We have come into this place and said again and again that we are asked to meet conditions of health and hygiene in our production, which are not remotely being met.

Let me take the case of prawns. Our prawns have to be grown in absolutely pristine water. It has to be regulated on its way in so that it is pure and free of bacteria, but then it has to be regulated on its way out, pure and free of bacteria. All water contains some bacteria. The impositions upon this industry have simply closed it down. I am the minister given the credit for starting this industry off, for which I deserve no credit. It was the six entrepreneurs: Wahedy, Coco, Sciacca and the very famous Irwin Vidor. They are the people that deserve the credit and, probably most of all, Jimmy Ryall and Dr Joe Baker from the Institute of Marine Science that commenced this industry.

We started off with great hopes. We felt that we would overtake Thailand in prawn production by the year 2000—this was about the mid- to late eighties. We reckoned that over the next 15 years we would catch up to Thailand. Thailand was on $2,000 million a year of production, and we forged ahead. We went up to, I think, $65 or $85 million—some figure like that—within a few short years. Starting from scratch, we went zoom and were on course to catch them. After the
environmentalists had finished with us, we are now down to $24 million, and I think that very shortly we will have no production at all. That would be my prediction.

Let’s have a look at the prawns that are coming in. Those are the impositions that are placed upon the Australian industry. You have to have twice the number of ponds plus there is twice the amount of water because you have got to put clean water back into the ocean. I said, ‘What contaminant is there?’ They said, ‘The prawns do their business in the water.’ ‘Do they have toilets out in the ocean for the prawns?’ They said, ‘Concentration’ and I said, ‘Good. I was waiting, Mr Environmentalist, for you to say that because we have fought again and again to have the sewerage outfall into the oceans stopped.’ They said, ‘Oh no. It dissipates.’ You could write a treatise on this, couldn’t you? Human waste dissipates but prawn waste concentrates.

It just demonstrates that these people are completely out of control. They are dangerous and they are evil. The environmentalist movement in Australia has moved from being a great asset to this country to a cancer. Here is their handiwork. Let’s go back to Thailand. Australia has gone down from $65 million to $25 million; Thailand has gone up to over $8,000 million. All of our agricultural exports in Australia—200 items—only amount to $28,000 million. Their sugar industry is now rivalling ours—it might even be bigger than ours now. These are two industries. They are forging ahead of us. We will run out of coal, we will run out of iron ore and, when we do, this country will be bankrupt. I want to put on the record that I said this in the year of our Lord 2011. I pleaded with this parliament to wake up to itself. You have destroyed agriculture in this country and are destroying it whilst I speak.

Everyone knows the Americans are whingeing, crying, screaming and howling over Walmart. Walmart and its nearest competitor, the big two in America, have 23 per cent of the market. Depending on what set of figures you want to use in Australia, between 88 per cent and 92 per cent of the Australian market is held by the big two. There is no country on earth that would allow two players to dominate the market. They would not allow it on any items at all, but of all items they would not allow it on those—the anti-trust legislation would have smashed them long ago in the United States. Similarly, that would happen in Britain, France, Germany, Japan or any country you want a name. But not here in Australia, where we suffer the power of the great corporations.

I did the figures some years ago on milk, when this parliament decided that it would facilitate the deregulation of the dairy industry. Here is the letter from Dairy Farmers to farmers in my electorate. On the day of deregulation the price for milk was 59c; the day after it was 42c. (Time expired)

Bill read a first time.

The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 41, the second reading will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Competition and Consumer Amendment (Horticultural Code of Conduct) Bill 2011

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Katter.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (10:31): If I go into a hotel or public place and people do not know who I am, I try desperately to avoid admitting that I am a politician. When I was a young man, politicians had great respect, and they deserved that respect. They had fought great battles for us. We had worked for nothing and we had died down the mines...
in horrific accidents or of the terrible 'miners-titis'. One in 31 of us, in fact, died down the mines or from what we encountered down there. The politicians in the Labor Party fought the great fight and changed all of that for us. Those men were heroes. If you read my history of Australia you will see them as great heroes—the likes of Ted Theodore and the other great Labor leaders before the Second World War. Curtin and Chifley were prominent amongst those before and, to some extent, even after the war. We praise greatly those men.

After the war, my family became members of the then Country Party, which fought great battles for us and secured statutory marketing. When Jack McEwen left this parliament, he said: 'I can stand up here and proudly say that, as I leave this place, every single rural industry is protected by marketing arrangements.' That was true even in beef. Under the beef agreements with Japan and Great Britain, we had a very highly protected situation. McEwen said: 'It delivers to our farming sector not a great wealth but a solid prosperity.' What a great statement to make. What a great man. That was why people admired, respected and looked up to politicians.

Now, today, we are pariahs. Of the top 30 professions in Australia, I think we rank second last. In those days we were in the top three or four. Why have we moved down? Does anyone care that thousands of jobs vanished overseas in the last few weeks with the announcements by Qantas and BlueScope or that a whole apple industry is being exported offshore? Does anyone care? Is anyone going to raise those issues in here? Not likely. Does anyone care that a farmer commits suicide every four days in this country? Not likely. I have not heard anyone, except me, ever refer to it in this place. And I do not want to mention it anymore because I think I have blunted the edge that a statistic such as that should have for the conscience of every person in this place.

Either Jack McEwen, the policies of the Country Party and that great man Doug Anthony, who introduced the wool scheme, stunk or the current policies of the LNP and the ALP stink. I know which side of the fence I fall on. There is no doubt about that. And the poor old apple growers got theirs last month.

The horticultural code of conduct is very interesting. Three or four elections ago the then leader of the LNP announced—and I am on record as praising him for it—that he was going to give us a mandatory code of conduct. The essence of this is twofold. Firstly, the farmer does not know what his produce is sold for. He sits up there in Mareeba or down on the Murray River or in Renmark in South Australia and has no idea. He sends his produce to market. He is out the re picking the grapes, the oranges, the mangoes, the bananas or whatever; he does not have time to be sitting down in the markets every day watching what his produce, which goes to market on a daily basis, is being sold for. So he does not know what he should get paid. A lot of farmers are very nice and very trusting people—foolishly trusting people, in my opinion. They do not know what their product is sold for, so, quite frankly, an agent can tell them anything. He could sell mangoes for $40 a box and tell the farmer he sold them for $20 a box. There is no protection whatsoever.

In the real estate industry there is a trust fund. In the legal industry there is a trust fund. In the insurance industry there is a trust fund. In every industry there is a trust fund to protect the person selling. But there is no trust fund in this industry. Why?

The other issue is the supermarket giants: Woolworth and Coles. Again, we do not know what they pay for produce. There is a
little game that is played here—and I speak with authority about it because I own a small mango farm, so I know. The game is as follows. Every farmer, for reasons we do not fully understand, will get a turn at being the first farmer off, so he will get spectacular prices—he will get $45 a box or whatever it is—for mangoes, which they will be pulling next month. But then, as all the other farmers start to come on, the price will tumble back down to $12 or $15 a box. The Woolworths or Coles manager has bought mangoes at $45 and thinks: 'Heavens! I'm going to lose my job here.' So he has a look at those mangoes and finds out that they are speckled and says, 'Jeez—we took these on consignment.' The truth is that he did not take them on consignment; he bought them. But there is no proof. So the trust fund is the first arm of this legislation; the second is a sales docket.

I hope the Prime Minister will not mind my quoting her here. When I was talking to her about my 20-point wish list for the Prime Minister, she said: 'Bob, you can't be serious. Are you telling me seriously that they will not give a sales docket?' She could not believe it, and I think most Australians and most people in this House who are not familiar with fruit and vegetables would also find it hard to believe. For everything you buy, from a hamburger to a banana to a motor car or a house, there is a sales docket—there is evidence of sale. The only group of people who are not allowed to have a sales docket are the farmers of Australia—and they are suffering greatly as a result, to the eternal shame of the LNP, who promised that sales docket in the election.

I do not have time to read out the quote from the then leader of the National Party, but I will say that Peter McGauran—a man of some integrity—went to the point of losing his portfolio because he thought, 'We cannot promise before an election something as important as this and then betray the farmers after the election.' So the honourable member from Toowoomba, who is not bound by such requirements, was put in charge of the legislation, and Mr McGauran risked his ministry. The end result of all this was that the promise was flagrantly broken, that the farmers were treated with absolute contempt and that the interests of the big corporations, whether they be agents or Coles and Woolworths and so on, were looked by the LNP in this place. Those are the sad facts of life. We have had three years since, and we have failed to get out of the ALP either. Why wouldn't you give the farmer evidence of sale? Every other sale that takes place in the world and in this country gets it, but all the poor old farmer gets is the rough end of the pineapple.

If you are genuine—if you are fair dinkum—then you will vote for this bill. But, if you do not, do not have the hypocrisy to go back to your electorate and tell them that you did. I am sending out a letter to every single newspaper in the electorate of every single country member in this place and saying: 'That's what we asked for; your member of parliament wouldn't even give you a sales docket—throw them out. But, if they vote for this, then you congratulate them and thank them.' So there is the choice, and it will be put in on the front page—if I get my way—of every country newspaper in Australia. (Time Expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): I remind the member for Kennedy to speak in future through the chair, not at the chair. He was in full flight, so I did not interrupt him, but I remind him now that in future I will interrupt him if he refers to the chair as 'you'.

Mr Katter: Greatly appreciated, your indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Debate adjourned.
Mr WILKIE (Denison) (10:42): The Telecommunications Amendment (Enhancing Community Consultation) Bill 2011 would change the Telecommunications Act 1997 to allow for greater input from local communities about telecommunications developments—in particular, about mobile phone base stations proposed to be developed in their areas. This bill would make several important changes to the Telecommunications Act.

For a start, it would expand the number of people who would require notification when a telecommunications tower was proposed to be built or substantially modified. At the moment, only the owner or occupier of the land on which the new tower will be built must be notified, meaning that owners and occupiers of land immediately adjacent to a major development may not even know about the development until construction commences. There is a belief in the community that it is currently a requirement that everyone within 100 metres of the new tower be notified; but this is not enshrined in law and is often ignored. This bill would provide certainty about that and stipulate notification of those within a more sensible distance of 500 metres from a new tower.

The bill would also extend the amount of time for owners or occupiers of affected land to respond. The act currently gives them just 10 business days to respond after being notified—a hard task for local landholders and an even harder task for councils, which often have to consult subcommittees or public meetings. The bill would give them a much fairer 30 business days to respond after being notified. Moreover, the bill would restrict the types of developments which can be declared under legislative instruments—in particular the low-impact determination which allows new developments to avoid scrutiny under state or local planning laws.

I understand the necessity for some projects to be classified as low impact and therefore regulated federally; but there have been numerous cases where it has been clear that low-impact telecommunications facilities will actually have a very high impact on local communities and that they therefore deserve further scrutiny. To that end, this bill declares that no new telecommunications tower may be categorised as low impact and that, for an extension to a tower to be declared low impact, it must not extend the height of the tower by more than one metre.

The bill would also remove the ability of telecommunications carriers to extend the size and capacity of towers under the guise of routine maintenance. Currently the size of antennae extending from the top of the tower is not included in official measurements of the dimensions of towers and this allows carriers to extend antennae often by metres without any scrutiny whatsoever. In other words, this bill would remove the ability of carriers to extend potentially highly visible and disturbing antennae without scrutiny and includes any antennae extended from the top of a tower into the official measurements of that tower.

There is also a belief in the community that high-impact telecommunications tower developments will always be subject to state and local government approval, but in fact the current legislation allows the Australian Communications and Media Authority to issue facility installation permits to allow carriers to install high-impact facilities which have not been granted planning approval by
state or local planning authorities. This bill would ensure that such permits are only issued in genuinely extraordinary circumstances. Moreover, under the current legislation, to grant a facility installation permit ACMA must decide, among other things, that the proposed facility is an important part of a nationally significant telecommunications network, but this bill would disallow ACMA from considering specifically the commercial interests of carriers when making this decision. Additionally, current legislation does not require ACMA to consider community sensitive sites properly when deciding whether or not to grant a facility installation permit to a proposed facility near a community sensitive site. Currently ACMA must only be satisfied that other less sensitive sites have been considered. Quite simply, this bill would raise that standard making it fairer to communities. Now ACMA would have to be satisfied that all alternative, less sensitive sites are unfeasible, and in any case the authority could not grant a permit within 100 metres of a community sensitive site, such as a school or local landmark.

This bill would also make it fairer for communities wishing to appeal a facility installation permit being granted. Under the current act, only carriers may lodge an appeal with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, but this bill would expand that right to local communities, thereby ensuring that communities and carriers are on a level playing field when disputes arise. The bill would also address the criteria whereby ACMA must notify the public about new developments. Under the current framework, ACMA must take its advice from industry representative bodies when deciding who to inform about new developments, but this bill would repeal that requirement and instead mandate that ACMA must consider the potential impact of the proposed development on the local community which will live with it every day.

If these changes seem basic, it is because they are. I understand that there must be a fundamental balance in this debate between the public interest in having fast and reliable mobile communications on the one hand and the public interest in not having inappropriate and hastily planned developments springing up all around our communities on the other. For too long this balance has been skewed in favour of telecommunications companies, who under the current legislation have carte blanche to place new telecommunications facilities essentially wherever they please. Communities are finding themselves in a position where they have no place to turn. The simple fact that the current act restricts the ability to lodge an appeal with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to carriers who have had permits disallowed suggests something is wrong with the level of community consultation in our telecommunications laws.

A case in point is Optus's proposal to build a tower on top of my local Woolworths in Sandy Bay. Originally it was declared by the carrier to be a low-impact facility, even though it would literally tower over a heritage neighbourhood and be an eyesore from nearby historic Battery Point. Yes, community pressure seems to have forced Optus to recategorise the development as high impact, and now the Hobart City Council is considering the proposal, but the community should have been spared the heartache in the first place and there still is no certainty that ACMA will not just ride in at the eleventh hour and issue a permit regardless of the council's determination. Congratulations and thankyou to Anthea Hopkins for leading the community revolt against this inappropriate development. This
example is just one of the many reasons I am very pleased to present this bill to the House.

For too long communities have been unable to have a say in where in new towers spring up in their area. The playing field has been skewed towards the commercial self-interest of the telecommunications companies. I have had people from all around the country call my office complaining about the sense of hopelessness they feel when they are informed—if, indeed, they are informed at all—that a significant development will happen right next to their house and that there is next to nothing they can do about it. Some communities have fought these developments and some of them have been successful, but many more have failed, though not through want of time and effort. The consistent message I get from those who have succeeded is: it should not be this difficult. I agree with those communities: it should not require public protest; it should not require lobbying politicians and courting media to get some kind of say about a development happening in your own backyard. I propose that this bill, the Telecommunications Amendment (Enhancing Community Consultation) Bill 2011, strikes the correct balance between developing our mobile telecommunications into the future and giving our communities real input into how we should do it. I commend the bill to the House.

Bill read a first time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): In accordance with standing order 41, the second reading will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011

Second Reading

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (10:51): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Day after day, week after week and year after year in our homes, our workplaces, our towns and our farms, firefighters put their lives and their safety on the line for us. The risk that faces a firefighter when they walk into a building, a structure or a home that is burning, or when they walk into a bushfire the likes of which we saw in Victoria on Black Saturday recently, is very obvious. But what is often less well known is that one of the greatest risks to a firefighter's health and their life comes not from those few moments, minutes or hours when they are fighting a fire but from what happens to them afterwards. That is because in an average home there are around 70,000 synthetic chemicals, and when they burn they produce a toxic cocktail of chemical smoke, with many compounds that we have not even properly identified the health consequences of yet. At the same time as everyone else is fleeing to get out of there, the firefighters put themselves right in the midst of that smoke.

In many parts of Australia we have some of the world's best protective equipment, breathing apparatus and turnout gear that the firefighters wear. But, because they are in an environment where their heart rate is up and they are working hard, of course the material has to be able to breathe—otherwise the firefighter would expire; they would suffocate. In the same way that it lets their body heat out, it lets that toxic chemical smoke in. When it does that, it comes at enormous, almost unpreventable risk to the firefighter.
What we know is that firefighters start in their career, as you would expect, about 20 per cent healthier than the average member of the population. But within five years, studies have shown, they can be almost twice as likely as the average person to contract leukaemia, and the risk of testicular cancer and other forms of cancer is much, much higher than that. It is for that reason that elsewhere around the world governments of conservative and progressive persuasions—in seven out of 10 provinces in Canada and many states in the United States of America—have changed the law so that firefighters who suffer those sorts of cancers are much more easily able to access compensation for themselves and their families.

The reason that is important is that at the moment, when a firefighter goes and seeks compensation for a work related injury for that kind of cancer, they get asked: 'Can you tell us at which specific fire you contracted that cancer?' Of course that is impossible. So many of them are right now suffering and many have died unable to access proper compensation. What the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011 will do is reverse the onus of proof so that for certain kinds of cancers where there is strong medical evidence in support it would be presumed that that cancer is work related unless it can be proved otherwise. This will make a world of difference to the people who protect us.

I introduced this bill at the beginning of July, and since then the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee has spent the intervening time inquiring into the provisions. I am extremely pleased to note that the report, which the Senate received only on Thursday, has as its main recommendation 'that the bill be passed'. In fact it makes four recommendations, each of which will improve and expand the scope of this bill.

If one wanted any reminder about why this was necessary, just think about the fire that we had here in Canberra on Friday. At the same time as police were going around evacuating people from the site and preventing them from attending, firefighters were going the other way, right into the middle of a toxic cocktail of chemicals. That is what they do every day. It is not just chemical factories, as I said, that pose a risk to firefighters; it is what is in every ordinary household.

I would like to close by quoting the Senate committee inquiry report:

The committee recognises that when a person spends their professional career inhaling and absorbing known—and probably some as yet unknown—carcinogens in the course of public service, it is the moral duty of the community to enable them to seek compensation should they fall ill as a consequence.

That is what we here in this House have the power to do and it is what we should do. I am extraordinarily pleased that, as is the case in other parts of the world, this is proceeding with cross-party support. I commend the bill.
and for the constructive way in which this bill is presented before the House today. I felt compelled to raise the issue of fair protection for firefighters in an adjournment debate after meeting with a delegation from the United Firefighters Union of Australia who came to Canberra to raise awareness about the life-threatening aspects of their profession and to speak to us about the occupational health and safety concerns of those involved in the firefighting profession.

Since the bill's introduction, the Senate Standing Committees on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations has held an inquiry that looked into the fair protection for firefighters bill and the case for presumptive legislation. The multiparty committee received many submissions and witness statements from individuals and organisations and, having conducted site visits—which included one to Tullamarine Airport in my own electorate to view a demonstration by aviation firefighters—tabled its report last Thursday in the Senate. In thanking the member for Melbourne and the member for McMillan, I would also like to thank the work of the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, chaired by Senator Gavin Marshall. I welcome the committee's report and its endorsement by members of the committee. This has been a comprehensive investigation and it is now this parliament's job to consider the findings of this investigation.

The Senate committee's report identifies key findings and recommendations guided by the facts, as is the case in the United States and Canada when it comes to fair protection for firefighters. In both those countries presumptive legislation already exists, and it is time for this parliament to enact similar legislation. Key findings of the Senate report reaffirm the original purpose of this bill, which is to provide for a rebuttable presumption for firefighters to access assistance and compensation if they are diagnosed with listed life-threatening diseases after the qualifying period of service. There are 14 listed types of cancers, and it is about recognising where, when a firefighter contracts one of these cancers, the burden of proof should sit, with appropriate safeguards in place.

The Senate report also affirms the fact that there is compelling scientific evidence demonstrating that cancer is an occupational disease for firefighters. We now know that firefighters are indeed at a greater risk of contracting some cancers because they are exposed to toxins and carcinogens in the course of the firefighting profession. The report also found that firefighters can never be fully protected from the hazard of absorbing toxins and carcinogens as the firefighting protective clothing must be able to breathe; otherwise, the firefighter would perish from metabolic heat build-up. It also found that the current legislation is an inadequate mechanism to achieve the objective of providing assistance and compensation for work-related illness for firefighters.

The fact is that there is scientific evidence; there is a non-exhaustive list of occupational cancers directly associated with the firefighting profession. There is also evidence of the positive benefits that have resulted from legislation similar to that before us in North America, where there is not only an increased awareness of cancer among firefighters but also a more proactive approach to the health and wellbeing of firefighters, earlier detection of cancer and therefore a better chance of treatment and survival. That has a positive impact for recruitment and retention in fire services. We should note these facts and be guided by them. Concerns about the possible flow-on effects, notions of a flood of claims and costs...
associated with similar presumptive legislation in Canada and the United States, are entirely negligible, as the Senate report has identified.

If ever there was proof of the courageous and essential work that our firefighters do it was, as the member for Melbourne said, here in Canberra last week, when our firefighters had to battle a huge chemical blaze as a result of a toxic explosion. That is an example of the hazardous nature of this job. And it is not only the big toxic fires that risk firefighters' health but everyday household fires, with which the risks increase with the length of service.

It is important, therefore, that this parliament continues to reflect the evidence based approach to this issue shown so far by the members and senators who have contributed to this debate in a non-partisan way and that it recognise the importance of enacting presumptive legislation through the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (11:02): I want to pay tribute to the United Firefighters Union of Australia. Unionism is something that seems to be maligned almost continuously in the media throughout Australia, and I am sure that the corporate owners of the media think it is a good idea to have no unions so they do not have to pay anyone very much money. In this case, I was a very reluctant starter. Staff had to sit me down and bang me on the head with the statistics. The firefighters union put forward a very professionally prepared brief and they had unassailable statistics. Clearly the incidence of cancer in firefighters was way out of proportion with that of the rest of the population. We know, of course, that certain chemicals are carcinogenic and breathing them can lead to cancer—as I have said many times in this House in relation to exhaust fumes from motorcars.

Before we had effective unionism in this country, one in 31 of us went down the mines, and this was really a mining and, to a lesser extent, a shearing country. All we had in the 1890s and 1900s was our mining industry. The one in 31 of us that went down the mines died down the mines or died the terrible death from 'miner's titus' when they came up. Humphrey McQueen and his social sketches of Australia went into the fact that everyone that worked for over two years digging the sewerage ditches in Sydney died of miner's titus. So we know that there are certain chemicals that, if they are breathed in, will tend to cause cancer. The firefighters union have made their case very professionally, and today we see again the value of trade unionism, as we saw before the start of last century.

I am very, very proud of the fact that my great-grandad put £3,000 behind the strike fund in the 1890s. In terms of today's money, £3,000 is nearly $1 million. All right, he was very wealthy but, at the end of the day, he was a storekeeper in Charters Towers—albeit Charters Towers was bigger than Brisbane in those days—and he made the decision to isolate himself socially from so many of the rich and socially prominent people in the community, not that that would have worried him. He is in the history books as backing that, and I am very proud to say that it is a tradition that our family have upheld for many, many years and I hope will continue in the future.

In backing up the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011 moved by the honourable member, I praise him for his work here. I also praise the members from the Liberal Party and Labor Party who have supported this legislation.
The fact is that, if you work as a fireman, you will breathe in fumes that will tend to give you cancer. You will have a far greater chance of contracting cancer than anyone else in society today. These people risk their lives. I think all of us watched the footage of 7-11, which probably brought out most graphically how these people did not think, they looked neither right nor left—they just went in and did their duty, and many of them died. Many of our firefighters in Australia have also died—maybe in less huge, but in very similar, conditions. So we pay them a great tribute and we also pay their union a very great tribute in bringing this to the attention of the House, and in winning over even sceptics and opponents such as me.

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (11:06): Thank you to the member for Kennedy for his remarks on the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011. He has been won over by the argument. I think that is very important—quite often the Australian public do not get a chance to see arguments being put in this place that win over a member of parliament—even though he does not seem to have suffered a lot of damage from his staff knocking him about as he has claimed!

I also recognise the member for Melbourne's and the member for Calwell's work in this and the interest that they have taken in the interests of firemen and their families, having regard to the issue they brought before us in the first place. Secondly, I recognise that their actions have meant we are able to go through a process whereby we were able to go to a Senate committee and have the issues, can I say without any pun intended, flushed out. Before I go on, I promised myself at the start of this year that I would recognise those that have gone before us. I am not talking just about Indigenous people and I am not talking just about those who came on tall ships or our leaders of the nation; I am talking about people like Peter Marshall, the national secretary of the United Firefighters Union, and all those who have gone before him, who work in the interests of their union and the people that they represent and serve. It is not just about Peter; it is about all of the people.

We heard the member for Kennedy talk about his great-grandfather. He had a lot of money if he could put £3,000 into a strike fund on behalf of unionists of the day. It just shows you that this House is made up of many a complex person. We are not, any one of us, like all the others. And the stories that come out are often interesting.

I also want to note today, because it is important to me, that the member for Brand is in the parliament at the very moment. He has had a few hiccoughs along the way with his health. We welcome him back and we appreciate the fact that he is well and up to the task of doing the job on behalf on his constituency and this nation.

Having said that, it is very clear to me that there may be some in the House who have concerns about this bill. You heard the member for Caldwell say that if you have concerns after reading the report—she outlined a couple of them—it is only right to raise them with the executive government. What I do not want to happen here is that a report as important as this one is for firefighters and their families—in the arguments that it makes and the facts that it lays out—is put on a shelf somewhere to collect dust. That is not what I am here for.

I am here to learn that the report will properly be addressed by executive government, and if it needs further consideration or further inquiry, or people need to be reassured, let them put their concerns before the minister and have them addressed. Go back to someone who has the information, because to me it is fairly clear
that if you are a fireman in this country today, you will be dealing with toxic fires that we did not have to deal with 10, 20 or 30 years ago. If a car burns now we do not know what the toxins are that come out of it—toxins that have detrimental health effects causing cancer in firemen here and around the world.

Although the member for Kennedy said 7-11 I think he meant 9-11. That event brought home to all of us that there were those who were killed on the day—I believe, to this day, that there could have been many more people killed—and there were those who have suffered after that massive event. I put it to you that firemen in this country are no different. They go out and put their lives on the line. In doing so, in the long run they put the health and wellbeing of themselves and their families on the line as well. It behoves this parliament to consider what the report has recommended and act on this bill on behalf of these people, especially those three little boys I saw over there in the Senate courtyard today.

Debate adjourned.

Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2011

Second Reading

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt—Chief Opposition Whip) (11:11): by leave—on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition I move:

That this bill be read a second time.

I rise to strongly support the Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2011 introduced into this House by the Leader of the Opposition on 12 September 2011.

The existing wild rivers legislation was put in place by the Queensland state Labor government in 2005. The existing laws gave the state government the power to declare any river a 'wild river', which allows the government to enforce a whole range of restrictions and regulations on what you can and cannot do on any land within certain ranges of that river or watercourse.

These Queensland government laws have negatively impacted on locals in Cape York, particularly Indigenous people. It is rather ironic that after decades and decades of campaigning by Indigenous people to recover some of their country at a time when they are becoming one of the major landholders within Cape York they are faced with the challenge of being able to do very little with the land because of the restrictions put in place by this legislation. It is no doubt that it is an agenda begin driven by the Wilderness Society and by an obliging and compliant state Labor government. Many of the opportunities for these people who have campaigned for so long to get their own country back are being put at threat by this legislation.

It seems like great rhetoric when you hear those on the other side always talking about recognition of land management by our Indigenous people for 40,000-odd years, but when there is an opportunity for Indigenous people to get out there and do something on their own country they are immediately stifled by this type of legislation. So much for closing the gap!

The Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2011 has been presented by the Leader of the Opposition to give freedom back to landowners in Cape York, particularly the traditional owners, and to give them an opportunity to be consulted on decisions that are being made on their own land. This is something that needs to be seriously considered. This bill is effectively being introduced for a fourth time into this place.

The original Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010 was introduced into
the House of Representatives by the Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, on 8 February 2010 as a private member's bill. A bill with identical wording was then introduced into the Senate as a private senator's bill, the Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010 [No. 2], on 23 February 2010 by Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion. The latter bill passed the Senate and was introduced into the House of Representatives on June 2010. Unfortunately, both bills lapsed when parliament was dissolved prior to the 2010 election.

After the 2010 federal election the bill was again reintroduced on 15 November 2010. In an attempt to frustrate parliamentary process, the Labor-Greens alliance moved to have this bill referred to a parliamentary committee which was designed to do nothing but stall and halt the progress of the legislation until Labor had the Greens and the Greens got the balance of power in the Senate. Unfortunately, that bill lapsed.

Last week the Leader of the Opposition introduced this bill to reiterate its importance to the economic development of Cape York Aboriginal people in particular and to recognise their stewardship over their own country and give them the opportunity to have a say and make decisions in relation to the long-term future of that country. Sadly, the Labor-Greens alliance has, again, referred this latest bill to another committee in a further attempt to totally delay and frustrate the parliamentary process.

There are some additions in this bill and I think these are quite appropriate, given some of the mischief that has been espoused by the other side. One is the new definitions of Aboriginal land, owner and register under clause 3, and the definition of 'native title' is deleted.

There is a new clause 4(3)(b), which provides a guarantee that the Commonwealth government should provide employment to persons who lose employment as a result of the enactment of the wild rivers. This one is particularly important given that, in an attempt to bribe some groups within the community, the state government has spent a lot of money in training up wild rivers rangers and there is a concern that these rangers, if the wild rivers legislation is thrown out or amended, may lose their jobs. This gives them a very strong guarantee that this is not the case. The reality is in Cape York, while the Wilderness Society and the Greens and the government obsess over this wild rivers legislation, the majority of national parks up there are underresourced, they have no management plans whatsoever and many of them are not even manned. So there is tremendous opportunity for wild rivers rangers to be able to go onto country that has been handed back. Rather than tokenism about handing back national parks to traditional owners, it provides a great opportunity for these traditional owners to play a very significant role in the management and be the face of these national parks as rangers and have that appropriate training.

Another difference in this bill is that it omits the term 'traditional owners' and substitutes 'owner', and 'native title land' is omitted and substituted with 'Aboriginal land'. Owners are required to agree in writing. A new clause 6 relates to obtaining agreement of native title holders, which should have been there right from the beginning. Amended clause 8 provides for regulations to be made. Clause 8(2)(c) provides for regulations concerning the continued employment of Aboriginal people if their employment should be lost.

I reiterate that these laws have seriously and negatively impacted on local Cape York
people, particularly our Indigenous people. Recently, Mr Gerhardt Pearson of the Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation:

... strongly expressed concerns about the potential impact of wild rivers declarations on economic development opportunities for indigenous people on Cape York. Some critical issues in relation to legislation include the onerous and unnecessary process for development approvals in wild river areas.

A very good example of this was outlined in an episode of the *Law Report* on the ABC on 5 October 2010. It was a story in relation to the community of Lockhart River, which is on the eastern cape.

There are currently massive levels of unemployment up there, as there are in many remote communities. The biggest private sector employer is a biofuels company called Evergreen and it employs about 10 people. So we certainly need more private sector development in supporting the communities in this area. For this one to be out there actively working with the community, to drive the creation of jobs, can only be a good thing, but wild rivers is certainly not allowing this to happen. In fact, they have been very restricted in any opportunities for expansion. The government puts its hand on its chest and says, 'We are providing opportunities through the employment of rangers.' There was a very relevant comment made there at Lockhart River that having two rangers really does not make a great deal of economic sense, insofar as they would rather have a biodiesel plantation that would not just take the two rangers but also provide economic opportunities for at least another 100 people in that region. It would certainly be a hell of a lot more beneficial for the community.

It is interesting to note, in fact, that the Lockhart River airstrip would not even have been able to be built if the wild rivers legislation was in place at the time, because it is within a high-preservation area, as declared on any land within 1,000 metres of any designated river.

Staying in that eastern area, the Hopevale community has been desperately trying to establish a banana plantation. Now, they are not a wild rivers designated area, but they have gone through all of the hoops, all the different government bureaucracies, in trying to get approval to establish the plantation over the last three years—this is an opportunity for something like 200 jobs in the region, a great opportunity. They have a small area that they have set aside now. They have about 300 trees, and they have been training community members enthusiastically to build on this plantation. It has taken three years so far to get to this stage, where they have only 300 trees and are doing the training, because of all the restrictions put in place by existing government agencies. The imposition of wild rivers legislation on that area would complicate the process to the point that, even at three years, they are almost looking at walking away; it is only their own commitment and determination that allow them to stay there. But, if there were another level of bureaucracy over the top of that, it would make it absolutely impossible for them to do anything.

They have also had another situation that was quite high profile, at Pisolite Hills, the bauxite mine up near old Mapoon—great opportunities for the community, with the prospect of creating about 1,700 jobs over the 15-year life of the project. They were building a full village not far from the old Mapoon community, which was then going to be handed over as a lodge for tourism for the community. They were guaranteed all sorts of jobs as well. That has now basically been scuttled by the wild rivers legislation and through the influence of the Wilderness
Society. On top of that, we are now looking at this federal government working overtime with the state government and, again, with the Wilderness Society to look at blanket World Heritage listing for the entire Cape York region. Of course, combined with wild rivers and all the other legislation, that will guarantee that they lock it up to such a point that the only opportunity you are going to find for our Indigenous people in Cape York would be to stand there bare bummed in a lily pond, on one foot, with a spear, being photo fodder for tourists. That is the sort of opportunity that this mob on the other side are looking to create for Indigenous people in Cape York. It is absolutely appalling. These people have struggled for so long to get their country back. They have every right, after that struggle, to sit down and contemplate what they have, to plan a future for themselves. They do not have to be curios for the benefit of the Wilderness Society.

I see my friend and colleague Mr Katter here and I would just like to recognise that Mr Katter as a minister gave the first cattle property lease, at Christmas Creek, to Eddie Holroyd, our good friend who just passed, who had a great amount of pride in that. If wild rivers legislation had been around, that would never have been able to happen. These people have very strong views on what they want to do, and they need time to assess what they have and to do their planning. It may not necessarily be of benefit to them, but it will be for their kids and grandkids, and for us to deny them that opportunity is absolutely appalling.

We on this side believe in the protection and sustainable development of our environment. But I think it has to be done in a cooperative and collaborative way that gives the Indigenous population the genuine opportunity to have a say, and the right to manage and operate their own land. And that is what this bill does. It is about giving economic destiny back into the hands of the traditional owners, the Indigenous people. It about giving them hope and aspiration and opportunity so that they can give better lives to their people, to their children, to stimulate their communities and to be able to make their own determinations. They certainly have the capacity to do that. Unfortunately, with the stranglehold that the Greens have over the Labor Party—and, particularly in Cape York, the Wilderness Society and the ACF—there is little chance of this happening under this current mob. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Is the motion seconded?

Ms LEY (Farrer) (11:27): I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (11:27): When the member for Warringah first introduced the Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2011, he said that he was working for the economic advancement of Aboriginal people, that economic development is important to the future of Aboriginal people and that access to the benefits of all Australians is the right of Aboriginal people. In this view, he is not alone. Many of us on both sides of the House have worked hard on the issue of Indigenous economic development.

The member for Leichhardt has done a great deal in his own electorate, but I need to correct a couple of statements he made in his speech. He said that clauses 4(3)(b) and 6 were new; that is not in fact the case. Those clauses were in the 2010 bill.

As a member of that House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics I visited Far North Queensland in late November 2010 and early March of this year. Our inquiry was broadly into Indigenous economic development, not just the wild rivers issue. We heard from over 50
people in the public hearings and took 39 submissions. We visited Brisbane, Cairns, Weipa, Bamaga and the Chualangun Aboriginal Corporation in Far North Queensland. What quickly became apparent to all of us on the committee was that Indigenous economic development in Cape York is a complex and an important issue.

**Mr Katter:** Seriously? Do you realise you have never spoken—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott):** The member for Kennedy!

**Dr LEIGH:** It is vital to get the economic development framework right. We on this side of the House are strongly committed to improving the opportunities and the life outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We deliver an annual Closing the Gap report. We have to continue to consider the full picture when it comes to Indigenous economic development. One part of that picture is mining. That has been brought to the fore over recent years. In the last decade, the price of alumina—one of the key minerals in the Cape—has risen by more than 50 per cent. It is important that we remember the role that mining plays in economic development. The national picture for mining is that it contributes 5.6 per cent of our GDP but employs only 1.3 per cent of the total labour force. The same picture shows up in the Cape. The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures from the 2006 census show that there were 19 Indigenous people in the Cape who were employed in mining. That is 0.7 per cent of Indigenous employment in Cape York. We should be open to the possibility that mining has a bigger picture to play in the employment base for Cape York. We should always be looking to possibilities, but we should be clear-headed and guided by the facts that we can see in the most recent census data. Mining is an important part of our economy, and is helping produce record terms of trade, but it produces fewer jobs than its share of the national economy.

I agree with Noel Pearson who says that education has to be at the heart of Indigenous policy, that education has a critical role to play in overcoming inequality and disadvantage. The role of education in economic development was reinforced to me when I visited Cape York last year and this year. As part of the committee's hearings I had a conversation with Ms Yunkaporta about Noel Pearson's Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy, which is an initiative championed by the Minister for Families, Housing, Communities and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin. The program offered by the academy has four components focusing on class, club, culture and community. As Noel Pearson recently wrote, the Class program immerses students in numeracy and literacy using the Direct Instructions programs. Students need to achieve a mastery of 90 per cent at their level before they can move on. Tests are done every five to 10 lessons and both the students' and teachers' performances are carefully monitored.

Club ensures that kids do not miss out on those future opportunities, providing extracurricular activities that many children in non-Indigenous communities already enjoy—including the hope to one day include foreign languages and Shakespeare classes. Culture helps children learn the local Aboriginal languages and their culture and traditions. In-school activities are supported by the Community program. School attendance and readiness for school are carefully monitored. A food program provides meals during the day—

**Mr Katter interjecting—**

**Dr LEIGH:** I hear the member for Kennedy laughing, but education is an
important part of Indigenous economic development. For those of us on this side of the House, Indigenous education is no laughing matter. This program provides meals during the day and families are helped to manage funds to cover educational expenses. Pearson states in his essay *Radical hope*:

Man cannot live by bread alone, but he does need bread, and in the modern world the broader economy is where he'll earn it.

That is why education is so important for the economic development of Cape York and the economic development of our nation.

Boosting the quantity and quality of education in Australia will flow on to improve the level of innovation in the economy. It will allow for more rapid diffusion of new technological changes. The boost to living standards that we get from improving our education system will rival any of the big economic reforms in Australia's history. It will rival floating the dollar, bringing down the tariff walls, enterprise bargaining or competition policy. Education then flows on to new jobs in Cape York. You can see the opportunity for that if you drive from Bamaga north to the very tip of Australia where you will see the ecotourism lodge which is, alas, now something of a wreck, but which offers great potential to be a new ecotourism centre for Australia. The white sands are breathtaking. The area has great potential to be a tourism destination. Not everyone in Cape York will be employed in the tourism industry, but it is a critical part of Indigenous economic development—the broader issue into which our committee inquired.

The causes of disadvantage in Cape York and the Gulf are complex, and we need long-term, considered approaches. We need to provide real opportunities, real jobs and sustainable development. I believe addressing disadvantage and creating opportunity through education are perhaps the most important thing we can do. The government respects the views of Aboriginal leaders in the Cape York area—

**Mr Katter:** No, you don't.

**Dr LEIGH:** and will continue to actively engage with them—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke):** The member for Kennedy may miss out on his opportunity to speak if he is not careful.

**Dr LEIGH:** in developing solutions for a sustainable and effective model of economic development and one that allows Indigenous people in Cape York to work towards and build the 'radical hope' of the future—a radical hope in which education provides the skills, economic opportunities and the ability to create and innovate new ideas and industries. As part of the government's commitment to economic development for Indigenous Australians we have agreed with the Queensland government to establish a new service for people in Cape York and the Gulf of Carpentaria, which will guide Indigenous applicants to develop new business and economic development proposals and assist them to effectively utilise the processes under the Wild Rivers legislation.

The importance of education, economic development and the future for the Cape was best put to me by Phyllis Yunkaporta, a witness appearing before the committee. She told the committee:

The education system, as I knew it before, has been of low standard. The curriculum in the past, as it is in all cape Aboriginal communities, has been of very low standard. By the time our children go out to mainstream schools they are hardly there—a child in grade 8 still has the understanding of a child in grade 1. Speaking for Aurukun, I was one of the persons who were invited to the States last October; I went to New York and Los Angeles visiting African-American
schools. What we have brought back to Aurukun is a new kind of teaching method and we are having that implemented in the school. Of course it took time. At the beginning it pretty much had been, in my words, chaos before that. Since having this new program come in, if you come to the classrooms in Aurukun the kids are fully focused. This new method of teaching has got them going. The teacher is full-on with the tasks given and you cannot believe it when you enter those classrooms—it is as if some of those kids are play-acting. They are not; they are just full-on, focused. I guess in time we have to have expectations for our children to be educated in a way where they have to balance both worlds—the Western world and the traditional way. Of course we want them to hang onto the traditional way because that is where they are going to be identifying themselves for the future. And with them having to venture out into mainstream, we want them to compete. It is a competitive world out there. We want our black little kids to start taking on the world. That is the aim of all this.

Ms Yunkaporta's views highlighted to me—and to many of us on the committee—the importance of a holistic picture with Indigenous economic development. It is absolutely critical that we recognise there is not a single industry that is going to be part of the cape's success. Cape York Indigenous communities need the building blocks of education and the sustainability of strong jobs. And they need effective leadership that is willing to argue strongly for the interests of people on the cape.

If anybody went on this inquiry believing that there were simple solutions to economic development in Cape York, they should have come away disabused of that notion; they should have come away recognising that Indigenous development on the cape has many futures ahead of it.

I will return to the point I made at the start of this speech, where I referred to some statements that the member for Leichhardt made. The member for Leichhardt referred to clause 6 of the legislation. Clause 6 remains unchanged from the previous version of this bill. It details a process for obtaining agreement for native title holders. The heading of that clause refers to 'native title holders', which is not defined in the bill. It is unclear whether the details for obtaining agreement of native title holders could also include owners as defined in the bill or just the native title holder of the land. As a result, this is potentially a cause of uncertainty as to how agreements, which are a central component of the bill, would be practically achieved. This uncertainty is one of many uncertainties in the bill.

As we saw in the committee's inquiry, there are many Indigenous stakeholders in Cape York, and Indigenous stakeholders operate on different levels. Some groups will claim to speak for larger populations, but, as our inquiries went on, it would sometimes turn out that people were not comfortable with others speaking on their behalf. So the absence of a definition of 'native title holders' is one of the concerns that I have about the bill before the House.

I think it is critical that this debate focus on the big picture, on Indigenous economic development and not pretend—that it would be wrong to do so—that the only factor affecting Indigenous economic development in Cape York is the Queensland wild rivers legislation. It is not. It is a small part of a much larger picture. I would like to close by paying tribute once more to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Mr Noel Pearson for the work they have done together in improving Indigenous education in Cape York. If anything is to be the key foundation stone for Indigenous economic development it is getting school education right. I pay tribute to both of those people for the careful thought they have put into securing that outcome.
Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (11:41): I am very pleased that Dr Leigh spoke before me because I am going to take his speech and distribute it to all of the Aboriginal councillors, first Australian councillors, in my electorate. It demonstrates magnificently towering ignorance and complete nonunderstanding and nonsympathy.

I seldom do this, but I cannot help but mention that all of the advisors to the ALP sitting over there are all what we call ‘migaloo’s’, every single one of them. I met 32 senior officers of the department dealing with first Australian affairs, and two of them—only two—were nonmigaloo’s. So we have the white fellas looking after us again, telling us, as the last gentleman told us, that we all need an education. Let me inform you, Sonny, that I worked in mining; I was a miner before I came into politics. That was one of the three things I did before I came to this place. I tell you what, I did not have a shred of education to tell me how to mine. He thinks it is funny; he is laughing.

Dr Leigh: I am not laughing.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for Kennedy cannot verbal someone.

Mr KATTER: The industries of North Queensland are cattle and mining. I worked in the mining industry and I would say 90 per cent of the people at the lead smelter—and that is a sophisticated operation compared with actual mining where you sort of drive a truck and a two-boom jumbo—I would say that three would have had tertiary education out of about 200. So much for education digging us out of the hole.

Maybe there have been some university graduates riding horses—in fact, the bloke who won the university medal actually does ride a horse, the highest pass ever recorded, and he is a good mate of mine. But he would agree with me that 99.98 per cent of the people riding horses and running the cattle industry have probably not even completed 12th grade. So you are going to tell us that we will all get an education and that will dig us out of the hole? Do you realise the towering ignorance of what you have just said? I would leave the chamber too if I were you.

Tourism is the third aspect. I know a lot of people in tourism. As the honourable member over here said, yes, we will get a bit of tourism out of throwing spears and boomerangs and those sorts of things. But when I went to school they never taught me how to throw a boomerang or a spear. It is not part of the educational curriculum. You might argue that it should be. He then said, ‘We’re moving forward.’ Moving forward? We are back to the bad old days. We have one set of laws for blackfella Australians and another set of laws for whitefella Australians. Apparently it is quite safe for whitefellas to have pornography and alcohol, but it is very unsafe for the blackfellas. They cannot handle it. We had laws which delivered the ownership of every one of the community areas—and I look to my colleague the member for Leichhardt here—to the duly-elected local council with the machinery to devolve that to private ownership, with a title deed just the same as everyone else on planet Earth has. This gentleman over here said that we had gone forward. I will tell you how much we have gone backwards. In 1989, if you lived on Doomadgee or Mornington Island or Palm Island or Aurukun, your council—duly elected by you—owned that area, with no frills, no complications but just absolute freehold title. Now they do not. Now all of those areas are legally owned by appointees at the discretion of the minister—not even the governor and council but a minister of the Queensland government. So the Queensland government now owns the four
or five million hectares of North Queensland that were supposedly owned by the first Australians. What a criminal theft! Those are Noel Pearson's words, actually, but he beat me to it; I would have liked to have used that phrase first. It was a criminal theft by the state government of Queensland, and we are trying to get the money together now to yard them and sue them for the theft of that land.

That is not the end of the story. They are not content to take the land back, and they now have a trust arrangement whereby an appointee of the minister is the trustee, the legal owner, and the beneficial owners are the first Australian people. That is a trust. A trust is used for little children who are not capable of running their own affairs. When they grow up and get to age 21, the trust vanishes. As this gentleman said, we need time. How much time do you need, you whites? You have had 200 years; how much time do you need? He has had 200 years and he said he needs time. The children are being taken away. We in this place had the arch hypocrisy. I really felt like spitting or walking out of here or doing something to bring attention to the fact that here we were apologising for the theft of the children. The children in New South Wales and Queensland are being thieved now at twice the rate that they were thieved in the old days. Have we gone forward as far as ownership of land goes? No, we have had the land completely thieved off of us. We have gone backwards as far as anyone can go.

I need to return to the land, because Tommy Geia, a great Australian on Palm Island, got me aside last weekend and he said that every single person in an Aboriginal reserve community had to sign a document saying that they have to agree to pay all the rents—or rates, if you like, because if you are going to live in a house you have to pay some money to somebody. It is not going to be paid to the local council anymore; it is going to be paid to the whitefella administrators in the state government in Cairns and Townsville and Brisbane. So what do we need a council for? We are going to close them down, aren't we? We are going to amalgamate them, as the recommendations of the ALP state government have put forward. We will amalgamate them, which simply means closing them down. And the honourable member for Leichhardt will tell you that up in the Torres Strait it is a farce. Self-management now is a farce. We delivered to those people the self-management on every one of those islands. They had their own self-management. Even little tiny islands like Stephens and little tiny communities like Seisia were given self-management. They were given complete control over their own affairs. They had a lot more power than local government. They had power of the local police, for example. We gave these people the power, and the power has been completely taken off them in the Torres Strait. They are now run by a centralised bureaucracy, manned in the main by whitefellas on Thursday Island. That is how much we have moved forward, my friend.

I return to the ownership of the land. If the federal government is to build a house for you, you have to hand the land over to the state government; otherwise the federal government will not build a house for you. The only way we will build a house for you is if we thieve your land off you. I ask you, please, because you are nodding at me, to check it out. That is the agreement. All of the councils decided unanimously to oppose it—except one dingo mob who were hiding outside because they were taking their running from a whitefella CEO. Except for that dingo mob, I think it was 26 who voted unanimously to reject the proposition. Of course they rejected it! If you people would honour your promise, then the number of
houses in Doomadgee, for example, would double—if we take you at your word and you are going to build 2,000 or 3,000 houses throughout Australia. But with the new Doomadgee, half the town will now be owned by the state government outright, completely, for 40 years. And you people agreed to it. You imposed that condition upon these people.

I will give you a sharp contrast with past Labor governments. When I rang up Gerry Hand, when I was minister, and I said, 'This is what we want to do,' he said, 'Mate, that sounds like a real good idea.' (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): I call the member for Parramatta.

Mr Katter: I'd dearly love another 30 minutes.

The SPEAKER: The member for Kennedy will listen in silence, as everyone did during his speech, or I will remove him.

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (11:51): I acknowledge the members for Kennedy and Leichhardt for their contributions. There can be no doubt in this House or the broader community of their absolute commitment to improving the lives and independence of our Indigenous community. I note that neither of them spoke very much at all on the actual bill that is before us today, and I would like to go back to that.

They highlighted the many complexities in Cape York. I visited with the economics committee last year and found a fabulous, difficult—

Mr Entsch: I have lived there for 20 years.

Ms OWENS: I acknowledge that you have a greater knowledge of the area than me—wondrous, harsh, almost impossible place with people with various histories. Some have lived on their land with links back tens of thousands of years and many others were removed from their lands and are finding their way back. There are complexities in the understandings within the Indigenous population about who had the right to speak for them and who did not—many complexities that impact on the viability of the bill that we have before us today.

This is the third version of the wild rivers bill. There have been two Senate inquiries and a House of Representatives inquiry into the previous versions of Mr Abbott's bill. All those inquiries found the bill to be unworkable and stated that it did not address any of the real barriers to economic development in Indigenous communities in Queensland.

Now we have a third version with some further amendments. There are still old sections in the bill that raise many issues about definitions of owner and consent, but there also some new clauses which add to the complex and problematic nature of the bill and require careful scrutiny. For that reason, I believe that the changes should be referred to a House committee inquiry to analyse their construction and potential effect.

The government is strongly committed to improving the life outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and takes Indigenous economic development seriously. The causes of disadvantage in Cape York and the gulf are complex and solving the issues that the community faces will need long-term, considered approaches, which provide real opportunities, real jobs and allow for environmentally sustainable development.

The member for Leichhardt talked about one of the communities up there trying to build a banana plantation and that it had taken three years so far. Again, I would like to point out that that community is not covered by wild rivers. Even without wild
rivers legislation, it has been incredibly difficult for many communities to move forward and, arguably, one cannot make a claim that the introduction of wild rivers legislation in 2005 has somehow led to a lack of economic development. There are of course decades—in fact centuries—of a lack of development in Cape York. There were wild rivers 2005 acts on top of a whole range of laws in Queensland, including the Sustainable Planning Act 2009, the Vegetation Management Act 1999 and the Water Act 2000. When we visited Cape York last year, we heard from many people who referred to a whole range of issues that prevent development, not simply wild rivers. In fact, we met communities up there that were supportive of the Wild Rivers Act in the form that it has now.

We also heard of the many, many issues and difficulties that people in Cape York have. It is a tropical monsoonal climate characterised by long warm to hot dry seasons and short, humid, intensive wet seasons. That monsoonal season is a major constraining factor on Cape York as it impacts on travel and many economic and social activities. It isolates most properties and communities for four to five months of the year.

For agriculture, Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation advised the board that broad-scale irrigation is limited as there are very few areas of arable soil on Cape York that are suitable for large-scale irrigation. Where such land is available, the water supply is not likely to be sufficient to support irrigated crops. Much of the west of the cape is very flat and unsuitable for dams and in the east the water flows to the Great Barrier Reef side, so dams are not really an option. It is an incredibly beautiful, harsh environment where roads are boggy and unpassable for much of the year, and one could argue that issues of freight and transport infrastructure are as much of a barrier to the development of Cape York as any other area.

The government respects the views of Aboriginal leaders in the Cape York area and will continue to actively engage with them in developing solutions. As part of the government’s commitment to economic development for Indigenous Australians, we have agreed with the Queensland government to establish a new service for people in Cape York and the Gulf of Carpentaria, which will guide Indigenous applicants to develop new business and economic development proposals and assist them to effectively utilise the processes under the wild rivers legislation. We heard from many witnesses during our visit to Cape York last year about the difficulty that they had in navigating their way through a whole raft of legislation that govern development applications in the cape.

There are several differences between the 2011 bill and the 2010 bill, and I am going to concentrate on some of those. The key differences essentially are: a new subclause, 5(2), stating that agreement with native title holders is taken to be agreement with the owner, but the owner is defined very broadly in the bill. It is not clear how agreement will be obtained from owners of other types of land included in the bill or how agreement from other types of owners would relate to agreement from native title holders.

Insertion of a new clause, 6A, which specifies that dispute resolution is to be resolved by a certain section of the Native Title Act 1993 or by regulations, also creates some confusion. The section referred to in the Native Title Act 1993 does not set out a dispute resolution process; rather, it sets out the dispute resolution functions of native title representative bodies. How the section referred to in the Native Title Act 1993 will...
work in the context of the bill is difficult to interpret. It is not clear how disputes between native title holders and other owners governed under the new process would work.

Changes to the transitional provision in clause 7B extend the period of time from six months to 12 months for declarations to apply if this bill were passed. It provides more time for agreement to be reached before existing declarations are overturned. However, if owners do not agree within the extended time frame, existing declarations will still be overturned whether there is agreement or not. Such a complex and significant area of law must not be dealt with in an ad hoc way, particularly as the three clauses I have referred to so far are interpreted within the context of Indigenous—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) (12:00): Order! It being 12 pm, the time allocated for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Veterans' Entitlements Amendment Bill 2011
Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Child Care Budget Measures) Bill 2011
Indigenous Affairs Legislation Amendment Bill 2011
Legislative Instruments Amendment (Sunsetting) Bill 2011
Australian National Registry of Emissions Units Bill 2011
Statute Stocktake (No. 1) Bill 2011
Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Bill 2011
Carbon Credits (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2011

Assent
Messages from the Governor-General/Administrator reported informing the House of assent to the bills.

Education Services for Overseas Students (Registration Charges) Amendment Bill 2011
Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Registration Charges Consequentials) Bill 2011
Horse Disease Response Levy Bill 2011
Horse Disease Response Levy Collection Bill 2011
Horse Disease Response Levy (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2011
Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Early Release of Superannuation) Bill 2011
Industrial Chemicals (Notification and Assessment) Amendment (Inventory) Bill 2011

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

COMMITTEES

Cyber-Safety Committee Appointment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Speaker has received a message from the Senate informing the House:

That the Senate has agreed to the following resolution:

That paragraph (17) of the resolution of appointment of the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety be amended to read:

(17) That the committee may report from time to time but that it present its final report no later than 30 April 2013.
Mr BUTLER: I move:

That consideration of the message be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Question agreed to.

Economics Committee Report

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (12:01): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Economics, I present the committee's report entitled Advisory report on the Food Standards Amendment (Truth in Labelling—Palm Oil) Bill 2011, incorporating dissenting reports, together with the minutes of proceedings. I ask leave of the House to make a short statement in connection with the report.

Leave granted.

Ms OWENS: The Food Standards Amendment (Truth in Labelling—Palm Oil) Bill 2011 seeks to amend the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991 and the Australian Consumer and Competition Act 2010. If passed, it would require Food Standards Australia New Zealand, FSANZ, to develop and publish a standard requiring food producers to label palm oil on packaging if it were an ingredient in the product or had been used in its production. It would also specifically list palm oil as a characteristic of all goods in relation to the misleading conduct provisions in the Australian Consumer Law.

The committee understands the strong community support for the goals of the bill. Zoos Victoria gave evidence of its online and hard-copy campaigns where thousands of Australians expressed concern about the connection between palm oil and the reduction of orangutan habitat. However, the committee has come to the view that the bill will not bring about the result that so many people in the community desire. Instead, it will have a range of unintended consequences that will cause a great deal of damage to our commercial arrangements and international relations. Indeed, one industry group, Accord Australasia, described the bill as 'reckless'.

For example, its only legal effect for food labelling is to require FSANZ to draft a food standard and publish it on its website. In order for the states and territories to enforce the standard, it would have to be determined in accordance with agreed processes. This has not occurred. In short, the bill is not enforceable as it operates outside of agreements between the Commonwealth, state, territory and New Zealand governments. Its passage could lead to inconsistencies in labelling across these jurisdictions.

In relation to the Australian Consumer Law, the bill will not change its legal effect. Currently, if a producer of food provided an ingredients list on the packet and the label omitted to mention palm oil when this was an ingredient, then it would breach section 33 regardless of whether the bill became law or not. However, current labels do not breach section 33 because they do not claim to be a complete ingredients list. Nor is there a legal requirement for producers to fully list the ingredients. The bill would not change the operation of section 33 if it became law.

The bill overlooks the fact that much of the legislative power in Australia resides in
the states and territories. In order to generate the benefits of a uniform national market, complex processes and negotiations are required to harmonise regulatory systems. In the case of consumer law, the Productivity Commission estimated in 2008 that the gain to the economy from uniformity is $4.5 billion annually. The bill simplistically overrides these important commercial arrangements without addressing the risks.

The bill also places our international relationships at risk. The food regulation treaty between Australia and New Zealand states that neither party can amend their legislation regarding FSANZ without effectively consulting the other party. This has obviously not occurred. Further, singling out palm oil means that it is more discriminatory than necessary to fulfil a health or environmental objective. Australia would then be at risk of a trade dispute under World Trade Organisation rules, and Malaysia and Indonesia have already indicated that they are prepared to do this.

Another negative feature of the bill is that, separately to it, the Council of Australian Governments has initiated a review of food labelling in Australia. The government released the review report, Labelling logic, in January this year. Recommendation 12 states that, where sugars, fats or oils are added as separate ingredients in a food, the label should list the actual ingredients. This is already the approach in the United States and will most likely become law in the European Union. The whole of the Commonwealth, state, territory and New Zealand government response to Labelling logic is under development. It is expected to be considered by the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council on 9 December 2011. Given that a rigorous process is covering the bill’s subject matter, there is even less reason to proceed with it.

Therefore, the committee has recommended that the bill should not proceed.

I would like to thank the organisations and individuals that assisted the committee during the inquiry through submissions or participating in the hearing in Canberra. I also thank my colleagues on the committee for their contribution to the report. I commend the report to the House.

**BILLS**

- Clean Energy Bill 2011
- Clean Energy (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2011
- Clean Energy (Income Tax Rates Amendments) Bill 2011
- Clean Energy (Household Assistance Amendments) Bill 2011
- Clean Energy (Tax Laws Amendments) Bill 2011
- Clean Energy (Fuel Tax Legislation Amendment) Bill 2011
- Clean Energy (Customs Tariff Amendment) Bill 2011
- Clean Energy (Excise Tariff Legislation Amendment) Bill 2011
- Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Import Levy) Amendment Bill 2011
- Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Manufacture Levy) Amendment Bill 2011
- Clean Energy (Unit Shortfall Charge—General) Bill 2011
- Clean Energy (Unit Issue Charge—Auctions) Bill 2011
- Clean Energy (Unit Issue Charge—Fixed Charge) Bill 2011
Clean Energy (International Unit Surrender Charge) Bill 2011
Clean Energy (Charges—Customs) Bill 2011
Clean Energy (Charges—Excise) Bill 2011
Clean Energy Regulator Bill 2011
Climate Change Authority Bill 2011
Steel Transformation Plan Bill 2011

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (12:06): I continue where I started—that is, by saying that there are three simple things about all these bills together: 1) climate change is real; 2) there are things that we can do about it; 3) the things that we can do about it are affordable. Given that we all agree in this place and, of course, much more widely—not only in Australia but also right across the globe—about climate change, it is just a matter of what type of system we should put in place to best achieve our goals. By far the best system is a broad-based carbon price. It is the most environmentally effective and cheapest way to reduce pollution. A carbon price puts a price tag on pollution. Through the carbon price, for the first time, an incentive will be provided for people not to pollute—in particular for our 500 biggest polluters, who will be required to pay for each tonne of carbon they release into the atmosphere in.

This scheme will start on 1 July 2012. Let us be clear that these bills will go through this place—there is agreement here for these bills to pass. There will be a fixed-price period for 2 years, and then we will move to a cap-and-trade emissions trading scheme whereby the market will set the price. A market based mechanism is by far the best way to deal with climate change. During the fixed-price period the starting price will be $23 per tonne, and during the next two years it will rise by 2.5 per cent. So, assuming inflation of 2.5 per cent, the carbon price will be $25.40 per tonne by 2014-15.

The flexible market, set-price period will commence on 1 July in three years time—that is, in 2015. During the flexible price period, the government will set the cap by issuing a fixed number of carbon units each year, and some of those units will be auctioned by government. This is the best way to move forward with the system. It means that the market decides and that business gets to adapt, to adjust, to evolve and to grow.

But we are not going to allow this to happen without accepting the fact that there is some cost and that that cost has to be abated in some way. That is why we have put together an assistance package for industry as well as for households. Over the first three years of the carbon price, the government will devote $9.2 billion to assistance for affected jobs in emissions-intensive trade-exposed industries. That is to provide with them a transition period to adjust, to adopt, to match what is happening in the rest of the world and an opportunity to continue to grow.

There will be $800 million in the Clean Technology Investment Program, which will provide grants to manufacturers to support investment in energy efficient equipment technologies, processes and products. Over six years there will be $150 million for the food processing industry and $50 million for the metal forging and foundry industries. The government will also provide $200 million in grants to support business research and development in areas of renewable energy, low pollution technology and energy efficiency.
The government is also ensuring that households, tradespeople, farmers and small businesses do not face a carbon price on fuel—because the will not be a carbon price on fuel. The government will reduce the fuels tax credits received by many large polluters so that they too pay an effective carbon price. Many businesses will be exempted from the reduction in fuel credits and shielded from the carbon price on fuel. Heavy vehicles such as semitrailers will also be exempt until 2014-15. While the carbon price will be paid directly by the 500 biggest polluters in this country, the government has designed a generous package to help small business grow and invest in energy efficient assets. Farming and other land-based activities will not be covered by the mechanism. However, the Carbon Farming Initiative will give farmers an opportunity to generate income by taking action to reduce their pollution.

I said earlier that these measures can be effective—and they are. The world is already acting on climate change; in every country there is something being done. It might be called something different and look slightly different in other countries, but every country is taking action on climate change. It is clearly in Australia's national interest to continue to work to achieve the international goal of limiting warming to below two degrees. In order to do this, it is imperative that we play a responsible role in the international arena by taking strong action at home. We have to act locally and think globally.

The government's plan will cut carbon pollution and drive investment in clean energy technologies and infrastructure. It will generate new jobs in these fields. The carbon price will see Australia's annual emissions reduced by at least 159 million tonnes by 2020 from where they would have been had we done nothing. By 2050, we will have taken over 17 billion tonnes of carbon pollution out of the atmosphere by saving nine out of every 10 tonnes of pollution we would have emitted had this plan not been in place.

Australia has some of the best renewable energy resources in the world, including hydro, wind, bioenergy, geothermal, wave and tide—not to mention one of our most abundant resources: solar energy. By 2050, according to Treasury modelling, with a carbon price $100 billion will have been invested in renewable energy, and 40 per cent of Australia's electricity generation will come from renewables. Australia's renewable energy sector will have grown 17 times because of the changes that we are putting in place.

But, as I said earlier, all this does come at a cost and we acknowledge that cost—and it must be compensated for. So nine out of 10 households will receive some assistance through tax cuts or payment increases, and two in three households will get tax cuts or increased payments that will cover the expected average price impact on them. We have tried in this area to be a little bit more generous: we will give a little bit more, because we would rather err on the side of assistance than on the side of not getting it quite right.

Over four million Australian households will get assistance that is at least 20 per cent more than the expected average price impact on them. Over one million additional Australians will no longer need to lodge a tax return. That is right—one million additional Australian taxpayers will never have to lodge a tax return again because of these changes. On average, the scheme will cost households $9.90 per week, but they will get $10.10 per week in assistance. The assistance is permanent and will increase over time in step with any expected increases
caused by these changes. The government will review the adequacy of assistance each year and will increase it further if necessary.

We will go further than that—there will also be tax cuts. Everyone earning up to $80,000 will receive a tax cut. For most people, it will be at least $300. The tax-free threshold will triple in size: no one will pay tax on the first $20,000 they earn. This means that half a million people will go from having to pay tax to paying no tax at all. This is a major tax reform that will encourage people who only need part-time work only to join the workforce. It is an incentive to create jobs and an incentive for people to work.

Of course, pensioners and self-funded retirees will not be left out. Pensioners and self-funded retirees holding a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card will get a cash increase of $338 each year if they are single and $510 combined each year if they are couples. That means that, on average, 1.8 million pensioner households will come out at least $210 ahead of the expected carbon price impact on them. Around 150,000 self-funded retirees and part rate pensioners will also receive tax cuts in the order of over $300. We have not forgotten families either. Increases in family tax benefit A for each child will be up $110 per year. Single-income families with children will get up to $69 extra in each family tax benefit B plus up to $300 in additional supplement. Allowance recipients such as people on Newstart and youth allowance will also get up to $218 a year for singles and up to $390 a year for couples. These are good things for the nation across the board.

Specifically, people will want to know what will happen in my electorate of Oxley. Out of the 62,000 taxpayers in Oxley, around 54,000 will receive a tax cut and 45,000 of these will receive a tax cut of at least $300. More than 38,000 people in Oxley will receive household assistance through income support payments or family assistance payments. A typical family in Oxley will have expected cost increases of around $497 per year, but they will receive around $754 in tax cuts and family assistance. They will be about $257 better off per year. There are more than 3,000 single parents in Oxley who will also get an extra $289 per year and 17,100 pensioners in Oxley will receive an extra $338 per year for singles and $510 per couple—that is, extra after all their expenses. Pensioners will be better off, students will be better off and families will be better off but, most importantly, our economy and our economy will be better off. It is always difficult to make the big decisions in government and to take the next steps forward. It is always difficult to be able to see beyond the horizon, to look where the future takes us—not after the next election or the election after that but the next generation in this country. That is what this is about. This is about making fundamental change. This is about structural reform. This is about changing the way our economy operates. This is about ensuring that industries of the future have a future. This is about making sure that we do not get caught in old thinking, old traps or old ways, which mean that you cannot transition economies and then the jobs you are trying protect today disappear tomorrow because no government took the courageous steps it needed to ensure you could have a clean energy future. This is about making sure we are part of the global economy, the global village. It is a small planet. We are connected. We are a trading nation. Not only do we need to do these things but also we need to shield the impacts of some of these things locally, at a domestic level, and that is exactly what we are doing. We are talking about one of the biggest changes in this economy that has been seen, I
Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (12:18): I rise to speak on the bills which will introduce the carbon tax. I welcome the opportunity to speak on this important issue facing this parliament. It comes to one of the most fundamental issues in our democracy, and that is whether the community should be told what a government is going to do before an election. Six days before the last election the Prime Minister said, 'There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead.' It was explicit and in none of the documentation—in none of the policies, in none of the material that was put out by any Labor candidate—did the government say they would be introducing a carbon tax.

Australian political history shows that Australians will exact a very heavy price on governments which mislead. Paul Keating, campaigning against a GST, in effect introduced a GST by stealth in the 1993 budget. He massively increased the then wholesale sales tax on a range of goods. Here we have a carbon tax bill that emerged after the 2010 election, when the Prime Minister clearly said, 'There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead.' This shows no respect for democracy in this country. You cannot make specific promises as part of your election platform and then ignore them once elected.

The proposal of the government will cost Australians $9 billion per year. To put this in perspective, the carbon trading scheme in Europe, a much larger economy than Australia's, raises $500 million a year. The impact of the carbon tax will be felt very heavily by people with fixed incomes, such as self-funded retirees and pensioners, and by families. The government has spent a lot of time in this debate focusing on the compensation that people are to receive. If you do not tax someone, you do not need to compensate them. But, if the carbon tax does not hurt, it will not work. What will happen is that the carbon tax will result in a 10 per rise in electricity prices and a nine per cent rise in gas bills in the first year alone. There will be a $4.3 billion hit on the budget bottom line. At the moment we already see enormous pressure on the cost of living for families and all this will do is add to it. At a time when we are seeing retail and small business sectors struggling as never before, this is the worst time to be introducing a carbon tax, which will only increase all of those pressures. Since 2007, when Labor came to office, on average electricity prices have risen 51 per cent, gas prices have risen 30 per cent and water and sewerage prices have risen 46 per cent. Despite what the government says, any tax cuts provided will not keep pace with the increasing cost of the carbon tax, and most Australians know this.

While the carbon tax will start at $23 per tonne, it will be a floating price after three years, with the government expecting the price to be $37 a tonne in 2020 and over $350 a tonne in 2050.

What will this do to the cost of living? Australian manufacturing is already under pressure, cost of living for everyday Australians is forever increasing, and a carbon tax will only make this worse. Australian businesses will be put at a major disadvantage. On the government's own figures, more than three million Australian households are going to be worse off under the carbon tax.

But worst of all is that under Labor's carbon tax scheme emissions will actually increase. Australian emissions will increase from 578 million tonnes in 2012 to 621 million tonnes in 2020. The whole point of the government's proposal is to reduce emissions in Australia. At the most basic
argument, the carbon tax fails in this purpose. The only way the government is going to reach its emissions reduction targets is to buy offshore carbon credits from foreign carbon traders. Under Labor's proposal, the government itself estimates that Australia will be spending $3½ billion purchasing carbon credits from foreign carbon traders in 2020. By 2050 we as a nation will be spending $57 billion a year, or 1½ per cent of our GDP, on purchasing offshore carbon credits from foreign carbon traders. This means that we will be spending $3½ billion in 2020 to buy up foreign carbon credits from potentially dodgy foreign carbon traders to plant trees in other countries, not in Australia. To put this into perspective, Australian government health funding in the latest financial year, as a percentage of GDP, was only 4.1 per cent.

All the Labor Party's carbon tax will do is shift emissions overseas, at a huge cost to the Australian taxpayer. The only way that a carbon tax can reduce emissions is if people use less coal produced electricity and less oil powered transport. The problem with this is that the use of electricity is inelastic—not entirely, but quite significantly. Electricity consumption does not drop with increased costs. We are dependent on electricity. Labor's carbon tax will not work. It will hurt families and cost jobs.

The government's own paperwork reveals that the scheme will raise $27 billion in revenue in the first three years of the tax. This is not a tax about the environment; this is a wealth redistribution tax. The 750,000 small businesses in Australia will receive no direct compensation for the massive hikes in electricity prices. What it means is that jobs will be lost and product prices will rise.

As I go around my electorate holding my listening posts and doorknocking, the issue of the carbon tax is raised continually. Residents in my electorate have constantly contacted me about the impact that this carbon tax is going to have on their family, their household or their business. People tell me how this tax is going to mean that their small business is going to struggle even more than before when their expenses go up under the carbon tax. Labor members have spent a lot of time talking about compensation which families will receive, but they have not spent any time talking about the impact on small business, who will receive no compensation. Self-funded retirees and other people on fixed incomes tell me how this tax is going to mean they will struggle to make ends meet because grocery bills and electricity bills are going to go up. These bills are going to go up just as our emissions are going to go up under this carbon tax. There is negligible environmental benefit achieved under this new tax.

I recently met with one of the local councils in my electorate. They informed me that their annual power bill is $1.3 million, 70 per cent of which is for street lighting. Based on the government's own figures, the carbon tax will have an instant impact of $130,000 a year on this local council's budget—money that would otherwise have been spent on providing services to the community. The only way they can recover that $130,000 per year is to increase rates on their ratepayers. This is an example of the fact that power is inelastic. The council cannot just turn off its street lights.

I would also like to focus a bit on the impact that the carbon tax will have on health care in this country. We have already heard from the Victorian government that this will have an impact of millions of dollars on the power bills of hospitals in Victoria. The carbon tax will dramatically increase the cost of running Australia's public and private hospitals. Hospitals are huge consumers of electricity, and there is no
way that this consumption can be reduced. Hospitals, through services like radiotherapy and diagnostic imaging, use enormous amounts of electricity, and there is no compensation for them in this carbon tax proposal. What a diagnostic imaging practice will see is a 10 per cent increase in their electricity bill. What a public hospital will see is, again, a 10 per cent increase in their electricity bill. A private hospital will see the same. For a clinic delivering radiotherapy and radiation oncology, it will be a 10 per cent increase in that power bill. Electricity prices will increase by 10 per cent in the first year alone, and the government refuses to tell us how much they are expected to rise in future years. When you consider primary care, a general practice, again, will see a 10 per cent increase in their power bill. In allied health, high users of electricity such as physiotherapy practices and dentists will also see a 10 per cent increase in their power bill, with no offset there at all. This is money that could have been spent on providing more front-line health services, and instead it will now be spent on electricity bills due to the government's carbon tax.

I would like now to talk about the coalition's alternative, which is our direct action plan. Despite what those opposite say, the coalition does believe that climate change is real and that mankind is making a contribution. Therefore we do support practical action on climate change. It is right that we protect our environment, and I do not think any Australian would argue with that. During the 2010 election, I made a promise that under a coalition government there would be several Green Corps projects to improve environmental conservation within my electorate. Our direct action policy is aimed at reducing emissions by five per cent by 2020, just like the government's plan. However, we believe that the action we take must be reasonable. We believe that the action we take must not be at the expense of Australian jobs or at the expense of our standards of living. The action we take should not, and must not, drive up the cost of living for people who are already struggling. There is a fundamental difference between the ideology of those opposite and that of the coalition. While those opposite prefer to penalise, punish, and tax, the coalition believes in providing incentive and optimism. This can be seen in many of the government's policies, but it is most clearly seen in their attitude towards climate change.

The coalition's direct action climate policy provides incentives for Australian businesses to reduce their carbon emissions voluntarily. Under a coalition direct action plan, there will be no cost to families, no new taxes and no rise in electricity prices. Our direct action plan is costed, capped and fully funded. By using incentives, our plan allows the market to determine the cheapest way to reduce emissions.

This is a bad tax, based on a lie. We must never forget that the Prime Minister lied to our country before the election—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for Boothby knows that he cannot use that word.

Dr SOUTHCOTT: Madam Deputy Speaker, I withdraw.

The Prime Minister, six days before the election, said, 'There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead.' That can only be described as misleading. Residents in the minister's own electorate are well aware of this. I have a very clear vision of a nice photo opportunity held at the Findon bowling club, where the Prime Minister was explaining her carbon tax. She was buttonholed by a constituent who realised instantly what the impact of the carbon tax was going to be and said, very correctly, that India and the major emitters were not taking
any action. This is a major breach of faith by the Prime Minister. The coalition will be voting against the carbon tax legislation and, if elected, we will rescind the carbon tax legislation.

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (12:32): On behalf of the residents of Bowman, I rise to make the two most obvious points that have been clear since the debate on emissions trading and the carbon tax began, and that is that we need to get the right mechanism and that we need to do it at the right time. I do not need to go back into the history of the misleading of voters before the last election, but I do need to acknowledge, more importantly, that it has been a long and tortuous debate on both sides of this chamber that has led us to this position.

The point I want to make clear today is that we need to get the right system for Australia because we are lawmakers here in Australia. It does not matter what the rest of the world is doing if we are doing the right thing for this nation. That is my job. It is the job of international agencies and international agreements to work out what is the right thing for the globe. I know if we do not have a global solution on carbon we do not have a solution at all. My speech today is going to focus on where we are globally in that agreement. I will also look at the temporal elements and the history of carbon negotiation—where we have got to and where the pitfalls have been. I do not doubt that a year or two from now we will revisit this debate and ask, 'What did we pass, and why?'

The best comparison for carbon negotiation globally is most likely the trade negotiations that began after World War II and continue today. We still do not have a worldwide trade agreement, 60 years on. More recently we have seen the poverty negotiations around the millennium goals—again, we are halfway to 2020 and we still do not have global agreement on action regarding poverty.

The point about carbon is that a quick and dirty agreement does not get you any closer to a global agreement. We know from international negotiation that it is a slow, trust-building, layer-upon-layer, meeting-upon-meeting approach that takes you towards the solution, or the destination, which is a global agreement. The early GATT negotiations began in 1947, in Annecy, Geneva, Dillon, Torquay and Kennedy. They then rolled right through Tokyo and then, finally, to the Uruguay Round, which began in 2001. Even 10 years after that tortuous process, no-one came out and said, 'I'm dropping all my trade barriers and that's the right thing for the planet.'

That is not the right thing to do in carbon. So the first point I want to address is this notion that we have to set an example for the rest of the world. We do not set examples for the rest of the world when it comes to jobs and livelihoods; we negotiate with the rest of the world. And what has happened since Copenhagen and since Bali? If we are this committed as a nation, why isn't this Prime Minister calling the President of the United States saying, 'Let's do something together'; getting in contact with Russia, Japan, Singapore and South Africa; bringing together the trade economies for meetings; and saying, 'Let's have a carbon arrangement'? It does not matter to this Prime Minister. This is purely a journey of political expediency for a Prime Minister desperate for something that she can look tough on.

Of course, in Australia we know that the impact will be significant. If we as a country wish to lead on climate we must be doing so at every opportunity, not just finding a way to punish our own people. That might be in
some masochistic sense impressive to those that are looking for action on climate, but it does nothing to take us closer to global agreement. The fundamental point that has never been made by this government is whether we signing up to something makes other nations more likely or less likely to sign up. If you set up asymmetry in trade and in business where there is an advantage for other countries not to sign up, it is called the first-mover disincentive. It leads to perverse outcomes where you perpetuate the situation. Why would another economy come together and say, 'Australia's harming its trade exposed exports with this carbon tax; let's quickly do the same and remove the advantage we have'? It is pathetic and it is ridiculous. How that occurs is a point that has never been made on this side of the House.

The government would lead us to believe from their Treasury modelling that every other nation in the world will fall into a carbon tax when the ink is barely dry on the agreement—that they are only months or years away from a carbon tax. That is complete folly. No-one on the floor of congress in the US wants a carbon tax. Prime Minister, visit Japan. Go and visit Russia. Talk to Brazil. Show me the mining economies that say that a carbon tax is the right way to go. You will not find an economy that says that. With the greatest of respect to our colleagues in the EU and to New Zealand, our brothers across the Tasman Sea, they are not a mining, trade exposed economy. It is quite easy when you have consumed your natural resources to raise your hand for a carbon tax. It is not that hard to do—particularly when it is at about a dollar per person per year. It is not a hard thing to do. It is a far different thing when you are a commodity-producing economy, where carbon is attributed to the economy where it is mined, not where it is consumed.

I do not forget the words of those who were at the Copenhagen meeting just two years ago. They said that three things brought down Copenhagen. It is good to remember what they were. They said that the first thing was that the nations of this planet did not arrive at Copenhagen universally agreed on the problem. There was not universal agreement. The preparatory work had not been done. They had a ground rush and got there with all different proposals. No less than our own then Prime Minister came with his own shiny apple of an ETS. But nobody was interested. No-one was tempted by Kevin Rudd's proposal at the time because that is not where the world was heading.

The second thing was that the leaders turned up at Copenhagen too early in the negotiation process. So the minute the leaders jetted in everything was paralysed. All the cameras turned to the leaders and we got no agreement. The third thing that was pointed out by those who were at Copenhagen was the obvious point that this is no longer a debate about who has the shiniest apple and the fanciest carbon tax; it is now about what is right for me. It is now, if I am a commodity-producing trade-exposed economy, about how I do it with other like economies. I want to know what they are doing before I do something.

There is a weird notion that if we cut our hand in some sort of pact and hold it out, even though no-one grabs it, that will fix the climate. That is patently ridiculous. Every international agreement is a painstaking, slow process of trust-building. Where is Australia doing that at the moment? We are not. We have retreated to the simple task of having a carbon tax debate here in Australia and we have let the rest of the world back away from it.
My fundamental point today is the temporal notion of whether a carbon tax is the right thing right now. I know that we are incredibly animated by this carbon tax debate but it does deserve pause for thought as to why we are the only nation on the planet having a carbon tax debate in 2011. Is it because we have a finely balanced parliament? Is it because someone tapped the Prime Minister on the shoulder and said, 'Unless you pass a carbon tax we will not support you in government'? No, nobody said that. The reality is that, in wanting to do the right thing, we as a nation have simply chosen a foolish course. We have chosen (a) to go it alone and (b) to have a large and churning carbon tax through which the potential for profit seeking, rent seeking, administrative overload and corruption is simply too great for this chamber to pass it.

This carbon tax is clumsily designed. It is overly bulky. It is unwieldy. It offers none of the protections for the industries that we need to be looking after. I do not care that those industries are not voters for the Australian Labor Party, because at some point you have to separate yourself from your own political myopia and say, 'They may not vote for us but possibly it is the right thing to do for the economy and for jobs.'

I do not see why one job should be lost in the pursuit of a carbon agreement. I want to see the evidence that these clean green jobs are going to occur. Let us look for a comparator nation. There is none better than Spain. They embarked on the green economy just five years ago. They made enormous investments in solar energy. And no-one has pointed out to me yet exactly how paying twice as much for a solar panel as you will five years from now helps the climate. No-one has told me how paying twice as much now for a solar panel as Spain did will not bring down the economy just as it did in Spain—because the green bubble simply vanished at the time of the GFC. That enormous investment in solar energy has collapsed.

As Bjorn Lomborg says in his book Cool It, there is plenty of agreement that there is a problem. There are plenty of solutions. The question is: are we prepared to pay, now, for those solutions? Lomborg himself talks about climate being a $5 trillion economic problem between now and the turn of the century. Do we want to pay $15 trillion now to fix it or do we want to pay $3 trillion later? I cannot tell you when that 'later' will be but I know that the solutions get cheaper every day. I do not want to be in the one nation—the one economy—that has a carbon tax in place in 2011 because that will damage our economy. No-one overseas will thank us. The EU will not—it has a very light, almost imperceptible carbon tax. New Zealand will not, because in the main we do not compete with them as a commodity exporter. Certainly the other major economies of the world will not thank us. I do not want to always mention China but their growth in emissions over a year will be three times the size of Australia's entire economy.

I have used this analogy in the past, for people who do not have the time to read all of these carbon publications. Nobody loved peeing in the pool, did they? But we are all in the pool together here. It is an atmosphere just like a pool and, I tell you what, we are all peeing in that pool. We all agree it is a problem. We differ a little bit on just how bad for your health it is but if there is an elephant and a bullock peeing in the pool I see no point punishing the mouse.

I am sure we are all contributing to this problem but let us get an agreement in which we are all talking. We do not have that; we are not even close to that. Is this Prime
Minister stepping out at saying, 'Let's bring together the tier-2 economies—the great exporters on this planet—for this discussion about climate'? No, there is none of that. She is too busy doing other things, like finding out ways to raise billions of dollars a year in carbon tax and then apportion them—as only the friendly hand of government can do! Come on! We can continue under this Labor administration to find excuses to tax Australians. We have had 17 of these excuses so far without a tax cut. In the end we have to trust in their benevolence to distribute the funds appropriately.

How much can Australians take in this 'servility' to assume that all knowledge rests in Canberra? 'I don't care how much they collect,' we are meant to say, 'as long as I get a little more back than I am going to pay.' This servility—this sense that only a government knows how to distribute these carbon collections—is a complete fallacy.

We may not always have someone with the priorities of the current Prime Minister. I do not see why another $71 billion has to be collected out of the pockets of people like those in the gallery over the next six years, while at the same time the EU has only collected a fraction with their carbon tax. If you look at the eastern US renewable energy arrangements, where they have only collected $825 million from 50 million people, you see that it is about $5 per person per year. These systems overseas are token systems compared to what we are potentially doing to our economy. The points that I have made here have been simple. We are moving too early and we are moving alone. We are nothing like the EU because we are a commodity-producing economy. Our competitors are not Switzerland and Hungary. Our competitors are those that mine the iron ore and coal, those that bring the natural gas and other energy requirements to South-East Asia. They are the ones we need to be looking at—and do they move closer to a carbon tax? No matter how many times you try to airbrush away the reality, they are phasing it back, they are delaying, they are issuing free permits; they are doing anything they can to not harm their own economies.

That is exactly what this lot over here are not seeing. We have the temporal element and then we have the structural components of the carbon tax, which time will not allow me to go through. But let me say this: huge economic impact with very little environmental benefit. Australia's system alone would give a hundredths of a degree of Celsius reduction. We are talking about massive investment, in the billions now, that I cannot spend on hospitals and health care in order to—what—delay global warming by nine hours by the year 2100?

There is no solution without a global solution. I would love to see an administration focused purely on that very hard and adaptive work to bring other commodity exporters with us. I do not have a problem with being a leader in the field, but there is no point leading if no-one goes with you. Reach out the hand. Let us see if there is an agreement on this carbon tax structure. I severely doubt that there is. I ask if there is one economy heading in our direction in 2011. The frank reality is that there is not. I ask if there is one contemplating an economy-wide approach that hits not just 500 or 1,000 but 60,000 businesses having to pay or be compensated, and not the added prices that will be imposed upon their businesses as the result of the removal of fuel credits. In my electorate there are the waterborne taxis alone, the barges that serve our islands. It is okay to exempt one industry but not another, so they are paying more for their water taxis and vehicles are exempted. There is too much picking of winners. There
are too many favourites. We have gone down this path alone with no support internationally and this is a bill that has to be opposed. (Time expired)

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (12:47): I must say that the contribution by the member for Bowman really says a lot about the level of debate that has been engaged in by the opposition. There are no details, there is just a whole lot of political rhetoric. He even said in his contribution that he would not go into detail. What he said was misleading and did not paint a true picture of what is happening not only in Australia but also around the world. In comparing it with Spain and the collapse of the Spanish economy he might as well have compared it with Greece or any other nation that is having problems. It has absolutely nothing to do with investing in clean energy.

The clean energy bills are revolutionary legislation, legislation that will work with other measures and measures adopted by other countries to ensure the future of not only Australia but also our planet. I listened to the contribution made by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. I learnt more about the opposition’s policies from the Prime Minister than from the Leader of the Opposition, who used his 30 minutes to hurl insults at the Prime Minister, create fear and make unsubstantiated one-liners that he thought would make a good grab on the news—just as the member for Bowman did.

The legislation before us today is a market based reform which places a price on carbon pollution on around 500 big polluting companies. This carbon price mechanism is designed to reduce carbon pollution by at least 160 million tonnes a year in 2020, deliver tax cuts and increase pensioner and family payments to Australians. It is about putting a price on pollution whilst ensuring that polluters pay, not Australian workers, families and pensioners. The aim of the legislation is to change behaviour by making polluting costly and rewarding clean initiatives and non-polluting behaviours.

This legislation is a blueprint for a clean energy future, a future with investment in clean energy and clean energy jobs. This legislation is about embracing the future and moving to implement the recommendation of the myriad reports and inquiries that have spanned years. It is about action not inaction, the future not the past. Never has there been legislation that has been more vilified and never has the behaviour of an opposition leader been more irresponsible. For this opposition leader it is about living in the Lodge—not about the future of Australians and the best action to reduce climate pollution and address the pressing issues of climate change.

Not only do I question the motivation of the Leader of the Opposition but also I believe that he and his opposition have failed to substantiate their claim that putting a price on carbon would only lead to job losses, increased prices and failure to reduce carbon emissions. Not true. I also believe the opposition have failed to establish that their direct action plan is an effective measure to address climate change. It will require an increase in taxation of five per cent if they are to reach their target in 2020.

I believe that climate change is caused by CO₂ emissions and that humans contribute to those emissions. I accept the science. I have visited the Solomon Islands and seen the impact that climate change has had on those islands, just as you have, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have spoken to people who have been forced to flee the islands on which they live because the increased temperatures have led to sea level rises, which have devoured...
their homes. I saw photos of orchards that separated the National Referral Hospital in Honiara from the sea, and I saw how today the ocean was just metres from the hospital. Recent news reports have shown that the polar icecaps are at their lowest level in recorded history, and the melting of that ice is leading to sea level rises. It is serious. It is not something that we can ignore.

In Australia, we have seen an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme climatic events. This year, we had the floods and cyclones in Queensland that caused havoc. In 2007, the electorate I represent was subjected to an extreme weather event when it and all areas in the Hunter and the Central Coast were lashed by storms, high winds and flooding, causing enormous devastation. There is no shortage of information that shows that climate change is a reality, and that temperatures are rising. There is no shortage of information that shows that CO\textsubscript{2} is contributing to these increases, that humans are contributing to the increase in CO\textsubscript{2} emissions and that, consequently, climate change is increasing. The government accepts that climate change is a reality and must be addressed. The opposition plays politics, promoting misinformation, as we heard from the previous speaker, the member for Bowman, and failing to provide a viable, affordable alternative to pricing carbon.

In Australia we hear the mantra that, until China acts, Australia should not act. If that is the case, the time to act is now. I recently visited China with the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Climate Change, Environment and the Arts, to see what, if any, action was taking place in China to address climate change. The overwhelming message that the committee received whilst in China was that the Chinese government and the Chinese people accept the reality of climate change. There is no debate there as to whether or not climate change is a reality. Rather, the debate is about how to cut CO\textsubscript{2} pollution, and the Chinese government has committed to doing that. China knows its future depends on action to reduce its emissions; that is why China is making a massive investment in research into renewable energies. We visited an ecologically sustainable city, Tianjin. We also learnt about carbon price mechanisms that have been used in some regions of China; in fact, I believe that six such pricing mechanisms have been implemented within China. So China is acting and is putting a price on carbon.

The member for Wentworth knows that climate change and global warming are a reality and he knows that pricing carbon is the only effective way to change behaviour and reduce pollution—and he is not the only one on the opposition side who knows that carbon must be priced if we are to address the issue of CO\textsubscript{2} emissions. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition does not hold the same belief. He has stated in the past that climate change is 'crap', and his close alliance with anti-climate-change groups proves that he is a climate change denier. His direct action plan is really about inaction rather than direct action. I believe if the opposition gained government at the next election and Tony Abbott became Prime Minister, Australia would see inaction, not direct action. As his plan is costly and would place a tax on all Australians. On Thursday, 15 September, the Sydney Morning Herald reported that the coalition's direct action plan would cost 'at least double' the cost of the government's clean energy package. Michael Hitchens, Chief Executive of the Australian Industry Greenhouse Network, said:

We understand … that the cost of abatement might double if we try to achieve the full abatement domestically—as set out in the coalition's direct action plan.
The article goes on to discuss in some detail how the plan that has been put up by the coalition will cost each and every Australian.

The government's clean energy package will cut pollution and drive investment in clean energy technology. The legislation is about taxing polluters: approximately 500 of Australia's biggest polluters will have to pay for every tonne of carbon they emit into the atmosphere. These industries have been identified by the Prime Minister and the minister, and I do not intend to go into details here; it is all already on the parliamentary record. All the money collected will go to jobs, clean energy and households. The tax-free threshold will be increased to $18,000, and increased payments will be provided to those Australians who need them. Nine out of 10 households will get some form of tax cut or increased payment. The legislation provides for increased payments to pensioners, veterans, self-funded retirees, Australian families and other Australians who qualify for assistance. There will be an initial lump-sum advancement for households before the carbon pricing scheme comes into effect, and this is to ensure that nobody receives any initial disadvantage.

The legislation is about taxing polluters, as I said, not about increasing costs for Australians. It is legislation designed to change behaviour and to ensure our future and that of our children and their children. Over four million households will be better off in terms of the average price impact. On average, households will see a cost increase of $9.90, while the average assistance to them will be $10.10 per week. Almost six million households will be assisted to meet the average price impact on them, and this means they will receive assistance that covers at least the average price impact of carbon on their cost of living. Around eight million households will get some assistance. They will receive some assistance through payment increases and tax cuts, as I have already outlined. Those households that improve their energy efficiency—and, remember, this is about changing behaviour—will help the environment and at the same time they will save money.

Pensions will increase by $338 per year for seniors and $510 per year for pensioner couples. Concession card holders who rely on essential medical equipment will also be eligible to receive a $140 essential medical equipment payment. Self-funded retirees who have a Commonwealth seniors card will get the same amount of cash assistance as is provided through the pension. Age pensioners, disability pensioners and carers will all be taken care of.

This government is about ensuring that the people of Australia do not bear the brunt of pricing carbon. This is about the polluters paying. Family payments will increase. Families who receive family tax benefit A will receive up to $110 per child per year extra and there will be up to $69 extra for families who receive family tax benefit B. There will up to $218 extra per year for single income support recipients, $234 per year for single parents and up to $390 for couples combined for jobseekers and students per year.

This is important legislation. This is legislation that is about the future. In summary, the government's clean energy legislation will ensure that big polluters pay, that households receive tax cuts and are compensated for any cost-of-living increases and that there is a clean energy future for Australia, whilst the opposition's direct action plan will cost individual Australians $1,300 a year. The opposition's plan is not deliverable and will become a non-core promise if a coalition government were ever elected; the government's plan is for a clean
energy future and will become a reality on 1 July next year.

Mr ENTSC (Leichhardt—Chief Opposition Whip) (13:02): I rise today to speak on the Clean Energy Bill 2011 and related bills. I have gone through the plethora of bills to try to see if there is anything really positive that I can speak on but, quite frankly, the more you look into the legislation the greater your concern for your local community and the impacts that this legislation is going to have on it, both socially and economically. For that reason, I certainly support the coalition’s position in vehemently opposing the imposition of this very, very unfair, job-destroying and ineffective carbon tax on my community—and, by extension, on the nation. There is no doubt that we live in a global economy, and these bills are certainly going to impose a very, very unfair impost on business, industries and families and they will have a serious negative impact on our trading with competing countries who do not have to endure this particular tax.

I think what makes this particularly difficult is that this whole debate has been predicated on deceit and dishonesty. The Prime Minister stated very clearly on 16 August 2010 on the Ten Network: There will be no carbon tax under a government I lead.

And in an interview in the Australian on 20 August 2010 on the Ten Network: I rule out a carbon tax.

The Australian public voted on this issue. They accepted the Prime Minister on her word and on the basis that she would not introduce a carbon tax. To now break her word and introduce it without first taking this to an election represents, in my view, a very gross breach of trust with the Australian people. When I speak to people in my electorate you see that that is very much the consensus. They are very, very disappointed and they feel very much betrayed. I am talking here about people who would have voted for the Labor Party at the last election, and they feel very betrayed.

I was a member of this House back in 1998 when we went to an election on the GST. Much has been said about the then Prime Minister, John Howard, changing his view. But at least he had the conviction to take the issue to an election. We lost quite a few of our colleagues at that time but, nevertheless, we won that election based on that commitment, and subsequently a GST was introduced. I notice that a lot of attention is being focused on the Leader of the Opposition and this nonsense about his 'No, no, no' and 'He is not going to support these bills' et cetera. I was here back in the days when we talked about the GST, and it was 'No, no, no, no' from the then Leader of the Opposition and that was the chorus from the opposition at that time—and the member across the chamber from me, the member for Banks, was part of that very, very loud chorus at the time. So I think it is a little bit hypocritical to now come into this place and suggest that, because we have some very serious and real concerns about this legislation and the impact that it is going to have on our community, we do not have the right to express our concerns and say, 'No; we believe there is a better way.'

People always say that we have to keep up with the world. I do not have a problem with that but, at the end of the day, we should not lead so that we are so far out in front that we get absolutely destroyed. They were talking about what has been happening overseas. There is no other country that is planning to impose an economy-wide carbon price. The Productivity Commission clearly stated that not one country on earth is bringing in an
economy-wide carbon tax or emissions trading scheme.

In the United States, for example, all moves towards a national cap-and-trade scheme have been abandoned. The government always uses Europe as an example—they say, ‘Europe has got an ETS’—of course it has an ETS, but it certainly does not cover the whole economy. It provides many industries with free emissions permits, and the ETS, interestingly enough, only raises about $500 million a year. The tax we are talking about here in Australia, a much smaller economy, would be raising $9 billion to kick off with. That is a hell of a cost in relation to the Australian people. The government also claims that China is acting to reduce its carbon emissions, but the reality is that China is forecast to rise by something like 500 per cent by the year 2020. So that does not seem to me to be much of a significant reduction in costs.

The actual carbon price would start at $23 a tonne, but after three years that price—it will not be fixed—will float in line with market prices. Government will have no control over that. By the government’s own forecast, that price will increase to $29 a tonne in 2016, $37 a tonne in 2020, and over $350 a tonne in 2050. What on earth is that going to do for our cost of living? The Centre for International Economics has forecast that the price will rise to $49 a tonne by 2016.

It is interesting to note that those who are really running the government at the moment—Greens senators Bob Brown and Christine Milne—say that the price needs to be at least $40 a tonne and that there needs to be a shift away from coal for electricity generation. Another Greens senator, Senator Hanson-Young, has canvassed a price of up to $100 a tonne. You can only imagine what sort of impact that is going to have not only on our economy but also on the cost of living of so many people. Any compensation is only being factored in for the introduction of this; this is not ongoing. I can assure you that, as the costs continue to escalate, the cost of living will be escalating with that. It will really make for a hell of an impost, particularly for those who can least afford it.

Cairns has a very diverse economy. From a regional perspective, we have mining—we have the Rio Tinto bauxite mine—but we also have agriculture and horticulture and we have a small Navy base. But tourism is the primary lifeblood of our economy, and we should never forget that. We have done it tough over the last few years, and businesses are now just starting to try to come back. Of course the floods and cyclones certainly have not helped; neither has the loss of flights into our international airport. That is just starting to recover now. There was the tsunami in Japan, one of our main feeder markets, and there was the disaster with the earthquakes in New Zealand, another major and important market for our economy.

We were in fact the unemployment capital of Australia; we were up to 13 per cent at one stage, and the value of the Australian dollar makes it very tough. So the last thing we need is a significant cost increase. They talk about whether we are going to compensate households for electricity and other living costs—as I said, very short term.

When you talk to people like Charlie and Pip Woodward—they have the Capita Group in my electorate, one of the major tourism operators there, operating buses, boats and a whole range of other experiences up there—you find that the increase in the cost of electricity and fuel is going to be quite profound. We have many other great companies up there, including Quicksilver, Jim and Jo Wallace, and Great Adventure
Boats. Their costs for fuel for the dive boats going out to the Great Barrier Reef is going to be very significant. These are costs that they have to pass on; they cannot carry these costs. Down Under Tours, James and Gordon Dixon, is a bus tour operation that travels quite extensively around our region. They also have these costs that they are going to have to pass on to the consumer, in a market that is already very, very price sensitive. To suggest that they can cover these costs, while they are still trying to recover from the impacts of the last couple of years, is a nonsense. On top of that they have no control over costs such as electricity and other costs. Again, it is something that they have to pass on.

One of the big concerns I have is in relation to the impact on our airlines. As I said, we have just started to attract further services into Cairns, and this means that there is an opportunity for the whole region. The international airport is an area where people arrive and disperse. The fuel costs in relation to this are going to make travelling into this area a lot less competitive.

Those on the other side say that it is only a minimum cost and they are all doing it overseas, but I note that the International Air Cargo Association has recently urged the EU to suspend the implementation of its emissions trading scheme on aviation and instead pursue a global agreement on aviation carbon emissions. They firmly believe that the aviation emissions must be addressed through a global framework; otherwise it will not result in any decrease in emissions but it will certainly impose a massive impost on the aviation sector. Yet here we are looking at putting the same thing on Australian aviation as well. I think that what we need to do is what we have committed to do in opposition, and that is looking for direct action. One of the things we are looking at is the development, through James Cook University, of carbon dioxide-eating algae that is being developed up there. Professor Kirsten Heimann is heading that project and they are going to retrofit it onto the stacks at Tarong Energy in Queensland. Basically, the algae consumes the carbon dioxide, they are able to harvest the algae, which grows at an accelerated rate, and from that they are able to take biodiesel, stock food and fertiliser. To me that is a much more practical way of reducing emissions. Investing in that creates an opportunity to export not our jobs but a technology that we as Australians can get a benefit from and, in the meantime, we can continue to reduce our own emissions.

I note that we are talking about buying foreign carbon credits. We have seen them in the media in recent times, and I have got to say: start selling credits into equatorial Guinea or Nigeria. That is the sort of thing that would happen if it is a repeat of a lot of the other initiatives that this government has been involved in. I think it is absolutely appalling that we are continuing down this track. I think there are far better ways in which we could do this. We have got to look at alternatives. I think it is right that we should be absolutely opposing this. I think that the compensation will never cover the costs of the losses of the things that we are going to see for families.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (13:17): When you are listening to some of this debate it is easy to forget why we are here. Ice caps are melting and the seas are rising. Hurricanes, storms and floods are becoming more intense and dangerous, and extreme fires are becoming more powerful and are happening more often. This is just the beginning of our pathway to a more dangerous and harsher world.

The existing and growing threat of climate change is the reason that we are here today.
We are all—every person and every species on this planet—threatened by catastrophic climate change and the potential of it, and we are running out of time to prevent this catastrophe. The catastrophe is not going to be just social but also economic. The hit to the Australian economy if we are not able to prevent runaway climate change is going to be enormous. We have just heard about the tourism sector in Queensland. The Great Barrier Reef has bleached up to nine times since the 1970s, which is completely unusual when you look at the period before it. Sixty-seven thousand jobs are directly dependent on tourism and the Barrier Reef. There will be no compensation that will be able to fully address the situation of those people who are going to be turfed out of a job and a livelihood when the Great Barrier Reef becomes nothing more than a perpetually bleaching feature.

We can look at the Murray-Darling Basin and see Professor Ross Garnaut's predictions of, by the end of the century, a potential loss of about 92 per cent of productivity if we do not get climate change under control. The Australian Climate Commission released a report this year which makes it clear that, to prevent disaster, countries like Australia need to be effectively zero pollution economies by the middle of the century. Indeed, for countries like Australia, it should happen sooner, by somewhere closer to 2040. As the report points out, we are in a critical decade. This decade must be the one in which our pollution in this country is the highest it is ever going to be and it needs to reduce. That means we need to begin the big steps to transform our economy to one which runs on clean energy. I believe it is vitally important in this debate that we do not lose sight of those basic facts. Climate change requires us to act, and today we are acting with this legislation.

If you follow the current debate in the media with its almost obsessive focus on the narrow political implications of this package, it is easy to lose sight of the great significance of this moment in Australia's history. For the first time, after decades of discussion about the need for action, we now have a comprehensive package of national measures to make a start in tackling climate change. For the first time we have a pollution reduction target of 80 per cent by 2050, and that is close to what the science says is needed. For the first time we have a climate change authority that will make recommendations every year on a carbon budget that will get us to that target. And for the first time we have a price on pollution to drive up the relative cost of fossil fuels and to drive down the price of cleaner and renewable energy. And, for the first time we have a well-funded agency whose sole focus is the promotion of renewable energy. And for the first time we have a publicly-funded green bank that can invest in clean energy and leverage billions of dollars in private sector investment as well. We will also have in legislation a commitment to keep global warming below the guardrail of two degrees—one of the few changes that the Greens proposed to the draft legislation.

So I think it is a very significant step towards Australia making its fair share of a global contribution to cutting pollution as well as participating in the global fight against climate change. I am particularly proud to be speaking on these bills today because, of course, we would not be having this debate at this point in time if the electorate of Melbourne had not shown the leadership that it did at the last election. By switching to the Greens, Melbourne was able to empower me and my fellow party members to make a price on pollution one of our conditions for supporting a minority government. We did this because, whilst we
agree that a price on pollution alone will not be enough to fix climate change, we know we will not be able to fix climate change without one. A price on pollution, it is worth remembering, comes from a very simple premise. Until now we have presumed as a human race that we can put as much pollution into the atmosphere as we like without any cost. This has not happened because some evil cabal has sat around saying, 'How can we put as much pollution into the atmosphere as possible?' It is just the way our society has been organised for the last couple of hundred years, and we have all benefited from it. We now know it comes at a cost. We now know you cannot continue to put pollution into the atmosphere for free, and this package will begin to say for the first time that polluters who put that pollution into the atmosphere are going to have to pay something approximating the real cost of that pollution.

A price is an essential part of both driving investment decisions and generating revenue that can be directed to cutting pollution and invested in renewables like wind and solar. It is a crucial platform on which further action can be built in the energy efficiency of buildings, transport and other areas of the economy. The negotiations with the government and the Independents, in which I participated and which led to these bills, set out a process for addressing some of these areas, and the Greens have a plan for more measures that will build on the carbon price.

I find very strange this current debate, within this parliament in particular, about false dichotomies between direct action and a price on pollution. That false debate has been created by the Leader of the Opposition for political purposes rather than a reflection of a real disagreement over the best way to act to cut pollution. How do we know that? Because we know the Leader of the Opposition has supported a price on pollution in the past, but we also know that conservative governments in Europe and the UK support the same. The conservative Prime Minister in the United Kingdom has just agreed to cut that country's greenhouse gas pollutants in half by 2025-27. We even have Silvio Berlusconi saying recently, 'You've got to put aside this national interest. It's going to affect us all.' There are not many things that I would agree with Silvio Berlusconi on, but he hits the nail on the head with that. It shows that elsewhere, when you step out of the narrow confines, you will find this is not a partisan political issue.

I think in different political circumstances the Leader of the Opposition would be backing a price on pollution. So I make the prediction that if the Leader of the Opposition ever becomes Prime Minister we will see a change of heart. We will see him join the ranks of the other conservative leaders around the world and back a price on pollution. The words of the shadow Treasurer today that the coalition will unwind the clean energy package and scrap the compensation that goes with it ring hollow.

This package will triple the tax-free threshold, and I cannot believe that a shadow Treasurer, if you were ever in the position, would go to the million Australians who will now not have to file a tax return and say, 'We want you to pay tax' and go to those hundreds of thousands of pensioners and recipients of welfare who are going to get hundreds of extra dollars, if not thousands, to help them deal with this and say, 'We want to take it back.'

The other reason that this debate between direct action and price on pollution is a false dichotomy is that if you think about other areas where we tackle problems in society we do not apply this kind of dichotomy. We know that smoking causes enormous damage
and is a major risk to health. We know that, despite the misinformation and fear campaign pedalled by big tobacco, successive governments have sort to reduce, significantly curb and eventually get smoking rates down to zero.

When we discuss how to deal with smoking, we do not ask, 'Are you a direct actionist or a price supporter?' We do not suggest that putting a price on cigarettes is somehow in conflict with education and health sector intervention. We do everything. We jack up the price. We send doctors on the warpath. We put ads on TV and pictures of cancer on packets of cigarettes. Does anyone seriously believe that investments in public health alone would work to cut smoking if you could buy a pack of cigarettes for $2? Would education programs alone cut through if buying cigarettes was cheaper than a cup of coffee? It is the same argument here: if we allow polluting energy to continue to be unreasonably and wrongly priced as a cheap commodity, we are going to continue to see people flock to it no matter what kind of direct action we take.

It is not just the decisions of consumers that this package is going to change. If you happen to be lucky enough to have a spare few billion lying around and you want to invest in a power station here in Australia, this price sends a signal to you as well: you can either invest in a dirty power station where you are going to have to pay a price on pollution for every tonne of CO₂ you emit or you can invest in a clean power station—wind, solar, solar-thermal—and not have to pay a cent. As investment changes we are going to set Australia on the path to being the renewable economy that it should be.

It has been my privilege since I have been elected to meet a number of remarkable people, one of whom is the adviser on climate change to the conservative Chancellor Angela Merkel and the G8. He said, 'I cannot understand why you Australians are not leading the world in renewable energy technology. Look at your intellectual resources. Look at your human resources. Look at how much sun, wind and wave power you have. Why aren't you leading the world?' It is a very good question. We need to be willing to put in place a range of policies that will take us on the path towards a zero carbon economy. Believing it can occur without a carbon price is a dangerous false hope.

I want to outline briefly some important aspects of this package of bills that I think highlight the success of the Greens in negotiating the cross-party agreement that led to these bills. The package means $13 billion investment for clean and renewable energy. There will be a $10 billion publicly owned Clean Energy Finance Corporation, which will leverage tens of billions more in private sector investment in clean renewable energy. There will be a new $3.2 billion Australian Renewable Energy Agency, which will for the first time create a systemic, whole-of-government approach to renewable energy from R&D to rollout and planning. The Australian energy planner, AEMO, will prepare plans for the electricity grid to move forward with 100 per cent renewable energy. There is generous compensation for households, especially low-income earners. Nine out of 10 households will receive assistance through tax cuts, increased payments or both. A supplement will increase pensions, allowances and family payments by 1.7 per cent and a big increase to the tax-free threshold will mean over one million Australians will no longer need to lodge a tax return.

The bills also mean we will start replacing dirty power stations. Two thousand megawatts of dirty coal fired power such as...
Hazelwood, Australia's dirtiest power station, will be closed. The price on pollution importantly means no new conventional commercial coal fired power stations will be built.

I want to take this moment to congratulate the Prime Minister on seeing this package through. Although Labor's platform was to do this in many years' time rather than now, the circumstances of this parliament, where the coalition did not win a majority, have meant that there has to be give and take. We have asked, and the Australian people want, the parliament to take action on climate change and for it to happen soon. I commend the Prime Minister and the government on sticking to that. I hope they use this opportunity not to have their foot on the accelerator and the brake at the same time. If they are looking to save $100 million in the next budget, they could easily do it by not giving it for the construction of a new coal fired power plant in Victoria, the HRL.

The reality is that the real opposition to a price on pollution in most cases is not based on a genuine desire to cut pollution. It usually comes from those who are opposed to any action on climate change. That is because, usually, carbon change deniers are those who want to protect polluters or have accepted the arguments of climate deniers. There are those who say that climate change is uncertain or not real, but really that is a question about risk. We may say, 'I cannot tell you the day when Australia will be invaded or where the ships will land or who will be invading us and I cannot tell you whether our submarines will be parked in the right place at the right time,' but that is not an argument for having no Defence Force. You do not get to the end of the year and say, 'My house did not burn down: that is more money I have just wasted on fire insurance;' you say, 'Thank goodness I am safe.' So it is that we should be adopting the question of risk when it comes to climate change. We should be saying, 'If the scientists are right in their over 90 per cent certainty that this is happening, let's address it commensurate with the full consequences of the risk of the most extraordinary extreme events occurring. What can we do to prevent them? How can we make sure that our children and our grandchildren in future generations inherit a world in a better state than it is in at the moment.'

There is also an argument that what Australia does is inconsequential because our pollution is too small. We are the world's largest per capita emitter and we cannot with any seriousness say to countries like China and India, 'We want you to cut your emissions,' if we do not do the same ourselves. Unless we do this, we will be a drag on any effective global action. Conversely, taking this action makes it much more likely that other countries will get on board.

It was reading the climate change science and a realisation of how quickly we had to act that led me to quit my job and begin running in election campaigns. It is with great pride that I stand here today knowing that we are taking our first ever steps on climate change one year into this government.

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (13:32): While it is tempting to spend my time rebutting the member for Melbourne's speech, I will try to resist. But I will say that in this House I have never heard so much emotional claptrap so removed from reality. The member for Melbourne thanked the people of Melbourne for putting him here for this momentous occasion. I was in Melbourne last week and it seems to me that there are a lot of houses and a lot of buildings in the middle of Melbourne made out of concrete. They have glass windows.
They have trams running on steel tracks using electricity to drive them around. While the good folk of Melbourne might have a desire to improve the environment, they do not appear to be doing too much of it themselves.

The member for Melbourne's scare campaign of referring to catastrophic climate change is nothing short of ridiculous. The member for Melbourne is still using the images of the Murray-Darling Basin after suffering 10 years of drought to demonstrate his argument. If the member for Melbourne would like to get out of the capital city and go to look at the Murray-Darling Basin, he will find out that it actually has rained, we are not in drought and the system has not run dry, as he would lead us to believe. The interesting thing is that the good folk of Melbourne, supported by the Greens during that drought, started a pipeline to pipe water from the Murray-Darling Basin for the good people of Melbourne to flush down their toilets. This is gross hypocrisy.

Professor Garnaut, who did the original report on climate change and an emissions trading scheme for the Rudd government, said that regional Australia would have an economic downturn of 20 per cent and the cities would have one of eight per cent. When the member for Melbourne comes in here with a scheme where the people of his electorate undertake the same amount of hardship as the people of my electorate, we might start talking. This is nonsense.

We talk about 100 per cent renewable energy in Australia. How do you make a solar farm or a wind turbine without a steel mill? How do you make a wind turbine without an iron ore mine and a coalmine to make the steel to make the turbine? Do the good climate fairies come in at midnight and put these turbines up to generate the electricity? This is an absolute nonsense.
carbon trading scheme and where, incidentally, they put out about 20 per cent or 30 per cent—

Mr Stephen Jones interjecting—

Mr COULTON: You will get your chance. Cement factories in Indonesia or China put out about 20 per cent or 30 per cent more carbon per tonne of cement than the factory in Australia did. So not only will more carbon be produced in a Third World country but the jobs will also be in the Third World country, and we will have ships traversing the globe to bring cement into Australia. It will be the same with the steel. Where does the good member for Melbourne think the steel is going to come from when they need new tracks for their trams in Melbourne? It is going to come from overseas. Where are the jobs that are going to create these things going to be? They are going to be overseas.

Being a member of parliament is not a popularity contest. People say that the coalition is running a popularity contest. In 2008, when I first spoke on the carbon price, 85 per cent of Australians were saying that they wanted an emissions trading scheme—that they wanted to put a price on carbon—but now it is down to about 20 per cent. I would like to think that this change was because of the great work that the coalition has done, but it is not; the reason for the change is that the Australian people have realised that they have been sold a dud and that they are going to be asked to change their lifestyle for no environmental gain.

There was an article in the paper today about how the price of Weet-Bix is going to go up one cent per biscuit or something like that and that milk is going to go up by so much, and so on. But that is not the argument. A cement worker at Kandos does not care about the price of Weet-Bix; he has to worry about affording the Weet-Bix in the first place because he has lost his job. What about the steelworkers? We have the member for wherever that suburb is in Wollongong where the steelworkers in Wollongong are losing their jobs. What about the people in Western Sydney who work in the factories which do repair works on the steel mills—who is going to protect their jobs?

For the members of the government and the Greens and the Independents this debate is like a year 5 social studies class where they come in, breathlessly excited, to show the teacher how they are going to save the world with absolutely no practical understanding of the consequences. The reason I am opposed to this legislation is that regional Australia will have an economic downturn of 20 per cent—we are users of energy. Do you think the tractor that grows the wheat to make the bread eaten by those good folk in Melbourne who are so warm and fuzzy about this bill is going to be run on a solar panel? Do you think the irrigation pump that pumps the water which grows the cotton used to make their shirts is going to be run on a solar panel? This is gross ignorance and hypocrisy. This House has turned its back on this tax twice before. It is not too late to save Australia from this tax yet again.

Behind me here sit the Independents—the member for New England and the member for Lyne. The member for New England has been making some very disparaging comments of late about redneck politics. He has been taking the high moral ground: he wants to give the Australian environment the benefit of the doubt. But you don't give something the benefit of the doubt if you know that it is going to have no environmental effect. Why would the member for New England and the member for Lyne support legislation that was clearly going to be detrimental to the economies of their electorates—which are exporters—and their country?
A farmer in my electorate who wants to produce a tonne of grain and process it into bread or stockfeed or something like that will pay a tax; a farmer somewhere else in the world will not. If I want to dig up a tonne of coal at Mudgee in my electorate and mix it with a tonne of iron ore from the electorate of my good colleague up the back here and make something here in Australia, there will be a tax; if I want to put those things on a boat and send them to China to get them to make it and send it back to us, there will be no tax. But how are we going to pay for it when it comes back? Agriculture and mining were the two industries—and, in my electorate, they are now equally productive—that saved this country from global recession. It was not the stupid stimulus package that put up those dodgy walls and burnt houses down with insulation that saved the country; it was mining and agriculture. But those industries are going to be hit. My electorate is going to be hit. The pensioners in my electorate may get some compensation, but it will not be enough. Already we are finding that they are, through fear of the future, shivering in winter because they are not game to turn their heaters on.

Opposing this legislation is about doing the right thing. It is about looking after the future of our children and grandchildren. We have heard the member for Melbourne talking about looking after the future of our children, but you can only look after the environment when you have a couple of bob in your pocket to spend on making the necessary improvements. If you are a farmer who is cash strapped, you cannot afford to make the improvements in technology which you need to be more efficient. If you are a business and you are being taxed, the ability to improve your business to make it more environmentally sustainable is taken away from you. You do not help the Australian people to change and improve the way they live by taxing them.

This legislation is going to have no environmental effect. We have heard from others in this debate that we have to catch up with the rest of the world. Between 2005 and 2011, the EU’s emissions trading scheme raised $2.6 billion to $2.9 billion. That operates in over 30 countries, including 27 members of the EU plus Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway. The Australian carbon tax, which we are speaking about now and will vote on—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper): Order! It being 1.45 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour and the honourable member for Parkes will then have the opportunity to continue his remarks.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Parkinson’s Disease

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong) (13:45): Last Friday I met a group of people who were inspirational in every way. I joined social workers Mark Silver and Fiona Riley for a meeting of their Parkinson’s support group at the Elgin Street Centre in Hawthorn. Each week around a dozen men gather to share their experiences about living with Parkinson’s. They are among the more than 750 people living in the electorate of Kooyong who are afflicted with the disease. These men range in ages, come from a remarkable variety of vocational and cultural backgrounds and have more than one trait in common. Their bravery and zest for life was obvious as they recounted wonderful stories from their time as a CEO of a leading corporation, a sport administrator and a medical practitioner. Dare I say it; one man was even a politician of note.
As I listened to these men talk about their experiences, including one who immigrated to Australia from the subcontinent and another from war torn Europe, I was struck by how debilitating this degenerative disease is. It is a condition of the central nervous system that affects a person's physical condition. There is no cure and no clear cause. Medication does help. This disease, first termed 'shaking palsy' by Dr James Parkinson in 1817, has altered the lives of so many people. It affects more than 100,000 Australians, including my great friend Sir Zelman Cowen, and more than 6.3 million worldwide. I know as I stand here today the best and brightest are desperately searching for a cure. One hopes that they find it soon.

(Time expired)

Sanders, Mr Max, DFC

Mr LYONS (Bass) (13:46): I rise in the House today to talk about Max Sanders DFC. Max was educated at Glen Dhu Primary School in my electorate of Bass. At 14 he started work. While still at school he joined the local cadet air training unit. In 1943 Max volunteered to join the RAAF and was accepted into the Empire Air Training Scheme. After training at several bases in Australia, he went to the UK to complete his training as a navigator. At the age of 19 he flew in Lancaster bombers with the Royal Canadian Air Force 419 (Moose) Squadron and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for gallantry in action. I encourage all Australians to read the new book by Dr Frank Madill called Out of the Darkness about Max. The courage of these men in the face of almost certain death was extraordinary. Six out of every 10 officers who served died.

Max and his wife, Merle, are avid supporters of the North Launceston Football Club, the mighty bombers—how appropriate. Merle was educated at Invermay Primary School and has maintained a strong relationship with the school. She was at the recent BER opening, and her smile was almost as good as when she was watching the North Launceston premiers with a grandson playing in the team.

Max, following the war, was an examiner with the Low Head Surf Life Saving Club. They have children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren who all contribute to my community. On behalf of all Australians, I thank and recognise Max and his comrades for their service in bomber command and their sacrifices for us all during World War II. (Time expired)

Great Northern Highway

Mr HAASE (Durack) (13:48): I rise today to bring the attention of this place to the situation with the Great Northern Highway that links Perth in Western Australia to Wyndham. It is the longest intrastate highway in Australia. A section referred to as the Bindi Bindi bends is in a deplorable condition. Numerous accidents each day are waiting to happen. The situation continues simply because the government in this place cannot find money to carry out repairs on the shoulders of that road. Of course, it is under the auspices of Main Roads Western Australia, which is funded by the Commonwealth government. This road is screaming out for funds. About 800 vehicles a day, the majority of them road trains and many of them triples, pass side by side. Drivers tell me that with the number of side mirrors that have been destroyed because of the closeness of trucks passing it is remarkable that something fatal has not happened thus far.

There is an urgent need for funds to be spent. It is time the minister responsible found some funds and stopped fobbing off the public by suggesting that by 2014 there
may be further opportunity for funds to go to this vital project.

**Jones, Senior Constable Kevin**

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (13:50): As the federal member for Fremantle and the Chair of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity I would like to recognise the dedicated service of Senior Constable Kevin Jones of the WA Police South Metropolitan Crash Investigation Unit, who is here in Canberra and the parliament today with his wife, Lorraine, to receive the Australian Police Medal. Presented by the Prime Minister, the Australian Police Medal is awarded to police officers who have served a minimum of 15 years diligent and dedicated service in an Australian state or Federal Police force.

Senior Constable Jones joined the WA Police on 5 March 1965 and has spent more than 40 years in the crash investigation unit, much of this time based in Fremantle, performing an often difficult and confronting but absolutely critical role within the police force. At 68 Mr Jones shows no sign of slowing down and he continues to carry out his duties with a high level of competence into what for many others would be their retirement years. This goes a long way to explaining why the WA Police Commissioner, Karl O'Callaghan, and the WA Police Union President, Russell Armstrong, nominated Mr Jones to be among the first Australians to receive the Australian police award.

I would also like to note that Mr Jones was the first police officer to receive the Western Australian police medal, which is similarly awarded for dedicated and excellent service in the WA Police force. I commend Mr Jones for his long service to the people of Fremantle and Western Australia. I know he has made a difference to our community. He is an example of the contribution that many good men and women make to law enforcement in Australia. I also want to wish his wife, Lorraine, a happy 65th birthday today.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper):** On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome Mr and Mrs Jones to the chamber.

**Flynn Electorate: Environment**

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (13:51): I rise today to speak on a matter of vital importance not only to Central Queensland but to the whole of Australia. A major public health scare has emerged in Gladstone. The state government has closed up to 500 square kilometres of Central Queensland coastline to fishing. To date two fishermen have been hospitalised and numerous deaths of turtles have been recorded along with barramundi and other marine life. Crabbers have been getting sores on their arms just from pulling their pots out of the water.

Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation Director-General Ian Fletcher has said that Gladstone Harbour would be closed to fishing to protect public health while the situation is assessed. Urgent meetings are being held today by the Director-General, the mayor, state member Liz Cunningham, me and other stakeholders.

I am calling on the federal Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Tony Burke, to immediately start an independent inquiry to coordinate activities in Gladstone Harbour. The people of Gladstone are demanding a quick, independent inquiry. Whilst not confirmed, our marine deaths could be a case of red spot disease caused by acid water. If this is correct, a new approach to disturbing the harbour floor must be found. Acid sulphite sediment must not be disturbed. Whatever the problem, it needs a
complete, independent, thorough and honest investigation. The federal government must step in today and announce a federal investigation into activities in Gladstone Harbour. *(Time expired)*

**Elizabeth O’Neill Journalism Award**

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:53): I rise today to bring attention to the Elizabeth O’Neill Journalism Award, named in honour of my dear friend Liz O'Neill, who died when her Garuda flight ran off the runway at Jogjakarta. Liz was a dedicated public servant with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. She helped families in their time of grief following the Bali bombing and was herself the victim of terrorism when she was blown off her feet when the Australian embassy was bombed in Jakarta. Liz worked hard to bring together Australians and Indonesians and to foster mutual respect and understanding. She was committed to ensuring journalists from both Indonesia and Australia provided accurate and informed media coverage to enhance our understanding of each other and the issues to both countries.

This award will see early- and mid-career journalists from both Indonesia and Australia spend time in a fully funded program to continue Liz’s legacy of mutual understanding and respect through informed and accurate journalism. The program is tailored to suit the area of expertise and interests of the award recipients and their reporting responsibilities. Applications close on 7 October.

This award is a fitting remembrance of my dear friend, and I encourage all early- and mid-career Australian journalists, whether they be in television, radio, print or online, to apply and continue the great work of Liz O’Neill in bringing the people of Australia and Indonesia closer together.

**Higgins Electorate: Prahran Mission**

Ms O’DWYER (Higgins) (13:54): On Saturday, 17 September, the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Tony Abbott MP, and his wife, Margie, joined my husband and me at the Mission Cafe in Prahran to discuss the innovative ways the Prahran Mission is helping people who have experienced long-term unemployment and are living with a mental illness or homelessness, get back into training and employment. The Mission Cafe, Mission Catering and Mission Shop are three of the very successful social enterprises that have been established by the Prahran Mission in partnership with their corporate supporters. All three create pathways back into training and employment for people who have experienced mental illness and/or homelessness.

We had breakfast with the CEO, Quinn Pawson, who introduced the corporate partners at Amcor, Chris Clark, and Cecelia Ho at the National Australia Bank. We also spoke with Stephen and Codie, two participants who have gone through the program, and the impact on their lives has been absolutely transforming. Codie in particular talked about the fact that he has now been symptom-free for four years with the care and support that he received from Prahran Mission. Given the skills and opportunity provided by Prahran Mission, he is now in full-time employment. More than that, he is somebody who has taken on a leadership role at Prahran Mission, volunteering his time on a Friday morning to help others in need.

Around 20 per cent of Australians suffer from mental illness at some point in their life, and almost all Australians are affected either directly or indirectly in some capacity. *(Time expired)*
Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (13:56): Last week I wrote to the New South Wales Minister for the Illawarra and Minister for Finance and Services, the Hon. Greg Pearce, regarding the non-completion of some public housing projects at Queens Street in Warilla. I am also aware of four other projects in the Illawarra area that have not been completed because of poor management by the New South Wales department of housing, which has left many local contractors high and dry with bills unpaid. These same contractors have written to the minister with proposals about how to kick-start the completion of these building projects.

I do not blame the minister for poor decisions in project management by the department prior to his taking up that role; however, I do have serious concerns about continued inaction on these projects by the New South Wales government, particularly when we consider the fact that they are currently spending in excess of $1,250 per day for 24-hour security on the incomplete sites, where not a brick is being laid. Given the lack of building activity going on in the Illawarra and the shortage of affordable housing, I call on the New South Wales government to do the right thing by local contractors and public housing tenants and get these projects completed so they can meet the need they were intended for.

Economy

Mr ROBB (Goldstein) (13:57): Outside the mining sector there is a crisis of confidence across Australian houses and businesses. In our two-track economy many sectors are effectively in recession. It has become imperative that their costs be cut if jobs and businesses are to survive, yet an ignorant, spendthrift Gillard government continues to borrow and grow government debt, which is now above $200 billion. It is a government incapable of living within its means. The Gillard government has forced our interest rates higher than they should be by spending far too much. In turn, this excessive borrowing and spending has pushed our currency higher than it otherwise would be, and finance for small- and medium-sized businesses is still hard to get and very expensive.

The Director of Deloitte Access Economics, Chris Richardson, said that the rule of thumb is that you have to cut by about $13 billion a year to achieve a one per cent reduction in interest rates which might in turn make a cent or two difference to the level of the Australian dollar. There is a case for the Reserve Bank to lower interest rates and see a lower exchange rate to cut industry costs and to force a complacent Gillard government to do more to rein in debt. At the moment the economic heavy lifting is being left to the blunt instrument of interest rates. This heavy lifting must be shared by fiscal policy, allowing room for the Reserve Bank to bring interest rates down with the flow-on effect on our currency. (Time expired)

Seabourne, Mr Jack

Mr LYONS (Bass) (13:59): I would like to congratulate Jack Seabourne, a young athlete in my electorate who was recently nominated for the Examiner’s junior sports award. Jack is a passionate young boxer. He is 14 years of age and has already represented Tasmania in junior basketball, football and athletics, but boxing remains his passion. This year at the Australian boxing titles in December Jack will represent Tasmania. It is fantastic to see such a great athlete. Jack is coached by Graeme George, who is Daniel Geale’s former coach. Graeme George says that Jack has the most potential of any Tasmanian boxer he has seen and that he is a champion in the making. He
recommends him as a top athlete in his sport of boxing.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:00): I inform the House that the Minister for Foreign Affairs will be absent from question time this week as he is representing Australia at the United Nations General Assembly. The Minister for Resources and Energy and the Minister for Tourism will also be absent from question time this week as he is overseas representing the government at the East Asia Summit Energy Ministers' Meeting and the Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum. The Minister for Health and Ageing will also be absent from question time this week as she is attending a high-level United Nations meeting in New York. The Minister for Trade will answer questions on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Attorney-General will answer questions on behalf of the Minister for Resources and Energy and the Minister for Tourism. The Minister for Mental Health and Ageing will answer questions on behalf of the Minister for Health and Ageing.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Asylum Seekers

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Prime Minister. Has the government received any Solicitor-General's advice over the weekend concerning what the Prime Minister says are very significant changes since Friday to the government's proposed amendments to the Migration Act?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:01): Yes, our legal people have been working over the weekend and if the Leader of the Opposition seeks some direct information from the Solicitor-General about the amendments I provided him with then I am sure we can facilitate that.

Ms O'NEILL (Robertson) (14:01): My question is to the Prime Minister. What is the government's response to the recent decision by the High Court regarding the processing of asylum seekers?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:01): I thank the member for Robertson for her question. It is a serious question about a matter that is a serious issue in our national public policy debate and a serious question for our country. The processing of asylum seekers has featured in our politics for a very long period of time, well over a decade. During that period we have seen tragedy at sea, we have seen people get on to leaky boats, we have seen people pay money to people smugglers and give money to people who are preying on their desperation. I believe across this parliament people generally want to ensure that we do have an orderly migration system and that we are doing what we need to do to protect Australia's borders but that, at the same time, we are extending the compassion and concern that our nation has shown over many decades towards refugees—that is, that we honour our obligations under the refugee convention.

During the course of today I did provide the Leader of the Opposition with some newly drafted amendments to the Migration Act. They are to achieve what the government set out to achieve after the High Court case—that is, they are to achieve a situation where executive government has the power to make the decisions it believes necessary in relation to offshore processing. The opposition received a legal briefing on Friday and a set of draft amendments were provided at that point. There are obviously a number of ways of achieving the same
outcome. I have provided Leader of the Opposition with a new draft and I thank him for his consideration of that new draft.

What we are talking about here is an issue that is of national importance and I believe Australians today are looking to this parliament to act and to show some resolution. I believe Australians are looking to this parliament to deal with these new amendments in a way that is not politics as usual. I believe the Australian nation is looking to us to deal with these new amendments in a way that is not politics as usual, in a way that resolves this issue and enables the nation to put it behind us. As we come to consider these new amendments, I believe that is what should be on the mind of every member of parliament. This issue is asking us to act in a way different to politics as usual and to seek some common ground.

In providing these new amendments to the Leader of the Opposition today, we seek some common ground. The new amendments have been provided in the spirit of not pursuing politics as usual. The new amendments have been provided so our nation can put this issue behind us and move on, confident that executive government has the powers it needs to implement offshore processing as it sees fit but always in accordance with our obligations under the refugee convention.

Asylum Seekers

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (14:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to what she considers substantial changes between Friday and today of the amendments that the government proposes to make to the Migration Act. Given the confusion that surrounds the government's changes from just Friday to Monday does this not simply confirm that the Prime Minister has a caucus management problem as well as a border protection problem?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cook, the last part of that question is beyond the standing orders.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:06): Can I say to the shadow minister, the objective of the government, and I hope it is shared as an objective of this parliament, is absolutely clear. It has been clear over a long period of time now, clear over many long months. That objective has been that we should take the most effective action possible to deter people from getting on leaky boats and from potentially risking their lives. We should take the most effective action possible to deter people from putting themselves in the hands of people smugglers who are seeking to profit from their misery. Our objective has been over many long months—apart from sending the most effective message of deterrence—that in designing a policy we should make sure that we are doing our best to protect Australia's borders but that, at the same time, we are doing our best to protect the values that Australians hold dear. And so at every stage the government has worked for effective deterrence and border protection coupled with honouring our obligations under the refugee convention. So when we entered into discussions with Malaysia, because we were advised and properly saw this as the most effective deterrence measure, we did it on the basis that our nation would always honour our obligations under the refugee convention. At its heart, the refugee convention is about not returning people to places where they would be persecuted, and the arrangement with Malaysia ensures that.

It is also about making sure that people can have their claims processed, and the arrangement with Malaysia ensures that. It also goes through and ensures that people
will have identification papers, that they would not be subject to the sanctions on illegal migrants, that they would have access to education and the ability to seek work. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees has indicated that they are prepared to work on the implementation of this arrangement. That is because we have worked on this arrangement as a part of a regional solution, firstly, going to the big regional meeting in Bali to work on a regional framework, and that was agreed. Then this is the bilateral arrangement under the auspices of that framework.

At the same time, in honouring our refugee conventions in this arrangement, we have ensured that we would extend our compassion to 4,000 more genuine refugees, people who are in Malaysia and have been there for years. I was asked about the government's objective.

Mr MORRISON: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My question went to what the Prime Minister describes the significant changes between last Friday and Monday and she is not addressing what has changed between last Friday and Monday.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cook should be reminded that his question went beyond that, which is not very helpful. The Prime Minister is responding to the question.

Ms GILLARD: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I was explaining what the government has always sought to achieve here. Then, when the High Court made its decision, which was unexpected, the government still seeks to achieve the same objectives that it wanted to achieve from the start. That now requires us to legislate and to amend the Migration Act to put beyond doubt that the executive government has the power to implement offshore processing arrangements.

Now, there is inevitably more than one way to draft a set of amendments. When the opposition was briefed on Friday a draft set of amendments was provided, and when they were provided in the discussion in the meeting it was clear that there was more than one way of achieving this objective. The Leader of the Opposition expressed concern about some matters. In the new draft I believe he will see additional clarity on the matters about which he expressed concern. The Leader of the Opposition has said to me that he will now consider those amendments and I believe that to be highly appropriate.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (14:10): Mr Speaker, my supplementary question goes to the assurances that the Prime Minister referred to in the answer to the member for Cook. Why then does the government's latest draft legislation say that the assurances need not be legally binding?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:11): That clause was in the draft that the Leader of the Opposition was provided with on Friday. It is in the draft that the Leader of the Opposition has been provided with today. Clearly, it is the government's view in instructing the drafting of these amendments that governments can make arrangements between them that are honoured by both sides. We have made an arrangement with Malaysia, which it has freely entered into, and, frankly, apart from being insulting to our friends in Malaysia, there is no reason to assume that Malaysia would not honour the obligations it has freely entered into.

At the end of the day, I do not ask the Leader of the Opposition to endorse the arrangement with Malaysia. I understand that he is opposed to it.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr PYNE: My Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition's
question was very simply: what is the point of making an arrangement with a third country that is not legally binding?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Sturt would resume his seat. The only point of order possible is of direct relevance. The Prime Minister is responding to the question.

Ms GILLARD: I was making the point that I am not asking the Leader of the Opposition to endorse the arrangement with Malaysia, but I am asking him to agree to amendments which would give executive government the power to act. To give the Leader of the Opposition a good example of where that power might be necessary, if we go back to the Howard government's arrangements with Nauru, they were a nonsignatory country in the days of those arrangements. The arrangements were not legislated in either Australia or Nauru. They were only enlivened by a memorandum of understanding between the two nations. So if in the future a government decided that it wanted to replicate exactly the circumstances that the Howard government had engaged in with Nauru at that time, it would need power as expressed in this amendment in the clause that the Leader of the Opposition has pointed to.

Asylum Seekers

Mr HUSIC (Chifley—Government Whip) (14:13): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship. Minister, what is the best way to break the people-smuggling trade and deter people from taking the dangerous boat journey to Australia? How important is it for protections for asylum seekers to be put in place as part of any broader protection policy?

Mr BOWEN (McMahon—Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (14:13): I thank the member for Chifley for his question. We know that the most effective deterrent for boat journeys to Australia is to remove the product that people smugglers wish to sell, and that is the opportunity of settlement in Australia.

Mr Hartsuyker interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cowper is now warned!

Mr BOWEN: That has been the consistent advice to this government and that advice has been provided to the opposition. The arrangement with Malaysia that this government has entered into achieves just that outcome. It provides for people to be returned to Malaysia for processing alongside the 90,000 other asylum seekers and refugees in Malaysia. It returns them to where the vast majority, well over 80 per cent, begin their boat journey to Australia—the country of Malaysia.

There are sound policy and humanitarian reasons for supporting the processing of asylum seekers offshore when it is part of a sensible and well thought out regional framework. Importantly, our regional approach involves Australia playing more of a role in resettling refugees and assisting countries in the region towards more consistent standards and treatments. The Malaysia agreement delivers significant humanitarian and protection outcomes in the region.

The honourable member for Chifley asked about the importance of protections and they are protections outlined in the Malaysia arrangement. The guarantee of non-refoulement, the guarantee of access to health and education and work rights as appropriate and the commitment to ensure access to processing are all outlined in the arrangement with Malaysia. There are two ways to deal with protections. You can negotiate them with the country involved, you can work them through, you can consult with the UNHCR or you can simply adopt
the policy of turning boats around on the seas, which would not have those protections built in. It would be open to the government to adopt the policy of turning boats around on the high sea, which apart from being dangerous not only to asylum seekers but to Australian naval personnel would also result inevitably, where those boats are not sunk or sabotaged, in those boats being returned to Indonesia. Indonesia is not a signatory to the refugee convention. Anybody who is returned to Indonesia would have no protections guaranteed through negotiations with this government. They would have no guarantee of non-refoulement, no guarantee of work rights, no protections built in.

If people are going to criticise protections built in with the Malaysian arrangement, it is appropriate that they also reflect on what the result would be of a policy of turning back boats, which is the policy of the opposition. It is the case that there are protections that can be built in with refugee signatory countries—Indonesia is not one of those—but I do note that being a refugee signatory country alone is not necessarily a guarantee of protection. For example, Afghanistan and Iran, our two largest source countries, are signatories. Iran is the country which the honourable member for Cook has proposed for a transfer agreement. But we on this side of the House would not see it having the appropriate protections in place.

We want to ensure that this government and future governments have the power to be able to manage Australia's border protection policies. Without this legislation being proposed by the government, there is no confidence that we could have any effective offshore processing regime. The questions this week are: can the two major parties in this country, which both support offshore processing, reach an agreement to make it lawful? Will we reach an agreement for the policy that both sides of this House support?

Will we have an effective and lawful offshore processing regime? And can we work in the national interest? They are the questions people in the region are waiting to see answered. On this side of the House, we are committed to doing so.

**Asylum Seekers**

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (14:18): My question is again to the Prime Minister. Why did the Prime Minister say in her last answer that boat people could not be sent to Nauru under the existing legislation when the Solicitor-General said on Friday that the recent High Court decision did not rule out offshore processing in Nauru and that to say that he did say so was inaccurate.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:18): To the Leader of the Opposition, he has misconstrued the point I was making in my last answer. He was asking me about a clause in the amendments that he has been provided with, and that clause was about assurances being gained between two countries which were not legally binding. That was his question to me. So I took his question to me to be: why would you want that in the re; when would you use it?

The government is seeking to use that clause with Malaysia. But I was pointing out to the Leader of the Opposition for policy consistency that it is the kind of clause that would have been necessary for the Howard government when it entered into its arrangement with Nauru had the High Court taken the same interpretation then that it takes now. When the Howard government entered into its arrangement with Nauru, Nauru was not a refugee convention signatory country. That is a fact. No shaking of anybody's head will wish that fact away. When the Howard government entered into the arrangement with Nauru, it was not a legislated arrangement in Australia or in
Nauru. There was a memorandum of understanding between the two nations which spelt out obligations on each side—that is, it is a comparable situation. It was not the end point because it was for processing rather than for transfers. But, on those points, it is a comparable situation to where we are with Malaysia. It is not a refugee convention signatory country but we do have an arrangement with it which spells out obligations. That was the point of my last answer.

Mr Abbott: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: my question was clearly about the Prime Minister's assertions as to the legal position regarding Nauru and I quoted to her the Solicitor-General's clear opinion on Friday—

The SPEAKER: Order! A point of order on a question is not an opportunity to repeat the question. The only point of order is whether the response is directly relevant. A question that commences 'Why did you say in a previous answer' leads to the Prime Minister being able to be directly relevant on the basis of her explaining why she said something in the previous answer. The Prime Minister has the call.

Ms GILLARD: I was directing my answer to that part of the Leader of the Opposition's question which went to my previous answer. He also asked me about the Solicitor-General. The Solicitor-General, in written advice on the question of Nauru that we have distributed, the opposition has and is publicly available, has said further information would be needed. He also pointed to the fact that there is legal risk. If you want to put it beyond doubt then you would amend the legislation. In addition to the general circumstances about Nauru, I would direct the Leader of the Opposition's attention to the Solicitor-General's advice which deals with the complex and difficult question of unaccompanied minors. He would need to direct his attention to that as well. I say to the Leader of the Opposition: the grading he used for the Solicitor-General's opinion is not right. I would direct him to the two comprehensive pieces of legal advice which have been provided to the opposition and provided publicly.

Pensions and Benefits

Mr WINDSOR (New England) (14:23): My question is to the Prime Minister. Given the continued misinformation being peddled in regional Australia in relation to youth allowance, can the Prime Minister outline the recent proposals for youth allowance, particularly for country students?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:23): I thank the member for New England for his question. I thank him as well as many members of the Labor Party who have consistently raised with me over a long period of time the circumstances of regional students. Because of the advocacy of Labor members, the member for New England and the member for Lyne, in the last parliament the government acted to create a better and fairer system of youth allowance for Australian students generally and particularly for country students.

Mr McCormack interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Riverina is warned.

Ms GILLARD: In the 15 months since those new arrangements have been in operation, the statistics speak for themselves. I know these may be uncomfortable facts for the members of the opposition, but the fact is in the 15 months since these changes came into effect the number of rural and regional university students receiving youth allowance has increased by 26 per cent, an additional 7,400 students. There has also been an 18 per cent increase in the total number of university students receiving
youth allowance, an additional 24,600. Those statistics are telling you that everyone has benefited, but country students have proportionally benefited more.

Mr Chester interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gippsland is warned.

Ms GILLARD: This is against a backdrop where under the Howard government the percentage of regional students and country students in Australian universities was going down. We acted to improve youth allowance for regional students. I am pleased to be in a position to say that we will act again to improve the circumstances of country students in getting access to university.

Mr Christensen interjecting—

Ms Marino interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Dawson is now warned and the member for Forest is warned.

Ms GILLARD: That is because we want country students to be able to go to university. We do not want to see the sorts of statistics that the Howard government used to think were fine, where the participation of country students was going down.

The government will devote $265 million to deliver on a package to eliminate regional eligibility distinctions for youth allowance from 1 January 2012. Inner regional students will be able to access independent youth allowance in the same way as outer regional, remote and very remote students. The government is also providing further support for eligible students as they face additional barriers to accessing higher education and often have more limited access options. The government will increase to $2,000 both second and third year relocation scholarships for eligible regional university students required to live away from home. This represents a $900 increase in relocation scholarship payments for each of those two years. We expect that these new measures will continue to improve the support for students in regional areas. It will allow approximately 5,500 inner regional students to access payments or receive upward variation in their income support payments and provide about 15,000 regional students with higher relocation scholarship amounts each year.

I am pleased to be able to report to the House that on top of a proud track record of better support for country students, we are improving that support again.

Economy

Mrs D’ATH (Petrie) (14:27): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline for the House the importance of sound economic and fiscal management in the face of global economic uncertainty? What would be the cost of not having sound and transparent fiscal policy?

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:27): I thank the member for Petrie for that question because there is ongoing instability in the global economy and it is likely that these headwinds will be with us for some time yet. Despite these circumstances, the fundamentals in the Australian economy are strong, and they are almost unique among all developed economies. Unlike other developed economies, we avoided recession. We have grown our economy by over five per cent from its precrisis level, whilst countries like the United States are still struggling to get back to where they were before the global financial crisis. We have also created something like three-quarters of a million jobs, whereas elsewhere in the global economy you have seen something like 30 million jobs lost. We have an unprecedented investment pipeline, something like $430
billion in resources alone. And we are bringing our budget back to surplus in 2012-13. These are all strengths which should be valued. Of course, they will help us ride out the instability that we see in the global economy.

It makes it more important that we build on these strengths during these times of global uncertainty. It makes it more important that we have fiscally responsible policies in place. It also makes it more important that all election commitments are fully costed. That is why it is so important that we have an independent Parliamentary Budget Office. I thank those on this side of the House and those on the other side of the House that recommended an independent Parliamentary Budget Office. Great work was done by both sides of the House to put in place a process in which all members of the House could have confidence. There was bipartisan support for the Parliamentary Budget Office, so that in the future there could be no excuses for parties not to have their election commitments fully costed. There would be no excuse in the future for things like the $11 billion black hole, the costings con job that was foisted on the Australian people during the last election campaign.

The Parliamentary Budget Office is critical for transparency around policy costings. It is all about making sure that these are open and public, not secret as the Liberal Party is now trying to achieve, because it has rejected the model of the Parliamentary Budget Office. Why has it rejected this model that its members in this House recommended? The fact is it has a $70 billion crater in its budget estimates. That is why there has been this backflip and it is now rejecting a Parliamentary Budget Office. A Parliamentary Budget Office is important to strengthen our fiscal framework. It is important to budget responsibility and to facing the future. When it comes to the Parliamentary Budget Office, 'No,' is not the answer.

Asylum Seekers

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:30): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the government guarantee that its proposed changes to the Migration Act provide a binding legal obligation for any designated offshore processing country not to return an asylum seeker to the country from which they are fleeing?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:31): We have provided the amendments, and they enable the minister for immigration to make a determination about offshore processing. In order to make that determination the minister would need to turn his mind to the national interest and, specifically, to two points in particular: the honouring of the central obligation of the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees that people were not being taken to places from which they would be returned to a place of persecution; and that those asylum seekers could have their claims processed. That is what these new amendments provide.

To the opposition generally, we have provided these new amendments today—

Ms Julie Bishop: I rise on a point of order on relevance. My question to the Prime Minister was whether she could give a guarantee that these changes to the Migration Act would not—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will resume her seat. The Prime Minister will respond in a directly relevant manner to the question.

Ms GILLARD: The amendments are there for the opposition to see. Regarding the opposition's consideration of these amendments, they would put the minister for
immigration in this government in the same position that the minister for immigration was when, under the Howard government, a determination was made to take people to Nauru, not then a signatory country to the refugee convention. No legislation was in place in Nauru. What was in place was a memorandum of understanding between governments. If, when the opposition was sitting on the government benches, that was viewed as perfectly satisfactory for them, I do find it a bit odd that now they are sitting on the opposition benches it is apparently no longer perfectly satisfactory for them. Those were the circumstances with Nauru.

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms GILLARD: There is no amount of shaking of heads or interjecting that will change that fact. That is the history. That is what the Howard government did.

Mr Hockey: False!

Ms GILLARD: It is true.

The SPEAKER: Order! Those interjecting will cease interjecting and the Prime Minister will ignore the interjections.

Ms GILLARD: At the end of the day what we are seeking to achieve with these amendments, despite all of this contradiction about the clear history, is a circumstance where the government of the day has the ability to put offshore processing beyond legal doubt. We have provided amendments because I believe Australians are looking to us to find some common ground and to act in good faith so that we as a nation can put this issue behind us and have legal certainty. I do genuinely believe that. The reason we provided the amendments today was that we believe the Australian people are looking to us to go beyond politics as usual and to put offshore processing beyond doubt.

I cannot forecast every permutation and combination of governments to come, but it may be that a government in the future wants to do exactly what the Howard government did when it had processing on Nauru in exactly the same circumstances—a non-refugee convention signatory country and a memorandum of understanding. I ask those opposite: why would they want to deny a future government the power they sought for themselves and used themselves when they were in government?

Carbon Pricing

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (14:35): My question is to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. Why is it important to provide certainty to households when it comes to putting a price on carbon? How will the passage of the clean energy bills deliver this certainty?

Mr COMBET (Charlton—Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency) (14:36): I thank the member for Wakefield for his question. The passage of the clean energy bills is extremely important in providing certainty for households and businesses. For the business community in particular the carbon price will provide the certainty to allow businesses to make the investments that are necessary, particularly in important parts of the economy like the energy sector. The carbon price creates the incentive for investments in low-emission technologies, and in energy efficiency and renewable energy, that will help drive productivity in our economy in the future.

There is growing evidence internationally that companies that reduce the emissions intensity of their businesses are more competitive and do deliver better shareholder value. Last week, in fact, the Carbon Disclosure Project released its 10th annual
report. The Carbon Disclosure Project is an independent organisation holding the largest database of primary corporate climate change information in the world, and it examined the climate change policies of the world's largest 500 companies and found that companies with the sharpest focus on climate change have rewarded their investors with double the average rate of return—double the average rate of return amongst those of the 500 largest companies internationally that are focusing on reducing the emissions intensity of their businesses.

Households, of course, will have the certainty that nine out of 10 households will receive assistance for the modest cost-of-living impact of introducing a carbon price. Almost six million households will receive assistance that meets or exceeds their expected average price impact, and no fewer than four million households—almost half of all households—will receive assistance that provides a 20 per cent buffer over and above their expected average price impacts. They will be better off.

In addition to that, all taxpayers earning up to $80,000 a year will get a tax cut, and most will receive at least $300 a year when we increase the tax-free threshold from around $6,000 at present to $18,200. Further to that, all families receiving family tax benefits will receive extra payments worth up to $110 per child, and all pensioners will receive a pension increase worth $338 for singles and $510 for couples combined. Those are very important elements of the clean energy bills that are before the House at this point in time. This is very important certainty for households and for business.

Yesterday the member for North Sydney confirmed, of course, that the coalition intends repealing the legislation and, in doing so, will take away all of that certainty for businesses and households—in particular, though, with very clear and specific comments that the coalition will take away the pension increases, will take away the increases to family tax benefits and will put up taxes. The member for North Sydney said, 'We have said that you don't need to have compensation if you don't have a carbon tax.' They are going to take away the tax cuts. They are going to take away the pension increases. They are going to take away the family tax benefits.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister will not debate unduly.

Mr Buchholz interjecting—

Mr COMBET: We all know the truth about this—that is, they have no interest in helping families and households. They have only got interest in their own political wellbeing, and that is it.

The SPEAKER: I remind the member for Wright that it is grossly disorderly for members to interject from out of their place.

Asylum Seekers

Mr KEENAN (Stirling) (14:40): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the call by Western Australian Labor Senator Mark Bishop that the government should reopen Nauru. As Senator Bishop said:

... you can have a proper office there doing the processing, staffed by Australian officials applying Australian law. Isn't Senator Bishop right?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:41): I thank the shadow minister for the question. As I have made clear in parliament over a number of days as we have discussed this matter, we are determined to implement the arrangement with Malaysia because the advice to us is that it would have the maximum deterrence effect. The advice to us—and this advice has been shared with the opposition—is that it would have the maximum deterrence effect. The advice to us...
is that Nauru would not have that deterrence effect, and that advice has been shared with the opposition.

Can I also say to the shadow minister who asked the question: at the end of the day, whether you determine that Malaysia is the best way forward or, as those opposite have determined, that Nauru is the best way forward, what will come before this parliament and the amendments that I have given the Leader of the Opposition today are not specific about Nauru. They are not specific about Malaysia. They are about empowering government to act.

The shadow minister who asked the question obviously does believe that Nauru is the best solution. I would refer him not only to the Solicitor-General’s advice but to the advice of respected commentators like Ron Merkel QC: ‘In respect of both Nauru and PNG, there must be great doubt that a declaration by the minister would be valid.’ He is obviously saying you need to legislate. Stephen Estcourt QC said, ‘Any declaration of Nauru or PNG under section 198A(3) would, notwithstanding the obvious points of distinction, likely meet the same fate as the recently invalidated declaration with respect to Malaysia.’ International law expert Professor Don Rothwell said:

… offshore processing in Malaysia, as per the High Court’s decision, and in Nauru or Papua New Guinea, would not be legally permissible.

Finally there are the views of the shadow Attorney-General, who provides advice to the opposition and who on radio said this—

Mr Pyne: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: the Prime Minister was asked about the advice of Senator Mark Bishop, and that is the advice that we would like her to address.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. My reading of the standing orders on direct relevance does not mean that other advice cannot be used in being directly relevant to the question.

Ms GILLARD: The shadow Attorney-General said on radio:

No, let … let me … let me put this in my own words: that if Nauru were to make itself compliant with all its obligations under Section 198—sorry, under the UN Refugee Convention and Section 198a of the Australian Migration Act—then the Nauru solution would work. But I do acknowledge that there is a sufficient area of doubt that it would be prudent and desirable to put the matter beyond doubt by legislative change.

I frequently do not agree with the shadow Attorney-General, but I do agree with that. The proposition that will come before this parliament is a proposition about amending the Migration Act. We have a view about Malaysia. The opposition has a view about Nauru. That is as it may be, but the proposition that will come before the parliament, in the words of Senator Brandis, is a proposition that would be prudent to pass even if the eventual aim was processing in Nauru. That is what the Leader of the Opposition needs to consider. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for meeting with me today and I thank him for indicating that the opposition is considering the amendments that have been provided to them today.

Superannuation

Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (14:45): My question is to the Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation. How will the minerals resource rent tax assist Australians in their retirement? How can the pre-retirement savings of Australians be improved to manage the demographic challenges of an ageing population?

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services
and Superannuation) (14:45): I would like to thank the member for Capricornia for her question. She understands that 49,500 of her voters stand to benefit by increasing superannuation from nine to 12 per cent. This is a very important issue. Australians are living longer than ever before—no jokes about the opposition frontbench today!—and it is important that we make sure that people do not retire poor.

Mr Randall interjecting—

Mr Shorten: It is important that we finish the job started—

The Speaker: The member for Canning is warned!

Mr Shorten: by Prime Minister Keating and Bill Kelty to lift superannuation beyond nine per cent. Twenty years later, we should finish the job that has been started.

We want to improve the retirement savings of Australians by decreasing the fees and charges that are exacted upon the income in their superannuation accounts. We also want to make sure that there is an adequate replacement for the tax which the Commonwealth will no longer be receiving by moving so much income from income tax into the concessional tax treatment of superannuation.

That is why the MRRT is such an important tax for this country. We believe on this side of the House that some of the profits of Australia's richest companies who are doing very well, who are setting the Guinness World Records for their profits, should be shared in a multi-speed economy. What could be better for Australians than increasing the retirement savings of 8½ million working people? What could be better than making sure that people have a dignified and financially adequate retirement?

Indeed, the challenge was issued to Mr Abbott and the opposition as late as today by the Daily Telegraph, which said that older people are working longer because they do not have enough. We need to do better in this country, and this parliament is capable of doing better. I understand very well that some of those opposite are not worried about whether or not enough other people have enough to retire on because they are all right; they have 15 per cent. Why would the Leader of the Opposition be worried about the retirement savings of 55,000 of his voters when he has a generous pension scheme?

It is only thanks to Labor in the last 20 years that the average account balance for men in Australia is at $71,000. It still lags at $41,500 for women in Australia—this is not enough. The current retirement savings system is not enough when men hold 63 per cent of all account balances in Australia and women only hold 37 per cent.

But why should we be surprised that this mob on the other side do not want the average punter to lift their balance, because they have put the claws—

Mr Pyne: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. How on earth could the slagging of the opposition be relevant to the question he was asked?

Mr Shorten: I'd always rather be a terrier than a poodle!

The Speaker: Order! The Assistant Treasurer has not got the call yet.

Honourable members interjecting—

The Speaker: Order! The Assistant Treasurer will wait until the House comes to order. The Assistant Treasurer will respond according to the standing orders.

Mr Shorten: We want to improve the retirement savings of 8½ million Australians. Yet those opposite say no to the Parliamentary Budget Office, they say no to
the minerals resource rent tax, they say no to increasing superannuation—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Assistant Treasurer will bring his response to a conclusion.

Mr SHORTEN: If they do not like what they are hearing perhaps I might conclude by referring to that well-known film Robin Hood. In Robin Hood, once upon a time, the hero was Robin Hood. But this crew, like the Sheriff of Nottingham, take from the poor and give to the rich. (Time expired)

Asylum Seekers

Mr NEVILLE (Hinkler—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (14:50): My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. What did the Prime Minister mean by the statement that she made on 6 July last year in relation to offshore processing, where she said: I would rule out anywhere that is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:51): I thank the member for his question. Obviously the refugee obligations are important to us. They are important to this country. When we deal with countries that not only are signatory to the convention but are implementing the convention, we can be sure that convention obligations are being abided by. Through the remarkable negotiating strategy of the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, we are now in a position to say refugee convention obligations—most important of all, the obligation of non-refoulement, of making sure that people are not returned to a place of persecution—can be achieved in Malaysia. In addition to that we can see in Malaysia the processing of claims and we can see people's humanitarian needs dealt with. The member, I accept, is genuinely interested in this. I accept that genuine interest. I say to him and to the Leader of the Opposition, and anyone else opposite, that if they are concerned about these questions I recommend that they ring the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, ask them their attitude to the Malaysia arrangement and ask them their attitude to Nauru. I think if those opposite bothered to make that call what they would find is that the UNHCR is prepared to be involved in implementing the arrangement with Malaysia, whereas the UNHCR is not prepared to be involved, in any way, in—indeed it is quite condemning of—an arrangement with Nauru. For those who are concerned—I accept that there are many genuinely concerned about our obligations under the refugee convention—I suggest they ring the United Nations agency charged with making that convention live and breathe and ask them about the alternative propositions here: Malaysia versus Nauru.

But let me come back to what I have said at other points in question time and what I said consistently last week, which is that at the end of the day this is not a debate between two contending policy propositions; this is a debate about whether or not executive government should have the power it needs to make the arrangements it believes fit.

Mr Morrison: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. The Prime Minister was asked about her own comment that she would not send anyone to a country that was not a signatory to the refugee convention. What did she mean by that?

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has the call.

Ms GILLARD: At the end of the day the legislation that will come before the parliament is not about Malaysia and it is not about Nauru; it is about executive government having the power to determine the offshore processing arrangements it believes are appropriate. I say to members
opposite, who now apparently have a newfound love for the refugee convention, that members opposite made arrangements to process asylum seekers on Nauru when it was not signatory to the refugee convention. It may be that some time in the future a government wants to go down a comparable path to the path that the Howard government went down when it initiated processing in Nauru—that is, a non-signatory country, and that is relying on a memorandum of understanding.

My point to those opposite is that if it was good enough for them to seek to have that power and to exercise it in government, what on earth can justify denying it to this government or governments in the future through a proper amendment to the Migration Act? This proper amendment to the Migration Act deals with core obligations under the refugee convention.

**Carbon Pricing**

**Ms OWENS** (Parramatta) (14:55): My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. Will the minister outline for the House modelling on how the government's plan to put a price on carbon pollution will affect public transport? What is the government doing to assist commuters to have greater access to public transport?

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (14:56): I thank the member for Parramatta for her question and indeed for her ongoing commitment and support for public transport, particularly for people in Western Sydney. This is a government that has committed more for urban public transport than was committed by all governments between Federation and 2007. Part of that commitment, of course, was to the Parramatta-Epping rail link, which the state government, in their budget a few weeks ago, walked away from. They walked away from that commitment in spite of the fact that it had some support from over there, sometimes, but consistent support from all those on this side of the House.

Of course, the member for Parramatta would know that the government of New South Wales also walked away from the $4 billion of state funding which had been committed for the Western Express line. That would have been of great benefit for all residents west of Parramatta on that line.

We are committed to public transport as part of our commitment to dealing with climate change. One of the benefits of increased use of public transport is that it lowers our carbon footprint by lowering our emissions. So this is a vital economic reform but is also vital for our environment.

I am asked about what modelling has been done. Of course, the government is ensuring that for any increased prices there is full and proper assistance given. Indeed, greater assistance will be given than the cost. Treasury modelling shows that there will be a modest impact of some 0.5 per cent on public transport.

In order to provide assistance nine out of every 10 households will receive assistance in the form of tax cuts or higher payments and there will also be direct assistance in terms of increased pensions and increased assistance for those on benefits. Compare that with the impact of the GST. The impact on public transport fares was some eight per cent—that is, eight per cent under the GST; 0.5 per cent under the carbon pricing. This carbon pricing relates to just a few cents on the ticket price for most public transport services. For example, a ticket from Parramatta to Central would have an increase of 2c or 3c.

I was asked about modelling that has been done. I was very surprised to see an exaggerated claim in the *Daily Telegraph*!
The federal opposition—Tony Abbott's office—and the Office of the New South Wales Premier got together to cook up some outcomes. An email from Peter Grimshaw, copied to the Premier, said:

The 'Tele' is very keen to do a story for tomorrow's paper on the impact of the carbon tax...

**Mr Pyne:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: you made it very clear in the last sitting week, last Wednesday, that these kinds of attacks on state Liberal governments or the opposition would not be regarded as relevant or in order. I would ask you to draw the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport back to your ruling from last Wednesday.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister for Infrastructure and Transport knows that he must relate his material directly to the question and I will listen carefully.

**Mr ALBANESE:** I am very clearly about the modelling for the price impact. What the email of 14 July said was this: 'Juicy quotes from the department of transport's brief. Note that there are some not so helpful quotes in the brief too.' You bet there were. What the department of transport's brief said was, 'The introduction of the carbon tax is not expected to have any measurable effect in people's choice regarding public transport or private car use.' NSW Treasury found, 'The impact, in terms of price impact, was 0.49 per cent,' exactly what our federal Treasury modelling showed, and that the impact would be miniscule. It is important in the debate about our clean energy future that people stick to the facts, not to making up figures. *(Time expired)*

**Asylum Seekers**

**Mr CRAIG KELLY** (Hughes) *(15:01):** My question is to the Prime Minister. What is the government's plan to protect Australia's borders from unauthorised boat arrivals once the Malaysia people-swap deal reaches its 800-person limit?

**Honourable members interjecting—**

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The question has been asked. The Prime Minister now has the call.

**Ms GILLARD** (Lalor—Prime Minister) *(15:01):* To the member who asked the question: I answered this question on a number of occasions last week. We have designed the arrangement with Malaysia because we have been advised it has the maximum deterrence effect; that is, it sends a very clear message to people smugglers and to the people that are preyed on by people smugglers that they can spend all of their money—their money gets taken away by a people smuggler—and they do not end up in Australia being processed for resettlement in Australia. We have the clearest possible advice that this sends the strongest deterrence message possible. So in designing—

**Mr Pyne:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: The Prime Minister was asked about the government's policy once the 800-person ceiling limit is reached—in other words, what is plan B? She was not asked a question about the Malaysia policy before—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. If he wants to add to questions, he should have them in the original question. Back to the question: the Prime Minister knows the requirement for her to respond in a directly relevant manner to the question. She has the call. She should be heard in silence.

**Ms GILLARD:** In designing this arrangement with Malaysia, relying on the best possible advice, we have accepted the advice that it is the strongest possible deterrence message. In being the strongest possible deterrence message our aim is that we send such a strong signal to people...
smugglers, effectively smashing their business model, that we do not see all of the 800 spots used because transfers send that very strong message—that if you spend your money, risk your life, you do not end up where you wanted to go. Consequently, that is the advice that has informed Malaysia, that is the policy that has informed the arrangement with Malaysia. But I say again to those opposite, I understand that they will continue to criticise the arrangement with Malaysia and in this House of parliament obviously people will come and put all different sorts of views on public policy questions. That is understood. We will in this parliament, though, be debating a different question. That different question is whether or not executive government should have the power to process asylum seekers offshore or whether all of that should be put at risk.

We believe that we should amend the Migration Act so that we can do that processing offshore. I also believe that with the new amendments I have supplied to the Leader of the Opposition today the eyes of the Australian community are upon us; that Australians in dealing with these new amendments want to see us go beyond politics as usual. Australians want us to resolve this issue and put it behind us. Australians want us to find the common ground necessary to get this done.

Pensions and Benefits

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (15:05): My question is to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Will the minister please outline to the House the importance of the government's plans to support pensioners on the age pension and what would be the impact of not providing this support?

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) (15:05): I thank the member for Page for her question as she understands very well this government's commitment to older Australians and the importance of the age pension. It is the case that this government has delivered historic reforms to the age pension, boosting both the amount of the pension and, just as importantly, making sure that the pension keeps up with pensioners' costs of living.

From tomorrow, pensioners will receive their fourth increase to the pension since we introduced the historic reforms just two years ago. We delivered pension increases of $148 a fortnight for single pensioners and $146 a fortnight for couples combined over the last two years. These are very significant improvements to the pension that this side of the parliament delivered. We know that the other side of the parliament refused to deliver an increase to the pension. We are of course also delivering real and permanent increases to the pension through our plan to put a price on carbon pollution. This too will mean improvements to the pension. Under our plan, it will be the big polluters who pay for their pollution, not pensioners. Pensioners will not be paying; it will be the big polluters. So we will see 3.4 million pensioners receiving an improvement to their pensions—yet again, from this side of the parliament—that more than covers their average expected price rises. Once again, pensioners will receive assistance worth $338 for singles and $255 a year for each member of a couple. These are the changes that pensioners can look forward to—increases to their pension that they know will come from this side of the parliament. It is not just these annual changes; they can also be assured that the clean energy supplement will keep up with the cost of living. So it is this side of the parliament that is making sure that pensioners are looked after.

What can pensioners expect from those opposite? I was asked what the impact would
be of not providing the support, and we have heard from those opposite that—

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister will stick to what is the impact.

Ms MACKLIN: it is their intent to claw back the assistance that this government will provide to those opposite. What that will mean in real terms, to real pensioners—

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister will return to the question.

Ms MACKLIN: is $338 less.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister will resume her seat.

Mr Pyne: Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. I had assumed the minister had concluded her answer, but, given that she has not, I would ask you to admonish her for departing from your ruling last Wednesday that these kinds of answers are not regarded as acceptable under the standing orders.

The SPEAKER: The member for Sturt will resume his seat. The minister will relate her remarks directly, relevantly, to the question, without undue use of debate. The minister has the call, and she will be heard in silence.

Ms MACKLIN: Pensioners do have the right to know what will be the implications for them, the impact on them and their budgets, of this Leader of the Opposition's—

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister will bring her remarks to a close.

Ms MACKLIN: decision to take $338 a year out of their persons and wallets.

Asylum Seekers

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (15:09): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to her statement earlier today, when she said, 'We have always, in the Malaysia arrangement, made sure that those obligations in the refugee convention and a number of others besides would be honoured.' I ask the Prime Minister: how can she ensure that obligations will be honoured when they are not required to be legally binding under the amendments that she is proposing to the Migration Act?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (15:10): In answer to the Leader of the Opposition's question, let me make clear the obligations that are in the agreement. Asylum seekers transferred from Australia will be there with the permission and agreement of the Malaysian government. They will have legal authority to remain in Malaysia, they will have the opportunity to have their asylum claims considered and Malaysia will not send any refugees back to persecution in their countries of origin—that is, they are upholding the central tenets of the refugee convention by not returning people to places of persecution and by processing their claims. Transferees will be issued with identification documents which will be endorsed by the Malaysian authorities and which will identify to the Malaysian government that the transferee is lawfully in Malaysia. They will not be subject to any of the penalties imposed on illegal immigrants. There will be arrangements allowing those transferred—

Mr Abbott: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: how can an obligation be an obligation if it is not legally binding? Now, I asked a very simple—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition cannot argue the question.

Mr Abbott: question, and the Prime Minister should be required to be directly relevant.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Opposition members interjecting—
The SPEAKER: Order! A question has been asked. The Leader of the Opposition rises on a point of order on direct relevance and then adds argument to the question. The Prime Minister will ignore the argument and will respond to the question as required by the standing orders. The Prime Minister.

Ms GILLARD: I did want to make the obligations under the arrangement clear. There are obligations allowing those transferred to work and children to get an education. The UNHCR, the United Nations agency charged with upholding the refugee convention, will also assist transferees to access services and undertake refugee status determinations. And, to ensure the ongoing welfare of transferees, there will be an oversight body that will include representatives of UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration, as well as Australian and Malaysian officials.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition: they are the obligations under the arrangement between us. The Malaysian government has done this freely. The Malaysian government has done it freely because it stands ready to implement it. The Leader of the Opposition has no evidence available to him—no evidence whatsoever—to suggest that the Malaysian government will not honour the obligations it has freely entered into. The Leader of the Opposition says that the only thing that ever compels anybody to do anything is legal compulsion. Well, I actually believe that, in the real world, decent people who freely enter into agreements that have obligations in them do that because they genuinely intend to meet their obligations. The Malaysian government has done that, and I think this sort of casual insulting of the government of Malaysia is not proper and not of assistance to us or to our role in the region.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition as well—and he needs to think about this—that the opposition in the past, when it was in government and indeed when it has been in opposition, has talked about things like towing boats back to Indonesia. Now, there are all the practical difficulties of that, all the risk of loss of life at sea—and the fact that Indonesia is not a signatory country. Indonesia has not entered into an arrangement of this nature with Australia. So how can the Leader of the Opposition say that that is satisfactory but this arrangement with Malaysia is not?

But, at the end of the day, I do not ask the Leader of the Opposition to resolve all of those conundrums and questions. But I am asking him to do what he said he would do earlier today when I met with him, which is consider the amendments that I have presented to him—those amendments being amendments which would enable executive government to act to have offshore processing and to do that in a way which is beyond legal risk.

Regional Development Australia Fund

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (15:15): My question is to the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and Minister for the Arts. Will the minister inform the House of the success of the first round of the Regional Development Australia Fund? What future opportunities are there for local communities from this fund?

Mr CREAN (Hotham—Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and Minister for the Arts) (15:15): I thank the member for Blair for his question, and I know his commitment to regional Australia. He advocated strongly for his community in this first round of Regional Development Australia funds. These funds came from the government's
commitment when it formed office to put significant new resources into the regions. That was delivered on in our first budget, where $4.3 billion was committed to the regions specifically and $1 billion over the course of the next four years was committed to the Regional Development Australia Fund.

The first round of that fund was announced a couple of weeks ago and it received an overwhelming response from both sides of the parliament. Indeed, I have much correspondence from many who sit opposite, quite apart from the great interest that was taken on this side of the House. The members for Herbert, Riverina, Farrer, Gippsland, Goldstein and Sturt all wrote to us asking that proper consideration be given to their particular proposals. The fact is that, whilst the first round was significantly oversubscribed—and there were many in the process that were ineligible because they had not complied with the procedures, and they will get important advice as to how make applications in the future—we increased the payment in round 1 from $100 million to $150 million to accommodate more of these good projects coming forward.

We have also said that we are reinforcing through the guidelines the importance of what we are seeking to achieve, and that is the leveraging of funding—not just through Commonwealth funds but also through state governments, local governments and community groups. We want the proposals that stack up and make a difference in terms of the economic and social diversification within the region. The member for Blair was successful in his advocacy for one of the projects in his region in relation to the Somerset Civic Centre. This is really important to the Esk community because, as it rebuilds, coming out of the devastating floods, this commitment to liveability and community amenity is terribly important. I am asked also what the future opportunities are. They can be significant. We will be announcing the opening of the second round in November and thereafter we intend for there to be three more rounds before the next election. But those additional rounds will only occur if this House passes the mining resource rental tax. That is a circumstance in which this government is seeking to take the proceeds of the mining boom, from resources that are owned by the Australian people and where there are super profits being made, to reinvest back into our community. The Assistant Treasurer has indicated that part of that will go to super and other parts are going to go to company tax cuts across the board so that we can diversify the economic base out of this resources boom. Some of it will go to infrastructure, including social infrastructure.

That is what is in prospect. I say to all of those members over there urging me that consideration should be given for their electorates and their projects: think carefully about the folly that you are pursuing in this blind saying of no by the Leader of the Opposition. There is a price for saying no. The price of saying no is to deny regions the ability to build themselves, build with confidence, diversify their economic base and sustain their communities. Don't say no; stick up for the regions—because we will.

**Asylum Seekers**

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (15:19): My question is to the Prime Minister. What consequences would Malaysia face under the government's agreement if someone transferred from Australia under that arrangement was arrested, detained or even caned?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (15:19): I refer the shadow minister to the obligations and agreement between Australia and Malaysia. I particularly refer him to the
fact that there will be an oversight body that will include representatives of the UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration as well as Australian and Malaysian officials. I also say to him: on what evidence does he suggest that Malaysia will not honour the obligations that it has freely entered into? On what evidence does he suggest that?

We are talking about the government of a nation in our region that was under no obligation to enter into this arrangement with Australia. No-one made Malaysia enter this agreement; it freely chose to do so. The fact that it freely chose to do so should, I think, be taken as indicative of its intentions. Why would it have entered into an agreement if it did not intend to abide by the clauses in it? There was no pressure on it to enter into this arrangement, other than wanting to assist with arrangements in our region. I would also say to the shadow minister: why does he believe UNHCR is willing to implement this arrangement? Why does he believe that—

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. I refer to page 55 of the Practice, dealing with the question of the amount of power that you have to require the Prime Minister to answer. This is a most salient point which Australians would really like to hear the answer to. You have the power to cause her to give that answer, and I ask you to do so.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mackellar will resume her seat.

An incident having occurred in the gallery—

The SPEAKER: Order! The gallery will come to order. The Prime Minister has the call.

Ms GILLARD: To the shadow minister who asked the question—he may need to explain this to the Australian parliament and to the Australian people—the United Nations agency charged with upholding the convention, the United Nations agency that works around the world to assist asylum seekers and refugees, has said that it is prepared to work to implement this arrangement with Malaysia. That is obviously the United Nations agency charged with the welfare of refugees and the refugee convention saying that they can see that there is some merit in this arrangement and that they are prepared to be involved in implementing it. Clearly, they have not come to an adverse conclusion about the Malaysian government freely honouring the obligations it has taken unto itself. If the UNHCR has not come to that adverse conclusion, why has the shadow minister? Why does the shadow minister come into this place and say he is motivated by concern for refugees, and yet he advocates a solution that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the body charged with upholding the convention, will not involve itself in—that is, he advocates Nauru.

The UNHCR has been very clear that they will not be involved in Nauru. I would suggest that the shadow minister should take a step back from the politics and look at this arrangement, look at what UNHCR is saying and actually examine his conscience as to whether he has any reason in the world to be asserting, as he does in this place and publically, that the Malaysian government will not honour its obligations. But once again, at the end of the day—even if the shadow minister has gone through that process of reflection and he is able to rationalise the fact that UNHCR is going to be involved in implementing the Malaysia agreement, and he is able to rationalise the fact that he has no reason to assume the Malaysian government will not honour its obligations, and if he is able to rationalise the fact that under the Howard government they took asylum seekers to non-refugee
countries, and if he is able to rationalise the fact that that happened without a legislative foundation stone; that is, the agreement with Nauru was through an MOU and boats were taken back to Indonesia with no arrangements about the convention and no arrangements about protection—if he is able to rationalise all of those conundrums and contradictions and still publically go out and say, 'I argue for Nauru', well, that is a question for him; this is about amending the legislation. (Time expired)

**Australia-United States Relationship**

**Mr BYRNE** (Holt) (15:25): My question is to the Minister for Defence. Will the minister inform the House of the outcomes of the Australia-United States ministerial consultations last week?

**Mr STEPHEN SMITH** (Perth—Minister for Defence and Deputy Leader of the House) (15:25): I thank the member for Holt for his question. I also acknowledge his longstanding interest in the Australia-United States bilateral relationship and his interest in our alliance with the United States. The Australia-United States ministerial consultation, or AUSMIN as it is generally known, took place in San Francisco on Wednesday and Thursday of last week. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and I represented Australia; the Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, and the Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, represented the United States. The Australian delegation included the Chief of the Defence Force, the Secretary of the Department of Defence and the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The ministerial consultations took place at the Presidio in San Francisco, the scene of the signing of the ANZUS treaty on 1 September 1951. So the context of the meeting was the 60th anniversary of an alliance which has served both the United States and Australia well. It also coincided with the 10th anniversary of the first invoking of the ANZUS treaty in the aftermath of September 11, and underscored the point that this is an alliance which has served us well for 60 years and that continues to adapt to modern challenges.

The drafters of the treaty would not have envisaged that the first invocation of the treaty would have been against a non-state actor, against a non-nation state, in the face of international terrorism. Indeed, the AUSMIN meeting declared that the treaty itself could be invoked in the modern day in the face of a cyberattack, again something that the drafters and signatories of the treaty would not have envisaged. We have acknowledged that in the modern day a substantial cyberattack degrading, denuding or destroying the communications system of a country—the degrading, denuding or destroying of communications and military communications systems of Australia or the United States—could in theory invoke the treaty. As Leon Panetta and I had said, this needs to be understood as a battleground for the future, not just for nation states but for industry and commerce as well.

As the communique outlines, we dealt not just with that modern challenge but also with a series of modern challenges, including space and space awareness, ballistic missile defence and the emergence in this century of the Asia-Pacific century—the growth of China, the rise of India, the rise and growth of the ASEAN economies combined, the ongoing importance of Japan and the republic of Korea—underlining the importance of the United States's engagement in the Asia-Pacific, which has been a source of stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific since the end of World War II.
In that context, as we did in Melbourne at the 2010 AUSMIN meeting in Melbourne, we discussed the United States Global Force Posture Review. A lot of work has been done in the intervening 12 months to better understand the potential for Australia and the United States to become even more deeply engaged so far as operational matters are concerned—training, exercises, access to ports and facilities, prepositioning of stores and the like. There is more work to be done on this front, but this is a very important development so far as our operational cooperation with the United States is concerned.

We also spoke about our immediate challenge in Afghanistan—shared assessment that we continue to be on track for transition by 2014 and commenced the discussion of the post-transition presence by the United States, Australia and the international community.

I also had the opportunity to speak to the Secretary of Defense about some capability issues, including the Joint Strike Fighter, C17s and submarines. This was a most successful and productive meeting amongst friends. This is an alliance which has served us well for 60 years and will continue to serve us well into the future.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (15:29): Mr Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr ALBANESE: Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings and I move:

That the House take note of the following document:

Defence Housing Australia—Statement of corporate intent for 2011-12.

Debate adjourned.

BILLS

Parliamentary Service Amendment (Parliamentary Budget Officer) Bill 2011

Consideration in Detail

The SPEAKER: The question is that amendment (1), moved by the member for North Sydney, be agreed to.

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (15:31): I would like to take the opportunity to respond to a number of issues that were raised before the debate was interrupted. I think it is fair to say that the principal claim that was being made by the opposition went to the question of the integrity of forecasting and figures that might be provided by the Treasury. In particular, there was some discussion around the PEFO, the Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook, and I was able to indicate that those figures are independently verified and that they need to be signed off by the secretaries of the departments of Treasury and finance. In the context of that discussion, the member for North Sydney raised some concerns in relation to the other reports that might be required to be produced under the Charter of Budget Honesty Act, in particular in relation to the budget economic and fiscal outlook and the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook. The allegation was made that in some respects in the past there had been political interference by previous treasurers with those forecasts and figures. If I recall correctly, the member for North Sydney indicated that he had been there and that he spoke with some personal experience in relation to these matters.
In addressing those concerns, I make the following points. The first one is that each of the matters contained within the two reports that have been referred to—the budget and MYEFO—the forecasts upon which each of those reports is to be provided, are forecasts that are provided by the Treasury. The assumptions that underpin those reports are produced by the Treasury, but of course those reports are provided by the Treasurer.

In relation to those forecasts, it is worth making the point that these forecasts are the subject of considerable and very robust review, and there are a number of checks and balances that are in place and that have been in place for some time. In particular, the Treasury forecasts are informed by extensive and regular discussions with the Reserve Bank, the Department of Finance and Deregulation and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and also the ABS, through the Joint Economic Forecasting Group. In addition to JEFG, there is also the opportunity for the Senate estimates process to be used to test the assumptions and parameters outlined within the various reports. In addition, the Reserve Bank and others, in particular private institutions and market economists, will make their own forecasts from time to time and, in the context of the public debate around those forecasts and the scrutiny that will naturally be applied to the government's forecasts, there is a degree of accountability that occurs in that sense as well.

I think it is also worth making the point that the Parliamentary Budget Office will have direct access to the Treasury and finance departments, notwithstanding what has been said in this debate before. So, regardless of where those forecasts might be generated, there will be full, frank and free access, without any ministerial intervention or encumbrance, that will allow the PBO to contact and to test various forecasts and to raise concerns that they may have. That is something that is permitted within the regime that the government is supporting in the bill.

I think it is also worth making the point, in the interests of clarity, that the legislation does not in any way prevent the PBO from assessing, evaluating or analysing the economic forecasts. The PBO is free to do that, but what they are not free to do is to dedicate resources that would be allocated to them to the task of forecasting. There is a very good reason for that, and that is why the joint committee—which, I remind the House, handed down recommendations that were unanimous, including members from the opposition—made the point that this would be a very expensive exercise and one that would not be a very useful allocation of resources. The opposition referred to the Congressional Budget Office on a number of occasions. In doing so they should make the point that the annual budget of the Congressional Budget Office is $US50 million, considerably more than what is envisaged for the PBO, because it has different functions. (Time expired)

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (15:37): The parliamentary secretary has just confirmed everything that I said. He absolutely confirmed that in fact the PBO will be only able to use the fiscal and economic forecasts of the Treasury, unless it is in relation to the pre-election fiscal outlook, which is the only document under the Charter of Budget Honesty that is in fact signed off as the figures that actually belong to the Department of the Treasury and department of finance. Otherwise, the PBO is constrained to looking only at the government's figures; that is all. Then they had the audacity to claim that this was a recommendation in the report. I do not recall seeing it; in fact, I went back to the report.
There is no recommendation in the committee's report. The mandates of the PBO can only use information and reports published under the charter. There is one mention, which at 3.100 says:

…the PBO should not be required to produce its own fiscal forecasts. Rather, it should provide analysis of the Government's fiscal forecasts…

Okay; fine. But that is actually not a recommendation, nor is it the case that it says it would not be able to produce its own fiscal forecasts. So, for example, let's take this, an issue that is highly contentious: what is the structural deficit? The Treasury does not do its own modelling on a structural deficit. It had a part of the budget papers that was allocated to a discussion of the structural deficit. This is an issue that is hugely contentious in relation to the fiscal outlook, and under the government's amendment the PBO would not be able to do any assessment of the structural deficit. How bizarre. It is not an independent body.

Secondly, it would not be able to use data provided by the Reserve Bank, nor would it be able to use data provided by ABARES. Under this situation, the government is saying, 'Look, there is only one set of data that can go into the PBO—that is, the government's data, the executive's data. All other information cannot go to the PBO because it cannot be challenged.' Frankly, if this is what the parliament thinks is an independent body, it is seriously kidding itself.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP (Mackellar) (15:39): When we began debating this last week, I made the point that what the government is proposing for this Parliamentary Budget Office is something that is simply linked to the coattails of Treasury. That is totally and utterly unacceptable to the opposition for very good reasons, because the Treasury has become so politicised. I made the point that Treasury and the head of Treasury had been rewarded for things that they had done to assist the government.

I want to go specifically to some of what happened after the election when the Independents said that they wanted to have our costings analysed because we had said we did not want to politicise Treasury to look at them. We had them done independently, and then the Independents said that they would make up their decision about how good or bad we were on what Treasury had to say about those costings.

I want to go to some of them directly to say why we cannot have a Parliamentary Budget Office which is attached to a politicised Treasury. Let's look at the conservative bias allowance. First of all we said we would have a saving of $2.5 billion. Mr Henry said, 'No, you can't have that, actually. You can't be counted as having $2.5 billion,' because, in his words, 'it will not realise any actual budgetary savings if you cut back on the conservative bias allowance that is factored in to allow a little bit of a buffer in the way projections are made.' Yet at the same time in the 2009-10 budget, Mr Henry, himself responsible for that budget, in Budget Paper No. 1 had set out that the government was saving $4.6 billion 'by savings from the conservative bias allowance over the forward estimates'. He said, 'This results in a reduction of expenses of $1.5 billion in 2010-11, $1.5 billion in 2011-12 and $1.6 billion in 2012-13, totalling $4.6 billion.' Yet Mr Henry said to the Independents, who were making a judgment: 'They can't count $2.5 billion. That's part of the $11 billion so-called black hole.'

Then we go to cutting expenditure for the Health and Hospitals Fund—another interesting one. Here we said we were going to save $3.3 billion, and Mr Henry said to the Independents, 'They can't do that. They
would have to identify before the election just what programs were going to be cut out of the three funds. They were: the Health and Hospitals Fund, the Education and Investment Fund and the Building Australia Fund. Then we said, 'But we asked you for that list of programs, Mr Henry, and you said you couldn't find one. It didn't exist.' Finally, in the middle of these protracted discussions for the benefit of the Independents to decide who they might back for government, he said, 'I've got a secret list. I've got it here, but guess what? I can't let you see it.' Isn't that amazing? 'I can't let you see it.' Did he ever give a reason for why this was a secret list, why it couldn't be made public or why it hadn't been able to be found before? Of course not. Of course Mr Henry should be rewarded. He did a wonderful job for the government.

Then we come to the NBN. Savings here were going to be $2.4 billion, and we were going to save that by not borrowing money on which we said the interest rate payable was 5.5 per cent. Mr Henry came to the rescue of the government again and said, 'You can't save that amount of money, because we say the interest rate will be 4.9 per cent.' He would not be moved. He said, 'I've made a decision, so that will be another $900 million to add to your black hole.'

I took the figures today for the average interest rate paid from July 2010 to today. Guess what it is? It is 5.23 per cent. So Mr Henry should be rewarded—4.9 per cent helped the government find an error in our costing of another $900 million.

Then we go on to employment participation where we said we will make savings in welfare payments of $600 million on the so-called mining tax was allowed by Dr Henry. Dr Henry assisted the government to find another $600 million so-called error in our accounts. So Dr Henry should be rewarded with a $528,000 a year job in the Prime Minister's office. That is why it is politicised and that is why we cannot trust them. (Time expired)

Mr ROBB (Goldstein) (15:45): My two colleagues have shown how the current process is devoid of integrity and credibility and has been grossly politicised. I experienced that firsthand after the last election. The parliamentary secretary opposite is yet to provide one decent argument on amendment (1). We will start with amendment (1); that is what we are debating at the moment, right? He has not provided one argument why the PBO and all the rest of us should be hogtied to the numbers, figures, forecasts and analysis of Treasury. Why should that be the case?

I will give you an example. Over the last four years we have been debating perhaps the biggest structural adjustment that will ever be considered by any of these parliamentary members: the imposition of a carbon tax and, subsequently, an emissions trading scheme. There has been endless modelling for four years of the impact of this, but not once has the model that has generated all of these numbers, all of these outcomes, all of this rhetoric and all of these forecasts by the government been revealed. They are all part of a black box in Treasury. We have asked endlessly to see the modelling; never have we seen one line of code from that modelling—not one assumption. We have deduced that one assumption built into the model is that there would be no unemployment by 2050. Surprise, surprise! When they got the outcome of the modelling there was no unemployment by 2050. If you put in that assumption, it is not a surprise.
What if you changed that one assumption and made it a floating variable in that model? What would be the outcome? What is the sensitivity to fixing that particular variable? We will never know. What would the Parliamentary Budget Office do if they were given that model? They would do some of that sensitivity analysis. We would be better informed; the public would be better informed; the nation would be better informed—especially when we are going it alone on this carbon tax. We are ahead of the world. No-one else is doing it. Yet we have been tied to this situation with Treasury. This is why we need credibility and integrity restored to the process. Treasury has been politicised in this whole exercise. We need the capacity for an independent body to analyse such critical matters as the modelling—the detailed, exhaustive, massive modelling—that has been undertaken.

We will get results this week again, but I can assure you they will just be outcomes. Out of this black box again will come a whole series of outcomes around which you will make the most ambitious statements. You will hold everyone hostage to this black box. Having come to government and said that transparency was at the heart of the way in which you would run government, since then we have had nothing but obfuscation, no benefit-cost analyses and a refusal to provide any of the analysis that sits behind all of this. No wonder we sit. We should just let committees sit and come up with their recommendations.

The amendment moved by the member for North Sydney is probably the most important amendment of the lot that we are moving because it is about having that contested advice. The parliamentary secretary's view is that you cannot question Treasury. If you go through the history of our government and now your government, the Treasury never gets the numbers right on its forecasts. That is not a criticism; that is just the truth. For instance, last year they forecast—

Mr Perrett: The GST they got right.

Mr BRIGGS: Right on cue, the member for Moreton. No, they did not, member for Morton. The numbers changed—of course they did, because they are estimates, based on models. As the member for Goldstein rightly pointed out, they put numbers into a model and it spits out other numbers. The assumptions changed and the realistic outcomes changed. The point is we should have contestable advice from an independent Parliamentary Budget Office. If you want to take away the politics of the costings in an election campaign, which is what the member for Lyne talks about doing, and have a genuine assessment, you should have a genuine independent body.
One of the reasons the parliamentary secretary gave that we cannot go down the route of the Congressional Budget Office was that the funding for the Congressional Budget Office was $50 million a year. Of course, the United States is a slightly bigger country than Australia, Parliamentary Secretary, so it is little surprise that it would have a larger budget office. But quite clearly there is a need for additional powers for the Parliamentary Budget Office so that they can make their own assumptions and arrive at their own numbers based on an analysis of the information that comes before us. The ideas contained in the arguments that the member for Goldstein and the member for Mackellar have just put forward would reduce the unhappiness of an opposition—and, if you think that this is the first opposition to be unhappy with costings during an election campaign, you have not been around for very long. The same problems have arisen in election after election, and it is the very reason that we need and want a genuinely independent parliamentary budget office. The reason you do not want to go down this road is the short-term politics of today. That position is ill thought through, because in the long term it will have consequences for the effective operation of what should be a genuinely good development in Australian public policy.

This is a smart amendment. It addresses genuine concerns that have been raised about the reliability of the numbers, the independence of the decisions and the release of the information. It should be supported, and if you are serious about doing this, Parliamentary Secretary, you will take on board and answer some of the genuine questions that have been raised rather than try to cover them over with half-truths, as you have so far. This is an important debate and you should take it seriously.

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (15:53): I again commend this amendment to the government. We were all feeling a bit awkward while we sat here watching the parliamentary secretary last Thursday as very legitimate and considered questions about how the PBO would operate were being asked of him, and clearly his briefing had not extended to him being able to answer them. The shadow Treasurer and others sought to highlight that, by handcuffing the Parliamentary Budget Office to the Treasury numbers and then to the Treasurer's numbers—which was a very salient point raised by the shadow Treasurer—you are effectively undermining the whole point of the PBO. You are effectively saying, 'Be free to inquire and be free to add to the better governance of Australia, but we are going to noble you so you can't drift too far away from what the Treasurer would like to assert is the only set of numbers that anyone should be taking any notice of.' This amendment is trying to inoculate against this situation, whereby the Parliamentary Budget Office—who, like the new kids on the block, cannot be left to their own professional competence to find the analytical basis best suited to the task being asked of them and must instead take the gospel according to the Treasurer—effectively become the apprentices of Treasury.

The only opportunity for the Parliamentary Budget Office to look at the numbers before the Treasurer puts his fingerprints all over them would be after the calling of an election. But they are the Treasurer's numbers up until that point and—given whatever mystery and nuancing has gone on to get them to the point—if we were to remain able to rely only upon Treasury numbers in the election context, I explained to the parliamentary secretary at the table how the situation would play out, since he could not answer my concerns himself. If the
opposition announced a policy and then said, 'Here are the costings behind them', the first thing you would hear from the Treasurer would be 'No—those numbers are out of date', and the government would make up some mystery black hole and base an argument on it. They would do that because, prior to the election period, there could be some interaction between opposition members and the Parliamentary Budget Office, but it could only be on the basis of the Treasurer's numbers. Getting those numbers revised and updated on the basis of Treasury numbers could only happen in the election context, and in the election context all that material is publicised the moment that the work is concluded. There is no opportunity for the opposition to consider the data generated by the PBO. There is no chance to reflect on our own policy commitments and on the calibration of those policies on the basis of the most up-to-date information provided by Treasury, because as soon as that information becomes available we are in the election context, and it all gets thrown up in the air to allow the government to make all sorts of claims and allegations, even though the opposition may not even have a simple view on the question that it was getting tested and costed and analysed through the PBO. We may not even have a chance to reflect on it before the government sets its enormous resources to the task misrepresenting what we may be contemplating? I urge the Independents to agree that, under this bill, the PBO is not an independent costing organisation but a nobbled Parliamentary Budget Office.

As I said last Thursday, PBO could stand for 'pretty bleeding obvious'. The government is trying through this bill to nobble the PBO so it becomes yet another arm of government, not a body that can independently contribute to the good governance of the country. The government is trying to nobble the resources of the PBO and the basis from which it can start. The PBO's analysis will be throw out into the public domain during elections, because that is the only time that Treasury numbers are used. Why can't other numbers be used? Why can't the Reserve Bank's forecast, which many in the economy think are very reliable, be used? Why can't the Canadian model, by which a range of independent sources can arrive at their own numbers, be used? Why can't the PBO be treated as an adult and satisfy itself that maybe the Treasurer's numbers are a good starting point—*(Time expired)*

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (15:59): I commend the amendments. Although the funding was allocated in this year's budget for a PBO, we are now almost three months down the road in the financial year and only now beginning to debate the policy in earnest. It will be astonishing if the PBO is up and running by the end of this year.

Almost everything the government touches ends up turning sour. The only
reason we are debating the bill this week is that the coalition has introduced its own PBO legislation. We on this side of the House believe that the government's bill is deeply flawed, and that is why we are pushing for a number of amendments. On this point it is worth examining the differences between the two pieces of legislation and, in order to do so, we need to reflect on the motivation for creating a PBO in the first place. The PBO is a necessary reform to ensure transparency and integrity of budgetary and fiscal processes. In short, it levels up the playing field between government and non-government members by giving them equal ability to scrutinise government policy and to evaluate their own policies. If it is to be anything more than a paper tiger, the PBO needs the power to obtain relevant information from government departments; it needs the flexibility to perform whatever analysis it sees fit; and, most importantly, it needs to provide a level of discretion to allow members and senators to retain control of their own policy. It is there, at the first hurdle, that the government's policy falls down. Under the government's proposal, the PBO is unable to prepare economic forecasts or budget estimates. Why and how is the PBO supposed to prepare accurate analysis of the budgetary impacts of policy over the longer term?

This bill also restricts the PBO from using any economic data prepared by a third party in its determinations, as mentioned by the member for North Sydney earlier. Data from the Reserve Bank and ABARES could not be used in a determination. Instead it can only rely on information provided by the Treasury and the Department of Finance and Deregulation. Again, why? What is the purpose of limiting the scope of the PBO's research to such an extreme degree? How can the PBO be expected to fulfil its full mandate with one arm tied behind its back?

Unfortunately, the problems do not end there. The government's bill severely restricts the PBO's powers to gather information by requiring it to enter into an agreement with the relevant departments to determine what information they can get and when they can get it. The PBO will have nothing to trade with during the negotiation of these agreements, so it stands to reason that any agreement entered into by the government departments will be heavily biased in favour of the departments in question rather than the PBO. In short, what we are looking at here is a Clayton's PBO: it is the PBO you have when you do not have a PBO.

The coalition's policy does not contain any of these rather obvious shortcomings. Instead the PBO, as envisaged by us, will have considerable powers to obtain information from government departments. These powers will be based more on the powers of the Auditor-General and will ensure the PBO is a much more effective body than the diluted version being offered by those opposite.

Of course, one of the most significant functions of the PBO will be to prepare costings, yet even here the government's bill has some rather strange provisions. For instance, during caretaker periods the costings facilities available to members and senators is different from those available at other times. Indeed, during election campaigns the costings functions provided by the PBO would be identical to those already provided to the opposition under the existing Charter of Budget Honesty. So, again, I find myself asking why. What is the reason for this differentiation and what is the point of this duplication?

The Charter of Budget Honesty was a groundbreaking reform, but unfortunately the costings process provided under the charter are not confidential. In fact, they are exactly
the opposite. As it stands, not only are requests for costings immediately published on the website of both Treasury and the Department of Finance and Deregulation but also the results of the said costings are made available in the same way. Perhaps this is a belated attempt from the Prime Minister to live up to her promise last year to draw the curtains back and let the sun shine in. But perhaps not.

In conclusion I believe the government's bill is deeply flawed. The bill provides the PBO with insufficient power to gather the information it needs to do the job, it makes insufficient provisions for discretion and it is structured in such a way that it protects the interests of the government of the day rather than the interests of budgetary transparency and its fiscal integrity.

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (16:04): I want to speak very briefly to put on the record my condemnation of the opposition's accusation that the Treasury is heavily politicised. That is a most serious accusation, particularly as it comes from the alternative government of this country. It is the case that in times past there has been some politicisation within the Public Service. At the time I was very outspoken about the practice by the then Prime Minister John Howard to personally vet all SES appointments in his own office. I do not think that is the way we should be appointing our senior public servants. But those times are behind us now, thankfully, and it is my observation that we have the world's finest Public Service. It is to the great credit of the Public Service that the country ran so well during those weeks of uncertainty following last year's election result. There are very few countries in the world where the country can be administered so confidently as Australia. I put on the record my praise for the Australian Public Service and my concern that we should be having a discussion about the degree to which the Treasury, of all departments, would be politicised.

I support the government's Parliamentary Service Amendment (Parliamentary Budget Officer) Bill; I do not support the opposition's amendment. Not only is it important to have scrutiny of election promises but also it is important to have transparency; hence, I think it most important that in the period of the election campaign itself there should be some visibility of what has been costed. If the opposition or the crossbenchers want to have any policy examined privately, that can be done before the election is called, but once we are in the election period itself the whole purpose of the PBO is to shine a light on those costings. Frankly, I personally found the work that was done costing the opposition's policies in the immediate aftermath of last year's federal election very important. The fact that the opposition's policies were found to have a black hole of between $7 billion and $11 billion was not the reason for my decision to put support of supply and confidence behind the government, but it was not lost on me that that was in the mix, particularly at a time when I was very generously being offered $1 billion towards a new hospital in my seat of Denison. It was a time when I could not have confidence that the money was in fact there, given that the opposition had a black hole of between $7 billion and $11 billion.

In essence, I do not support the opposition's amendment. I think the government's model is sound because it does bring scrutiny and transparency. I applaud the government for again staying true to its commitment to the crossbenchers and to me personally, as contained in our written agreement.

Mr ROBB (Goldstein) (16:07): Firstly, I have been advised—and it was a matter that
was raised, I think, by the Treasurer, the member for Lyne and others—that the model that they chose is based far more on the Canadian parliamentary budget office than on the US Congressional Budget Office. We were told that the Canadian budget office does not do analyses or—for the benefit of the member for Denison—provide transparency in regard to critical analysis, like four years of modelling of the biggest decision all of us will ever take, where we cannot analyse or look at one single variable out of hundreds of variables that are put into that modelling. Transparency is what we are talking about, not politics. This thing is dripping with politics.

Now we find that as of the middle of this year the Canadian budget office, in contrast to its previous practice of preparing fiscal projections using government numbers, is basing its fiscal outlook on its own economic projections. Answer that, Parliamentary Secretary—sorry, I forgot your office. Parliamentary Secretary, you might be able to answer that question. I will read from the latest PBO economic and fiscal outlook. This is the PBO of Canada. You might listen to this if you want to talk about transparency. This is a report by the Canadian PBO:

To enhance PBO's independent analysis on the state of the nation's finances and trends in the national economy and given the downside risks to the average private sector outlook, PBO is providing—for the first time—its own medium-term economic outlook. ... PBO's economic outlook incorporates its judgement of the balance of risks and as a result it can be viewed as a 'balanced' projection, which means that higher or lower outcomes are equally likely.

In other words, in Canada, for the first time, they have an independent body which can in fact do its own analysis and give its own sensitivity of the government projections to changes in all sorts of variables. It seems an unremarkable thing that this should happen.

It would seem to be a great strength for this parliament to have access to an independent body that can give some sensitivity analysis in regard to key analysis provided by Treasury. That does not mean Treasury is wrong; it just means that we have a far more substantial debate and that we have, in fact, an ability to test the projections and not sit here and be fed, like mushrooms, in the dark. We need this sort of analysis. This is what my colleague and friend the member for North Sydney has put forward. He has put forward this analysis and this request that we as an opposition be able to get the benefit of an independent analysis. I would suggest that the government at times would also benefit from an alternative point of view.

Secondly, on the question of the secretary and the Treasury, with great respect to the member for Denison, he did not spend 3½ hours in detailed debate with senior Treasury officers following the election and he did not witness, as my colleague the member for Mackellar has started to articulate, the type of discussion and obstinacy that was provided. There were many examples which we have documented previously, which are a matter of public record and which have again been repeated—some of them today in this House—where we were simply told, 'We have made a decision,' every time we got to a point where they could not argue against what we were saying, such as with the 5.5 per cent bond rate. We had canvassed around the community, with all the leaders of the finance market, what would be a sensible bond rate. Why would we, for the sake of a few dollars, try to obfuscate and cover up?

(Time expired)

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield) (16:12): As we consider the amendment before us at this consideration in detail stage, what we are doing is asking ourselves the question: which of the two alternative models put forward, one by the member for North Sydney and
one by the government, better gives effect to the policy objective that, we are all agreed, makes sense—a policy objective in which resources are available to the parliament, the legislative branch of government, to assist it in having available to it alternative expert advice on economic, financial and budgetary matters? It is a question of which scheme—which mechanism; which process—is best going to give effect to the principle upon which we are all in agreement.

Against that backdrop, there is a pretty clear contrast between the two alternative frameworks which have been put forward. The government's framework, laid out in proposed section 64E(2) and (3), specifically bars the Parliamentary Budget Office from carrying out certain functions such as preparing budget estimates. It also specifically constrains the Parliamentary Budget Office to use forecasts, parameters and fiscal estimates released by the Treasurer. By contrast, the scheme put forward by the member for North Sydney in his excellent amendment is a scheme under which the Parliamentary Budget Office has a maximum degree of discretion in performing its functions. In the words of the amendment, the Parliamentary Budget Officer is given the discretion to 'prepare, or have regard to, either or both of economic forecasts or budget estimates'. In other words, it is a provision which grants the maximum extent of discretion to the Parliamentary Budget Officer so that he or she is best placed to discharge the functions which this legislation is imposing upon him or her—namely, the function of being a provider of independent expert advice to the legislative branch of government.

When the policy suggestion was put forward by the coalition, and subsequently taken up in the negotiations between the Independents and the government, the underlying logic was to establish an independent body, an independent office which would provide a source of independent advice. There is no notion of being critical of the existing departments of state. There is no notion of saying that they are in some way inherently flawed in what they do, but there is a mature recognition that executive government will often have a different set of interests from the parliament, from the legislative branch. There is also a mature recognition that it makes sense to better inform the parliament to provide a source of specialist expertise to the parliament to allow it to discharge its weighty responsibilities.

If a consequence of these new arrangements is that there is a battle of ideas, that there is contestability in policy, that is no bad thing; indeed we on this side of the House say that is a good thing. But the one thing we say very specifically and very precisely about the two alternative schemes that are before the House this afternoon is that we are deeply suspicious of the bona fides of the government in putting forward the particular scheme it has, because we do not believe that the restrictions on the Parliamentary Budget Office contained in proposed section 64E(2) or the constraints on the sources to which it may have regard contained in 64E(3) adequately and sensibly give effect to the policy objective which all of us share in this debate, which is a Parliamentary Budget Office best able to provide independent advice to the parliament about these complex and important matters. It is on that basis that I believe the amendment put forward by the member for North Sydney ought to be supported this afternoon.

Mr HUNT (Flinders) (16:17): In order to assist the Independents with their judgment I want to provide three real-world examples of why there is a need for contestability, as has been set out by the member for North
Sydney. Let me begin with three examples from my own portfolio in recent years. Firstly, under the Home Insulation Program, we were given a set of estimates by the government which were rock solid and ironclad and which we were to accept as Holy Writ.

It is known by all members of this House that virtually none of those estimates came to pass. They did not come to pass in terms of their costs, their safety assessments, the rate of installation or, indeed, the emissions reduction. We were told that $2.45 billion had been set aside under the Home Insulation Program to achieve installation in just over 2.7 million homes around Australia. Unfortunately, only one million homes, less than 40 per cent of the government figures, were ever installed with insulation. Almost a billion dollars had to be set aside in provisioning for repair and maintenance and restoration. The rate of emissions reduction was one-third of that given by government agencies, and obviously endorsed by Treasury, as Holy Writ. We were derided for contesting those figures, yet we were correct and the government agencies were incorrect, I am sorry to say.

I do not blame the government agencies. They were forced to act against a set of parameters imposed upon them by the executive government. It is important to understand that executive government can, but it should not, under this current government impose parameters on the bureaucracy and administration. That has distorted the way in which that bureaucracy and administration produces its figures.

Contrary to what the member for Denison says, we are not asserting that this is a bad bureaucracy. We are asserting that there probably has never been any greater interference in the operations of the bureaucracy in Australia's history. For us, then, to have to rely upon the figures which come from that process is utterly unacceptable. There must be contestability. Perhaps we could have avoided a tragedy such as the Home Insulation Program, let alone the waste and the extraordinary impact on so many small businesses. Contestability in public figures would have assisted throughout the Home Insulation Program. That is not provided for under this bill but it is provided for under the alternative model that the member for North Sydney has set out.

I also want to give two current examples before the parliament under the existing carbon tax modelling provided by the government—again I say 'the government'. There is an assumption in the modelling that the United States will have an effective carbon tax—a cap-in-trade system, in their words—up and running on a full national basis by 2016. That is simply fallacious. It is a fantasy that the United States under any foreseeable political structure will have a fully functioning carbon tax or cap-in-trade scheme. That has a huge impact on the global assumptions and, therefore, the entire base for the Treasury modelling. That is not the fault of Treasury. It is the fault of a government that imposes a straitjacket on the bureaucracy, that reaches into its operation and distorts the way Treasury works and distorts the figures. For that, we say, there must be contestability. A similar thing is that there is a change in the assumption of elasticity regarding the sensitivity of the population to changes in electricity prices and demand. There is no basis for this. There is no basis for this. There is no explanation for this. It does not sit with Australian economic history. It does not sit with the work of the New South Wales independent regulator. Again, none of this is contestable under the model which is currently proposed.
These are real-world examples. There is the home insulation program. There is the fact that the United States, in no foreseeable future, will have a fully functioning cap-and-trade system by 2060. And there has been a complete rewriting of economic history regarding the sensitivity of people to changes in electricity pricing. That is why the amendment should be supported and there should be contestability in figures. (Time expired)

Mr OAKESHOTT (Lyne) (16:22): As someone who was part of the agreement—an agreement that included representatives of all members of this chamber—to establish a parliamentary office in this term, I am at a loss why we are seeing so much trouble in passing this legislation. Likewise, I was a committee member of the Joint Select Committee on the Parliamentary Budget Office, along with Barnaby Joyce, Kelly O'Dwyer and Christopher Pyne. The three coalition members, the government members, the Greens and I unanimously supported various recommendations for the establishment of a PBO. Again, I am at a loss as to why we are now struggling to turn this into legislation.

We are building a service for this House. We are not building a service for the executive. There was an important question asked at the end of the last engagement over this piece of legislation—I think it was last Tuesday night, when, thankfully, we adjourned so that we could consider our positions. Further work has obviously been done by all of us. As far as I can see, questions that I was raising at the end of that debate regarding the difference between Treasury and the Treasurer seem somewhat spurious, at the very least.

Mr Hockey: Spurious!

Mr OAKESHOTT: Spurious, the member for North Sydney. I am increasingly—

Mr Hockey: You have been stiffened up by them, have you?

Mr OAKESHOTT: Not at all. The member for North Sydney thinks I have been stiffened up, sticking up for an independent parliamentary budget office, a service of this parliament agreed, by members of his own party, to be put into legislation twice in the last 12 months.

Mr Briggs: Stop verballing people, Rob.

Mr OAKESHOTT: I am not verballing anyone. The big question that I wanted cleared up at the end of the last debate was: can any member of this chamber, including the member for Mayo, confidentially ring the Parliamentary Budget Office and ask for work to be done on any topic of their choice? The answer is yes.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr OAKESHOTT: You can have another go, all of you. I am happy if you have information that proves this wrong. The question then is: does the Parliamentary Budget Office, whoever the independent CEO is, have rights of confidential access into Treasury? The answer is yes.

The member for North Sydney shakes his head. I ask him, please, to get up and tell me his views on why that advice is wrong. Let's get to the heart of whether a confidential process, as a service for members of parliament in this chamber, with nothing to do with the Treasurer and nothing to do with the executive, actually applies. The only point in all of that is whether the Treasurer signs off on a budget or not. It is illogical if we, as a chamber, are asking for a Treasurer not to sign off on the budget. If we accept that then we accept that the figures that are used from the Treasury as the starting point
for the process of PEFO, and other similar
documents as part of the Charter of Budget
Honesty, already apply. What seems to be in
place is a direct attack on the independence
of the Treasury. I have heard that from
speakers twice now.

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop: It is not
independent.

Mr OAKESHOTT: The member for
Mackellar confirms that. The shadow
Treasurer and the shadow minister for
finance sit either side of the member for
Mackellar as she directly attacks the
independence of the Treasury.

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop: Correct.

Mr OAKESHOTT: She again confirms
it: 'Correct.' We have silence from the two
key finance officers of the coalition. This is a
direct attack on the independence of the
Treasury. If that is the case—if that is the
point of your position in this debate—why
on earth did you waste this parliament's
time in the last 12 months by participating in a
process that arrived at unanimous
recommendations? That process involved
Barnaby Joyce, Chris Pyne and Kelly
O'Dwyer. Why on earth did you waste 16
days after the election reaching an agreement
over these proposals for a better parliament?
Please explain your position as to why you
consider this is not confidential and why it is
not independent.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC
Scott): I remind all those who are speaking
in this debate to refer their comments
through the chair, not at the chair. It is not
'you' or 'your'; it is not 'me' and 'you'.

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (16:27):
To help the member for Lyne, who seems to
pride himself on understanding how
legislation works, I refer him to proposed
section 64E of the bill before the House:

(2) The Parliamentary Budget Officer's functions
under subsection (1) do not include:

(a) preparing economic forecasts; or
(b) preparing budget estimates (whether at the
whole-of-government, agency or program level.

Mr Oakeshott interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: Just listen. I know this is
hard to get through, but give it a shot. And
64E(3) says:

(3) In performing his or her functions under
subsection (1), the Parliamentary Budget Officer
must use the economic forecasts and parameters
and fiscal estimates contained in the most recent
relevant reports released under Parts 5, 6 and 7 of
Schedule 1 to the Charter of Budget Honesty Act
1998.

The Charter of Budget Honesty Act 1998—

Mr Oakeshott: You still haven't
answered it.

Mr HOCKEY: Hang on. I know it is
hard to listen because you have signed up to
the other mob, but just for one brief moment
put the parliament ahead of your own
sectoral interests. I say to the member for
Lyne that part 5 refers to annual government
reporting. Then at (1) of 13 it says:

Commonwealth bodies to provide information
to help prepare report

(1) To help the Treasurer to prepare a budget
economic and fiscal outlook report, the Treasurer
may request a Commonwealth body to provide
information.

That means these are the Treasurer's
numbers. They are not the Treasury's
numbers, they are the Treasurer's numbers—
and you do not understand that.

Mr Oakeshott: You haven't proved a
thing.

Mr HOCKEY: Okay, fine. Vote with the
government against this amendment and
defang the Parliamentary Budget Office. We
have given you a chance. We have given the
member for Lyne a chance to have a truly
independent parliamentary budget office. If
the member for Lyne does not want it, okay,
fine, no problems. Go with a weaker
parliamentary budget office and live with the consequences, if you are there at the next parliament.

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong) (16:30): I rise to support the member for North Sydney's amendments to the Parliamentary Service Amendment (Parliamentary Budget Officer) Bill 2011. We start from the position that the Parliamentary Budget Office is a net positive and it is not new. An OECD survey found that another 18 countries have some sort of legislative parliamentary involvement in setting the fiscal situation with a PBO. The United States has a $45 million per annum budget for its Parliamentary Budget Office. The Dutch Parliamentary Budget Office has more than 150 staff and we have heard about the Canadian budget office. Indeed, this is our idea and ever since 2007 the coalition has driven the idea of a parliamentary budget office. That is why the shadow Treasurer has before the parliament his own bill. It is because those opposite have such a poor record when it comes to releasing and costing their policies. What happened in 2007 and at the election in 2010 bears that out. The Parliamentary Budget Office amendment we are moving will bring greater transparency to the fiscal situation and fiscal process. It will ensure that non-government MPs and senators and parties have access to the proper costings and it mitigates the disadvantage that those in opposition have against a better resourced government.

We only have to look at what happened with our costings before the last election, when we were looking at the interest to be saved from not proceeding with the NBN. We used the Commonwealth bond rate as the discount rate. It was the NBN implementation study which showed that you should have used the Commonwealth bond rate to assess the amount of savings that you would have if you did not proceed with the NBN, and you would not have that information released.

There are three key criteria that our amendments to this bill are pushing. Firstly, there is confidentiality. Requests to have policies costed should not be immediately put up on the website when they are received. The timing of release of those costings should not be immediately put up on the website and made public once they are done. It should be up to those who are seeking those costings to assess the timing of that release—whether they want to resubmit a request for costing or whether they want to change the assumptions they are putting forward for their particular policy or whether

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You will refer your comments through the chair not at the chair.

Mr FRYDENBERG: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The point is that those opposite have a very poor record when it comes to releasing and costing their policies. What happened in 2007 and at the election in 2010 bears that out. The Parliamentary Budget Office amendment we are moving will bring greater transparency to the fiscal situation and fiscal process. It will ensure that non-government MPs and senators and parties have access to the proper costings and it mitigates the disadvantage that those in opposition have against a better resourced government.

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Ms Rishworth interjecting—

Mr FRYDENBERG: You will remember that in 2007 you released your costings the day before the election. In 2010 you released your costings the day before the election.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! I would remind the member for Kooyong not to refer in your speech to 'you'. You are referring to me in this occupied chair, the Deputy Speaker. You will refer to the government or the opposition, please.

Mr FRYDENBERG: I was simply making the point that when—
they want to discuss and alter those particular assumptions.

Secondly, there need to be fewer restrictions on the PBO's ability to source material to make its analysis. As the member for North Sydney said: why cannot ABARE, why cannot the Reserve Bank of Australia be able to provide information to the Parliamentary Budget Office for them to make their analysis? Why restrict it to those reports under the Charter of Budget Honesty? That will very much limit the quality of the analysis that is done.

Thirdly, we must increase the powers of the PBO to get information from other departments. Currently, under the government's bill, it is about an MOU. It is just about an MOU with departments but not giving the PBO the ability to compel those departments to release that information. That is why the member for North Sydney has very appropriately suggested that he should use powers akin to those of the Auditor-General in order to source that material from other departments.

The Independents have a privileged position at the moment. They, particularly the Greens, are getting assistance from the government. But that will not always be the case. They need to get behind these amendments we are moving because they are right for the parliament and right for the budget office. (Time expired)

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (16:35): In order to assist the process, the member for Lyne was asking for a very specific piece of information. I think he was contesting the assertion of the opposition on confidentiality, to which he placed considerable weight, so that members could seek, with confidence, confidential advice and have some interaction. We were highlighting how that is compromised and he was contesting that, if that is a fair characterisation. I draw his attention to proposed section 64L of the bill and I will read it. This is under the heading 'Caretaker period policy costing requests made before polling day—public release of requests and costings.' It says:

This section applies in relation to a policy costing request that is made under subsection 64J(2) or (5) before polling day during the caretaker period for a general election.

It goes on to say:

As soon as practicable after the request has been made and before polling day, the Parliamentary Budget Officer must publicly release the request and a costing of the policy.

That is the practical black-and-white provision to which we were referring and I hope that is helpful. I was seeking to illuminate the parliament—and it is perhaps not as helpful as I might hope it would be and, dare I say it, the Member for Lyne, I have been there before, but I will persevere—and I hope that is helpful.

The point I was making and that the shadow Treasurer has made is that, up until the caretaker period, the base against which costings are provided is provided by the Treasurer. The Treasurer owns that costing basis. He can do whatever fiscal magic and wisdom he feels is appropriate to release his figures. The point I was trying to emphasise—and perhaps I did not do it well, and I stand admonished for that—is the only time the Treasury has undiluted, unadulterated data during the entire period between elections available is from the PEFO, the Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook. That is the only time, Member for Lyne, that the dataset upon which you are placing such great weight and respect, as I do, on Treasury, let Treasury be heard.
That is really what the opposition is on about.

But what we are also saying is if you are only interested—sorry, not you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke):** Yes, I was going to say to everybody that perhaps if he keeps—

**Mr BILLSON:** I have been pretty good up to that point.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** No, everybody has been pretty bad. I may enter the debate, seeing as I sat on the inquiry, but I won't be that cheeky. The member for Dunkley has the call.

**Mr BILLSON:** I hope the clerks take that 15 seconds off your time and not mine, Madam Deputy Speaker. The point I was trying to make to the member for Lyne is that if the Treasury figures are to be allowed to be used, let them be used, not the Treasurer's figures. The only time in which the Treasury's figures are used are during the caretaker period. So any effort by anyone in this chamber to rely upon Treasury's figures only happens during the caretaker period where there is this obligation under 64L to release all the material. There is no opportunity to go back on the basis of the analysis that is provided to recalibrate, to contemplate whether it is worth 'moving forward', dare I use a phrase, on the material that is provided—none whatsoever.

So if he is fair dinkum about Treasury, let them be heard. But if he is also only wanting to hear one tune—that we have all got to be on exactly the same tune in this nation's parliament—then persist with his point of view. If he would like to hear other voices, other options, other analysis to make sure there is rigour and robustness to this work, he must support the opposition's amendments, because there is a range of other analysis available that will strengthen the quality of governance in this country, and not have the parliament handcuffed to whatever the Treasurer thinks is advantageous from his political perspective.

We are on about good governance in this country; not what is good for the government. He has been hoodwinked into being locked into this 'PBO Lite' that relies upon the magic of the Treasurer doing whatever he likes with material that Treasury might produce, to have that as the starting point, to say, 'No other voice interests us; no other basis of analysis has any value whatsoever.' I get a bit sick of hearing unctuousness about public servants. We respect public servants, but when they get rolled out and manipulated by a dodgy, poor government, that is a problem for everybody. My last point is: what about the Parliamentary Budget Officer? Is he or she not deserving of the respect to go and source advice where he or she sees fit? I have respect for that position as well, not just some that are chosen to be favoured. *(Time expired)*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member's time has expired—with extra time for my interruption.

**Mr OAKESHOTT** (Lyne) (16:41): To try and settle this debate, I have seven questions that I would like to put to the parliamentary secretary. My understanding of the answers to those questions is yes, but if there is any doubt about any of these, it is good for them to be on the record and for us as a parliament to then work them through.

The first is: does the PBO under this legislation have full and unfettered access to the departments of Treasury and finance? I hope the answer is yes.

The second is: is this access direct—that it does not depend on any minister's office and it will not go through any minister's office? My understanding of that is yes, but I need to
hear from the parliamentary secretary if otherwise.

Third: does this allow, therefore, the PBO to question, critique, test any of the forecasts of the budget or of the government more generally? My understanding is yes, but please answer otherwise if it is incorrect.

Fourth: is this direct access unencumbered by any ministerial oversight, providing another critical check and balance for this parliament? My understanding is yes.

Fifth: under these arrangements would it quickly become obvious, as was a point made by the member for North Sydney last week, if there were any fudging of the figures along the lines that were implied last week? My understanding is the PBO would actually add to this parliament and a shadow Treasurer's ability to pick up whether the Treasurer was fudging anything that the Treasury was actually doing.

Sixth: can the PBO inform their analysis by drawing on other sources of information such as the RBA, the IMF, the OECD, whatever? My understanding is yes.

Finally: is the use of forecasts and estimates prepared by Treasury and Finance about providing a more sensible basis for comparison of policy costings, reducing an expensive and unnecessary duplication of effort? Anyone in business understands double-handling is bad. We have got to have a common set of rules from somewhere. I would have thought an undisputed independent Treasury was the place for macroforecasting to be done, and then the politics can go its hardest on the back of that. Can you answer those seven questions to assist the debate?

Mr Bradbury (Lindsay—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (16:43): The answer to those questions is yes. In relation to the first one, the PBO does have full and unfettered access to the Department of the Treasury. In relation to whether that access is direct or not, that is correct. In relation to whether or not the PBO has the ability to test that advice, there is nothing in the act to preclude them from being able to test that advice. In relation to whether or not there is the ability for that to occur unencumbered by ministerial interference, the answer to that is yes. In relation to whether or not it would become obvious if there were any fudging, for the reasons I set out earlier in terms of the robust processes that exist to test these forecasts, the answer to that would be yes as well. In relation to whether or not the PBO can inform their analysis by drawing upon forecasts from others, certainly that is an option that is available to them, with exception of course being in relation to the basis upon which costings are to be formed. When it comes to the question of the preparation of costings in relation to particular proposals, that is to be based upon the forecasts that are to be obtained from Treasury.

That goes to the final question that the member for Lyne has asked in relation to a more sensible basis for comparison. That is the very heart of this debate. We need to ensure that, when the public is being given the opportunity to compare one particular set of election commitments with another, they are able to compare apples with apples. It is important that the set of forecasts upon which those costings are to be made is a comparable set of forecasts. That is the key consideration in this whole debate. So the answer to that question of course is yes.

Mr Briggs interjecting—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms A E Burke): The member for Mayo is warned!

Mr Bradbury: That is why the elements that have been set out in the bill and debated and supported by the
Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (16:47): I rise in support of the amendment brought forward by the shadow Treasurer to strengthen the independence of the Parliamentary Budget Office. We on this side of the chamber are the only people interested in a rigorous analysis on the economic and fiscal impacts of policy proposals, which is why we brought forward our very own bill. Let us not forget that it was actually this side of the chamber that brought forward, before the last election, a policy to initiate a parliamentary budget office. That is why we are having this debate in the chamber today—not because of any agreement with the Independents but because the coalition brought forward this policy before the last election.

This has not been a longstanding commitment of the government. They rushed in legislation in response to our policy proposal, and their legislation is deficient. That is why the shadow Treasurer has needed to bring forward an amendment, which he has done so very ably. What he has brought forward is an amendment to make sure that the Parliamentary Budget Office, when it is brought into effect, will be an independent parliamentary budget office, that it will not be unduly restricted in what it can look at and what it can do in the performance of its role and function. Critical to that, of course, is the fact that it should be able to have regard to its own ability to perform economic forecasts and budget estimates. It can of course have regard to Treasury's economic forecasts and budget estimates, but it also should be able to initiate its own if in fact it believes it is required.

The government's bill restricts the ability of the Parliamentary Budget Office to look at only Treasury and Finance figures, and this of course goes to the power of the Parliamentary Budget Office to perform its
own functions. We believe that this will, unfortunately, make a of the eunuch parliamentary budget office. Unlike the US Congressional Budget Office or the Canadian Parliamentary Office, it will be a parliamentary budget office which is a parliamentary budget office in name only.

I was on the joint committee that recommended that a parliamentary budget office be initiated. I, along with the Independents, agreed that we needed to have a parliamentary budget office that had the power to gather information, a parliamentary budget office that would be independent and would not be unduly restricted. Unfortunately, though, I think the bill before us today will in fact restrict the ability of the Parliamentary Budget Office to perform its role and function, which is why we have needed to bring forward the amendment that we have.

I notice that the government has not been able to respond to the amendment that has been brought forward. It has not been able to provide one sensible reason as to why it cannot accept the amendment. Instead, I notice that, on the weekend, the Treasurer put out a media release that attacked our amendment by saying that it went to our economic competence. It said, in fact, that we were economically incompetent. That is a little bit like Silvio Berlusconi giving a critique on the virtues of celibacy. It is a little bit like the member for Dobell telling us about the importance of good governance and financial accounting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Higgins is straying.

Ms O'DWYER: It is not something that is remotely credible for the government to say. We believe, as I have just said—and which has been said by all of my colleagues—that a transparent, independent budget office that is not restricted in the performance of its role and function is the most critical thing that we can achieve here today. If we get this wrong today, we will be getting it wrong for the future. That is why it is so critical that the government actually answer the question that has been brought forward by the amendments that the shadow Treasurer has put on the table today. They cannot provide one reason why we should not be able to accept the amendments brought forward by the shadow Treasurer. I think they should simply accept that our amendments will improve their bill, and they should support them.

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (16:52): I think I have been developing quite a good relationship with the opposition. It has been a bit of a rocky start, but I have shown that I am willing to support the opposition when they have a good initiative. I have to say that on this particular issue I do believe the opposition has lost its way.

I pose three questions to the member for North Sydney. My first question is: will the member for North Sydney now withdraw and apologise for the opposition's attack on the Treasury and the claim that it is politicised? My second question is: why won't you now support an initiative which the opposition supported unanimously in committee—did someone belatedly realise that there had been an inadvertent episode of being constructive? My third question is: why all the focus in here this afternoon on the need for confidentiality during an election campaign, when, if the opposition stopped saying no to everything and instead did some good policy development work now, they could get everything they want costed in confidence before the next election campaign?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (16:54): In answer to question 1: no. In relation to question 2: you clearly have not even read
the report that has come before this parliament on this bill, because in fact the specific amendment I am moving at the moment is not even a recommendation in the report.

Mr Bradbury: It is dealt with under the report.

Mr HOCKEY: It is not a recommendation of the report. Have you read the report? I would urge you to read the report that you are referring to. In response to the third question, relating to constructive analysis: we have not said that we will not reveal all of our costings before the next election. We have said we will but we are not going to submit our costings to a parliamentary budget office or a Treasury that is an arm of the government and is using government data. Full stop.

If the member for Denison had looked at all the other amendments when I endeavoured to engage in conversation about this bill, he would see that in fact what we are doing through these amendments is making the PBO more independent and more accountable to the parliament. That is why I said this is the chance; there may not be a second chance in the next parliament. And I would say to the member for Denison: look carefully at our amendments, have a good think about them and ask yourself whether these would enhance the power of the Parliamentary Budget Office and not reduce it.

I do not understand why the Independents—and I say this very genuinely—are so hobbled to the government on this bill. It is not a bill that goes to good government; it is a bill that goes to the integrity of the parliament and to the independence of the chamber. We were the ones who initiated a parliamentary budget office policy. Malcolm Turnbull as Leader of the Opposition did that, and it was carried on by the current Leader of the Opposition. We went to the last election promising to introduce a parliamentary budget office. Senator Guy Barnett in the other place had worked on this initiative for an extended period of time. This is not anything new. We are the ones who actually put forward the initiative. We were the ones who introduced a bill.

Mr Briggs: We introduced the Charter of Budget Honesty.

Mr HOCKEY: Exactly right. We are the ones who introduced the Charter of Budget Honesty. And we are the ones now who are introducing a bill for a PBO. The government only reacts when it is forced to do so. Obviously the Independents feel that they have done a deal with the government—they have made their decisions even though they do not even know what they are talking about—so be it. That is the way it is; let it be on their heads.

Mr ROBB (Goldstein) (16:57): I have some questions for the parliamentary secretary. Firstly, I would be grateful if he could confirm or otherwise that Canada and its parliamentary budget office now carry out independent analysis on the state of the nation's finances and trends. Secondly, I would like the parliamentary secretary to confirm that in the United States the Congressional Budget Office carries out independent analysis on the state of the nation's finances and trends. Thirdly, I would ask the parliamentary secretary to explain why in Australia the Parliamentary Budget Office, as pronounced in this bill, will not allow that authority to carry out independent analysis on the state of the nation's finances and trends?

The next question relates to the issue of access to Treasury data. The member for Lyne asserted and then asked a question about the PBO. He said that the
Parliamentary Budget Office would get private access to Treasury data and analysis and would have the ability to make their own assessment of Treasury data and analysis on a confidential basis. The parliamentary secretary confirmed; he said yes to all of those propositions. So I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary: if the government's Parliamentary Budget Office is put into place, would the Parliamentary Budget Office get access to things such as the modelling to do with the carbon tax, which has been carried out extensively? Will the Parliamentary Budget Office get access to the variables and all of the assumptions embodied in that analysis? Do you want to take some notes, or have you got all this in your head? I am just getting a bit worried. I am onto question 11—

Mr Briggs interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for Goldstein has the call and the member for Mayo should remember that he has been warned.

Mr Bradbury: When you say 'you', are you referring to me?

Mr ROBB: I said 'the parliamentary secretary’, thanks very much.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The parliamentary secretary is not assisting and my patience is being worn down by everybody.

Mr ROBB: It would be better if the parliamentary secretary were to take notes rather than putting cheap shots across the chamber. I am very worried that I am not going to get answers to any of this, and it is quite relevant to the two Independents up here—and I am going to disregard the patronising cheap shots from the member for Denison in all of that. I ask: would the Parliamentary Budget Office be able to get access to Treasury modelling of, say, the education rebate? It is modelling that we were denied in the 3½ hours that we met with the Treasury officials. We got told to pull our heads in, effectively, and to take what they had to say—even though we had commissioned modelling from NATSEM, which Treasury uses. But they said there is a $900 million black hole, and we were told, 'You cop it.' That is what we were told, and you call that not interference. That was no cooperation whatsoever, and you have got the hide to stand up there and say that we are playing games. This is very serious business. They are in government because of the way in which that material was mishandled by Treasury and then by the government, and how you lapped it up! How those members lapped it up!

The next question I would like to ask is quite critical. In fact, I might come back to it in a minute, because I am running out of time. According to this bill as I read it: in the caretaker period if you present any proposal, automatically the costing of that is released immediately. I reserve the right to come back and finish that proposition. (Extension of time granted) The critical point in all of this, the thing that has really got our back up, is the proposition—and one of our own members of the committee has confirmed this—that unanimous agreements are not being delivered upon in this bill. The thing that is really getting up our nose is the fact that if we present a proposal, or two alternative proposals, to the Parliamentary Budget Office in the caretaker period, where we are trying to explore the relative merits of that proposal, or some competing proposals, we are trying to compare the relative merits. We are trying to come up with an answer which is economically responsible, economically doable, robust and independently assessed. If we present those two alternatives, over which we have taken no final decision, is it true that the analysis and costing of those two proposals—over
which we have taken no final decision but we are in the caretaker period—will be automatically released? That is how we read this bill, and the shadow Treasurer's amendments go to making it absolutely crystal clear that that is not the case and that in fact we could test some proposals that we are looking at the relative merits of before we have made a final decision and keep in confidence the costings of those two proposals. If you say that it is true that those costings have to be released, no-one can form any other conclusion than that this is an act of politicising this whole Parliamentary Budget Office.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP (Mackellar) (17:05): I would cede to the parliamentary secretary to answer the questions, but he was not making any movement to rise to answer them. I have in front of me a 'note for file: post-briefing feedback for the opposition; meetings of Independent MPs with departmental secretaries.' As I read through it, I see that follow-up question No. 1 was to have some, but every other question says, 'no follow-up'. On the questions where our costings were challenged by Treasury, I went through earlier, chapter and verse—before the member for Denison came into the chamber but the member for Lyne was here—why the disallowing of a legitimate saving of $2.5 billion with regard to our conservative bias allowance savings was knocked out by Treasury. I went through why the $3.3 billion of expenditure savings against the Health and Hospital Fund, the Education Investment Fund and the Building Australia Fund were knocked out by Treasury and why the $2.4 billion saving that was put in place with regard to the NBN was knocked out. We had assessed that the savings that would be made on interest payable was 5.5 per cent, which was the average of the 10-year bond rate for six months leading up to the election, and Treasury said, 'No, we've decided it's 4.9 per cent,' and I said that I had taken out the figures today showing that, in fact, the bond rate from July 2010 to August 2011 is 5.23 per cent. And yet that was knocked out. Why were the $600,000 of savings from putting people back into the workforce—people over 50 and under 30—knocked out by Treasury, because they called it 'a second-round effect', whereas in fact they allowed it for the government in their own budget papers, as they had indeed allowed other things for the government and denied them for the opposition.

Then there was a further $1.5 billion knocked out by Treasury with regard to the savings that could be made on the PBS, whereas the forecast was that 40 per cent could be saved and the government's legislative base was 23 per cent. A further 17 per cent in savings was available, which was accounted for in the $1.15 billion.

That totals $9.95 billion knocked out by Treasury, and you accepted it according to these minutes. When the question was asked about the bottom line impact of the department's costings, that was when you decided that you would go with this lot, the government of the day and not us. The answer came back from Mr Henry, who, as I said, has been rewarded by the new appointment in the Prime Minister's office.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for Mackellar is straying, and there is imputation in what she has said—

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: This is why we have to have—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: and I would ask her to withdraw.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: No, I cannot withdraw, Madam Deputy Speaker.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Then the member for Mackellar may have to resume her seat.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: Madam Deputy Speaker, if the Secretary to the Treasury—and what we are talking about here is whether or not—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: We are not going to debate this.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: we have an independence. The point about independence is: is the head of the Treasury serving the government of the day and therefore not able to give independent advice on opposition costings? That is a fair and legitimate point to make in this debate—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: All I have asked—

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: and it is the one that I am making.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: is for you to withdraw the imputation.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: I am sorry: it is a fact, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have made—

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: The fact of the matter is—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: All I have asked you to do is to withdraw.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: I will read from—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have made an imputation about—

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: I have made a statement of fact.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: a public servant, and I am asking you to withdraw.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: I am sorry: I cannot do that.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Then the member for Mackellar will resume her seat. The question is that amendment (1), moved by the member for North Sydney—

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: On what basis am I being asked to resume my seat?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Because you are refusing to withdraw an imputation, and I think—

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: It is a statement of fact.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The statement you made was that he had been—

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: I will read you Mr Dreyfus's remarks.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: rewarded. That is an imputation—

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: Where is the standing order?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Mackellar will resume her seat.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not accept.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You will have to move a dissent, won't you? Otherwise, you will resume your seat.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: I will resume my seat, but I do not—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you very much. The question is that amendment (1), moved by the member for North Sydney, be agreed to. I call the member for Mayo.

Mr BRIGGS (Mayo) (17:10): I wanted to just address a couple of issues which were raised earlier, particularly one raised by the member for Denison who said, in one of his cheap shots, as the member for Goldstein described, about doing work now in preparation for the next election campaign to avoid the release of confidential information which you would be familiar with. Budgets change. Numbers change quite substantially
over a period of time, so much so that the
government of the day's numbers change
between the mid-year budget review and the
final outcome. In fact, we do not know what
the final outcome of the budget was last year,
because the revenue numbers change and the
parameters you work with change.

If you understood the Commonwealth
budget and how budgeting works, member
for Denison, you would understand that you
cannot do a costing now for a tax cut you
might want in two years time for an election
campaign. Guess who does not do that
themselves? The executive. So, in your view,
it is okay for the executive to have that right
to test their policies to get it right but not for
the opposition or in fact yourself. That is
completely illogical, but we should not be
surprised, I guess. It is as logical as attacking
any public servant appointed by John
Howard but then getting outraged if anyone
raises questions about current public
servants. It is a completely illogical position.
It is all right to slander the former Prime
Minister, but if it is anyone in this place it is
a great outrage. Hypocrite—absolute
hypocrite.

I go back to the issues raised by the
member for Lyne. I point this out to him: in
the questions he raised to the parliamentary
secretary, who did not answer those
questions, he did not point to the sections but
said, 'There is nothing which will stop it.' I
thought that was a fascinating answer for the
third question you raised. I put this to you,
member for Lyne: 64B of the bill says:

Purpose of Parliamentary Budget Office

The purpose of the Parliamentary Budget Office—
I am reading from the bill—
is to inform the Parliament by providing, in
accordance with this Division, independent and
non-partisan analysis of the budget cycle, fiscal
policy and the financial implications of proposals.

It then directly rules that out when in 64E2 it
says:

The Parliamentary Budget Officer's functions
under subsection (1) do not include:
(a) preparing economic forecasts; or
(b) preparing budget estimates

Give me a break. This is an absolute sell-out
of this policy. If you want to go through the
history, you do not own this. In fact, this was
owned by the coalition who proposed this in
the budget in reply, but that is not the point.
If we want good outcomes in this place, if
you want the parliament to work properly, as
you say—and I take you at your word on
that—this is a really good reform if you
make some changes. What they are
proposing is a halfway house.

It is the same as when the Labor Party
opposed the Charter of Budget Honesty in
1996. We do not take these people on trust.
They opposed the Charter of Budget Honesty
in 1996 because they completely politicised
the process in 1995 and 1996. The member
for Denison probably forgets that. It might
have been one of his hazy periods. They
completely politicised the budget process in
that time, and that is why, when the Howard
government came to power, there was a $10
billion black hole in the budget. That is how
the Charter of Budget Honesty came about.

This is our proposal from when the
member for Wentworth was the Leader of
the Opposition. It is a good proposal, with
some improvements, including making it
genuinely independent to give it the power to
make its own forecasts. You know what: the
Treasury is not always right. They would say
to you themselves that they are not always
right. It is economic forecasting. Access
Economics does it. Lots of people do it. Lots
of people on the internet do it these days. It
should be a contested thing. We should have
the right to improve policies in this place and
get decent and genuinely independent access
to information, including forecasts. This is a good amendment. It is not about playing politics; it is improving what is decent reform in this place.

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (17:14): Of the questions that were asked by the crossbenchers of the parliamentary secretary, I would like to add an eighth. I am sure the member for Lyne had so many questions that the issue he spoke quite vigorously about, in fairness—the opportunity to get considered independent advice—did not feature in the top seven. Maybe it would have been eighth. The assertion that was being raised by the member for Lyne was around our concern about the inability to obtain confidential independent advice, weigh policy options and even analyse announcements made by others to see where they might be improved through calibration and policy settings. The opportunity to do that confidentially is denied to the opposition and to all Independents during the caretaker period. As I so might to do before, I draw his attention to section 64L of the bill, which makes that quite explicit. If he wants a rewritten account of that, page 10 of the explanatory memorandum emphasises that point quite clearly.

To draw connections between why that should be of concern to Independent members and all members in this place and why it should be of concern to the broader Australian public, my friend and colleague the member for Mayo points to a very excellent example. In 1996, we were all told the budget was in surplus by the then Labor government, only to find a $10.4 billion black hole that took considerable expertise and adulthood to work through to put the budget back into surplus. That leads to the point that, under the construct that the Independents seem to be shackled to, they seem to overlook the consequences of some of the settings within this bill. One is the caretaker period. There is no opportunity for private consideration and discourse, recalibration, weighing up of options or even examining other proposals that might come forward, even from the member for Lyne. There is no chance to look at that or at whether there may be some opportunity for improvement, dare that be conceivable.

Going back to 1996, the other point is that that is the only point in time when the Treasury's figures were available. If the member for Lyne and the member for Denison have such love and affection for the Treasury figures and point to them as such a credible and solid foundation for analysis, why then deny the parliament and all the members in this place the chance to have policy ideas costed against those figures?

The member for Denison was quite right and very insightful: policy work is an ongoing process. Even in my portfolio area of small business, there is some policy that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet blue book said would boost productivity. I am happy to have that work outsourced so the government could actually do something about small business. That work is an ongoing process, but the member and others would rightly criticise the opposition if we were not using the most up-to-date data for our costings. In the entire period between elections and the issuing of writs, we are beholden—we are hogtied—to the Treasurer's numbers, which in case after case have been illustrated as not as reliable and robust as they can be, because the Treasurer can influence them and, dare I say, adulterate them from what the Treasury may have provided and inject new assumptions. The only time there is purity in those numbers is during the election period. You would expect us to go back to those numbers to make sure they are up to date and as reliable as possible on the least adulterated data available, the Treasury figures, and that
only happens during the caretaker period. There is an obligation under this bill that that work gets released publicly.

Please join up the dots. This is not that hard. It is PBO, pretty bleeding obvious, that what the government is trying to do here is noble this process so we are all shackled and handcuffed to whatever the Treasurer expects to be the starting point for this analysis, and the only time we can get away from that and have pure Treasury figures as the starting point is during the election period, when there is no confidentiality. This is not that complicated.

I urge you to look at those points. I take you at your word that those things matter. If they matter, I am finding it hard to work out why you are not actually connecting the facts that are in these bills with that concern and the reason that the opposition's amendments are so important. I take you at your word, but you are all backswing at the moment and no follow-through. The follow-through would see you back the opposition's amendments if you are genuinely concerned about those points. Nice backswing; we are looking for a bit of follow-through, gentlemen.

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (17:19): I would like to address some of the questions that were asked in this debate by the member for Goldstein. The questions broadly fit into the following categories. The first one was in relation to other models of parliamentary budget office and the extent to which some of those models may be empowered to create their own forecasts. I can confirm that there are other parliamentary budget offices across the world that do have the capacity to generate their own forecasts, but that is not the model that the government has decided to go with. In fact, we are not going with that model because we happen to agree with the recommendations and, indeed, the content of the report that was handed down by the joint select committee.

I know that the member for North Sydney has made much of the fact that he says there is no finding or recommendation in the committee report. The committee report, at item 3.100, reads:

Given the resource intensive nature of the work and the need to minimise the duplication of work produced elsewhere, the PBO should not be required to produce its own fiscal forecasts. Rather, it should provide analysis of the Government's fiscal forecasts, commenting on the assumptions, judgements and overall reliability of Government assessments.

That is what was in the report and that is why the government has gone down the path it has.

The report indicated that this is a very resource-intensive exercise. It might be worth putting on the record the fact that Treasury currently has 30 officers engaged in economic forecasting and a further 50 engaged in revenue forecasting, and Finance's budget group has around 250 officers, all of whom are engaged in preparing the budget forecasts. I think we can see that, apart from it being a waste of time to duplicate those functions in a new entity, it would be a waste of resources—a waste of money. That is why the government has not opted to go that way. But the most significant reason why we have not opted to create an alternative set of forecasts and assumptions in the PBO is comparability of the costings. I note that in today's Herald Ross Gittins made the very point that the government relies upon. He said:

It is infinitely preferable that all parties' costings be prepared on the same basis—rather than allowing oppositions to choose different economic forecasts or different budget parameters and costing conventions. Exactly. The second set of questions which
the member for Goldstein asked was about the free flow of information. I can confirm that there will be unfettered and free access, subject to privacy provisions and the usual FOI requirements that operate outside the regime that is envisaged here. But that will occur, and that is contained within the bill.

Mr Hockey: Where's that?

Mr BRADBURY: Section 64F.

Mr Hockey interjecting—

Mr BRADBURY: It refers to a memorandum of understanding type arrangement, and that will put in place as the mechanism for the free flow of information. The third—and, I think, the most significant—set of questions raised by the member for Goldstein was about the confidentiality of costings during the caretaker period. These questions go to the nub of why the opposition, who unanimously supported these propositions in the committee process, have come forward now and opposed them. Why are they opposed to them? They are opposed to them because they know that under these arrangements their election commitments will be subjected to the scrutiny of the Parliamentary Budget Office. It is true that a matter which is publicly announced—and that is the key; what the legislation refers to is 'publicly announced'—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr BRADBURY: The opposition has two years and 11 months of the parliamentary term to do the hard yards on policy. If the opposition cannot do the hard yards on policy throughout the two years and 11 months and instead have to rely upon the possibility of putting in election costings during the election campaign, it shows just how lazy the current opposition is.

Let us call this what it is, because this is all about one thing, and it is a very simple proposition: the coalition, now that they have stumbled across the fact that they have the huge challenge of a $70 billion black hole, have discovered that they need to construct an alibi so that they can avoid being held to account for the fiscal atrocities that they are about to commit. We know that these fiscal atrocities are going to be grievous. There is a $70 black hole, and they know how difficult a job that is. If casting aspersions, denying the importance of this reform and challenging the credibility of the PBO is what they need to do to avoid any scrutiny when it comes to the next election, that is exactly what they will do. They will try to talk down this body, because to do that is to deny— (Time expired)

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (17:24): I am deeply troubled by the lingering accusation in this place that the Treasury is politicised. I applaud some members of the opposition, who have trod around this issue much more carefully than some of their colleagues, but as it is at the moment the member for North Sydney has refused to withdraw and apologise for the opposition's attack on Treasury through the claim that it is politicised, and the member for Mackellar, by refusing to withdraw her comment, has not helped things at all.

For the public record, so it is absolutely clear to everyone in this country, I ask the member for North Sydney: will you now withdraw and apologise for the opposition's attack on the Treasury and the claim that it is politicised?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): I gave latitude to the member for Denison before, but I say now that this is the consideration in detail stage and that we should actually be addressing the amendments before us. Does he have anything else he wants to add, or has he concluded?
Mr WILKIE: No—thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr ROBB (Goldstein) (17:26): The concerns of the member for Denison will be addressed if the amendments proposed by the member for North Sydney are adopted. The parliamentary secretary sought to answer some of the questions I asked, but in doing so he exposed the motivation of the government in the way in which they have interpreted the committee’s recommendations.

Mr Bradbury interjecting—

Mr ROBB: The fact of the matter is that the only time that we see Treasury data in its rawest form, so the member for Denison can be satisfied that we are working with Treasury data unadulterated, is when PEFO is released. PEFO is not released until 10 days after the issuing of the writs—is that correct?

Mr Bradbury interjecting—

Mr ROBB: Right?

Mr Bradbury: You're telling the story.

Mr ROBB: Yes, right. Let us say that we had obtained access 10 days into the caretaker period, and we wished to see whether the policy proposals that we had been preparing for three years—

Mr Bradbury: What have you got at the moment?

Mr ROBB: The reason your government is in such trouble is that you did not prepare any policy in three years—that is the reason. We would want to wait for PEFO, despite having prepared a raft of policy, so that we got the latest statistics on costings when we released our documents publicly. Let us say that the government released a policy in the second week of the campaign and that we wanted to prepare and release a variation on that; or that we were preparing to release something, but it was partly covered by the government's policy. If you wanted to assess the merits of the policy, you are telling me, Parliamentary Secretary, that, if we put it into the office, the detail of that would be automatically released. We would not have the opportunity to make a considered assessment of whether that was affordable—

Mr Bradbury interjecting—

Mr ROBB: Madam Deputy Speaker, do I have to put up with these cheap shots?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The parliamentary secretary will stop interrupting.

Mr ROBB: The Treasurer has sent a boy on a man's errand here—that is what we have found out tonight. Why doesn't he have the courage to come in here and answer these questions? The only way you are answering any questions is with the help of the advisers over there; you have no idea yourself, Parliamentary Secretary. Why isn't the Treasurer here to answer these accusations? This is a very important issue. An election swung on it last time, and now we are sitting here with the parliamentary secretary grinning over at his advisers to see if they will give him another piece of advice that he can come up to the box with.

On the free flow of information, which the member for Lyne quite appropriately asked a question about, you have just confirmed, Parliamentary Secretary, that if the Parliamentary Budget Office is set up as you have described it and as it is embodied in the bill and if the office went confidentially they could get access to the assumptions, the variables and the modelling for such things as the education rebate and the carbon tax. I would be grateful if you could properly and directly answer the following questions. Would the Parliamentary Budget Office get private and confidential access to the modelling of such things as the education rebate and the carbon tax—not only to the
outcomes but also to the hundreds of assumptions and to the way in which that model was written? Would it have the ability to get an assessment of what would happen if some of those variables were changed?

If you are true to the broad statement you made before, you will answer yes to that. If you cannot answer yes to that, the member for Lyne and the member for Denison and every other person in this chamber should be deeply concerned about the motive, the veracity, the credibility and the integrity of this process. On two counts now—firstly, on the access to private information and, secondly, on the presentation of policies before an election in the caretaker period—you have created great doubt.

(\textit{Time expired})

\textbf{Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (17:31):} I think the parliamentary secretary really summed up the government's position. He said that other parliamentary budget offices have the capacity for independent analysis but the government has chosen not to have it with this.

\textbf{Mr Bradbury:} I said some.

\textbf{Mr Briggs:} Just the big ones!

\textbf{Mr HOCKEY:} Well, some. The big ones, like the Canadian budget office and the United States Congressional Budget Office. But that is okay, because now the Independents are about to support a lesser model, in the words of the parliamentary secretary. He said: 'Hang on, guys. We decided—'

\textbf{Mr Bradbury interjecting—}

\textbf{Mr HOCKEY:} You did that! I encourage you to get a copy of the \textit{Hansard}. It was a telling admission after how many hours of debate? He has now accepted that the government—

\textbf{Mr Bradbury:} It was the committee.

\textbf{Mr HOCKEY:} And now he is blaming the committee! There can never be any difference of opinion between this chamber and a committee! That is impossible to countenance!

\textbf{Mr Bradbury interjecting—}

\textbf{Mr HOCKEY:} Keep digging, old china! Now we have a new rule for this chamber. This chamber is not allowed to disagree with a committee, even though the amendment immediately before the House was not a recommendation of the committee. This chamber is not allowed under any circumstances to disagree with a recommendation of a committee. So we are the echo chamber of a parliamentary committee. That is all it is.

What most interested me in this debate is that, after admitting that this is a lesser parliamentary budget office than those of other countries, the parliamentary secretary then went on to say, 'Yes,' in answer to the member for Lyne, who has already made up his mind but who did ask a question about—

\textbf{Mr Billson interjecting—}

\textbf{Mr HOCKEY:} No, I do not think there is any change coming, mate. Sorry to let you down. I do not think he ever moves on these things. It was quite interesting when the member for Lyne asked the question about access to information from Treasury. The parliamentary secretary just retorted: 'Section 64F. Look at that. That is how you are going to get the information out of Treasury.' Now, I have read section 64F—I do not know if the member for Lyne has—and it says:

The Parliamentary Budget Officer may make an arrangement—

This is the subject of another of my amendments. It says the PBO may make an arrangement. Not 'will', not 'must', not 'shall', but 'may':

\begin{itemize}
  \item in writing, with the Head … of a Commonwealth body … to obtain from the body information and documents relevant to the Parliamentary Budget Officer's functions.
\end{itemize}
I am prepared to put my wallet on this table and make a bet with the member for Lyne. Here is 20 bucks, right here. I seek leave to table $20.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms S Bird): The member for North Sydney would be aware that that is not a parliamentary thing to do.

Mr HOCKEY: I am seeking leave.

Leave not granted.

Mr HOCKEY: I am prepared to put $20 on the table to have a bet with the member for Lyne that the only source of information this body will have out of the Treasury will be the Treasury forecast in the MYEFO or the budget. I bet that the MOU, if it should ever be agreed between the Parliamentary Budget Office and the Treasury, will never extend to getting any further information out of the Treasury other than that which is published. I am betting my money here because that is what this piece of legislation says. It says you can only use the budget numbers—that is, the Treasurer's numbers—and should you require any further information you need to have an MOU, a memorandum of understanding, with the department from the PBO. What a laugh!

Mr Oakeshott interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: I am sorry, but I understand the legislation. It is in here. It is going to come as a rude shock, but it is actually in the legislation and I look forward—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for North Sydney will resume his seat. I indicate to members that it is extremely unseemly to be casting bets around in this chamber and I will ask that you desist from doing so.

Mr HOCKEY: I am happy not to have a bet. I am just using that line. Perhaps we can lay something more significant on the line, like the seat of the member for Lyne. Maybe we could lay his seat on the line and see whether this turns out to be the case.

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (17:36): To reiterate a point the shadow Treasurer made, the saviour that the parliamentary secretary sought to offer was the prospect of an elusive MOU. We have established that we are handcuffed to the Treasurer's numbers. The only time we get a clear run at Treasury numbers is during the election period, when there is no confidentiality. I am grateful that it was not necessary for me to hand over the bill, but now we are relying on the provision that relates to the memorandum. I can just imagine a department secretary saying: 'Look, I've had this approach from the Parliamentary Budget Office. It's been so hollowed out by the parliament because the executive doesn't want it actually doing what parliamentary budget offices do in other jurisdictions, and now there's a memorandum of understanding.' Does anyone—particularly the Independents—think for one minute that an MOU will trump the legislation of the parliament? Does anyone think that will happen? Does anyone think that the department—the Treasury officials—will sit there and say, 'Look, I know there's been this express wish of the parliament, as reflected in the legislation.' The parliamentary secretary has rolled out all of these spurious and incredibly unpersuasive arguments about why it is in the national interest to nobble the Parliamentary Budget Office before it even starts. Then Treasury officials say, 'Well, there is scope for us to enter into an MOU.' Do you think for one minute that that MOU will go anywhere further? Of course it will not. It may even be more restrictive than what the parliament said. It might even say: 'Now that you're nobbled to the Treasurer's numbers and PEFO, we don't even want you to be critical of those; that's under the MOU.'
The MOU might say, 'You can't criticise any of the pre-election data or challenge any of the economic foundations in the forecasts, so, on the basis of the MOU, we will provide you with that material only so long as you are completely respectful and not in any way contradicting what the Treasury—or in this case the Treasurer—has had to say,' or the MOU might simply go down to: 'Would you like it on an Excel spreadsheet? Can we send it electronically? How quickly would you like it? If it happens to be late on a Friday night, is Monday okay?' Come on, Parliamentary Secretary! We know you are a lightweight in the Treasury portfolio, but do not tell the parliament or try to reassure the Independents that this completely empty, vacuous argument you put up has anything to do with the substantive issues that we are debating here.

The MOU will add nothing to this debate. It risks actually constraining further the information that is available. If it goes to information at all, it will not touch on any of the assumptions, any of the modelling or any of the various parameters that have been set and selected. It will not go to that; it will actually be more focused on the process of obtaining the already constrained information. The executive is hell-bent on making sure that only its view of the economic world and forecast ever sees the light of day.

I go back to where this started, the PBO—pretty bleeding obvious! They are trying to take the heart out of this, deny it to the Independents and deny it the respect that the Parliamentary Budget Officer deserves—and that is to satisfy himself or herself on what should be the basis of calculations that he or she is undertaking. That should be what is available here, and for the parliamentary secretary to come up and say, 'Hey, the MOU's the answer for everything,' is just utter, utter nonsense.

Mr ROBB (Goldstein) (17:39): I am just concerned that I get an answer to the last two questions that I put to the parliamentary secretary. I will reiterate. As I understand it, Parliamentary Secretary, you confirmed to the member for Lyne—

Mr Oakeshott: To the House.

Mr ROBB: In response to the member for Lyne's question.

Mr Oakeshott: Yes—to the House.

Mr ROBB: Either way, I am happy. You confirmed to the House in response to the member for Lyne's question that if the Parliamentary Budget Office as embodied in your bill wants to see, privately and confidentially, the modelling of the carbon tax, the education rebate or any other modelling for that matter—if it wants to see the assumptions that have been made, the variables that have been included, the code that has been written and the impact of changing certain assumptions on the outcomes—then that is in fact embodied in this legislation. If that is true, that is a huge step forward. I would be grateful if you could confirm whether that is true or not.

Secondly, I would be grateful if you could also confirm that, under this Parliamentary Budget Office as espoused by the government, if we as an opposition, in the third week of the caretaker period of the next legislation, present two competing proposals which we are looking to get costed so that we can make—

Mr Bradbury interjecting—

Mr ROBB: You have your chance to answer the question; let me just put it first so that people can understand what I am getting at. Suppose that we in the third week of the caretaker period of the forthcoming campaign, from opposition, have two competing proposals to achieve a similar objective and we wish to have those costed
so that we can find out which is the proposal which has most merit, which is economically the best, which one may be robust and which one may be less affected by changes in the economic environment. If we wish to have that analysis done, are you saying, Parliamentary Secretary, that this bill requires that material to be made public on both of those considerations before we have made a decision?

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (17:43): I will address those two points. As I indicated earlier, in relation to the ability to access information, proposed section 64F provides the mechanism through which a memorandum of understanding can be brought into effect, and that would provide sufficient opportunity for access to that information.

In relation to the second question that the member for Goldstein has asked, on the provision of materials for costing during the caretaker period, I draw the member’s attention to proposed section 64J of the bill, which provides the direction in relation to matters that might be brought forward for costing during the caretaker period. At proposed section 64J(2), the bill reads:

An authorised member of a Parliamentary party may request the Parliamentary Budget Officer to prepare a costing of a publicly announced policy of the Parliamentary party.

That, in effect, is no different to the way in which the Charter of Budget Honesty occurs in relation to the caretaker period.

Mr Hockey: It is just a duplication of the Charter of Budget Honesty.

Mr BRADBURY: I find that amusing because, for all of the time I observed those within the Howard government, they held up the Charter of Budget Honesty as though it were some particular beacon for good governance.
Under the proposals that are being put forward in these amendments by the opposition, it would be possible for the opposition in the caretaker period to bring forward a set of policies that may be publicly announced, to have them costed but, in the event that their confidentiality provisions were allowed to prevail, then there would not be a requirement for the PBO to release those details. Under your proposals, that is what you have suggested. The other amendment that you are moving would suggest—

Mr Hockey interjecting—

Mr BRADBURY: With great respect, this has been a wide-ranging debate and the question I have been asked does not go to this amendment either; it goes to the amendment to which I am referring. I make the point that, under the amendments that have been brought forward by the opposition, you could have a situation where they publicly announce a policy, they take it to the PBO, they do not like the answer that they get from the PBO, they go off to one of their accounting firms—one of their mates—and they get alternative costings and then they shop around for the one they want. We do not want that. We want a comparable set of benchmarks and that is why we are proposing this system.

(Time expired)

Mr ROBB (Goldstein) (17:48): This has taken us about 2½ hours, but the parliamentary secretary has finally confirmed that the caretaker period under the proposal that is embodied in this government's Parliamentary Budget Office is absolutely no different to the situation we confronted at the last election and the election before that. We have a choice: we can use non-current Treasury data before the caretaker period or we can wait for PEFO—PEFO is very important data—and get accurate assessments of alternative policies, some of which we have not yet made a decision on because it depends on what data the PEFO comes up with. Those will be used and abused by the government. This is a total stitch-up and you have confirmed it. You have confirmed today that the only thing this does is give us access to costings well ahead of an election. That is what you have confirmed.

Mr ROBB: None of the people here, including the member for Hunter—was that you just throwing in your two-penneth? You have not been here for 2½ hours.

Mr ROBB: Now that we have confirmed that nothing has changed and that, as far as the caretaker period is concerned, this is a total stitch-up, why are we wasting our time on this bill in this place? If you are going to use and abuse the office of government to misrepresent the findings of a committee, why are we wasting our time here when we will end up in the same dogfight again next
time? Why not have a process where we can get rid of the calculations at a point of contention and then we can debate the merit of policy during the campaign. No, you are not prepared to do that. You just want to get down in the gutter again at the next election and spend 33 days casting aspersions on our ability to make assessments of the costings, when we would like to have an independent office which makes its own judgment of your policies and our policies so that we can take this costing process out of the public arena and we can debate policy. That is the root of the problem. The second thing is that the parliamentary secretary has again, in a very—

*Government members interjecting—*

**Mr ROBB:** Madam Deputy Speaker, do you have several debates going on here or not?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Goldstein has the call.

**Mr ROBB:** I might have the call but I am having trouble hearing myself because of the Leader of the House.

A government member: You're not missing much!

**Mr ROBB:** That is true.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** We will all stop interjecting and the member for Goldstein will continue his remarks through the chair and not refer to 'you' as often as he has been.

**Mr ROBB:** I will forget 'you'. The parliamentary secretary very craftily slipped around the second issue. I did ask him very explicitly whether, if the Parliamentary Budget Office wanted to get access to the carbon tax modelling and the assumptions—to all of the variables—and the impact of changes in those assumptions—

*Government members interjecting—*

**Mr ROBB:** I am asking a question. Do you want to listen or do you just want to prattle on over there?

*Government members interjecting—*

**Mr ROBB:** You are not in this debate.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Goldstein will resume his seat for a moment. I indicate that there has been a great deal of interjection, including interjections by members on their own speakers. The debate has been robust and I have allowed it to run but it is now my feeling that it is getting out of hand. The member for Goldstein will not respond to other conversations in the room. Those having other conversations will take them outside. The member for Goldstein has the call but his time is up. Is the member for Goldstein seeking the call a second time?

**Mr ROBB:** I am. *(extension of time granted)* Thank you for that privilege. The second point I would like to raise is the fact that I asked, quite specifically and directly, of the parliamentary secretary whether the Parliamentary Budget Office would have access to the variables and the modelling and the opportunity to change assumptions in that modelling and assess the outcome of that modelling—and any other modelling, for that matter. In a very obtuse way he said that the Parliamentary Budget Office could seek to strike a memorandum of understanding. The question I have to the parliamentary secretary is: does that mean that if a particular department—pick any one of 30—feels, on a day that they are requested by the Parliamentary Budget Office, that they do not want the department or the modelling that they have used and developed to be put under any scrutiny, they can just refuse to agree to a memorandum of understanding which gives the Parliamentary Budget Office that sort of access? If that is the case this is
like the FOI process, where you are denied anything of any consequence.

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (17:55): Madam Deputy Speaker, I have sought the call because the member for Grayndler came in and told the member at the table not to answer any questions. It is just part of the ongoing transparency of the government, I suppose! And the Independents are voting for it, I might add, but so be it. If you think we are using the filibuster I will speak on this in summary—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for North Sydney, I do not think anything.

Mr HOCKEY: on behalf of the opposition, because the government are not going to answer any further questions at the instruction of the member for Grayndler. First, the parliamentary secretary has now admitted that this is a lesser model than that which is applying in other countries. He would say that because, as he failed to note, the Parliamentary Library’s pre-election policy unit identified that the PBO should include the provision of the kinds of assistance offered by the PBO such as costing and economic modelling’. So the Parliamentary Library says the PBO should be able to do its own independent modelling.

And the Clerk of the House of Representatives, in the submission to the committee that the member for Lyne boasts of being a part of, says:

... discussion may be more comprehensive if Members had access to some additional quantitative analysis on how government projections had been arrived at and their sensitivity to assumptions.

That is the point the member for Goldstein raised.

We now know that the government’s justification for having the Treasurer and the minister for finance as the sole contributors of economic data, economic modelling and fiscal data to the PBO is cost. That is what he said before. This is a government that is now concerned about cost. After four years it has suddenly grown concerned about cost. What a revelation! Forget the billions of dollars that were handed out, the $900 cheques, now is the time to draw a line: ’We don’t want it to go from $6 million to $7 million a year; we are going to be prudent as a government and we are going to hold back.’

Mr Briggs: Return to surplus!

Mr HOCKEY: This will be the path to surplus! My second point, in summary, is that the parliamentary secretary has admitted that now there will be no additional access to information out of the Treasury or the department of finance or any other department without a memorandum of understanding. It will be a memorandum of understanding that this Parliamentary Budget Office is going to have signed with 30 different departments by the next election— yeah, right! They are going to have unfettered access under those MOUs, but that is the subject of another of my amendments.

The first of my amendments seeks, after all these hours of debate, to prove the case that this government, in partnership with the Independents, is just not serious about having a fully independent parliamentary budget office. By the words of the parliamentary secretary and the admissions in the very drafting of this bill, it is now clear that the government itself, in partnership with the Independents, is de-fanging the Parliamentary Budget Office. In the words of the parliamentary secretary himself: ’It is a lesser parliamentary budget office than that which exists in some other jurisdictions.’ Question put:

That the amendment (Mr Hockey’s) be agreed to.
The House divided. [18:03]
(The Speaker—Mr Harry Jenkins)

Ayes....................67
Noes....................69
Majority.............2

AYES
Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Bishop, BK
Briggs, JE
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Forrest, JA
Griggs, NL
Hartsuyker, L
Hockey, JB
Irons, SJ
Jones, ET
Kelly, C
Ley, SP
Marano, NB
Matheson, RG
Mirabella, S
Neville, PC
O’Dwyer, KM
Ramsey, RE
Robb, AJ
Roy, WB
Schultz, AJ
Secker, PD (teller)
Slipper, PN
Somyaji, AM
Stone, SN
Truss, WE
Turnbull, MB
Vasta, RX
Wyatt, KG

NOES
Elliot, MJ
Emerson, CA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georgas, S
Gillard, JE
Grierson, SJ
Hall, JG (teller)
Husic, EN (teller)
Kelly, MJ
Leigh, AK
Lyons, GR
Marles, RD
Melham, D
Murphy, JP
Oakeshott, RJM
O’Neill, DM
Parke, M
Plibersek, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Saffin, JA
Sidebottom, PS
Smyth, L
Thomson, CR
Willie, AD
Zappia, A

NOES
Ellis, KM
Ferguson, LDT
Garrett, PR
Gibbons, SW
Gray, G
Griffin, AP
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
King, CF
Livermore, KF
Macklin, JL
McClelland, RB
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
O’Connor, BPJ
Ovens, J
Perrett, GD
Ripoll, BJ
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Smith, SF
Swan, WM
Vamvakas, M
Windsor, AHC

PAIRS
Ciobo, SM
Dutton, PC
Frydenberg, JA
Gambaro, T
Moylan, JE
Pyne, CM

Question negatived.
Debate adjourned.

Clean Energy Bill 2011
Clean Energy (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2011
Clean Energy (Income Tax Rates Amendments) Bill 2011
Clean Energy (Household Assistance Amendments) Bill 2011
Clean Energy (Tax Laws Amendments) Bill 2011
Clean Energy (Fuel Tax Legislation Amendment) Bill 2011
Clean Energy (Customs Tariff Amendment) Bill 2011
Clean Energy (Excise Tariff Legislation Amendment) Bill 2011
Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Import Levy) Amendment Bill 2011
Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Manufacture Levy) Amendment Bill 2011
Clean Energy (Unit Shortfall Charge—General) Bill 2011
Clean Energy (Unit Issue Charge—Auctions) Bill 2011
Clean Energy (Unit Issue Charge—Fixed Charge) Bill 2011
Clean Energy (International Unit Surrender Charge) Bill 2011
Clean Energy (Charges—Customs) Bill 2011
Clean Energy (Charges—Excise) Bill 2011
Clean Energy Regulator Bill 2011
Climate Change Authority Bill 2011
Steel Transformation Plan Bill 2011

Second Reading
Debate resumed on the motion:
That these bills be now read a second time.

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (18:12): The Clean Energy Bill 2011 and related bills have no mandate. These bills will send Australian jobs offshore. These bills will have no global or local environmental benefit. This carbon tax is the largest single change to the Australian economy that we have seen in a lifetime. This legislation will have a devastating effect on Australian citizens and Australian business, particularly small business. In my electorate, these bills will put small business and farmers at a disadvantage. The tax will severely impact on the mining industry and on agriculture.

We have heard from the member for New England of the benefits in the Carbon Farming Initiative. This is a Trojan Horse. The Carbon Farming Initiative will not be of benefit to farmers in regional Australia. The Carbon Farming Initiative will not help the productivity of agriculture in regional Australia. The Carbon Farming Initiative will not be accepted by mainstream farmers. Farmers in Australia and farmers in my electorate are the most efficient, the most energy conscious of anywhere in the world. Farmers in Australia produce more tonnes of grain and fibre per litre of fuel and megalitre of water than anywhere in the world. To hamper them with this tax that is going to impact on their inputs is going to place them at a disadvantage to their trading partners and to their competitors who are trading into our markets. This legislation is based on a false ideology. This legislation is working on the conscience of Australians. Australians do want to help the environment. Australians do care about the future of their children and their grandchildren. These bills will not have any beneficial effect on the environment but they will hamper our children and our grandchildren in their ability to be competitive with the rest of the world. If this country sinks into financial oblivion because of the impost placed by this tax, our country, our children and our grandchildren will not be in a position to undertake any environmental improvements because of the financial impost. They will be at a disadvantage to the rest of the world, and we do not need to lead the world in this charge. (Time expired)
Ms MARINO (Forrest—Opposition Whip) (18:15): The Labor-Greens proposal for an economy-wide tax on carbon is the wrong answer to the question of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. Through the Clean Energy Bill 2011 and associated bills, the government is imposing a unilateral tax and costs on Australia's industries, businesses, families, local governments, hospitals, schools, community groups and sporting organisations. No-one will be exempt. It will cost Australians $9 billion in the first year alone. At the same time as the US is facing a double-dip recession and Europe is staring down the barrel of debt default, this is beyond irresponsible. This is just sheer, unmitigated economic stupidity. The Productivity Commission has stated that this will be the only economy-wide carbon tax in the world—described by US Republican congressman on climate change, Jim Sensenbrenner, as 'unilateral economic disarmament'. This is an indictment.

Australians have a great deal of common sense, and common sense tells us that we will all pay more under this carbon tax. Even Ross Garnaut has said that ultimately householders will pay. No matter what the compensation is, common sense tells us that we will pay more—pensioners, self-funded retirees and those who struggle to make ends meet. Common sense also tells us that taxing Australian business and industry in Australia and not in other countries will drive industry and jobs offshore. In fact, it is already happening, as businesses factor the carbon risk into their forward planning.

Australians understand that, while both the Liberal and Labor parties in Australia are committed to a five per cent reduction in our country's emissions from year 2000 levels, the major global emitters will actually increase their emissions up to fivefold over the next decades. World CO₂ emissions are projected to rise by about 50 per cent—from 30 billion tonnes in 2010 to 45 billion tonnes in 2020—and nearly half of that increase will occur in one country.

Most Australians are already reducing their own emissions to help meet our five per cent reduction target. Individuals, families, businesses, industries and even those vilified by the Labor government as 'big polluters' have cut or are cutting their emissions. These are the same companies employing hundreds of thousands of Australians and are the major contributors to regional, state and national economies, often underpinning much of regional Australia. Their combined efforts to date have seen Australia's emissions intensity decrease by over 44 per cent since 1990. Australian industries and families have become more energy efficient and less carbon intensive without a carbon tax—a tax that is specifically designed to make their lives more difficult and costly.

Australians are addressing climate change. This is why Australia is one of the few countries in the world to meet its emissions reduction obligations under the Kyoto protocol. As a result, Australians do know that the Gillard government's unilateral, cascading tax on their homes, families and businesses is not the answer. In stark contrast, the coalition policy provides incentives to further reduce carbon pollution by targeting direct action, not through a Labor policy that raises the cost of living for families, increases costs for small business and industry and decreases our international competitiveness.

Even using the government's own figures, three million Australian households will be worse off. We know that over 400,000 families in Western Australia alone will miss out on any form of assistance. And the impact on regional Australia will be disproportionately high, given the impact that transport costs will have. And what for?
Australian emissions will not fall under this tax. The government's own modelling states that their new carbon tax will not reduce emissions in Australia—in fact, they will 578 million tonnes to 621 million tonnes. So here we have a Labor government plan to raise costs for families and businesses through a tax that will not reduce Australia's total emissions and makes a negligible impact on world emissions. The government's own adviser and Climate Change Commissioner, Professor Tim Flannery, said:

If the world as a whole cut all emissions tomorrow the average temperature of the planet is not going to drop in several hundred years, perhaps as much as a thousand years.

And, as we know, emissions will in fact increase.

The Labor government carbon tax plan only works if billions of dollars are spent on purchasing overseas emissions reductions. Many of these reductions will be brought from in countries with higher total emissions than Australia. According to Treasury, well over half will come from the former Soviet Union and from 'other Asia'. Australians will be paying $57 billion, not to reduce emissions in Australia but to reduce emissions in other countries which may not be paying one cent to reduce their own emissions and may not even have the capacity to measure emissions or emissions reductions. So here we have a Labor government plan to raise costs to families and businesses through a tax that will not reduce Australia's total emissions and the government's own Climate Change Commissioner, Professor Tim Flannery, saying that it may perhaps take a thousand years to make a difference.

The carbon tax will cost jobs across Australia, including in my electorate of Forrest. Australian Trade and Industry Alliance data reveals that nine out of 10 manufacturing jobs are with companies that will face the full impact of the carbon tax and that less than nine per cent of Australia's more than one million manufacturing workers are employed by firms that will have any compensation from the Labor government. Some of these companies are in my electorate. Millennium Inorganic Chemicals Ltd is one of only two Australian titanium dioxide pigment producers. Together with the Tiwest Pty Ltd joint venture, which is also in Western Australia, they produce five per cent of the world's titanium dioxide. I ask members to note that Australia produces 20 per cent of the world's titanium dioxide feedstock but only five per cent of the processed product. The remainder is mined here but sent overseas for processing. According to the submission Millennium and Tiwest jointly made to the government on this legislation, this carbon price impact on titanium dioxide production, even with initial 66 per cent assistance, will very likely lead to carbon leakage with a net increase in global CO$_2$ emissions. They said there was a real risk that potential expansions would be deferred or cancelled. In particular, Tiwest is considering an expansion that would likely be deferred or ultimately cancelled. The loss of this $150 million expansion would come at the cost of around 400 construction jobs and additional operational staff. Like many other trade exposed industries, Millennium Inorganic Chemicals needs to be supported, because this government's carbon tax creates an even more unfair playing field for Australian exporters.

This Labor government could increase their assistance to this industry to the 94.5 per cent level or provide a separate special assistance package or, the best solution of all, scrap its plans for a carbon tax that will drive Australian jobs and industry offshore. Then Millennium could just get on with the
job of employing people and generating export dollars for our nation.

Collie is the industrial hub of my seat of Forrest, and it faces a major threat from Labor's carbon tax. Collie has three power stations—Muja, Collie and Bluewaters—with total annual emissions of 9.8 million tonnes of CO₂. However, the government is refusing to compensate any of these power stations for the cost of their carbon tax. They will be facing a cost of $225 million. These costs will have to be passed on to Western Australian power users. There will also be businesses which cannot pass costs on and there are nearly half a million families in WA who will receive no assistance at all. Some of those businesses and families live in Collie and work in and with the power stations.

There is a broader concern for Collie. The Labor government plans to change Australia's electricity base to just 10 per cent coal generation by 2050—down from 80 per cent now—this is the government's plan—it is in their document. As well, this tax devalues every existing coal fired power generation asset—an issue for finance or refinance. It also impacts on new and proposed businesses, such as the proposed Perdaman coal to urea plant which will face a residual tax liability of $25 million a year.

Worsley Alumina is one of the largest and most efficient alumina refineries in the world. It produces over $1 billion worth of exports every year, and directly employs over 1,500 workers. This is about to rise with the completion of a multibillion dollar expansion. Australian alumina production is part of a highly competitive global market, and making production more expensive here will risk the next alumina project or expansion. Worsley is a part of the Australian Greenhouse Gas Challenge, and has committed to reducing its emissions for each tonne of alumina produced. Over the last five years Worsley has reduced its emissions intensity by 6.25 per cent. This has been achieved without a carbon tax. As a reward for this the government is planning to tax Worsley millions of dollars every year.

Cement is a critical commodity for the Australian building industry, for community development and for the our economy, in the south-west particularly. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development says that 'after water, concrete is the most consumed material on earth—cement is the glue that holds it together'. In my electorate John Hovey runs Australind Premix, and his business is now at the mercy of this government's carbon tax. John has to work out whether he has a carbon tax liability, what that liability might be, and what that means for his business—but of course he will have to pay to find out. And right now neither he nor his accountant can answer those questions.

He, like thousands of others, has no direct measure of his current emissions, so he has to work out if his businesses emit more than 25,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. Even if he falls under the 25,000 tonne limit he will, like many others, still be hit by the carbon tax. A major part of his business is transport—all of his inputs have to be transported to him, and then the products transported to his customers. He is also a high user of electricity. All this means that John will be paying considerably more to run his business with no compensation, and he will probably have to absorb the additional cost.

At a time of economic uncertainty the government has imposed even more uncertainty on John Hovey, his workers and his business. John is another business owner who has taken environmental responsibility and invested in new low-emissions
technologies. His new trucks meet the European standards, but that is ignored by the government. They are in limbo with this tax—he has no clear idea of where his business stands and he is going to have bureaucrats crawling all over his business for years and years. He, like every other business, just wants to get on with what he does best: having a go, hard work, investing his own money, employing local people and offering service and products to people in the south-west.

In agriculture, some of the biggest input costs are fertiliser, feed and electricity—all affected by the carbon tax. We know about dairy farmers, apple orchards, abattoirs, butchers. Australian farmers are at the frontline in the delivery of environmental outcomes—they have collectively spent $3 billion on natural resource management on their properties, and reduced emissions by 40 per cent from 1990 to 2006—that is 94.3 per cent of farmers actively undertaking NRM. Two million Australian small businesses will face higher input costs and receive no direct support, including the nearly 14,500 small businesses in the south-west.

The statement that only 400 businesses will be affected by the carbon tax is a complete fabrication. The transport costs will impact very seriously on regional areas. We know that at least 56 per cent of small businesses may pass on the carbon cost to consumers but, because of restrictions and competition, 44 per cent will have no choice but to pay the costs themselves. This is a real issue in regional areas and right around Australia.

One in three small businesses surveyed expect to have to sack staff as a result of this Labor policy. This policy is expected to cost jobs; common sense again tells us so. We do know about the transport costs; it will apply to transport from 2014. Regional people will feel these costs. It will have a greater impact.

In 2007 Australian trucks transported 277 million tonnes of food and animals around the country, and the carbon tax is designed to add costs to every tonne.

In its analysis of Australia's climate policy, the Wall Street Journal concluded that the Labor-Greens proposal was as much about social engineering as environmental stewardship. It noted that 'this is in part a scheme to redistribute income from energy users to Labor voters'. The Labor government's proposal is to raise the cost of living of every Australian who uses energy and the cost of doing business for millions of Australian businesses, for the net result of a small increase in Australian emissions and a massive increase in world emissions. I would counsel the House to remember the very wise words of Winston Churchill, who said that for 'a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket trying to lift himself up by the handle'. That is what we see with this Labor government carbon tax. As I said at the beginning of my speech today, common sense tells Australians that, irrespective of what they are offered, they will all pay.

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (18:30): I would like to begin by sharing a letter I received earlier this year from a group of primary school students in my electorate: the Vardy's Road year 4 reading group. It reads:

Dear Ms Rowland

We are worried about our future. We want you to help our country to reduce greenhouse gas production. Climate scientists tell us that we only have ten years to turn things around. If we don't, by the time we are adults in 2020, it will be too late.

We will still be alive when your life is over. We want to have a good life like you have had. We don't want to live in a mess.

On 3 May I had the pleasure of meeting with and spending time with these young students.
These young people, the future leaders of this country and the future mums and dads of Australia, wanted to know what I am doing to address their concerns. I told these young people that I am committed to taking action to safeguard our environment from the effects of climate change, to sustain our society, to support our economy and to create the jobs of the future. I could tell these children that I am a member of a government that cares about their future; that I believe climate change is real, that human activity contributes to it and that it has a detrimental effect on our environment, which will only get worse if we do not take action now; and that I am committed to doing something about it, something that is economically responsible as well as environmentally sound, that recognises that the most vulnerable in our society need a helping hand and that creates and grows jobs in the future. The biggest polluters in our economy will now pay to pollute, something that today they do for free. The cost of that pollution is borne by the environment and in turn by each of us.

I speak today in support of the Clean Energy Bill 2011 and related bills. I do so as a proud member of this government, as a local member and as a mother-to-be. Everything has a cause and effect. Everyone in this place knows that if we drive our car recklessly we endanger society and we should pay a price for it. If we rely on obtaining energy by burning irreplaceable fuel and the consequences threaten the safety of our society then surely those doing the polluting should pay a price for it also. It is the right thing to do for this country both environmentally and economically.

Western Sydney is already embracing a clean energy future that recognises the environmental and economic realities. You can see it in action. The TAFE New South Wales Western Sydney Institute's GreenSkills Hub in Quakers Hill is revolutionising the way our tradespeople are being trained. Last year I was honoured to officially open the GreenSkills Hub, which was later visited by the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency to see how the green jobs of the future are being created in the fastest-growing region of Sydney. The Western Sydney GreenSkills Hub was funded under this government's Training Infrastructure Investment for Tomorrow initiative. It is a living laboratory designed to model sustainable practices and provide innovative training in subject areas that include green electrical engineering, plumbing, refrigeration and information technology.

For anyone in this place who wants to see how the new green-collar jobs are being created under this government, I strongly recommend a visit to the Quakers Hill GreenSkills Hub. It is the first vocational education and training facility of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. The young apprentices there are literally the first of their kind to become qualified in the green skills trade.

Speaking of young people and jobs of the future, I also have a special obligation to support this legislation because of the reality that exists in my electorate of Greenway. I often refer to our region in west and northwest Sydney as Australia's nursery and that is because in nearly every age category the electorate of Greenway ranks as one of the youngest in Australia. As an example, 8.2 per cent of Greenway's population is aged zero to five years old, making it the second youngest electorate in the entire country.

There is a particular demographic in our society which occupies the time and energy of many a marketing consultant or public office holder—young people who feel disenfranchised from the policy and
legislative process that impacts on them and their future and indeed the non-franchised young people who have not yet reached voting age. We spend hours in this place making decisions that affect these young people. Any public office holder worth their salt struggles to find mechanisms to communicate and engage with them. The problem is that by and large these young people do not have the loudest voices on the airwaves or the opinion pages of the newspapers.

As I said in my first speech in this place, I recognise my obligations to these young people. There are occasions when I spend more time with them, their parents and their teachers than any other single group in my electorate. That is why I know that the Clean Energy Future package encapsulated in these bills, which is about transformational change for a positive future, is what these young people, their parents and their families are focused on.

We do not have to look far outside our region to see why we must act on climate change. Countries in our region stand to be hurt the most by changes to our climate. Indeed, Pacific countries such as Kiribati are already being impacted by rising sea levels brought on by climate change. As documented by the World Wildlife Fund:

The people of Funafitu in Tuvalu and on Kiribati island are lobbying to find new homes: saltwater intrusion has made groundwater undrinkable and these islands are suffering increasing impacts from hurricanes and heavy seas. In the village of Saoluafata in Samoa, villagers have noticed that their coastline has retreated by as much as 50 metres in the last decade. Many of these people have had to move further inland as a result.

Not only in the Pacific are nations being adversely affected by man-made climate change but Asia’s low-lying nations are subjected to sea level rise also. The impact of climate change in these parts is well-documented, including as reported by the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 2010:

The low-lying delta region that makes up much of Bangladesh and the neighbouring Indian state of West Bengal are acutely vulnerable to climate change.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts rising sea levels will devour 17 per cent of Bangladesh by 2050, displacing at least 20 million people.

… … …

The Bangladesh non-governmental organisation Coastal Watch says an average of 11 Bangladeshis are losing their homes to rising waters every hour.

These regional examples demonstrate that not only is it in our domestic interest to tackle climate change but it is also in our national interest, for Australia holds itself out as the leading nation in the Pacific region. We must take the leading diplomatic steps to tackle climate change. These bills will reinstate our authority on this issue and reflect our leading economic, environmental and social status in the Asia-Pacific.

The Australian economy even in these challenging global conditions is diverse and dynamic. Sixty years ago it would have been inconceivable that the agricultural sector, for example, would shrink to where it is today as a proportion of GDP—a topic that rightly continues to occupy many debates in this place. Conversely, nobody would have predicted even 20 years ago what the ICT sector in Australia would look like today, how it would become the primary driver of GDP growth in our economy and the way in which it would become the primary driver of GDP growth in our economy and the way in which it would become the primary driver of GDP growth in our economy and the way in which it would become the primary driver of GDP growth in our economy and the way in which it would become the primary driver of GDP growth in our economy and the way in which it would become the primary driver of GDP growth in our economy and the way in which it would become the primary driver of GDP growth in our economy and the way in which it would become the primary driver of GDP growth in our economy and the way in which it would become the primary driver of GDP growth in our economy. As has been noted time and again, the single most indicative feature of a healthy economy is change. If you are not driving it, if you are not continually transforming it, you are as good as standing still. It is this fact that the opponents of change—the
opponents of transformational public policy—have sought to destroy since time immemorial. And of course we have seen scare campaigns on environmental and economic challenges before in Australia. We have seen how they have been exposed as baseless.

Twenty years ago a Labor government introduced a superannuation guarantee. At that time, those who were sitting opposite made a number of predictions about the supposed damage, with no corresponding benefits, that universal superannuation would wreak on Australian workers in the economy. By revisiting some of the uninformed claims made on superannuation, we can draw some revealing comparisons with the current carbon pricing debate.

Mr Secker: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I ask that you bring the member back to what we are debating. What she is talking about now has absolutely nothing to do with this legislation at all.

Ms ROWLAND: Thank you. By revisiting some of the uninformed claims made on superannuation, we can draw some revealing comparisons—

Mr Secker: How can you possibly say that this has anything to do with the carbon legislation? Superannuation has nothing whatsoever to do with it, and I ask you to bring her back to the legislation.

Mr Clare: Further to the point of order, this is a debate about a major piece of reform legislation in this parliament, and what the member is doing in this debate is making the points that scare campaigns now, like scare campaigns in the past, have been proved false and how important it is for us as legislators to look past those scare campaigns to the best interests of the people of Australia. That is what this member is doing in her contribution, and I ask you to rule that it is in order.

Mr Baldwin: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On the first point of order, the point of order raised by the minister is absolutely ridiculous and irrelevant. The second point of order is that the speaker is not addressing the bill. She is not referring to the legislation about the carbon tax and that planned imposition; she is talking about superannuation. There is nowhere in the 19 bills of the carbon tax legislation that specifically addresses superannuation, so I ask you to bring her back to the bills before the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I see that there is a determination here this evening to play ping-pong with the debate.

Mr Baldwin: As members are requested not to reflect on the chair, I think it is also incumbent on those occupying the chair of Speaker. This is not about playing ping-pong; this is about, to quote the Speaker during question time last week, making sure the standing orders are upheld.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Greenway is within order. I will ask the member for Greenway to continue with her speech.

Ms ROWLAND: Thank you. It is therefore no wonder that the forward-looking nature of the superannuation industry reflects an endorsement of these bills. Richard Mattison, the CEO of Trucost—

Mr Baldwin: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Again, this member is going into issues such as superannuation. The only effect these bills may have on superannuation is a negative effect. I ask you to bring her back to the bills before the House.
Mr Clare: Madam Deputy Speaker, you have ruled on this matter and the member is now canvassing your ruling. Your ruling was correct at first instance, and I ask that the member be deemed in order.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Greenway has the call.

Ms ROWLAND: As Richard Mattison, the CEO of Trucost has said:
Superannuation investment managers can manage carbon risk by integrating carbon metrics into investment processes and identifying opportunities from companies that are better positioned for a low-carbon economy.

Similarly, Fiona Reynolds, the CEO of the Australian Institute of Superannuation Trustees, said that 'moving to a carbon price reduces investment uncertainty and means super funds can look to manage climate change without speculation on the price of carbon pollution'. She added that the three-year transition period would be enough time for funds to prepare for market based pricing of emissions. And the Industry Super Network has welcomed this government's announcement of the introduction of a price on carbon.

We ask ourselves to what lengths our opponents would go to stoke a fear campaign today. The answer is we need to look no further than the concoction of the Premier of New South Wales and the Leader of the Opposition, a story that made the mass media and is now the subject of media scrutiny: how New South Wales Treasury modelling showing train fares would rise by only 0.12 per cent was replaced with a completely made up story from the premier that public transport fares would increase by up to 3.6 per cent under a carbon price.

These baseless scare campaigns have not just been confined to big economic challenges; they also occurred with previous environmental challenges such as the chlorofluorocarbon debate in the 1980s. As history proved, the world acted on CFCs and prevented further environmental damage. The sky did not fall in as those with vested interests promised it would. Businesses and the scientific community innovated and developed real alternatives to CFC just as they will with high-carbon-emitting practices.

The reality is that both sides of this House have policy which purport to seek the same carbon emission reductions in the same time frame, yet time and again speakers opposite in this debate have shown how they refuse to believe those reductions will have any positive environmental impact. As Robert F Kennedy Jr so eloquently stated in his book, *Crimes Against Nature*:

We protect nature not for sake of the trees and the fishes and the birds, but because it is the infrastructure of our communities. If we want to provide our children with the same opportunities for dignity and enrichment as those our parents gave us, we've got to start by protecting the air, water, wildlife, and landscape that connect us to our national values and character.

I came into this place to improve the community I represent, and I plan to do this. As an expectant mother I want my child to grow up in a world where they can see all the beautiful things it has to offer, a world where they can breathe clean air, live a healthy and happy life, and enjoy the benefits of a strong and dynamic economy. I commend the bills to the House, for my child and for the future of this country.

Mr SECKER (Barker—Opposition Whip) (18:45): I rise to speak on the Clean Energy Bill 2011 and associated legislation. From the start I want to point out to the chamber that I do actually understand the theory of greenhouse emissions. I do understand why some scientists say that an overexpansion of CO₂ could possibly lead to an increase in temperatures around the
world. I also understand climate change. I have been a farmer all my life. I rely on the climate. I rely on the weather. I understand it probably as well as anyone in this chamber because my livelihood depended on understanding the climate and what likelihood we would have of rain, heat, dry conditions, drought and so on. That has been part of my life and without it I would not have been as good a farmer as I was—my son now runs the farm.

I understand the theories. I understand we have had climate change. We have had climate change for centuries and I understand when people, especially from the other side, get up and say, ‘We should listen to the scientists.’ I believe in listening to the scientists. You do not always have to accept what they say, but I believe in listening to the scientists. But I can say to this chamber there is not one scientist in the world that will say that these 19 pieces of legislation will have any effect on the climate. There is not one scientist in the world that would say that these bills will have any effect on the climate. Let's just get it right from the start. If we are going to accept the views of scientists then we should accept the view that all scientists in the world would say that this would have no effect on climate.

In the short time that I have I will try to fit in all the views expressed to me by many of my constituents on this government's carbon tax. Firstly, I want to highlight just one of the very bad parts of this legislation. I do not have nearly enough time to tell the House about all the ramifications of this tax but I will touch on some parts I feel are important. After the Prime Minister said, 'There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead,' Julia Gillard, the Prime Minister, then set about introducing a tax that would drive up the cost of living, hurt business and do nothing to improve the environment. This is a $9 billion a year new tax. It will increase electricity bills by 10 per cent in the first year alone, hike gas bills by nine per cent in the first year, equate to higher marginal tax rates for low- and middle-income earners and hit the budget bottom line by $4.3 billion to the negative.

It is important to remember the government has not provided updated modelling since the initial price was set at $23 a tonne, so even as we are debating this motion we have not got the updated modelling because the truth about the government's modelling, which it has used to estimate how much the carbon tax will cost families, pensioners and businesses, is that it uses a price of $20 per tonne not $23 a tonne which is what they are setting the price at. Here we are expected to debate something when we do not have the correct modelling. There is a 15 percent discrepancy between the modelling and the actual price. This carbon tax is deeply flawed from the very beginning.

So with the price starting at $23 a tonne and costs estimated on only $20 a tonne it is also important to understand this government's carbon price is not fixed after three years. The government's own forecast is that the price will rise to $29 per tonne, not the $20 of the modelling, in 2016 then $37 per tonne in 2020 and over $350 per tonne in 2050. Has this government done any calculations on what these prices will do to the cost of living? Those figures would be hard to look at, that is for sure.

There is the Greens influence, this is a Labor-Greens government, and Greens senators have already expressed their views on the price, Senator Bob Brown would like to see $40 per tonne and Senator Hanson Young has canvassed a price of $100 a tonne. Even the government's own...
calculations talk about $350 per tonne in 2050—not $23, nearly 15 times greater.

I spend a fair portion of my time travelling around to businesses in my electorate to listen to their concerns and offer assistance where possible. During my travels this year I have heard one overarching theme: this government's carbon tax will cause unnecessary pain and force many businesses to close their doors. A well-established transport business owner in Murray Bridge with nine employees told me that he will close his doors due to the carbon tax. The added costs to transport will be enormous. A carbon tax will be applied to all trucks from 1 July 2014. This will increase costs significantly for transport companies. On top of that the fuel tax credit will be reduced from 1 July 2012 and this will ultimately lead to higher prices for consumers as the industry will be forced to pass costs on.

An Access Economics report highlighted the potential loss of 126,000 regional jobs under an earlier version of Labor's scheme. Gommers Transport in my electorate estimate Labor's carbon tax will cost their businesses an extra $60,000 a year in fuel alone. That is about $6,000 extra per truck. Gommers employ just under 30 people and transport is just one extra cost. They believe that the flow-on costs will be massive, and I hear stories similar to Gommers all over Barker.

Adelaide Mushrooms, Australia's largest mushroom producer, are another well-established business that believes this government's carbon tax will seriously hurt their business. Initial modelling by Adelaide Mushrooms predicts their costs would increase by $680,700. The price of mushrooms will rise from 18¢ a kilo to 23¢, their gas bill will increase by 10 per cent in 2012, their water bill by 26.3 per cent and freight and packaging both by three per cent. The company will be hit by 5.5 per cent increase to wages, work cover, super and payroll tax—all those increases to a business that has already invested heavily in direct action by planting trees and installing energy-efficient generators.

Australia's 750,000 small businesses will receive no direct compensation; there most certainly will be a damaging flow-on effect from this alone. The Prime Minister has tried dismally to offer support to emissions-intensive and trade-exposed industries. BlueScope Steel chairman, Graham Kraehe, had it right when he said Labor's proposed compensation deal is like putting a bandaid on a bullet wound.

All this pain to businesses and increases to cost of living and the government's own modelling shows emissions will not decrease in Australia. In fact emissions will increase in the eight years from 2012 to 2020, from 578 million tonnes to 621 million tonnes. These are the government's own figures. $3.5 billion in carbon tax revenue will be spent buying carbon credits from overseas. This is a scheme which the Australian Crime Commission has highlighted has involved $5 billion in fraud already.

Farming has not been spared either, and I have a large farming constituency. ABARES, Australia's premier agricultural sector impact group, said that broadacre incomes will slump by two per cent in 2011 and be down by up to 14 per cent by 2015. That is a slug of $1,100 initially, increasing up to $8,900 over four years. So the idea that farmers will not bear any of the cost is wrong, and of course it will be made worse when the tax on diesel comes in two years time, because every farmer knows they have to transport goods for production. Beef farmers will be slugged $1,200 initially, increasing to $6,700 by 2015. Sheep farmers could expect $800 initially, rising to $4,800
by 2015. Crop farmers could expect an initial $1,400 slug, rising to $9,700 by 2015, and diary farmers would face $1,800 in 2011, rising to $8,800, or up to $10,400, by 2015. I suspect this government only delayed the tax on diesel by two years because they knew the cost to consumers would go through the whole system. But it will affect farmers; it is only deferred for two years. The idea that farmers will not be worse off is quite wrong.

I attended a public meeting in Naracoorte in the south-east of my electorate earlier this year. It was organised by one of my constituents and I was a guest. The forum was advertised widely in the community and there was a great turnout. Even though the forum was open to everyone—and I did not organise it—the attendees were unanimously against this government's carbon tax. I would like to read out just a couple of comments I have received from my constituents.

Margaret from the south-east said:

My husband and I are quite worried about the new Carbon Tax. We are pensioners but only own a diesel powered automobile. I have gone on the Internet to find the actual document that Ms Gillard will introduce but I can't find it. We want to know how her scheme will hurt us. We can see no benefits for the atmosphere or the Australian people.

Jan from the Riverland wrote to me and said:

I am very concerned about the Gillard carbon tax. I believe that it will not benefit any individual, nor the environment, but it will cost our country dearly by driving more industry offshore, simply by the fact that it is going to make Australia even less competitive in the World market. I urge you please to oppose this foolhardy action proposed by the government and furthermore stop their socialist agenda.

Her words. If you have a look around the rest of the world, there is no other country planning to impose an economy-wide carbon price. Europe has an ETS, often extolled by those opposite. I have spoken in this place previously on the European ETS and some of the dismal figures coming from it. But today I want to highlight that Europe's ETS is plagued by rorts, fraud and loss of jobs offshore. On top of this, it raises only about $500 million a year while this government's will raise $9 billion a year. That is just over $1 per person that Europe's ETS raises, while Labor's plan will be for $400 per person—$400 versus $1! It is just madness.

China's emissions growth of seven billion tonnes from 2005 to 2020 will be about 100 times Australia's so-called decrease of 70 million tonnes. In reality, there is zero chance either China or India will adopt any form of serious carbon tax. The United States, Canada, Japan and Korea have all either ditched or deferred carbon tax systems. China is experiencing a huge growth in greenhouse gas emissions and this includes the China Daily last year reporting that one League within Inner Mongolia plans to build 24 large-scale coal mines and eight clusters of coal fired power plants. This is just one small League's plans, and the Prime Minister was reported saying this year that China is closing down a dirty coal fired power generation facility at the rate of one every one or two weeks. I think the evidence suggests the opposite: they are building a lot more. The coalition's position is clear: we will vote against this carbon tax legislation and, if elected, we will rescind the legislation and scrap the carbon tax. Australia's manufacturing sector is already under pressure and this carbon tax will increase costs which overseas competitors do not have to pay. The carbon tax will force jobs overseas to factories which emit more emissions than those here in Australia.

Of interest are some promising renewable projects in Barker, a wave power site in Port MacDonnell. Wave power has the ability to be used as base load power and, when not in use for power, can also be utilised for desalination. Also in the south-east is a
geothermal site. The Penola project is a measured geothermal resource totalling 11,000 PJ. This is the largest of only three known measured resources in Australia and can provide base-load power.

Unlike this government's carbon tax, the coalition's policy is fully funded and will ensure a government lives within its means. *(Time expired)*

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (19:00):**
I am pleased to rise to support the Clean Energy Bill 2011 and associated bills. Since the industrial revolution in the 1800s humans have been putting more and more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere through burning fossil fuels like oil and coal. We know that this is having a negative impact on the world's climate and we have known this for a long time. Eighty-six years ago Alfred Lotka calculated the rate humans were burning the earth's energy reserves and talked of how the world's atmosphere would fundamentally change. Since then the science has strengthened and now climate models tell us that CO₂ in the atmosphere traps the sun's heat and is warming our planet. So after a long debate, a multitude of inquiries and reports, it is time to do something. We know that waiting longer will only make the change to a clean energy future harder.

There is often some confusion in the media, sometimes deliberately so I suspect, about climate science because science deals with what is most likely rather than simple 'yes' or 'no' answers. There is always debate in science because science is based on scepticism. 'Prove it to me!' is what scientists always demand. Scientists want data; accepting someone's word is not good enough. This is also exploited by the opposition and vested interests as they wheel out so-called experts to argue that little to nothing needs to be done. The fact that there is debate in science is often used as a basis for arguing that the opinion of very few is the real position that government should take rather than listen to the vast majority of scientists, who have very different conclusions. This tactic has been used in the past to delay changes that will impact interest groups and big business but benefit the vast majority of the public. Science denying that smoking causes cancer is but one example.

For those lacking a science background, it is always prudent and responsible to take advice from those with appropriate scientific qualifications as you would in the area of health. This is what the Labor government is doing, and the vast majority of scientists agree that climate change is indeed real and needs to be tackled. There are also no credible scientific associations, universities or scientific bodies that disagree that climate change is real or caused by human influences. I ask you: are NASA, the UK Royal Society, CSIRO and the Australian Academy of Science all wrong?

Anti-climate change websites, blogs, emails and conspiracy books are unreliable sources of scientific information because they are not based on data or peer reviewed scientific studies. They are opinion only. Furthermore, what we quite often see from the opposition and a handful of so-called experts is not scepticism based on science but climate denial. The opposition, with a wink and a nudge, also have the same target of a five per cent reduction by 2020. We all know they are really in denial about the urgency of the issue and the rigor of the science—no more than two years ago they agreed with it! Only one vote separated whether they would have been prepared to put an ETS to this parliament and this country. But now they are all converted, except one or two, to denial.
We know the Leader of the Opposition has used a variety of descriptions when talking about climate change, including describing it as 'absolute crap'. Later he talked about 'a draconian new police force chasing an invisible, odourless, weightless, tasteless substance'. Recently we had the New South Wales Premier, Mr O'Farrell, claiming publicly in July that the carbon price would increase public transport fares in Sydney by 3.6 per cent and warned that some commuters faced extra costs of $150 a year. And, boy, didn't some newspapers and TV networks rush to get that onto their front pages and onto our screens! But documents released in the New South Wales parliament show that the New South Wales Treasury advised the state government in August that the federal government's carbon price would increase public transport fares not by 3.6 per cent but by just 0.49 per cent.

The opposition's alternative policy, if that is what you could call it, is not supported by science; it is simplistic and not supported by economists or pretty much anyone of any note. With any degree of scrutiny the public would dump it as ineffective and too expensive. Why would any polluter bother to change if it was business as usual? No price on carbon means there is no incentive to change. 'No thanks, we like what we are doing,' would be the response, unless, of course, the subsidy is huge. This would lead to corporate rent seeking in the extreme. The more carbon dioxide you pump into the atmosphere and the more technologically backward an industry is the greater the handout you can receive under the Liberals' policy. That is the logic of it. It is a direct handout, a direct subsidy and a direct windfall to the very industries that create the problem in the first place. There will not be a dollar for those companies who have already reduced their carbon footprint. These companies will not get a cracker from the Liberals because they have already acted to become a zero-emissions company. The Liberal's direct action has no capacity to recognise positive action the way a market mechanism does. In fact, companies who have lowered their emissions off their own bat would see their competition get paid to do nothing to lower their emissions. Again, if this is the case, why bother doing it in the first place? You would be much better waiting to get your hands on a huge subsidy. In a perverse fashion, under the opposition's policy the only way to get a subsidy is to be a polluter waiting for cash in a handout and not be an innovator. The other centrepiece of so-called direct action policy is locking up carbon, specifically planting trees and locking up soil carbon. Firstly, you cannot plant enough trees to take enough carbon from the atmosphere. On top of this, they have ruled out planting trees on great swathes of Australia. There is also no evidence that soil carbon can lock up anywhere near enough carbon to counteract emissions.

On the other hand, Labor has designed a fantastic scheme that, after a fixed price period, creates a market for emissions. Only the big polluters will pay. Scientists tell us we need to reduce our reliance on carbon emissions, and economists tell us that a market mechanism is the cheapest and most effective way to do this. Indeed, until recently those opposite accepted the logic of that argument. Now they reject it. They stand by themselves with one or two newspapers in holding that view. To ignore this advice trashes the credibility of scientists and economists. We know those on the other side have sought to do that and continue to do that. But in designing this package we have not forgotten about households, no matter how much those opposite try to whip up a scare campaign to the contrary.
We have designed a comprehensive support package for Australian households. Nine in 10 households will receive some assistance through tax cuts and/or payment increases. Almost six million households, or two out of three, will get tax cuts or increased payments that cover their entire average price impact. Over four million Australian households will get an extra buffer with assistance that is at least 20 per cent more than their expected average price impact. Over one million Australians will no longer need to lodge a tax return. On average, it will cost households $9.90 per week, but they will get $10.10 per week in assistance.

This assistance is permanent and, contrary to what those opposite say, will increase. The government will review the adequacy of assistance each year and will increase it further if necessary. The assistance will mean, for example, that pensioners and self-funded retirees will get up to $338 extra per year if they are single and up to $510 per year for couples. Families receiving family tax benefit part A will get up to an extra $110 per child. Eligible families will get up to an extra $69 in family tax benefit part B. Allowance recipients will get up to $218 extra per year for singles, $234 per year for single parents and $390 per year for couples. On top of this, taxpayers with annual income of under $80,000 will all get a tax cut, with most receiving at least $300 per year. Almost all eligible households will get financial assistance automatically, without having to apply. On top of this there is a significant support package for industry. This package, when combined with the carbon farming imitative, shows clearly there are real opportunities for rural and regional Australia.

Avoiding the worst impacts of climate change relies entirely on top emitters taking action. Contrary to what is claimed by those opposite and denialists, Australia is a top emitter, and acting alongside mid-sized countries like the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands—all of which have a carbon price already in place—we can cut global carbon pollution. We cannot just stick our heads in the sand and expect that we will not be adversely affected by sea-level rises, and the increasing incidence of extreme drought, floods and bushfires. We all have a role to play if the world is to reduce carbon emissions to a level capable of keeping temperature rise to less than two degrees Celsius. We owe that to the globe now and we owe it for our future.

It is often said that Australia is acting ahead of the world and that other countries are not acting. Again, contrary to newspaper articles generally from the same stable, News Limited and particularly the Australian, many countries are acting positively, either with schemes somewhat similar to an ETS or through other actions. Eighty-nine countries, accounting for over 80 per cent of global emissions and over 90 per cent of the global economy, have pledged to reduce or limit their carbon pollution by 2020. Australia's top five trading partners—China, Japan, the United States, the Republic of Korea and India—and another six of our top-twenty trading partners—New Zealand, the UK, Germany, Italy, France and the Netherlands—have implemented or are piloting carbon trading or taxation schemes.

Ten US east coast states have an emissions trading scheme. One of those states alone, New York state, has the same size economy as Australia. California, the eighth largest economy in the world and more than 50 per cent bigger than the Australian economy, has committed to introducing an emissions trading scheme from 2012. South Korea has committed to introducing an ETS from 1 July 2015 and an
emissions reduction target of 30 per cent below business as usual from 2020. New Zealand introduced a trading scheme in 2008, initially covering only forestry but in 2010 expanded significantly to cover liquid fossil fuels, stationary energy and industrial processes. I recall the Prime Minister of New Zealand claiming that the impact of that scheme has been minimal.

China has indicated it will introduce emissions trading pilot schemes in a number of provinces, including the industrial centres of Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong. And the World Bank recently indicated that these regional schemes may be expanded to a national scheme by 2015. China has the world's largest installed renewable energy electricity generation capacity. In 2009, China added 37 gigawatts of renewable power capacity, more than any other country in the world. India has a tax on coal which is expected to generate over half a billion dollars annually to fund research into clean energy technologies. In the US, President Obama has set an ambitious target to transform the energy sector, which will see 80 per cent of electricity coming from clean resources by 2035. He has also committed the US to being the first country to have one million electric cars on the road by 2015. Countries around the world are already taking action on climate change. Eighty-nine countries, representing 80 per cent of the world's economy, have already pledged to take action on climate change. Globally more money is now invested in new, renewable power than in conventional, high-pollution energy generation. Indeed, China is now the largest manufacturer of both solar panels and wind turbines. I am very pleased to support our clean energy future.

Mr NEVILLE (Hinkler—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (19:15): I quote: 'There will be no carbon tax under a government I lead.'
will not reduce global emission levels one iota. It will hurt our own industries at a time when they can least withstand it. It will spawn a whole new bureaucracy—the sole purpose of which will be to take money from the households and businesses, funnel it through government departments of endless public servants and dribble it back in the form of government handouts to try to compensate for the inevitable increased costs everyone will have to pay. The whole idea of a carbon tax or a carbon abatement scheme is to discourage people from wasting power and wasting energy. But if you compensate to a level where that does not become an issue, what have you achieved? It is almost an admission on one hand and falling into an abyss on the other.

Last week, Queensland’s seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for August was at 6.2 per cent—up from 5.7 per cent in July. Indeed, unemployment in Queensland is at a 10-year high, with 15,000 people joining the dole queues in August, pushing unemployment to 155,000 Queenslanders. To drive those statistics home, last month only 1,800 new jobs were created in Queensland, but 14,900 were lost. Such a significant rise in unemployment in Queensland at this time of the year cannot be ignored. While increases in unemployment are expected over the Christmas period, it is a sign of the financial distress out there in Queensland’s business community when there is a half per cent rise in the middle of the year.

Locally the same story is being told right now. People of Wide Bay-Burnett are doing it tough. Unemployment is at the highest level for years, sitting at 12.3 per cent. We have not seen it that high for the past seven years—since July 2004. Wide Bay-Burnett’s total youth unemployment rate is 26.2 per cent, and our full-time youth unemployment rate is sitting at 38.9 per cent. Jobs are a precious commodity in my electorate, and anything which puts job security and job creation at risk is simply not welcome.

I must also mention the plight of pensioners and other older Australians who live on fixed incomes. I have almost 22,500 age pensioners living in my electorate, and they will pay a high price under the Labor-Green carbon tax through higher costs for electricity, gas, food, water, transport and health. The tax will directly impact on a wide variety of goods that pensioners and other older Australians purchase on a regular basis; and, as those prices go up and up, it is inconceivable that any offsets the government might offer will be able to keep up, and this is just the start. The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs accidentally admitted as much in a recent letter to the editor which appeared in one of my local newspapers. She confidently asserted that pensioners would receive more in compensation payments than they would pay out through higher household bills—but her maths were well and truly out of whack. She reported that the average increase in household bills would be $9.90 a week, including food, gas and electricity. In her own words, ‘We are providing Australian pensioners with increased payments that are more than the expected average price rise.’ And then she announces $10.10—20c more. Newsflash, Minister: $9.90 is $515 a year; $10.10 is $25. Work it out for yourself. One minor glitch in your scenario and pensioners and fixed income earners are down the drain. Even a primary school student can work that out for themselves. The soaring cost of electricity in Queensland will not just hit pensioners but every single household and enterprises of the state. Despite Premier Bligh’s promise that ‘nobody would be worse off’ under the Labor government’s electricity charges, Queensland families have suffered a 63 per cent increase...
in the last five years, or $628 per year on top of an average $1,000 bill. And these costs are only going to go up.

On July 12, CS Energy CEO David Brown told a Queensland parliament finance estimates hearing that the carbon tax will be the single biggest cost item for electricity generators going forward. These companies are going to have to recoup these costs, and the state has passed legislation which allows them to do so. It is estimated that the carbon tax will add a further $190 a year to those bills, and those costs are only going to go up.

Late last month in August, the Fraser Coast Chronicle reported that thousands of Fraser Coast builders have found themselves out of work or have left the industry in the past two years. In fact, construction on the Fraser Coast has halved since 2009. The construction sector employed 12,175 people in Wide Bay in February 2009, while the latest figures reveal a slump down to 6,486 jobs. In other words, the figure has nearly halved. One of the industry professionals interviewed for the article, Connell Constructions owner, John Connell, has been forced to pay off three staff and says the state of the industry is the worst he's seen in 40 years. To quote Mr Connell:

The (industry) won't improve until we get a different government.

The Gillard government had the opportunity to help us with the school buildings being built, but barely any of them went to local contractors. Had they been given to local guys, our contractors would be busy right now.

The main problem in my opinion is people haven't got confidence in the government so they haven't been spending.

Likewise, Bundaberg builder, Brad Warren of Warren Family Homes, told the Bundaberg NewsMail on July 26 that the carbon tax would send the economy 'spiralling downwards'. In his own words, regarding the carbon tax, Mr Warren said:

The building industry is struggling at the moment—we need it like a hole in the head.

Never have truer words been spoken. He is well aware that the carbon tax is set to add another $5,000 to the cost of building an average new home and he knows what the consequence will be for his business.

High-growth centres like Bundaberg and Hervey Bay rely heavily on the local building industry for their economic stability, but our local housing sector is dominated by small subcontractors who will not get any compensation under the carbon tax. These people, who are effectively being punished for being self-employed, are the big losers in the Gillard wealth distribution ideals. Why? Because they do not get what the pensioners and others on fixed incomes will get.

According to the Bureau of Statistics, the value of private dwelling construction in the Bundaberg Regional Council area has been in freefall since 2007, going from $131.6 million in the 2006 calendar year to just $66.2 million for 2010. It is the same scenario on the Fraser Coast where the value of private dwelling construction dropped from $307.6 million in 2006 to $149.6 million for 2010. The last thing our local building industry needs is another deterrent in the form of a new tax, which will invariably flow through to the costs of existing homes as well.

Homeowners throughout Hinkler are already facing higher electricity costs, gas bills and water rates as well as an anticipated 10 per cent extra for electricity and nine per cent for gas, if the carbon tax is passed. With a national housing shortage of 202,400 dwellings and low levels of housing affordability, locals need a hike in the cost of construction and development like, as I said before, a hole in the head. Investors in new housing will also pass on the higher
repayments to their tenants in the form of higher rents. The carbon tax will also cost jobs in the Australian building product manufacturing sector—places which manufacture kitchen cabinets, bench tops, windows and the like—because they will not be able to match the price of imported items from countries which do not have a carbon tax.

A Deloitte Access Economics report commissioned by the Queensland government and tabled in the state parliament on August 23 outlined just how bad the carbon tax will be for Queensland. In fact, it stated the carbon tax will hit Queensland the hardest, costing an estimated 21,000 in forecasted jobs and slashing state growth by 2.76 per cent to 2020. It estimated that the tax will cut the state's growth by 0.57 per cent more than the rest of the country over the decade because of Queensland's dependence on the high-emitting resources sector, including mining and minerals processing, is well understood. By 2050, Queensland growth will be 4.11 per cent lower under a carbon tax. These are frightening figures, but they go down to the simplest things affecting the average household. Most people's garbage bills will rise $200. In fact, state governments around Australia say it will cost around $100 million more to run hospitals, while public transport fares could go up an average of $150 per person per year. In regional Queensland, councils are already suffering under Labor's ideology of forced council amalgamations, which saw the removal of a 40 per cent subsidy for water and sewerage infrastructure projects. Imagine what it will be like when councils have to pay for the effects of a new tax on top of that.

All in all, this is a very ugly picture. I do not like it. I am generally an optimistic sort of person, but this is not an optimistic scenario. As I said before, if the whole idea of a carbon tax is to alter behaviour, if it is to put a value on energy and see it is used wisely, the mere fact that the government has had to compensate people to such a high level gives a lie to its own agenda—I hope I can use the word 'lie' in that context.

I do not support the legislation and I doubt very much if my electorate would.

Mrs D'ATH (Petrie) (19:30): I rise to speak in support of these clean energy bills, and I do so as a proud member of the Gillard Labor government, a government which had the foresight to say, 'Enough is enough,' when it comes to talking about addressing climate change and is willing to stand up and finally take action on this important matter. The Prime Minister said in this House just a week ago that this parliament has been debating climate change for decades. The parliamentary debate of this issue predates the building itself. The Prime Minister said:

My predecessor as member for Lalor, Barry Jones, once said this about climate change, 'If we are only prepared to plan five years, 10 years, 15 years or 20 years down the track all the dangers that are feared can be avoided.'

Those words were spoken 24 years ago this week.

For my part, I went to the election in 2007 and promised my electorate action on climate change. In 2010, I went back to the people in the electorate of Petrie and once again affirmed my commitment to take action on climate change and to see an emissions trading scheme introduced to this country. That is what this government is doing for this country.

I have had a number of people in my electorate approach me and talk to me about their views on this issue. Can I say how pleasing it is, but not surprising, that so many of those people who are so supportive of taking action on climate change are our seniors. I cannot count the number of
seniors—pensioners and retirees, a lot of them men—who have come up to me and said, 'Yvette, we have to do this. We have to deal with climate change.' A gentleman came up to me in a shopping centre and said, 'Our children will curse us if we do not do this.' I have had retirees who have said, 'We need to stop thinking of our hip pocket and start thinking about our grandchildren's future.' It is our retirees who understand this the most, because they understand that the decisions we make today affect future generations and that we cannot look into the eyes of our children and grandchildren and tell them: 'It was all just too hard; we just could not do it.'

There are a lot of school students out there who are very frustrated by the delay in dealing with climate change because they feel that they are doing a lot. They are doing a lot in their schools and in their homes to try to save energy and make the world a better place. But they feel like not enough is being done in the business community. They say to me, 'Why should we make such an effort at home when we see high-rises in the city with all their lights on?' It is a fair point. It is about time that business steps up and takes on its responsibility. That is what will occur under this set of bills. The largest polluters in this country will pay for the pollution that they put into our atmosphere. By them paying, not only will we start addressing climate change and carbon emissions but we will be able to use the money paid by those big polluters to give back to the community to start tackling some of the important issues that need to be tackled to address climate change, like reinvesting in clean energy and renewables and supporting households and businesses to make this very important transition.

We have heard a number of claims from people in this chamber. We just heard from the member for Hinkler. Despite the claims made by the member for Hinkler, the facts are that more than 36,600 pensioners in Hinkler will receive $338 extra per year if they are single and up to $510 per year for couples combined in their pension payments. On average, the expected increase in costs due to a carbon price for single pensioners will be $204 per year. With the increase in their pension payments they will be $134 better off. The assistance to pensioners will be automatic and will start before the carbon price begins through an advance payment of $250 for singles and $190 for each member of a couple. This will be paid in May and June 2012. From March 2013, assistance will be delivered through extra fortnightly payments. The member for Hinkler said, 'But, if other prices are going up, the assistance that the government gives is pointless. It will all be gone.' Let's be clear: this assistance is about assisting households in relation to the impact that the introduction of a carbon price will have. It is not assistance for all general increases in costs of living; it is about assisting people to meet the carbon price. There will be other cost-of-living increases related to a whole lot of other issues, and there will be businesses out there who try to claim that the price increases that are passing on are due to the carbon price. That is why this government is giving strong powers to the ACCC—to make sure that those businesses who price gouge and mislead their customers about why they are increasing their prices are prosecuted.

Treasury modelling has shown that the average increase in prices as a consequence of the carbon price will be around 0.7 per cent. The assistance that nine out of 10 households get will be equal to or better than that. Our pensioners will get the equivalent of a 1.7 per cent increase in payments to assist them in any costs arising from the introduction of a carbon price. These are the facts. The facts also are that, when we look at what a 0.7 per cent increase means to the
average household, we can give people a comparison that they can understand. They only need to think back to 2000, when the GST came in, and to what the impact was on them then, because at that time there was a close to 2.5 per cent increase in the CPI, whereas what is being proposed and modelled with the introduction of the carbon price is only a 0.7 per cent increase in the CPI.

We have heard from members on the other side, including the member for Barker, and a number of them have made claims that are just misleading. I am sure that they are out in the community trying to scaremonger and convince people that the carbon price is going to hurt them and that they should not support it. But the fact is that the carbon price will be paid by around 500 of Australia's biggest polluters, not the truck drivers, as those on the other side would have the community believe. Truck drivers currently receive discounted fuel through the fuel tax credit by which they pay around 15c a litre less than ordinary motorists. The government is proposing to reduce this discount by 6.9c a litre from 1 July 2014. Fluctuations in the global oil price have a far greater impact than that. In just the last four years, the price of diesel has fluctuated by around 62c a litre—it has cost between $1.18 and $1.80 a litre at the bowser. Trucks that use LPG, CNG and LNG as well as ethanol, biodiesel and renewable diesel will not be affected at all, and the impact of a reduction in the fuel tax credit can be offset by moving to more fuel-efficient vehicles. We need to begin the long process of weaning ourselves off oil, a finite resource which in coming decades is likely to become increasingly expensive as the world's reserves run dry.

Despite what they say on the other side, the Australian Trucking Association in a press release of 10 July 2011 stated:

The ATA has welcomed the Government's decision to exempt the trucking industry from carbon tax until 1 July 2014.

It continued by saying that this will:

give small trucking businesses a breathing space to increase their fuel efficiency and renegotiate contracts with their customers.

So, despite the claims of those on the other side, the reality is that the industry is willing to work with the government; they understand the importance of these reforms.

The member for Barker is trying to start a scare campaign about the agricultural sector; in fact, the agricultural sector has nothing to fear from the carbon price. The facts are clear: the agricultural sector is permanently excluded from the carbon price scheme. Farmers will not pay the carbon price, they will not have to account to their emissions and every litre of fuel used on a farm will receive the same tax credits that the government pays now. Farmers will now also have the opportunity to earn new income through the Carbon Farming Initiative, which recently passed through parliament and which the member for Barker and the coalition voted against. The government knows that farmers already do a lot for the local environment, and through the CFI we have ensured that farmers can now be rewarded for this good work. Taking steps to reduce emissions from livestock and fertiliser use or increase carbon in soils and vegetation will allow farmers and landholders to generate credits which can be sold to businesses as carbon offsets.

So, despite the views of those on the other side, the fact is that businesses and homeowners want action on climate change and are willing to step up and be part of that action. They acknowledge that there may be a cost, but they also acknowledge that the government is providing assistance. The Treasurer has released current modelling that once again breaks down what the increases
in prices will be. For products such as milk and cheese and other dairy products we are looking at a 0.4 per cent increase; for cakes and cereals we are looking at a 0.4 per cent increase; for fruit and vegetables we are looking at a 0.4 per cent increase. The fact is that all of the price increases that have been modelled will be 0.5 per cent or less other than the increase in prices for electricity, gas and utilities, which, it is estimated will be around 7.9 per cent, which equates to about $3.30 a week in electricity bills and $1.50 per week in average gas bills. These, not those that we are hearing the other side talk about so often, are the real price increases.

What does the other side really offer? They offer a model that does not achieve the bipartisan targets. In order to reach the target, they will need to plant enough trees to cover five Tasmanias, the entire land area of Germany or an area the size of Victoria and Tasmania combined. They have no support from any credible scientists or economists; in fact the Leader of the Opposition has on a number of occasions attacked leading economists and scientists for supporting the government's policy. Their modelling does not add up; in fact, the independent Grattan Institute has estimated that there is a $100 billion black hole—that is, a third of the entire federal government budget—in the Liberal Party's costings. Treasury estimates that, without international permits, which we know the opposition are opposed to, the Liberal Party's model would cost $30 billion in today's dollars in 2020. Taxpayers will have to pay an extra $1,300 per household. This is what the opposition says. Maybe the opposition should start listening to people like David Cameron, the British Prime Minister, who is actually delighted to hear about the ambitious package of climate change policy measures announced by the Gillard Labor government and who, on 31 July, wrote to the Prime Minister of Australia outlining his delight at our announcements. I certainly support the bills before the House. The country is looking for action on climate change. My electorate is looking for action on climate change. I am pleased to support the bills. While we are making history, the opposition will be remembered for their opposition to addressing climate change.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (19:45): I rise to speak on the Clean Energy Bill 2011 and associated bills. A year before the last election we launched a series of meetings for our own supporters in the electorate—they were the only people invited to the meetings. We had 15 of these meetings, and at them we asked, 'What are the issues?' I was very surprised that at every single meeting two of the main issues were electricity and dentists. If I had drawn up a list, I do not think they would have been in the first 40. But what we think and what people are saying are two entirely different things. I thought the arguments of QCOSS, the Queensland Council of Social Service—that is, that you switch the lights off or you eat, but you cannot do both—were wildly exaggerated. But people are doing it very, very hard. They cannot afford their current electricity charges.

Between 2004 and 2010 charges in Queensland rose from $839 to $1,296 per household. That is a 100 per cent increase. These are not my figures, but the federal government's figures from the Garnaut report, Australia's low pollution future. That is the document that the Parliamentary Library gave me when I asked them what would be the increase in electricity charges with a five per cent reduction in emissions. Table 6.15 on page 176 of the document tells me that the increase for a five per cent CPRS over the years from 2010 to 2015 will be 20
per cent. The average household electricity price increase for a five per cent CPRS reduction is 20 per cent. They are not my figures, they are the government's figures. They are telling us 10 per cent. On a show recently I asked Greg Combet could he please sack the Treasury and Mr Garnaut for telling lies, because they had said it was a 20 per cent increase, but the government said 10 per cent. The government would not lie, we know that. The audience burst out laughing because either Mr Garnaut and the Treasury report are telling lies or the government is telling lies. A 20 per cent increase translates into mark ups. With retailers like Energex and Ergon in Queensland, with delivery systems, with transmission lines then each of them adds on to that 20 per cent. Whether those add-ons are included in that 20 per cent I do not know. All I can say to the House is that we have an average increase of nearly 100 per cent every five years in Queensland and we are now going to add 20 per cent on to that with the government reductions.

Despite my very anti-environmental statements in this place many, many times, I have never been a person who has said that we should not show some restraint. Sometimes you need to pull on the reins a bit, and this is a case where I would say that. The argument that the world is heating because there are 358 parts per million up there of CO₂ is quite ridiculous. It is a proposition that in any other time or age would have been laughed at. I liken it to putting wire netting over your house and thinking it will keep your house warm, but wire netting is actually more than 400 parts per million. It has got a better chance of keeping your house warm than this proposition being put forward by the government. If you have a particle of energy coming off the earth's surface—rebounding from sunlight that hits the earth's surface and bounds back into outer space—only 50 per cent of it is passed on. That means 50 per cent is retained by the CO₂ molecule and 50 per cent is passed on into outer space. Even the 400 parts per million pales into insignificance when you consider that 50 per cent has gone anyway, back into outer space. There may be global warming; I would not deny that, although I think that even in An Inconvenient Truth there is some equivocation on the evidence—even from a very hardened warrior against global warming such as Al Gore. Katharina Fabricius of the Australian Institute of Marine Science is a leading international authority on the effect of CO₂ in the oceans. In actual fact, there are some very serious ramifications in the decrease in the alkaline levels of the ocean. Calcium carbonate, which is the shell of shellfish, is an alkaline compound, so there will be problems if the sea ceases to be as alkaline. A tree grows well if there is a lot of CO₂ in it. A shellfish grows well if there is a lot of calcium carbonate or alkaline substances out there. So if the alkaline levels drop then it becomes much harder for shellfish to form. I said to Dr Fabricius: 'But they're not at the bottom of the food chain. On the contrary, the minuscule bivalves that you cannot see with the naked eye—you need a microscope to see them—in fact comprise the major part of the bottom of the food chain.' So if those shellfish cannot form their shells then we have a very serious problem which starts to arise in the oceans.

I do not come here as any cassandra or soothsayer of doom—that is a long way off at this stage—but I, being a very strong opponent of the carbon tax and the various other proposals that have been put forward at various times, have said that we should have a bit of a pullback. If you want to cut carbon emissions, let us go to the experts. My environmentalist enemies would claim one of their patron saints to be Al Gore. The very first solution put forward by Al Gore is
ethanol. There is no proposal in this place to do anything about ethanol. Mr Iemma, when he was the premier of New South Wales, said that he was going ahead with a 10 per cent ethanol blend because, he said at the conference he was addressing, he could not live another day with his conscience if he did not introduce ethanol into the petrol blend. People are dying in Sydney and Melbourne—not quite so much in Brisbane. I refer people to the works of Jonathan Streeton, the very eminent thoracic surgeon who was the specialist called by Slater and Gordon in the tobacco case in Australia; he is the leading chest authority in the country. I also refer people to the statements by the president of the AMA in New South Wales and Dr Tom Beer, the head of air quality control for Australia. Each of them said effectively—I think Tom Beer probably put it most succinctly—that more people are dying in Australia from motor vehicle emissions than from motor vehicle accidents.

It is remarkable to me that, while Mr Iemma has a conscience, the people in this place do not. They actually listened to the oil and gas lobby, who told them that motor cars will break down if you put ethanol in your tank. They actually said this and, in this parliament—the Liberal and National parties were in power then—actually promulgated that most extraordinarily stupid statement. Mr Speaker, I think you have seen pictures of the people in California. All the cars are breaking down in California, are they? America's average is nine per cent ethanol in their petrol tanks now, and in states like California, which have very stringent laws, it is much, much higher than nine per cent. Are all the cars breaking down in California? Go home tonight and turn on your television. Almost all your movies and TV shows come out of Hollywood in California. Have a look and see if there are any cars on the side of the road broken down. Twenty million people live in Sao Paulo and 21 million people live in Rio. All the cars are breaking down in Brazil, are they? They have 22 per cent. Yet the people on the front benches in this House came into this parliament and promulgated that piece of incredible rubbish put out by the oil companies. Why have we not got ethanol? Why has a country whose sugar industry is collapsing and whose grain industry is in desperate trouble not got ethanol? Why would we go to a solution that will cost this country $15,000 million a year in taxes alone?

I represent the base metals industry of Australia. I represent more base metals than anyone else in this parliament. A great company built up by many generations of great Australians, Mount Isa Mines, has announced the closure of its copper-processing plant in Mount Isa. BHP has announced that it is doing no more processing in Australia. The steel industry is moving offshore. The major cost input item into these industries, outside the copper and iron ore themselves, is electricity. The aluminium industry, the third greatest export industry of this country, is dependent almost exclusively on electricity. Electricity is more built into the cost of aluminium than is the cost of bauxite. It is congealed electricity.

So this government goes forward, smashing the coal industry, which is the carbon dioxide industry of the world. It is saying, 'We're going to be world leaders in smashing carbon dioxide'—and by implication, of course, the coal industry. 'We're going to be the people that lead the world in closing it down. Guess what Australia's biggest export is and has been for the last 15 years? It is coal, and we are going to close it down. The answer is there, not only in your motor cars, not only if you move the 10 per cent ethanol up to 20 per cent ethanol—the same as Brazil—and not only if you reduce your carbon emissions by
five per cent for transport. In Australia, where most of that ethanol comes from sugar cane, people will say, 'It's a trade-off; we'll lose food.' Let me tell you: the cattle industry desperately needs distiller's grain for ethanol.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Murphy): Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting. The honourable member will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

COMMITTEES
Treaties Committee
Report

In accordance with standing order 39(f), the report was made a parliamentary paper.

Ms PARKE: by leave—Today I present the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties report No. 119, which contains the committee's views on the Instrument Amending the Constitution of the International Telecommunication Union and the Instrument Amending the Convention of the International Telecommunication Union, which were tabled in the Commonwealth parliament on 5 July 2011.

The work of the International Telecommunication Union is technically complicated and not widely understood. However, its work does materially improve telecommunications services for the general public. Probably the best known example of this is the 2000 agreement establishing an international standard for third-generation mobile telephony. The 2000 agreement replaced a diversity of country based mobile telephony standards with a single international standard, enabling third-generation mobile devices to operate anywhere in the world, laying the framework for international mobile roaming.

The ITU funds its activities through contributions from member states. Unlike other United Nations agencies, member states decide their own level of contribution. Although Australia's contribution to the ITU is SwF4.725 million, or approximately $5.1 million, this sum is entirely recouped through industry contributions. Consequently, the Australian government has no net costs.

The proposed treaty action amends the ITU's constitution and convention in relation to the class of contribution member states may make to the ITU. Both of the amending instruments will enter into force generally on 1 January 2012. The amendments comprise a provision which allows member states to reduce their contribution at any one time by not more than 15 per cent of their prior level of contribution and a provision which increases the number of levels of contributory units from which member states can choose their class of contribution.

The greatest impact of the amendment will be to reduce the amount by which the largest financial contributors to the ITU can decrease their level of contribution at any one time. Although the ITU is not financially unstable, the adoption of this amendment would contribute towards improving the ITU's financial stability. Aside from the above provisions, the obligations of ITU member states will not change.

The treaties committee supports the adoption of the proposed amendments as they will provide stability to ITU funding. The committee understands that the telecommunications industry supports the
changes and that there will be no net cost to the Australian government. For these reasons, the committee concludes that these amendments should be supported with binding treaty action. I thank my fellow committee members and take this opportunity to pay tribute to the hardworking treaties committee secretariat. I commend the report to the House.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Australian Industry Participation Plan

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby)

(20:04): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) Australia needs a diverse economy to prosper now and into the future;

(b) Australia has a strong innovation framework, and some of the best research and development and skilled workers in the world, but industry and government support is needed to turn that capacity into goods manufactured in Australia;

(c) the Australian Government has an agenda for nation building, innovation and improving the productive performance of business and industry, but that more can be done in this area;

(d) the Australian Manufacturing industry should continue to be assisted by government to ensure that the mining boom does not crowd-out every other area of the economy; and

(e) the Government has already made a substantial contribution to the development of this agenda;

(2) reaffirms its belief in a modern, cohesive and comprehensive industry policy for Australian manufacturing which links these elements of the Australian economy;

(3) supports policies to spread the benefits of the mining boom to local manufacturers and the development of a skilled workforce by;

(a) ensuring that the mining industry invests in apprenticeships and training to ensure Australia continues to renew and develop a high-skilled workforce; and

(b) requiring:

(i) all new major resource projects have an Australian Industry Participation Plan (AIPP) which provides details of the Australian manufactured materials and services to be used on all major resource developments; and

(ii) open and transparent tendering arrangements which permit Australian industry to compete on an equal basis with international companies for sub-contracts associated with major resource projects;

(4) supports policies that require Australian Government infrastructure and defence industry projects to produce and publish an AIPP detailing Australian manufactured materials and services; and

(5) in the interests of accountability and transparency, insists that all AIPPs be published and regularly updated as projects progress.

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

Ms Bird: I second the motion.

Mr STEPHEN JONES: Australia is going through unprecedented economic change. This change is driven by our place in the world and the demand for our natural resources. Despite what some say, our economic outlook is one of fundamental strength and resilience. The economic transformation of Asia is bringing tremendous benefits to this region. Our economy is strong. Our mining and resources sector is strong and revenue is flowing from this to both state and federal governments. Our terms of trade are high and the high Australian dollar means that everything from petrol, TVs, T-shirts and overseas holidays are cheaper than they have ever been before.

But the sustained high Australian dollar is driving structural change in our economy. Different sectors and regions within the Australian economy are growing at different speeds. It is clear that the manufacturing sector is struggling, and there are many examples in my region and the region of my
colleague who joins me in the chamber, the member for Cunningham. In our area of Illawarra this is very prevalent.

I believe that manufacturing matters. Manufacturing is critical not only to our economy but to the sort of country that we want to live in. This is because a country that makes stuff knows stuff. Manufacturing and the engineering trades create the ecosystems of knowledge that are critical to being a clever country, and you can measure it. While manufacturing makes up only about 8.3 per cent of all employment and about 8.6 per cent of gross domestic product, it contributes to more than 25 per cent of all business investment in research and development. Put simply, the manufacturing sector is boxing well above its weight when it comes to investing in our future know-how and technological capacity.

The government is implementing many reforms to deal with the pressure that is now being faced by the manufacturing sector in a changing economy. We are investing in skills in record amounts. We have a record investment of over $36 billion in infrastructure projects around the country to support our economy. We are building important new infrastructure like the National Broadband Network, and we are pushing for better taxation on the mining sector and for improved research and development tax incentives for manufacturing and other industries. We have created over 130,000 new training places and we are investing heavily in skills and training measures. These are all important measures to keep our economy strong, but many of them have been opposed by those opposite.

We believe that there is an important role for government. It is not just a matter of letting the market rip. We believe that we need a policy mix to create a diverse economy. A broad range of programs are already in place to support our manufacturing industries and include the Australian Industry Participation measures, which are encouraging full, fair and reasonable opportunities for the manufacturing industry in many major projects; a range of investment and co-investment vehicles through our Clean Energy Future initiatives; and programs such as Enterprise Connect which are providing assistance to small and medium sized enterprises and encouraging innovation and investment in new technology and projects. These programs are targeted at enhancing productivity through innovation across the economy because we recognise that the Australian economy needs to be self-sustaining beyond the resources boom. In June this year, the Minister for Defence Materiel strengthened our program to reduce the threshold for mandatory AICPs from $50 million to $20 million, and put new conditions for tender, which exclude any company that has failed to meet their Australian industry participation plan obligations. A number of these measures have already been put in place but the motion before the House today quite simply calls for more action. It calls for policies which will spread the benefits of the mining boom to local manufacturers and the development of a skilled workforce by ensuring that the mining industry invests in apprenticeships and training. It calls for policies to ensure that all new major resource projects have an Australian Industry Participation Plan which provides details of the Australian manufactured materials and services to be used in all those major projects and policies, which would require open and transparent tendering arrangements which permit Australian industry to compete on an equal basis with international companies for subcontracts associated with major resource projects.
I am moving this motion before the House because, from conversations I have had with many manufacturers in my electorate, I can see that we are playing on a far from even playing field. According to the Australian Steel Institute, out of a $400 billion investment over the next five to 10 years, Australian steel is currently getting only around a 10 per cent share of the market. And this is at a time when our steel fabrication sector is running below capacity and many firms are laying off staff.

I have heard too many examples lately of mining and resource companies effectively locking Australian companies out of being able to tender for major projects. Companies like Chevron, Fortescue Metals, Pacific Sino and Rio Tinto are making billions from developing Australia's natural resources, and Australian manufactured products, particular Australian steel, are not getting a fair shake in those contracts. I will cite a number of examples. One example that has been brought to my attention is of the Chevron project at Barrow Island—a large LNG project. The Gorgon LNG project on Barrow Island is Australia's largest ever project but, unfortunately, the LNG plant has been designed in London to use Japanese standards and Asian steel and will be fabricated completely in Asian yards and then transported to the site.

A second example which has been brought to my attention involves Rio Tinto in the iron ore expansion in the Pilbara. The specifications for that project clearly say that all steel plate will be welded and that the welded sections and floor plate to be used will be of Chinese standard and specifications—effectively precluding Australian companies from bidding in those projects.

Another example is of the Fortescue Metals Group. Earlier this year Fortescue Metals Group announced it had struck a deal to buy 260 40-tonne iron ore rail cars from China's CNR Corp as part of Twiggy Forrest's $US8.4 billion Pilbara expansion ambitions. Another example involves CITIC Pacific Mining's Sino Iron Ore project at Cape Preston—probably the most extreme example I have seen. In that project all the steel that is used was imported from Shanghai steel yards. That is around 100,000 tonnes of steel that could have been supplied locally but which was imported for this project. Not only that—and to illustrate the problems facing Australian manufacturing—CITIC Pacific imported entirely ready-made concrete footpaths from China. Concrete is a simple commodity and this work could, and I say should, have been done locally.

These examples show clearly that Australian manufacturing industries like steel, engineering and concrete are effectively being excluded from the benefits of these major resource projects. And this is occurring at a time when the manufacturing sector, as I have said, is shedding jobs. It is clear that greater transparency and accountability is required in the contracts being awarded in this sector, and the motion that I have put before the House calls for exactly that. We need transparency and accountability at a federal level, but there is clearly more that state governments can and should be doing. There is clearly a role for national leadership in this regard, and I will be seeking a coordinated approach—and I ask for a bipartisan approach—to be progressed through COAG as a matter of priority. The government will work to ensure that manufacturing will continue to be a source of well-paid, high-skill jobs for Australian workers, but this will not happen by accident. The best way that we can spread the benefits of the mining boom is to ensure that Australian manufacturing industries get greater access—at least on an equal basis—
to the over $400 billion worth of investment that is going into our mining sector over the next 4½ years.

While I am at it, I believe that greater access to a number of the infrastructure projects of a number of governments, at state and federal level, would greatly benefit local manufacturing industries, because if the purpose of many of these projects is to stimulate employment and local jobs then one of the most direct and effective ways that this can be done is to ensure that local manufacturers and local workers such as those who are employed in electorates like mine and the electorate of the member for Cunningham can get access to fulfilling, high-paying, good, skilled jobs for now and well into the future. I commend the motion to the House.

Mrs MIRABELLA (Indi) (20:13): In rising to speak on this item of private members’ business I welcome the opportunity to train a spotlight on the ruinous state of industry and innovation policy under this government. We have heard from the previous speaker, the member for Throsby, about what was not working in the industry sector, what barriers local businesses were up against, but there was no understanding of what policy prescriptions should follow. There were no answers; there were just repetitions of stories of the problems—very real problems—facing industry in accessing work in Australia.

There was a dizzying set of contradictions by the member for Throsby, who continues to walk both sides of the street but does so ever more unconvincingly and unsuccessfully. I do admit that he has a very difficult job because of the relevant ministers that he is lumped with as part of the current government. There is no argument from the coalition with the sentiments outlined in paragraphs (1)(a), (1)(b) and (2) that Australia needs a broad based economy, a better harnessing of our innovative capabilities and more effective industry policies. These points are entirely self-evident and I am glad that at least one Labor member is finally prepared to say so and to repudiate Labor's pursuit of what BlueScope Steel's CEO, Paul O'Malley, has described as an almost anti-manufacturing philosophy.

As for paragraphs (1)(d), (3), (4) and (5), we are also broadly in agreement with them, but we naturally need to be careful about precisely how governments in Australia intervene in these areas. Ultimately, there can be as many guidelines around industry policies as you like, but they count for little if the government responsible for administering them does not exhibit common sense and exercise political will to implement them effectively.

It appears from the motion that the member for Throsby needs to be somewhat educated about the government’s atrocious record on defence procurement. Is he seriously not aware that his own party has tried to send the manufacturing of Australian camouflage fabric to China and that it broke commitments to upgrade body armour and weapons for frontline troops? We even have another story in the Telegraph today revealing that our diggers' American-made camouflage pants are falling apart while they are on patrol. And how much did Australian taxpayers pay to an American company for this privilege? They paid $7.8 million. I would be very interested to hear from some of our domestic manufacturers about the tender process for that $7.8 million contract that found itself in the US. I am no stranger to these issues, having very strong manufacturing in my electorate in north-east Victoria and a very strong competitive and innovative defence manufacturing sector as well.
As for paragraphs (1)(c) and (1)(e), the government has never had an agenda for industry and innovation policy and national productivity other than to embark on its familiar mission of destroying successful Howard government initiatives. Instead, it has not only slashed funding in critical areas such as commercialisation and R&D but also has stood back and expected our manufacturers to absorb ever-increasing regulations and costs.

It claims it has increased spending in that portfolio by many billions of dollars but, sadly, it has failed to comprehend there is never an automatic connection between spending more government money and getting better outcomes. Indeed, even Ms Gillard and Senator Carr battled to nominate a single practical achievement from all this spending. And just to confirm its stunning incompetence, the government now wants to whack Australian manufacturing with a punitive carbon tax that we know, from research out today, will fully impact on nine out of 10 manufacturing workers. The 10 per cent that will not be impacted fully by it will be impacted in some way.

He does not go far enough but there is essentially a shameful admission from the member for Throsby in paragraph (1)(c) of his motion about the abject lack of common sense and direction the government has exhibited because he uses the words 'more can be done in this portfolio area'. Indeed, it can. We on this side of the House do agree very strongly with this sentiment: a lot more can be done. Last Wednesday at the National Press Club we invited the government to work with us to immediately adopt and implement eight key policy changes in relation to manufacturing. I note that the member for Throsby asked for a bipartisan approach. Well, there it was. They were very easy steps, from one to eight. We agree with him that there are sectors such as steel and cement that are locked out of contracts. There are very simple things that can be done immediately—but, sadly, no response.

At a time when Australia is facing its greatest crisis in manufacturing—as one union leader said, the greatest crisis since the Great Depression—I had hoped for a slightly better response. But as the government continues to be paralysed and obsessed with self-preservation it has failed to focus on industry policy and at least make some attempt to reverse its failed vision. The Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator Carr, used to hyperventilate any time there were job losses under the Howard government. Ironically, that was during a period of government when manufacturing jobs actually rose, yet his own legacy will be that he presided over the worst rate of job losses in the history of Australian manufacturing. It is a statistic he could not dispute in the Senate a few weeks ago and it will be the one that, more than any other, will define his time as a minister.

Over the past quarter, jobs have been lost at a rate of more than 2½-thousand every week. That is one gone very four minutes. The situation is such as to discredit even the words some of their own advisers have given them. Let us have a look at Terry Cutler, who Labor hand-picked back in 2008 to advise it on what it should do with its policies in this portfolio. He has said that the government essentially has no idea what it is doing.

I welcome the member for Throsby's newfound and in some ways sudden rhetorical interest in manufacturing, innovation and industry participation plans. I would counsel him that it is one thing to wax lyrical on the floor of the parliament and in press conferences but it is quite another to practically force change to Labor's industry policies. I would also remind him that the
The most fundamental responsibility of being a member of parliament is to stand up for the interests and wishes of your local constituents. This motion is no substitute for opposing the single greatest threat to the viability of manufacturing in this country—and that means voting against the carbon tax.

Labor's spin and blind loyalty to an out-of-touch Prime Minister, industry minister and climate change minister on policies like the carbon tax simply does not wash with anyone anymore. No member representing a great Australian manufacturing heartland should be substituting parliamentary motions like this for real work and placing real pressure on their party's power brokers to make policies that will make a fundamental difference, that will make a change and stop the rot. I find it sad that members from the Illawarra have so little clout in the ALP anymore and that all of us have been forced to endure the sight of the member for Throsby changing his language on the carbon tax so often for different audiences. He has performed more contortions than a circus acrobat to try to please both his political masters and local workers. It is not convincing either way. Instead of sinking into the comfortable green leather of the House of Representatives, people like the member for Throsby should have been wearing out their shoe leather visiting local businesses, listening to their concerns and then pounding on the doors of senior colleagues to urge them to stop penalising the millions of hard-working Australians who are being crushed by this government and its policy initiatives, including the carbon tax. So far there has been none of that from him—a point admitted by Ms Gillard in June when she hung him out to dry by effectively conceding he had made no representations to her about the toxicity for his electorate of the carbon tax. No amount of parliamentary motions like this one can obscure the reality that the member for Throsby has let his electorate down and has failed the most basic test of political representation.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (20:23): It is a very special level of punishment to have to follow the member for Indi in any debate. Her capacity to spend 15 minutes criticising, spewing vitriol, misrepresenting people's positions and failing to put forward any alternative has a special level of achievement in parliamentary debates. I would simply say to her that I cannot even be bothered responding to most of her arguments because they are so lacking in foundation anyway. I would be interested to know whether the member for Casey has a particular view on the member for Indi's approach to manufacturing and whether there is an interest in a more market interventionist approach more generally on the benches on the other side.

Quite contrary to the member for Indi's complete misrepresentation, the member for Throsby and I do visit many of our local manufacturing businesses and talk to them on a regular basis. Indeed, I have done so for all the years I have been in parliament and my colleague the member for Throsby has done so since he was elected. I could hardly think of a more inaccurate criticism to be made of the member for Throsby for bringing this motion forward to the House. It is indeed an important recognition that the Wollongong and Illawarra area more broadly does make a substantial contribution to the Australian economy. Like the member for Ballarat at the table, our region makes things, it exports things and it provides services. Over the last 30 years our region, however, has been diversifying its economic base. The Illawarra region used to be based around two major employers: steelmaking and coal producing. One fed the other.
come from five generations of coalminers and certainly am well aware in my own family of the close relationship between those two industries.

Although steelmaking and coal production are still very important to the Illawarra, the region has diversified to include a world-class and nationally significant research university and TAFE institute, a growing health and community sector, and a property and financial services sector. Our big employers were once BHP and coal companies. Today that is shared between the University of Wollongong and our TAFE campuses, our hospitals and aged-care facilities, our banking and superannuation fund administrators.

Our region has been through tough economic times before. In 1982-83 the then 'Big Australian', BHP, threatened to walk away from steelmaking. BHP threatened to close its works at Port Kembla. It took a Labor government then, the Hawke government, to design what came to be known as the Button steel plan to save the steel industry in Australia. During the implementation of the Button steel plan, which began in 1984, both the company and combined unions went through a process of modernisation, work practice improvements, capital investment and an investment in people. BlueScope Steel today—today's incarnation of BHP—operated a world-class, low-cost and competitive, modernised steel plant. The Port Kembla steel plant located in our area is a product of that Labor government's steel plan.

On 22 August this year BlueScope Steel announced that it needed to restructure its operations because of the higher exchange rate, the higher cost inputs from iron ore and coking coal, and the sluggish steel demand across the globe. Unfortunately, that decision involves substantial job losses in the Illawarra—not only for BlueScope Steel workers but also the company's supplier-contractors. The very same day of the announcement, the Prime Minister and other senior cabinet ministers announced a $140 million assistance package for the Illawarra region. This is one of the largest regional structural adjustment packages introduced by a Commonwealth government to assist in the economic transitioning for a region.

It is important to place on record the difference in assistance provided to Wollongong and to Newcastle, when its steel industry was affected in 1997. The Howard government at that time provided $10 million in adjustment assistance for BHP workers. This was matched by the then Carr Labor government. I do not criticise the assistance provided by the Howard government or the Carr government, but I think it is important to recognise that this Labor government did provide an important and significant assistance package to the Illawarra.

The package has three elements. First, the bringing forward of $100 million under the Steel Transformation Fund, which will help BlueScope Steel implement a new business model and help it to produce new products. It should be emphasised at this point that the opposition has indicated, even prior to the BlueScope Steel decision on 22 August, that it intends to oppose the Steel Transformation Plan. As I said in my contribution to the carbon bill debate, I believe that is hypocrisy at its most flagrant. They are weasel words from the opposition—to express concern about the BlueScope Steel situation but not indicate they will support the Steel Transformation Plan.

It is not only the importance of supporting the steel industry because steel is so important to our region, but it should be acknowledged that the Leader of the
Opposition and the shadow minister for industry have told us that they will oppose the $300 million fund to help the steel industry transition to a low-carbon economy. I note my colleague the member for Gilmore is in the House and I would hope that she and perhaps Senator Fierravanti-Wells will, in arguing to their own side, convince them to support the steel bill because it is important support to our local region. This is no longer a theoretical or conceptual debate; it is real time and the workers in the Illawarra depend on this fund, BlueScope Steel depends on the fund. We should stop playing politics, be responsible and support the bill.

Secondly, the government has announced a $10 million employment assistance package to help displaced workers find other jobs, to retrain for other industries, to up-skill and to relocate if they need to. Later this week, a jobs market—a Commonwealth government funded initiative—will be held at Unanderra where under one roof over two days affected workers from BlueScope and their supplier-contractors will be able to obtain advice and assistance, including meeting potential employers in the mining, resource and engineering sectors.

Thirdly, the government has established a $30 million Investment and Innovation Fund to help local businesses innovate and expand their operations in the region. This fund is a co-investment fund. At the conclusion, we should have been able to secure a doubling of the Commonwealth's investment to create a $60 million injection in the region's economy. At the same time, the Prime Minister has announced the establishment of the Illawarra Stakeholders Task Force, chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Dr Don Russell, to co-ordinate that response.

In the few minutes left to me, I just want to mention some other Commonwealth investments in our region that have proved significant to manufacturing. We have contributed $43.8 million to build the Australian Institute for Innovative Materials at the University of Wollongong's innovation campus. This was showcased on 29 August at an Illawarra manufacturing expo following the visit to Wollongong by the Prime Minister. Senator Kim Carr, the minister, opened the expo, which brought together a range of Commonwealth agencies to assist manufacturing companies innovate, demonstrate their capability to be involved in big investment projects—such as those outlined by my colleague, the member for Throsby—and to export. Over 100 manufacturing representatives met with these Commonwealth officials and, importantly, researchers from the institute to foster new relationships. Given the new Research and Development Tax Credit program introduced by this government and targeted at smaller businesses, the institute will become a very important partner for the manufacturing sector in Wollongong.

I also highlight the Commonwealth's investment of $25 million to build the new Sustainable Building Research Centre, located next to the institute I have just discussed at the innovation campus. This new research centre has a fantastic partnership with the Illawarra Institute of TAFE and BlueScope Steel to introduce innovative building materials and building skills for clean energy workers into the future. They will design and create new products and services dedicated to improving the existing built environment. It will be the first in Australia to be assessed under the Living Building Challenge initiative.

The future of manufacturing can at times appear gloomy in Australia, particularly at times when the dollar is at the level that is at,
but I am and remain an optimist about the future of the sector. Around one million Australians are employed in the sector. This has been consistent across the last decade. Treasury modelling suggests that manufacturing output is projected to grow by 70 per cent to 2050. The latest national count shows that manufacturing in general is actually growing in Australia. Metal products rose 14 per cent for the quarter and 16 per cent to June. However, we acknowledge that the manufacturing sector does face challenges. But it is resilient and one of the most creative of our economic sectors.

The government has already introduced a number of initiatives to help in this transition. All of the programs that we have introduced will be cut by the opposition. Importantly, we have introduced and approved the Australian Industry Participation Plan for all new Australian government contracts worth more than $20 million. Indeed, as the Prime Minister has indicated, we are considering publishing plans and outcomes for the AIP. I commend the fact that my colleague has introduced this motion to the House and reaffirm our ongoing commitment to the manufacturing sector. (Time expired)

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (20:33): I rise today to speak on the motion put forward by the member for Throsby and to speak specifically on the need to develop and maintain a diverse economy and to support local manufacturers. For many years now the Gold Coast economy has been very dependent on tourism and construction, as these industries have been our strongest and most prosperous. However, in recent years, there has been a downturn in both sectors, resulting in higher than average unemployment levels, particularly on the southern Gold Coast. The Gold Coast is well placed though to diversify and broaden its economic base, particularly in manufacturing.

It is fair to say that manufacturers throughout Australia are doing it tough now and have for some time. More than 136,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost over the last 3½ years. This downward trend needs to be stopped and preferably reversed so that we are creating manufacturing jobs. I recently held a manufacturing roundtable with the member for Indi and a number of manufacturers from the southern Gold Coast. Many of these businesses are facing an uncertain time due to various factors, including the high Australian dollar and reduced spending patterns as Australians continue to tighten their belts. Many are also struggling to find the skilled workers needed to produce high-quality products. I believe that one of the issues that we must address is the way that trade training, in particular, is undertaken in Australia at this point in time. We know that there is a relatively low completion rate for apprenticeships, with the national completion rate of approximately 55 per cent when factors such as the apprentice changing their employer are taken into account.

On the southern Gold Coast we have the Australian Industry Trade College, the AITC, which is dedicated to preparing year 11 and 12 students for a career in industry. The college has been successful in achieving over 530 school based apprenticeships in over 50 different trade qualifications. The unique program and flexible learning pathway provided by the AITC allow students to graduate with a Queensland Certificate of Education as well as significant work experience, knowledge and skills in their chosen field. Currently, there are around 300 students enrolled at the college and half of these students will be on campus at any one time attending classes in a custom-designed curriculum that includes
English communication, mathematics A—or prevocational maths—business, information technology and physical wellness. All students must also engage in community service. Other fields of study include a certificate III Australian school based apprenticeship, delivered offsite at a registered training organisation. The work experience component is run consecutively, and students swap from their classroom to the workplace every four weeks, alternating as two groups. At the AITC, students are assigned case managers to offer advice and support during the two years that they are enrolled at the college. Through this customised learning approach and support structure, students have the confidence and skill sets to succeed in the workforce as apprentices and trainees. The AITC completion rate for apprenticeships is about 68 per cent, which in turn is about 13 per cent above the national average.

A recent Deloitte Access Economics study found that skill shortages were jeopardising $254 billion worth of mining projects in the planning pipeline. It identified five key trade qualifications—electricians, drillers, production technicians, mechanical fitters and boilermakers—as the most severe skill shortage areas. Three of those trades—electricians, mechanical fitters and boilermakers—are also key to the manufacturing sector. An appropriate trade training program needs to be implemented.

As I said earlier, the Gold Coast is well placed to further develop its manufacturing base, which I believe is already diverse. To demonstrate this point, I would like to speak about three of our local manufacturing sectors and some of the barriers to their productivity and success that the government should be addressing. Let me start with engineering and speak about one of our local manufacturers, the Rockcrush Group, one of the top engineering manufacturing groups in Australia, with over 100 years combined experience. They are located in Burleigh Heads, in one of the industrial estates in McPherson, and their core business includes the manufacture of marine winches, mining winches, general winches and also dredges.

Rockcrush pride themselves on the export of these dredges, which are designed to be used in a variety of industry applications around the world. Because of its unique market position, Rockcrush is in the enviable position of being able to expand its operations and increase the number of boilermakers it employs. However, there have been issues in finding skilled and experienced boilermakers on the Gold Coast, as many are now attempting to seek employment in regions with major manufacturing industries. Rockcrush will also be affected by the proposed carbon tax and may well be forced to move some of its manufacturing base from Australia to an offshore location. Clearly, if this were to happen, there would be an immediate impact on jobs as well as a loss of local expertise in this specialised area.

I have spoken in this place on a number of occasions about the surfboard manufacturing industry. I wish to again highlight the importance it plays in my electorate. Industry leaders have advised me that the following issues have impacted on them: firstly, the high Australian dollar and increased competition from overseas manufacturers; secondly, cheap, imported boards that are not appropriately labelled so that it is clear to Australian surfers that they are buying a board that was manufactured overseas and not from an Australian shaper; thirdly, keen surfers, who would normally change their boards every six months, are holding onto them for perhaps two years because the rising cost of living has left them with little or no discretionary spending ability; and, fourthly, skilled labour shortages. There is
currently no formal traineeship or apprenticeship for surfcraft manufacturing, and this needs to be addressed as a priority.

The third sector I would like to speak about tonight is the textile, clothing and footwear sector. One of the nation’s largest listed apparel companies, Billabong, is based in my electorate of McPherson. It employs over 2,000 people locally as part of an international workforce of 8,000. There are also a number of smaller TCF businesses on the southern Gold Coast. We are all well aware in this place that TCF industries have struggled to remain internationally competitive for some time and that the sector has undergone significant changes over recent years.

Having been involved in that sector myself over a number of years, I was very interested to read about the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Strategic Capability Program. According to the application form:
The Textile, Clothing and Footwear Strategic Capability Program is a competitive, merit based grants program. It funds strategic projects that increase innovation across Textile, Clothing and Footwear industries …

That certainly sounds very positive. It then goes on to say:
Confirming your eligibility first can save you a lot of time and effort.

That prompted me to look at what the eligibility requirements are. One of those requirements, amongst others, is that:
… the entity (if a clothing manufacturer) is accredited in accordance with the Homeworkers’ Code of Practice or is seeking accreditation …

A quick call to AusInd confirmed that, yes, indeed, a clothing manufacturer had to be accredited or be seeking accreditation through Ethical Clothing Australia to be eligible for the TCF Strategic Capability Program. There are various fees that are applicable for accreditation, based on a number of factors. The Ethical Clothing Australia website indicates that it can cost up to $6,000 for that accreditation.

Businesses that are not accredited or seeking accreditation are not eligible to be considered for funding. There is no opportunity for the manufacturer to demonstrate compliance or adherence to the code. This criteria also completely dismisses membership of independent global ethical standards bodies and compliance with relevant international standards.

In addition, some clothing manufacturers do not engage home workers. It is nonsensical for such manufacturers to have to be accredited or seeking accreditation for a code of conduct that applies to workers that they do not have.

There is a future for the manufacturing industry in Australia and on the southern Gold Coast, but this potential future is in jeopardy due to the actions being taken by this government. There is the capacity to increase manufacturing and workforce participation in this area, with a number of industrial estates in McPherson already available. However, if the Gold Coast and Australian manufacturing industries are allowed to continue to shrink by the Labor government, this opportunity to diversify the local and national economy will pass long before any benefits can be harnessed.

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (20:43): It is a great pleasure to be talking about manufacturing in the House again. We have to thank the member for Throsby, who has been a tireless advocate of his electorate and of manufacturing generally. I think he has been one of the people who has really rapped home and helped to explain, not just to this House but also to the Australian people, some of the challenges that manufacturing now faces. We have heard a lot about the two-speed economy. Last year
we had a pretty torrid debate about the mining sector and whether or not they should be taxed. We are now starting to see, I think, the effects of a high currency, a currency that is a reflection of our economic success—let us not hide from that. Having a high currency does bring us benefits in higher prices for our exports. It lowers import costs and input costs. It is an important thing. It is a sign of the world’s confidence in this country and its future, so we should acknowledge the benefits of the high currency and not be shy about that.

We should also understand that the economy has been growing and jobs have been growing throughout this period. Despite a global financial crisis, despite the two-speed economy, despite a high currency, jobs continue to grow. We heard that from the previous speaker, the member for McPherson, who talked about manufacturing companies in her electorate which were continuing to put on employees and, indeed, could not find skilled labour. It is interesting to hear some of the more balanced contributions from some of those opposite—those who say that we do have a lot to be happy about and to celebrate in this country. There is no doubt that this period brings some challenges for manufacturing. We face a situation where a high dollar is putting pressure on our industries. That is not something that is unique to Australia. If you look at Brazil, they have got problems with currency appreciation, and, most recently, the Swiss have had problems with the franc rapidly appreciating. So this is a problem that is present around the world. We have heard a lot about Dutch disease and the perils of that, and that is one of the reasons the government is bringing the budget back into surplus. It is one of the reasons we are introducing a minerals resource rent tax, and it is one of the reasons why we have got a big investment into skills in this country. It is interesting to hear those opposite talk about skills.

I do think that this issue needs a long-term discussion and I think we do need a bit of goodwill on both sides. Just simply slinging insults at one another will not help. We should, where possible, seek out areas of common interest in the national interest, and I do think skills might be one of those.

Opposition members interjecting

Mr CHAMPION: Peace in our time! Don’t worry, I’ll get stuck into you later on. I think we have probably always got more in common than we have differences. I think the country basically faces a choice between co-investment and capitulation. We either capitulate to these market forces, run up the white flag and let jobs move offshore and say that manufacturing is dead, and maybe just accept that that is part of the process of a strong currency and high prices for our minerals, or we have co-investment. I have seen this co-investment in my own electorate with Holden and an investment of $149 million to develop the Cruze, now the No. 3 selling car in Australia, and an extra 265 jobs at Holden. This is a product which is selling, and you can tell it is selling, because wherever you go, in the supermarket car parks of this country, there are Cruzes driving around. I would urge those opposite to look at that. We now see it with the Commodore and $40 million invested in developing the Commodore with new lightweight panels and new technology to make them more efficient. Again, we have got more secure jobs.

We saw it at Holden with our big investments during the global financial crisis where the company did have some difficulties with demand, and so the government and the company had a co-investment in training the workforce. During that down time, rather than people being off
work they were in training, preparing for the launch of the Cruze. So we see that where co-investments are made we can have productive, profitable companies and we can have companies that are domestically successful. I have every confidence that in the future they will be successful with exporting police cars to the United States.

We are not alone in this. The United Kingdom have recently invested £200 million. They had one particular plant with Nissan—a battery plant where they co-invested £20 million to get that in place. This is something that is happening all over in other countries. Other countries help by tariffs. India has got a tariff of 105 per cent—to give people some understanding of the international environment. We see that where we have co-investment we have success.

While some of those opposite, like the member for Mayo, the Marty McFly of the parliament—he has a great love of Back to the Future—focuses on places like Mitsubishi and the hard-luck stories, I prefer to focus on the success stories that we have had in the last few years under this government's program. We know that the Liberal Party oscillate between reassurance on one side of it—they have got all these vague reassurances on one hand and not really talking about their policies; some of them come in here very reassuringly about jobs and then they rattle on about the carbon tax for a while—and the other side of it is pretty significant. We have the member for Mayo perhaps sending messages more to his own party than to this side of parliament about co-investment. He talks about the enormous markets of the flat world. You might want to tell that to the Indians, with the 105 per cent tariff, or Thailand, where they have about 80 per cent tariff on Commodores.

When we first introduced these assistance measures to the car industry, Tony Abbott said: 'There have been a lot of assistance packages for the car industry, and the real issue for any future package is: just how long is this going to last? Will the car industry in this country ever be able to stand on its own two feet? Will Kevin Rudd be able to give a guarantee that any new package of assistance really will be the last package?' We have that undermining. Before Tony Abbott was Leader of the Opposition he would maybe have told a different story today to car workers in South Australia; maybe he would not. We had Joe Hockey say: 'I don't know that it is necessarily the right thing to hand money immediately to the motor vehicle industry in Australia without knowing whether those key companies are going to be merging or won't even exist in 12 months.' That is what he said in 2007, when we put in place our co-investment plan.

The opposition are very clear about what they will do, in many respects. They talk in circles, there are lots of reassurances and lots of banging on about the carbon tax, but, when you get right down to it, they will cut $500 million out of the Automotive Transformation Scheme. That is what they will do. They will put the sledgehammer to jobs in South Australia and Victoria and manufacturing jobs in New South Wales. We hear the member for Mayo talking about Mitsubishi. That is what he wants to talk about all the time. He wants to talk about the stories of job losses. That is what they want to talk about; they do not want to talk about the successes.

This country does have a choice. We have a choice between co-investment, which is the Labor way, which is investing in research, high technology, exports that are going to sell and having a manufacturing sector at the end of this whole process of our terms of trade; or the Liberal Party way, which will be
capitulation, which will be to run up the white flag to say we cannot compete and to simply rely on an unrestrained, untaxed mining sector which will simply run rampant. When they have finished digging, they will be off and that will be the end of it. The Labor way is to provide jobs and a stable and diverse economy for the long term.

Mrs GASH (Gilmore) (20:53): Whilst I certainly support some parts of the member’s motion, I rise to speak against the subtle thrust of other parts of his motion and remind the House that last Thursday the Member for Throsby made a statement in an MPI on the impact of the carbon tax on Australian industry. I would like to take umbrage over some of his then comments in relation to this motion. My reason for doing so is that he and I share an interest in the economy of the Illawarra. The northern end of the electorate of Gilmore now encompasses parts of the old seat of Throsby, so I cannot allow him to go unchallenged with the rather rosy picture he is trying to paint of conditions there.

The motion he puts forward is constructed on a denial of events affecting his own constituents, constructed on platitudes and not an honest assessment of what is needed. The member seems oblivious to the state of the manufacturing industry, especially in his own backyard. He is oblivious to the fact that BlueScope Steel has just cut 800 jobs from its operations in Port Kembla. He is oblivious to the fact that another 69 jobs have just gone from the Australian Steel Mill Services at Port Kembla, with many others in the pipeline. He is oblivious to the effect this is having on contractors and subcontractors who have lost their livelihoods because of failed government projects. He seems oblivious to the fact that the unemployment rate for the June quarter in Throsby is pushing 7½ per cent and that will rise as the steel works job losses start feeding in.

The Shoalhaven is at 10 per cent and rising, and the government has no answers. He is oblivious to the no-show of trade centres that we were promised. He cleverly ignores the fact that Regional Development Australia gave nothing to the Illawarra even with the solid evidence of dramatic job losses under their noses, even without a carbon tax. Yet there he was last Thursday berating the opposition for being all doom and gloom. We have every reason to be so for next year when the carbon tax kicks in. Is the member suggesting unemployment is going to fall in the Illawarra? Is he suggesting that the manufacturing industry in his backyard will not rationalise some of its operations in response and that part of that rationalisation will mean job losses? As a former union official, he would have tracked the gradual decline of industrial activity in Port Kembla over the years. He would have seen jobs whittled away from a time when the steelworks employed 23,000 people, through the recession we had to have, to a figure of about 10 per cent of that. If he was any sort of trade union leader, he would know that the figures he spruiked on Thursday relied heavily on the mining industry.

In his motion he is warning that we should not let the performance of the mining industry eclipse the poor performance of the rest of the economy. My question to the member is: if that is the case, and you are fully aware, why aren’t you doing something about it? Take mining out of the equation and what would be left? Surely he must be now aware of an article in Friday’s Australian Financial Review which reports that, and I quote from a comment by Commsec economist, Savanth Sebastian, who said:
The prospects for the manufacturing industry are not good.

This is a highly professional economist who did not just pluck that statement out of thin air. He has been watching industry for some considerable time, analysing data, assessing, forecasting, and working the figures. The only thing the member for Throsby has been working on is the desperate regurgitation of spin in the face of all the evidence to the contrary.

Mr Jones says the government's economic modelling is predicting 1.6 million new jobs will be created by 2020. The question is: are these actual extra jobs, on top of what we have now, or are they going to be the mickey mouse green jobs this government is going to fabricate to save face? A recent study in the United Kingdom shows that, for every green job that is created, almost four real jobs were lost. I put that observation to the Prime Minister, but she refused to directly answer the question.

The Australian Financial Review reported that for the three months to August, the economy shed 14,000 jobs—the biggest quarterly decline in seven years. Over the past 3½ years, 136,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in Australia; yet the motion calls for training. Great—if you have a job or you can get a job. Yet in his motion, the member for Throsby states that Australia should have open and transparent tendering arrangements so that Australian industry can compete on an equal basis with international companies for major resource projects. What a joke!

How can Australia be competitive when most of our competitor countries do not impose or will not impose this carbon tax on production costs? Over the past year alone, 53,800 manufacturing jobs have been lost in Australia. Over the past six months, the period that coincides with the time during which Australia has been under the threat of the introduction of the carbon tax, 49,400 manufacturing jobs have been lost and, overall, the total number of manufacturing jobs is now down to 945,600. These are verifiable Bureau of Statistics figures.

Westpac has noted that household unemployment expectations have risen 8.5 per cent this month. People think things are going to get worse. Their economist, Justin Smirk, says that 'the reading was consistent with other measures of a deteriorating labour market.' Hardly a rosy picture being painted by the experts and certainly totally opposite to the yarn the Member for Throsby was trying so hard to push.

It is also reported that the government has resisted growing pressure to conduct an inquiry into the future of manufacturing. Can they be afraid of what might be revealed? But apparently it has scheduled another one-day talkfest on jobs for October 6th. One day! The member is either deluding himself, his electorate or is just panicking and grasping at straws. Yet his colleagues in the trade union movement are worried and have been calling on government intervention in the manufacturing industry.

If the farce of the hastily convened joint select committee on the energy bills is any guide, then the government is going to resist any inquiry that is bound to cast even more doubt over this ill-conceived carbon tax. But the Member for Throsby is not worried. It is not his job on the line. The previous day, the member was also waxing lyrical about what fantastic things were happening at Port Kembla—but again made no mention of the job losses that were happening at the same time all around him. He is still prattling on about how Australia was set to achieve a five per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2020. Yet this government's own modelling shows that emissions will
increase from 578 million tonnes in 2012 to 621 million tonnes in 2020, despite the carbon tax. Apparently this minor inconsistency should not stand in the way of a good story. He said in his Wednesday statement that it was no secret that he has a lot to say about the manufacturing industry, but he omitted to share with us the details of his government's plan to fix the problem. His motion calls for policies. Well, Member for Throsby, where are they? You are in government after all. All words and no action. It is just unfortunate that what he is saying seems to have little bearing on the unfolding reality.

Make no mistake: the manufacturing industry in the Illawarra is in decline, and it has much to do with the self-serving spin of Labor politicians like the member for Throsby and the member for Cunningham, who prefer to sweep problems under the carpet so that issues are not realistically confronted until it is too late. It is a far cry from what his predecessor and former colleague, Jennie George, had to say and also a far cry from the brutal assessment of the former state Labor member for Kiama and former Mayor of Shellharbour, Bob Harrison. Neither was afraid to put the needs of their constituents ahead of party politics, because they understood what was really happening at the grassroots level and actually listened to what was being said.

Our rate of manufacturing production has not only begun to stall; it has gone backwards. In a listing of industrial production for 42 countries in the most recent issue of the Economist, we were ranked 41st, only in front of Greece. One of my constituents has just returned from Germany and says that nearly everything you buy there—clothes, food, hardware—is made in Germany. If you see two Japanese cars, it is a rarity. How do we compare in Australia?

This rather cleverly constructed motion pretends to be doing something when really nothing practical or timely is being done. They are an inept and incompetent government and no amount of their grandiose statements will change the fact. The member's motion is deliberately loaded to give the impression that they care. They do not. Take part 1(c) of the motion, which says:

the Australian Government has an agenda for nation building, innovation and improving the productive performance of business and industry, but … more can be done in this area;

Sorry, but I have to disagree with that observation. I would have to say that the only positive initiative would be to have the guts to call an early election. The government's policies are about nothing more than desperately preserving the status quo of power. What good, Member for Throsby, is compensation if you do not have a job?

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (21:02): I congratulate the members for Cunningham and—

Mr Briggs interjecting—

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON: I beg your pardon?

Mr Briggs: I thought you were more of a CFMEU man.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON: I congratulate the members for Cunningham and Throsby on bringing this resolution forward. Indisputably, even their worst detractors over there would concede that they have very close associations with industry in the Illawarra. I particularly noted the point made by the member for Cunningham concerning the contrast between what the previous government did in Newcastle and the swift action that has followed the terminations at BlueScope. All
we are hearing from the opposition is their opposition to measures within that package.

One of the most interesting parts of this debate so far has been the contrast between the contributions of two members on the opposite side. The member for McPherson, who has an industrial relations background, obviously has a close knowledge of industry in her electorate. She gave examples of what is happening with industries in her electorate and saw the problems that this country faces as extremely broad: the Australian dollar and skills, as well as the spending patterns that are apparent in Australia at the moment.

In contrast, the opposition's spokesperson, who put on quite a performance at the Press Club recently, came in here with the usual diatribe against various individuals in the government. It was the end of Western civilisation, according to the member for Indi, but she offered no answers whatsoever. As I said, she was at the Press Club and there we saw her call for more collaboration between researchers and industry, simultaneously saying that we should abolish innovation councils, where that collaboration actually happens. We saw her praising greenhouse gas reductions in this country by manufacturers but claiming that manufacturing had no place in the clean energy future. We heard her say that her major contribution to industry in this country would be to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and get rid of the $4.8 billion industry investment in technology and development.

It is interesting to note figures from Dave Oliver from the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union about the realities of what is happening internationally. The size of the global clean energy economy is $6 trillion. Today the opposition spokesperson, as last week at the Press Club, did not come forward with any real initiatives. As I say, her contribution is to abolish initiatives in this area, not to assist industry to develop, expand and go into new areas. I noted Oliver's comment:

… we are now facing a wave of hostility to this record investment.

Instead of welcoming the opportunity … we hear all kinds of arguments … bemoaning the package.

Those comments, made in the Drum on 14 July, are the reality.

This motion calls for a diverse industry. It is important to electorates like my own. We still have agriculture and the University of Western Sydney, which has an expanding presence. We have high rates of government employment in the state and, of course, a manufacturing base which is structured around two circumstances: the fact that there are a lot of greenfield sites in Werriwa and the fact that it is in close proximity to important networks.

As the member for McPherson pointed out, the situation that we face in this country is complex. It is not simple, as the member for Indi would suggest. We are in a situation where the Australian dollar has made it very difficult for companies to compete. The member who spoke before me talked about what we face with regard to import barriers in other countries. It is preposterous to say that we can actually counter that, but, as I say, the situation with the dollar is not a simple one. It means that some of our imports are cheaper for other parts of our sector. It means that our export products can make enhanced profits.

This motion displays the government's determination to make sure that the manufacturing industry is preserved in this country. I congratulate the mover of the motion.

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield) (21:07):
The essence of this motion is to recommend a new layer of bureaucracy which is
supposedly going to be the magic potion to protect and stimulate manufacturing. In the member's dream world, there is a requirement that all major resource projects have an Australian Industry Participation Plan. This is a bad idea which goes in the wrong direction. What we need in Australia are policies which stimulate economic activity in the private sector rather than try to pick winners in any particular industry or sector. What is the first thing that any sensible government should do to achieve this objective? It is to do no harm. Yet we have seen the precise opposite of that from the Rudd-Gillard government. We have seen a determination to impose a cost burden on Australian industry which, through the imposition of a carbon tax, makes it uncompetitive with competitors based in other nations around the world. What have people in the manufacturing sector to say about this carbon tax? Mr Lindsay Partridge, the managing director of Brickworks, had this to say:

The end result will be an exodus of manufacturing industries and investment offshore, jobs will be lost, the cost of housing will increase and there will be no change to carbon emissions.

We have also seen increasing rigidities in the labour market under this government's legislation, which bears the Orwellian title of Fair Work Act. 'Do no harm' should be the first principle of government, but this government has been enthusiastically doing everything it can to interfere with the productive operation of Australian industry. What are they now suggesting? They are suggesting Australian Industry Participation Plans. What a useless piece of window dressing! I speak with some direct experience, because in the telecommunications sector in 1997 a requirement was imposed for carrier industry development plans. This emerged from the very same worthy impulse that government can make things better by imposing the requirement for a plan. I was a senior executive at Optus for eight years. I had accountability for the production of the industry development plan, and I assure you that it was a useless waste of time. It was time-consuming, costly and cumbersome and made not one bit of difference to the very considerable contributions made to industry development by Optus and other companies in the telecommunications sector.

So, despite the best instincts of the member for Throsby to engage in well-meaning government intervention—nice pieces of paper to be filled out in an earnest and worthy way—the experience is that these kinds of measures make absolutely no difference. This point was accepted by the Productivity Commission when in 2001 it recommended repeal of the completely useless industry development plan regime. One can only imagine the horror with which the Productivity Commission would view the recommendation contained in this motion by the member for Throsby.

What would be a more sensible direction for us to pursue in order to promote economic activity and ensure that the benefits of the resources boom are captured as widely as possible? Being charitable, I am prepared to concede that this intention underlies this manifestly ill-conceived motion brought forward this evening by the member for Throsby. An excellent recent report by Port Jackson Partners entitled Earth, fire, wind and water: economic opportunities and the Australian commodities cycle says:

… the opportunities and benefits of the commodities boom can accrue more broadly than is commonly understood.

They recommend an approach which is focused on building capacity and enabling growth by:
accelerating and streamlining development processes and enacting other supportive policies—such as a—less expansive fiscal policy—I do not hear much support for that from the government benches—and by appropriate tax policies and by the encouragement of foreign investment…Let us do sensible things to encourage manufacturing rather than implement another earnest and useless bureaucratic measure.

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (21:12): I welcome the motion moved by the member for Throsby because it goes to the heart of a matter of great concern to many in my electorate of Chisholm: the decline in manufacturing jobs. Unlike the previous speaker, I have seen where Australian industry partnership agreements have worked in practice in a range of cases rather than been forced down the throats of companies or individuals. People have seen the benefits of having long-term, stable relationships with their suppliers. For an example I only need look to Toyota and its relationships with many of its suppliers—in particular, in my electorate, its relationship with Unidrive. Unidrive has 300 employees, and they are guaranteed ongoing work because the company has developed a long-term, stable relationship with their major deliverer of component parts. Toyota comes on a yearly basis and trains up people at Unidrive in their skills and techniques; they also send staff from Unidrive to Japan on a very regular basis so that they can see how quality control is implemented there. Half the staff now refer to many of their processes in Japanese lingo, because that is how it is done in Japan. So relationship building is really important, and that is what we are talking about.

We also need to look at why Australia's economic credentials remain strong. The federal government's action during the global financial crisis and the resilience of the Australian economy mean that our economy continues to outperform other advanced economies. Australia's unemployment rate is incredibly low regardless of what those on the other side are saying. Recent national accounts figures said that jobs in manufacturing had increased, not declined. We also have low government debt and record terms of trade that show that our fundamentals are strong and our economic prospects are bright. We are indeed the envy of the developed world. In light of the potentially difficult global economic climate, this government understands that high-skilled, high-wage jobs ensure diversity and adaptability and prepare us for an uncertain future. We know that we cannot afford to put all our eggs in one basket, and that diversity ensures that economic benefits spread to all Australians. We also need to realise that there are more jobs in manufacturing in Australia than there are in the mining sector. We need to realise where the jobs actually are. There are also more jobs in the service sector, and we need to remember the decline in the service sector and where we need to put money.

We are looking at innovation representing a key element of building upon our current and future economic prosperity. Nowhere is this more evident than in my electorate of Chisholm, which features highly-skilled innovative research and development work. I recently had the opportunity to visit the polymers CRC in my electorate, which has been in operation since 1992. You only need to look at the joint venture between its current participants, which includes nine universities, government research organisations, CSIRO and ANSTO and its commercial arm with many businesses. It
draws on world-competitive teams, comprising leading researchers from its industry participants and the best researchers in Australia, drawn from across universities and government laboratories, for delivering its planned research outcomes. Their major emphasis is on developing technologies and products to improve health, to enable greater food and water security and for producing low-cost solar energy. The use of products based on CRC technology has provided a range of benefits including productivity gains and the creation of high skilled, high-value manufacturing jobs.

I also recently visited CSIRO, which has one of its largest headquarters in my seat of Chisholm. It is also the key precinct in Clayton, which is my electorate, for materials and manufacturing science. We need to look at science and research as leading to greater industry and greater development, not with this complete negativity. At CSIRO in my electorate one of the things they are working on is titanium alloys—they are light and strong and the current production methods are too costly to expand their use beyond the aerospace market. Leading researchers from the US have been attracted to CSIRO to work on this titanium product. There is market capitalisation going on that will lead to many jobs, and we need to look at this as the way forward.

Part of the motion tonight looks at how to develop all these things together. We are doing many things in this sector that we need to be proud of instead of talking it down all the time. We need to talk up the Australian economy. We need to talk about where the jobs are, how to develop them and how to create them. Tragically I, like others before, have seen manufacturing jobs lost from my electorate. The recent announcement by Bosch that 360 jobs are going to go by the end of the year is a crying shame. They do not actually need to be going. The recent closure of Australian Envelopes, which was a money grab by the company, did not need to happen. We also need to look at what manufacturing employers do to their own staff.

Mr BRIGGS (Mayo) (21:20): I am not sure whether the member for Chisholm was speaking for the motion or against it given the positive outlook she had for manufacturing in Australia. I support what she said; Australia has got a very strong and diversified manufacturing sector. Some parts are performing very well at the moment while some parts are struggling under the counterweight. Pressure has been put on it by a strongly performing resource sector, and I notice the member for Wakefield, when he was walking away from his position in the Labor Party as a disciple of Paul Keating, was saying towards the end of his contribution that the success of the resource sector is apparently now a terrible thing. 'We're going to dig it all up and they're just going to leave,' was, I think, the direct quote from the member for Wakefield.

The motion moved by the member for Throsby was in part a good motion. In other parts it is an appalling step back to the future for some members of the Labor Party who are trying to send a signal of false hope to people who are going through difficult times, and they should be ashamed of themselves. They have walked away from their great Hawke-Keating traditions that we hear about so often in this place—about the reformist, the open economist, the move to a competitive global environment—and moved back to providing industry plans, as the member for Bradfield put it so well in his contribution to this debate.

With nearly one million people employed in it, the manufacturing sector is important to our economy. We will always have a
manufacturing sector, and we should have one, but we will not have a manufacturing sector which is subsidised by government because we know that government subsidies do not work. The member for Wakefield can call it whatever he likes—he can call it co-investment. If the Labor Party is so desperate to run businesses it should go and try to run a business. Co-investment is the new way of describing it. It is sophistry at its finest from the member for Wakefield.

But so hypocritical are those in the government and their friends on this side that, at a time when car manufacturers are under the greatest pressure we have seen because of the dollar and other competitiveness pressures internationally, what do the Toyota workers do under their leadership of the AMWU? They walk off the job. What a shock! We have absolute pressure, we are hearing from them day in, day out; we have a motion before the parliament saying that the industry is going to fall over if we do not intervene and have co-investment, as the member for Wakefield put it. And what do the Toyota workers do? 'We'll go off the job! We may as well. Why wouldn't we?' Come on, give me a break! This highlights an utter hypocrisy. As the member for Gilmore and the member for Indi said so well regarding this Labor Party: its members talk in this chamber from the green leather of that side, but when they are out there with their mates in the AMWU they walk everyone off the job when workers are under great pressure, and they expect the taxpayer to co-invest to keep the industry going. That is the great hypocrisy of the modern Labor Party. Paul Keating will be at home tonight with his head hung in shame that one of his disciples, sitting there, refuses to continue along the path that he knows Australia should continue on. As I said before: go forwards, not backwards; let us keep moving forward. The member for Wakefield is a good example.

The modern Labor Party reminds me of Ronald Reagan's most famous contribution to American public life, where he said, describing the government:

If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidise it.

That is what this motion is about. This motion is the confirmation of what Ronald Reagan said so famously in the 1980s about a Democrat government. This is exactly what you could say about a Labor government these days. At a time when it knows parts of the manufacturing sector are under genuine pressure—and we agree that they are under genuine pressure—what does it do? It goes and puts the world's biggest carbon tax on them, putting them under more pressure. The second thing they will do is have their mates at the AMWU walk off the job at Toyota in Melbourne in the middle of the greatest pressure on the vehicle industry we have seen, but they will still come cap in hand for co-investment. Finally what you will have is the great re-regulation of the labour market to make it more difficult for these manufacturing employers to compete or to ensure that they are competitive going forward.

I think that today the chairman of the congressional House of Representatives Committee on the Budget in the United States, Mr Paul Ryan, put it perfectly. He said, 'Governments shouldn't try and pick winners and losers in the marketplace; they should focus on the conditions for economic growth and let the private sector create jobs.'

Mr Husic (Chifley—Government Whip) (21:22): It is a pleasure to follow the member for Mayo, who I understand is a member of this society that they have formed, the Modest Members. They are so modest you never hear an idea out of them.
That is modesty in the extreme—never having a positive idea to contribute to public debate. We saw more evidence of it tonight.

This resolution and what has been put forward by the member for Throsby—and the member for Cunningham spoke on this earlier—is critical in terms of being able to recognise that this is a sector that contributes a great deal to the Australian economy and is going through one of its roughest patches, brought on by movements in currency—45 per cent in two years. We need to look at what can be done to assist the industry through this difficult period. Overall, manufacturing itself accounts for 34 per cent of all goods exported and generates about $84 billion of income for our country. Output is still growing in the face of pretty challenging times—about one per cent in the past year—and manufacturing creates close to a million jobs. In my neck of the woods, in Chifley, manufacturing generates about 10,000 jobs and 16½ per cent of all jobs in the electorate are as a result of manufacturing activity, probably the 10th highest of the seats across the country. The contribution of manufacturing to parts of Western Sydney is huge, and I think Fowler is the other seat that benefits greatly from the contribution of manufacturing in Western Sydney.

But, as I mentioned before, currency pressures, with the Australian dollar moving 45 per cent in two years and on top of that the Chinese currency being deliberately undervalued to the tune of about 40 per cent, mean that there are huge impacts on our sector. The motion itself talks about the way that we can assist industry through greater industry participation, and it certainly attempts to find ways to help a sector that is under pressure.

Much has been made of the impact of mining in crowding out other sectors, and I wanted to see what some people in authoritative positions would be able to bring to this debate to assist us. I have to say that the Reserve Bank of Australia has made a few statements that have been real eyebrow raisers to me. We have had a lot to say about two-speed economies. While many look at the heat being generated by mining, we do need to look at other sectors of the economy and see what is happening there. It is certainly well documented in retail, for example, that they are concerned about flat retail output and concerned to see what can happen to induce greater growth there in the face of what is happening in the mining sector. Manufacturing is the other sector that has been very concerned about the growth of mining.

When we looked recently at what Ric Battellino, the deputy Reserve Bank governor, had to say, I was quite astounded at what happened when we were looking for answers from someone in a position like that. He said:

The structure of the economy is changing very dramatically and, one way or another, that is going to happen while the demand for resources is so strong—a pretty straightforward statement, but then he said:

The manufacturing sector is finding life more difficult with this exchange rate, and we've seen the result of that in recent days. But I don't think anybody can really work out what can be done about that—this from the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank if you are looking for answers, and on top of that—

Mr Briggs: Oh, attacking the Reserve Bank now?

Mr Husic: Well, they are independent, but they are supposed to be able to provide some sort of input as to where we might head, particularly in these rough times. Only
adding to the position was the governor himself when he appeared on Friday, 26 August before the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics. He then went on to make an interesting series of comments about issues regarding individual businesses and negotiating flexibility in agreements—but, at the same time, ignoring fact. He said:

What people say to me, I cannot verify it obviously, from their individual businesses is that they find it harder to negotiate flexibility. That is something that is said. If that is true that I think is a matter for concern—

an astounding comment, particularly when he says, 'I cannot verify it obviously.' Secondly, he said:

What we do not do is get into political debates over particular policies.

He ignores the fact that 64 per cent of awards and agreements have flexibility clauses in them. On top of that, it is a slap in the face for employees and unions who worked with employers through the GFC to ensure that there was flexibility through the difficulties of the GFC. If he wants to listen to business, why doesn't he talk up, for example, the need to tackle currency differentials in the broader international economy or listen to businesses who are keen to see what he might do on interest rates?

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms KATE ELLIS: I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

North Sydney Electorate: Mater Hospital

Seidler, Mr Harry

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (21:28): Tonight I want to acknowledge the great work of one of the country's most renowned private hospitals, the Mater hospital in Crows Nest in Sydney. As many of you know, having a child is one of the most rewarding and exciting times of our lives. Admittedly it is also one of the most stressful periods—I suspect more for the mum than for the father. I am sure my colleagues in the chamber, both mothers and fathers, would be able to empathise. It is at this stressful and joyous time that we want the best environment for our children to enter the world and for our wives, in my case, to be cared for and looked after in such a way that they will be able to focus on the challenges and to go through the birthing pangs in a compassionate and supportive environment. For me and my wife, Melissa, the Mater hospital in North Sydney provided exactly that throughout the births of our three children: Xavier, Adelaide and Ignatius. I cannot speak highly enough of the quality of care and compassion given to us and so, too, to the parents of some 40,000 babies born at the Mater since the opening of its maternity unit in 1991.

The Mater hospital maternity unit had its 20th reunion celebration last month, on 9 August, at the Crystal Ball venue in Luna Park. I was very privileged to be invited, along with, amongst others, Sarah Murdoch and Karl Stefanovic, as one of the many special guests and as a parent to attend the reunion. Like many of the parents and children who attended the 20th reunion, we were there to acknowledge and thank the staff and people who helped make the Mater hospital the unique place that it is, second to none, for their great work.

Even though I was actually born at that hospital 46 years ago, it was a 20th reunion for the maternity unit. For over 105 years the Mater hospital has worked in partnership with patients and their families. Its holistic approach to health care and its unique patient care have to be commended. They are not just doctors and nurses and staff but care givers, who work together to ensure our
safety, our wellbeing and our swift recovery. Once again, I would like to thank all the staff, especially the executive director, Robert Cusack, for his leadership and his commitment to seeing that the Mater excels in its performance.

I would also like to pay tribute to a late friend of mine and an Australian icon, Harry Seidler. The late Harry Seidler is well known to many in this place for his outstanding architectural contribution not just here in Australia but around the world. He was more than an architect to me; he was a mate. Even though I disagreed with him from time to time and even had the odd political disagreement with his wife, Penelope, it is a great honour to have been asked to open Harry's Park, which is a public and cultural park currently under construction that will be a reminder of the significant contribution this man has made to our nation. The park is located in my electorate, on the corner of Glen Street and Dind Street in Milsons Point.

Let me first acknowledge his great architectural skills. Often referred to as one of the greatest and most influential architects ever to work in the Southern Hemisphere, Harry started his architectural study in Canada, before winning a scholarship to Harvard University. Arriving in Australia to commission the Rose Seidler House for his mother, his new and innovative style of architecture, which incorporated open-plan living and natural light, won him instant acclaim. He went on to design iconic buildings in Sydney such as the Australia Square tower, the MLC Centre and, I might add, Blues Point Tower, which I lived in and am very fond of. They changed the Australian landscape. Harry earned a special place in the history of modern architecture.

He was born in Vienna in 1923 and his family left for England, when Harry was just 15, to escape Nazi occupation. Soon after, the English authorities interned his family and sent the Seidlers to Canada as 'enemy aliens'. Harry was eventually permitted to study architecture and structural engineering at the University of Manitoba. He graduated with first-class honours in 1944 and, in the following year, won a scholarship to the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where he studied under architect Walter Gropius, formerly director of the famed Bauhaus in Germany.

For me, part of the honour of being a member of parliament is to have opportunities like this to highlight the work of and pay tribute to people such as Harry Seidler who have helped transform our society and the nation in which we live. I am proud to be able to represent his interests here in this parliament.

**National Health and Hospitals Reform**

**Mr NEUMANN** (Blair) (21:33): After many years of neglect by the previous coalition government, national health reform is delivering for a health and hospital system in Ipswich. The national health and hospitals reform is delivering new subacute services in Ipswich, providing more support for patients in the local community.

Recently, the Hon. Nicola Roxon, the Minister for Health and Ageing, visited Ipswich. Together, we inspected a new rehabilitation centre and announced a boost to geriatric evaluation and management services at Ipswich Hospital. These new services will provide better assessment and rehabilitation care for elderly patients in the Ipswich and West Moreton region. It is part of a $16.52 million boost to West Moreton health services. Providing local communities such as Ipswich, with a fast-growing population, with resources is critical for adequate and proper health care. It is crucial that Ipswich gets support for local health and hospital reform.
The $16.52 million investment in the Ipswich and West Moreton region over the next three years will provide for 10 subacute bed equivalent services, or an extra 3,280 occupied bed days, for geriatric evaluation and management at Ipswich General Hospital; six subacute beds at Boonah Hospital; a new community based adult rehabilitation service at Ipswich; and an expansion of palliative care outreach services across the Ipswich and West Moreton region, also benefiting the Lockyer Valley and the Somerset region, in my electorate.

The new rehabilitation centre that we inspected will start operation in the new year and it is the first of its kind in the region. When the geriatric evaluation management service is fully operational it will provide, as I say, an additional 3,280 bed days per annum at Ipswich General Hospital. That is the equivalent of 10 extra beds and it will make a big difference with respect to rehabilitation services in the whole area. It is part of a 1,300 subacute bed and community services commitment across the whole of Australia, including at least 265 beds and services to be delivered in Queensland. This is crucial.

The facility we inspected will feature a kitchen and bathroom set-up, helping patients simulate a homelike environment as part of their therapy program. In addition, palliative care services will be expanded by approximately 800 appointments specifically for patients with heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. This builds on Labor's already strong investments in the Ipswich and West Moreton region, including the GP superclinic which was so critical to the flood recovery evacuation in Ipswich. It is making sure that Ipswich residents get the care they need.

Since this government was elected in 2007 we have committed $6.1 billion in new funding for Queensland's health and hospital system through national health reform. Locally, in the Ipswich area, that has included $16.7 million to increase paediatric emergency treatment places in Ipswich General Hospital; $1.7 million to fit out an additional operating theatre at Ipswich Hospital, which the federal Minister for Health and Ageing formerly visited with me; and $2.5 million for the Ipswich GP superclinic, of which the first stage is operational; eight general practitioner registrars in the Ipswich area; and over $700,000 for the healthy communities project, Healthy Active Ipswich. I congratulate the Ipswich City Council for their success. The project is aimed at making sure that Ipswich has the healthiest community, through physical activity and improved healthy eating amongst adults, predominantly those not in the workforce.

I note that some of this funding will go towards a very popular centre for the Ministry of Food. Jamie Oliver, of course, runs that internationally. The centre is located in Ipswich. The Ministry of Food is just one of the innovative programs that will benefit from the health community funding, with healthy cooking lessons expanded to help disadvantaged students.

This is also part of the assistance we are giving the University of Queensland. The University of Queensland and the University of Southern Queensland have recently received a $712,000 investment in refurbishment and fit-out of clinics at those universities to improve clinical education and training infrastructure across the Ipswich and West Moreton region. And $690,000 was given to the University of Queensland to help refurbish and fit-out the clinical training and placement environment the Ipswich GP superclinic, on top of the $2.5 million we have committed. This is great for the local community.
Micah Challenge

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (21:38): We all know that extreme, absolute poverty is occurring around the world. At least 900 million people do not have access to safe water and 2.6 billion do not have adequate sanitation facilities. It is a life that is difficult for an Australian to imagine. With the constant media attention on the many disasters around the world we can often be overwhelmed by the extent of need in our society. Charity is needed both at home and abroad and it is often difficult to know where to start. That is why I am speaking today to support the Micah Challenge and their 2011 Voices for Justice campaign. This year, as part of their aim to encourage world leaders to meet their commitments to the Millennium Development Goals, the Micah Challenge is focusing on safe water and sanitation.

This campaign is particularly important, for whilst we have seen vast improvements in relation to some of the eight Millennium Development Goals, insufficient progress has been made on health goals. These include goal 4 focusing on child mortality and goal 5 focusing on maternal mortality.

I am pleased that the Micah Challenge is drawing attention to these issues as, unlike natural disasters or war, these tragedies often do not make the headlines. It is difficult to imagine Australian children dying from diarrhoea as a result of not having access to clean water and it is now very rare in Australia for a mother to die during childbirth, yet around the world 8.1 million children die from basic illnesses brought on by a lack of sanitation, and 1,000 women die every day from complications during pregnancy or childbirth. The common theme in these causes of death is, in most cases, a lack of access to health care. Even in Port Moresby, our nearest neighbour, five mothers die in childbirth every day. And I would like to take this opportunity to commend the ongoing work by Dame Carol Kidu in this area.

I also believe there is a great opportunity for corporations and governments to work together to achieve better outcomes, and I look at the excellent work being done by Oil Search in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, where they are working with and supporting local communities to deliver better health services for their people.

The Micah Challenge has recently released a report that states that access to water, basic sanitation and hygiene— included in Millennium Development Goal 7 regarding environmental sustainability—could hold the key to unlocking huge progress in development goals 4 and 5. The World Health Organisation has estimated that, by addressing this issue, 28 per cent of all children's deaths could be avoided—that we could save the lives of two million children a year. It could also save scores of mothers who die from infection and lack of nutrition. The benefits are astounding, and could clearly make a huge improvement to standards of living. Additionally, the World Health Organisation believes that these improvements can be made at relatively low cost. They are the most cost-effective public health interventions available. Indeed, for every one dollar invested in water, basic sanitation and hygiene, an estimated eight dollars is paid back into a nation's economy.

Huge improvements to poverty have already occurred under the Millennium Development Goals. Since 1990, developing countries have seen the proportion of their people living in poverty fall from 46 per cent to 27 per cent. They have seen suffering from hunger decline from 30 per cent to 23 per cent. They have seen access to clean water increase from 72 per cent to 84 per
cent, and they have seen the number living with infectious disease stabilise and in some cases begin to decrease. We should celebrate the achievements that have been made and the lives that have been saved. However, it is not enough. We all know that it is not enough. It is vitally important that we achieve the Millennium Development Goals, if for no other reason than that no-one deserves to be born into absolute poverty. No-one deserves to live their life or raise their children in such terrible and difficult circumstances—circumstances undeserved and beyond their control.

The Micah Challenge is calling on the Australian government to increase efforts towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in response to the 900 million people who do not have access to clean drinking water and the 2.6 billion who are without basic sanitation. It is also important that we recommit to our aid commitments as a nation. Both sides of this parliament have pledged to raise foreign aid to 0.5 per cent of gross national income by 2015, and I know that the coalition continue to be committed to that goal.

I commend the Micah Challenge initiative in bringing these issues to the fore. A global commitment to water, basic sanitation and hygiene offers increased economic, social, and human development, improving the health and wellbeing of children, families, and communities around the world. The Micah Challenge says, 'Reducing needless preventable child and maternal deaths is both developmentally expedient and, perhaps even more importantly, a moral and human imperative.'

**United Nations**

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (21:43): In 1945, the establishment of the United Nations was a triumph of hope over experience. The League of Nations had failed to forestall World War II, yet the creation of the United Nations signalled optimism that such horrors could be avoided in the future—hope that succeeding generations, as the charter says, might be saved from 'the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind'.

I spoke a month ago in the adjournment debate about the challenges of reforming the United Nations Security Council and I want to follow up tonight by offering a few suggestions for reform of the United Nations General Assembly. Again, I am grateful to William Isdale for his assistance.

The General Assembly is the largest body of the United Nations. It is the place where all member nations are represented and have a say. It is supposed to be—and should be—a forum of great significance. Regrettably, the views of experienced observers are damning.

In his book on the United Nations, Australian Catholic University Professor Spencer Zifcak says the assembly 'is a body of only the most fleeting relevance to the conduct of world affairs ... a forum in which the agenda consists mainly of national grievances... the resolutions proliferate without review and are 'almost impossible to translate into practical action'. For anyone who cares about issues that come before the General Assembly—which range from disease pandemics to nuclear proliferation and transnational crime to climate change—this is worrying stuff.

The United Nations's High-Level Panel has concluded that the central difficulty for the assembly is its lack of focus and procedure. For instance, its huge and inflexible agenda leads to repetitious discussion and the desire to achieve unanimity generates resolutions that are vague, vapid or represent the lowest common denominator. No fewer than 18 resolutions...
have been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on the subject of its own revitalisation. Since this is the world's principal deliberative forum, it is time that some of these resolutions were acted upon.

For instance, smaller, more expert committees could help sharpen debate prior to them coming before the assembly. The general unwillingness to delegate to committees should be met with clearer guidelines as to when it is appropriate to do so. It is important that the General Assembly be a forum for the discussion of global issues that matter, not the minutiae of budgets and administration. We need to strengthen the office of the President of the General Assembly, a position held by H.V. 'Doc' Evatt from 1948 to 1949 when he was the United Nations' fourth president. The president should be able to prioritise the most important issues on the agenda and call debates on major issues.

When it comes to speeches, the floor should be opened to competing positions, not just to anyone who wants to speak, and time limits must be better enforced. Currently, delegates regularly go well over their allotted 15 minutes but are not stopped. In 2009 Muammar Gaddafi spoke for an hour and a half, causing his translator to break off mid-speech with the cry, 'I just can't take it anymore.' This is still short of Fidel Castro's 1960 effort of 4½ hours in the General Assembly and well below the United Nations Security Council's record for a speech—just under eight hours.

To make it more authoritative, the General Assembly should be better equipped to publicise its decisions and to monitor action taken on its resolutions. At present there is a tendency for resolutions to proliferate almost endlessly, without regard to what has been said before and with little follow-through.

The General Assembly, as the most representative organ, should also have a greater say in selecting the Secretary-General of the United Nations as a whole. The General Assembly has the formal power to appoint the Secretary-General on recommendation of the Security Council. But in practice the Security Council has assumed the decisive role by sending only one candidate for the assembly to approve. The Security Council should be encouraged to send the General Assembly more than one candidate to choose from. This would go some way towards democratising the United Nations by ensuring that the Secretary-General is someone that all nations have a say in appointing.

We expect a lot from the United Nations. It is indispensable in the world we now find ourselves in. The United Nations runs on less money than the Manhattan fire service—but reform need not be expensive. The United Nation's value comes in providing a space for deliberation, not a world government. A concerted effort is required and a commitment to the realisation of the United Nations's central project: creating a safer, more prosperous world.

**Murray Electorate: Drought Assistance**

**Dr STONE** (Murray) (21:48): The drought that was the worst on record in the central part of my electorate of Murray was a drought that no-one expected ever to see because it was in an irrigation area. The exceptional circumstances drought relief literally put food on the table for hundreds of families, and for many of those families the support continued for more than five years. You can imagine their great financial distress when, with the first rains, the exceptional circumstances support was cut off—even though there was no income with that first rain. For some there was further disaster
ahead when the floods came and wiped out over $1 billion worth of livestock and infrastructure.

For a few, there was one last hope in the form of an exceptional circumstances exit grant. This meant that, given they were forced to sell their properties, they could receive some retraining funding of $5,000 to $10,000, some counselling and information about where they might go to support their families in the future and $150,000 which was to be paid to them to help them restart their lives in a different enterprise. Part of the condition of this grant was that they would not return to farming for a number of years.

No small business person, especially a farmer, can readily or easily face the business of selling their farm, but numbers saw this as their only hope to be independent into the future. I want to give you some of the cases that I now have before Minister Ludwig—begging him to understand that you cannot simply withdraw an exit grant in the way that this government did—unconscionably, without warning—when you had, only a few weeks before, announced that it was to be extended until June-July next year.

This particular family has three young children. They live in my electorate in central Victoria. They finally decided they had to sell their farm. A deciding factor was the fact that they would be eligible for this exit grant of $150,000. They were assessed and found to be eligible and were paid the $5,000 of the first instalment of the training grant. You can imagine their extraordinary distress when, having put a deposit on a small, modest home in Bendigo, where they were going to have to move, they were contacted and told it was all off. They were not to receive the exit grant. The government had run out of money. That family is now in deep shock and great financial distress. They owe money on a house they can no longer get any borrowings for to give them a future. The man of the family has three days work. That is the only income to keep food on the table for that family.

There is a second case. They are another young couple. They were pre-assessed and accepted into the EC exit grant scheme. It was a major factor in them deciding to finally sell their property, despite years of hardship in trying to nurse it through, first of all, drought and then flood. These are the words of the financial counsellor who had been advising them through this stage: "Early last week they had presented at my office, the day following receipt of the letter advising there were no funds to complete their exit grant process. She was crying as she relayed their plight. He excused himself a couple of times to run to the bathroom to vomit. They are long-term clients and their farm had been on the market for 3½ years in an attempt to sell. They have lowered their price several times. Settlement had been delayed three times due to the flood, NVIRP and delay in payment of water sold under the government tenders. They both now suffer extreme and severe stress. Prior to the EC declaration in June 2011 when they contacted Centrelink and rural financial counselling services and politicians they were told again and again they wouldn't miss the deadline for an EC Exit Grant, they were eligible and the deadline had been extended to 30/6/2012."

Imagine their distress—and I just read you the way they were physically sickened by the news that the grant, despite their farm sale, was not going to come through. As a result they have now no grant but they have left only a nominal deposit on a modest house and they in are exactly the same terrible financial situation they were before they sold the farm.
In another family the farm was sold $80,000 below its value because they were told they were going to receive this grant, they were eligible, they had been approved. They sold the property thinking the $150,000 would make the difference of that reduced sale value because they had had it on the market a long time. That family, too, is in great distress. They do not know where to go nor how they are going to feed their family, given there is very little work in these areas.

This is an unconscionable thing to do. I believe that the scheme for Compensation for Detriment Caused by Defective Administration, the CDDA scheme, must step in and compensate these people, because this has been government maladministration. 

(Time expired)

Climate Change

Mr MURPHY (Reid) (21:53): Whilst the scientific scepticism and the hostility to scientists of the Leader of the Opposition and his followers has become a national embarrassment, readily comprehensible evidence that supports the government's actions to restrict carbon dioxide emissions continues to grow, as do atmospheric carbon dioxide levels. There is now so much unarguable evidence that carbon dioxide emitted from burning fossil fuels is driving global warming and climate change, as well as the acidification of sea water, that it is difficult to decide where to start.

Perhaps I could start tonight with an account of discoveries by geologists who have examined the fossil record of the temperatures and sea levels from the Eemian, the interglacial period that occurred 130,000 years ago that preceded the current Holocene interglacial in which we are now living.

Since 1837, when Karl Schimper and Louis Agassiz first presented evidence for extensive glaciations based on data collected in the Alps, it has been understood that the earth has undergone a succession of ice ages now known as the Pliocene-Quaternary glaciation, which started about 2.6 million years ago. There is compelling evidence that icesheets and sea levels have advanced and retreated on 40,000 and 100,000-year cycles during the Pliocene-Quaternary epoch, and that these glaciations and associated changes have been interspersed with much shorter and warmer interglacials, such as the preceding Eemian interglacial that I have just referred to.

Rather like today's climate change deniers who dispute the evidence for climate change, the 1830s audience for Schimper and Agassiz's theory of ice ages was very critical of, or even opposed to, the new idea because it contradicted the then established theories of climate history. Most scientists of that time thought that the earth had been gradually cooling down since its birth as a molten globe and that preceding ages were hotter rather than cooler as Schimper and Agassiz had proposed. Yet, as we know, Schimper and Agassiz were correct in their interpretation of the evidence and, despite the protests of the doubters and deniers of that time, the regular advance and retreat of the ice over hundreds of thousands of years is now accepted as an historical fact established beyond any dispute.

So it is for global warming driven by carbon dioxide emissions, although what is different about the present concocted argument is that the very great majority of scientists accept the evidence for human-induced global warming and climate change caused by carbon dioxide emissions whilst those denying the evidence are either scientific illiterates, amoral political opportunists or undeclared campaigners for vested interests.

What is most concerning about the geological evidence from the Eemian period
is the fact that data from ice cores and ocean sediments show that average global temperatures were around two degrees warmer than today's temperatures, while other evidence shows clearly that the sea level was four to six metres higher than at present, with the water coming from melted icecaps in Greenland and the Antarctic.

Although the Eemian interglacial may have been warmer than the present interglacial due to natural variation, what is different about our time is that the initially lower temperatures and sea levels are being driven upwards by distinctly unnatural carbon dioxide emissions produced by human activity. Fossil reef terraces from the Eemian period are a common sight along tropical coasts, and examples sitting four to six metres higher than current sea levels can be seen throughout the Caribbean. Eemian reefs are also obvious along Australian coasts and, according to Dr Stirling of the Australian National University, in Western Australia fossil Eemian reefs occur between 2.5 and 3.4 metres above present mean low water spring at Mowbowra Creek, Vlaming Head, Southern Yardie Creek and Burney Point.

How would a sea level rise of this magnitude affect the many people, even in my own electorate, who live on the foreshores of Sydney Harbour and who would certainly be forced from their homes by these sorts of increases in sea level? If nothing is done to restrict emissions, an atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration of 450 parts per million will be reached within 20 years, up from the present level of over 380 parts per million, and that increase will, on the evidence, push up average global temperatures by around two degrees to a level not experienced since the Eemian period 130,000 years ago.

A sea level rise of four to six metres may therefore be in store for people living on Australia's coastline if the destructive policies of the opposition and climate change deniers continue to obstruct measures to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. (Time expired)

National Police Remembrance Day

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (21:59): I rise today to speak about National Police Remembrance Day to remember those police officers who have lost their lives serving the community. On 29 September each year thousands of people across Australia stopped to pay tribute to the members of the police force who have lost their lives and to offer support to their families. I felt compelled to speak here today because I proudly served my community as a police officer for 25 years, reaching the rank of sergeant.

I joined the New South Wales Police Force in October 1985, graduating from class 216. My career in the police force was very rewarding, but as an officer I had to deal with many challenging and confronting situations. I will never forget my first autopsy, my first deceased person or the first fatal motor vehicle accident that I attended—and having to tell loving parents their only child had been killed in that accident. During my time in the New South Wales Police Force I saw firsthand the devastating effects the death of a colleague can have on their family, friends, other police officers and the entire community in which they serve. A death within the force is a solemn reminder of the dangers our police face and the risks they must take every time they go to work to keep our communities safe. Like any member of the emergency services would know, it takes a great deal of courage to leave your own family behind to protect those you have never met each time you go to work. When an officer is killed in the line
of duty there is no telling how many police officers are affected from all over Australia. Many officers reconsider the risks they take every day and their family members they would leave behind if something were to go wrong.

The camaraderie in the police force is second to none. That is why so many police officers and former members of the police force will stop to remember their fallen comrades on 29 September. Even if they do not personally know an officer who has been killed, they know how easy it could be for a day at work to turn into a horrible nightmare for themselves or their colleagues. It was great to see more than 900 police officers take part in the Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance on the weekend. Officers travelled from the Police Wall of Remembrance at the Domain in Sydney to the National Police Memorial in Canberra. As they travelled south, they were joined by police officers from Australia's other states and territories. The ride is a great tribute to those officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice protecting the community. It not only commemorates the sacrifice made by the fallen officers but raises money for the loved ones they have left behind.

Earlier this year I spoke about two courageous police officers who were killed whilst on duty. Detective Senior Constable Damien Leeding was killed after responding to an armed robbery and hostage situation on the Gold Coast in May this year. Constable Leeding was described by his family and peers as a great father, a top bloke, a larrikin and a hero. His death had a devastating impact on the Gold Coast community and police officers across the country.

I also spoke about Senior Constable Jim Affleck, a highway patrol officer from my electorate who was run down during a police pursuit along the F5 in 2001. Jim was laying road spikes to stop a stolen vehicle when he was run down at high speed. I remember that day like it was yesterday, as would many others in Macarthur. After his death he was awarded the commissioner's valour award for exceptional bravery. Jim was a dedicated and professional police officer. His death shocked not only the police force but the entire Campbelltown community in which he served.

The deaths of these two officers, as with any police officer killed on duty, demonstrates the danger members of the force put themselves in every day to keep our communities safe. I join many people in the Macarthur electorate who have the utmost respect and admiration for members of the police force. These men and women take great risks every time they go to work. They deserve the utmost respect by the community for risking their lives to protect others.

Macarthur has more than 300 police officers working in the Camden and Campbelltown local area commands serving the local community. These men and women work very hard to fight crime and keep our residents safe. Away from work they are normal people with loving families who have high hopes and dreams for the future. At work they are brave and courageous men and women who do everything they can to protect my electorate. Over the years I have met many of these officers who love their job serving their community in this way but, no matter how much they love being a police officer, they all know the risks and dangers they face every time they put their uniform on.

In New South Wales alone we have lost more than 240 police officers through a variety of causes in the line of duty since August 1803. These include being shot by bushrangers, drowning whilst crossing a
creek, being shot by an offender, being assaulted, having motorbike accidents during a pursuit and having other motor vehicle accidents. No matter how they died, it is terribly sad when the men and women who have dedicated their lives to protecting others are killed whilst doing so.

In the lead-up to National Police Remembrance Day next week my heart goes out to the families of all police officers who have been killed in the line of duty. I offer them my heartfelt condolences. I am sure they share with me the hope that one day society will understand and respect the great undertaking that is required to serve as a police officer. Until then I am sure the brave men and women of Australia's police forces will continue to protect their communities despite the dangers they face and the harsh reality that some may not return home to their families.

**Micah Challenge**

Mr GRIFFIN (Bruce) (22:03): I join with a number of members tonight in acknowledging the Micah Challenge campaign Voices for Justice 2011, 'dying for a dunny'. Clean water and sanitation facilities are something we all take for granted, but there are some 900 million people across the world who do not have access to safe water and around 2.6 billion who do not have adequate sanitation facilities—basic services that are essential to the health of a community, basic services that they all have a right to have. Members of the Micah Challenge groups will be here in Canberra over the next couple of days. They have been meeting with members of parliament today and I will be meeting with them tomorrow.

Micah Challenge is the global movement of Christian aid and development agencies, churches, groups and individuals which aims to deepen people's engagement with those living in poverty and to reduce poverty as an integral expression of Christian faith. In Australia approximately 50 church denominations, organisations and development agencies endorse the Micah Challenge and over 114,000 individuals have signed the Micah call, which states that it is time for international and national decision makers to fulfil their public promise to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and so halve absolute global poverty by 2015.

As I mentioned, currently they are holding their sixth annual national gathering—Voices for Justice 2011—which is all about the need for improved sanitation services. The issue is simple and overwhelmingly evident every time you travel to a developing country. Almost 1.4 billion people live in extreme poverty. This means they live on less than US$1.25 a day, which is insufficient to meet their most basic needs. They are hungry, susceptible to disease and lack access to things we all take for granted such as clean water, decent sanitation and health care.

In the year 2000 the millennium declaration catalysed more attention and international support to tackle the problem of global poverty than had ever been seen before. The declaration contained eight Millennium Declaration Goals that together have provided the framework for poverty alleviation efforts over the past 11 years. In light of these goals, the progress for those living in poverty has been extraordinary. On every goal progress has been made. Since 1990 developing countries have seen the proportion of their people living in poverty fall from 46 to 27 per cent, suffering from hunger decline from 30 to 23 per cent, access to clean water increase from 72 to 84 per cent, and living with infectious disease stabilise and in some cases begin to decrease. Despite this progress, there is still more to be done. Despite this progress there are still a
number of goals that are in danger of not being met in the times that have been set. They are in particular MDG4, child mortality; MDG5, maternal mortality; and MDG7, environmental health. There is much to be done. Certainly a lot more can be done by nations throughout the world.

Micah Challenge is calling on the Australian government to once again increase efforts towards achieving these goals. The call is on for the Australian government to increase spending on initiatives in relation to water and sanitation to $500 million by 2015, to ensure that at least half of this money is spent on sanitation and hygiene, and to ensure that the bipartisan commitment to increase our aid budget is maintained and developed in the years ahead. The Australian government, of course, has been committed to increasing aid to 0.5 per cent of GNI by 2015. On current projections this will more than double the aid program relative to 2010-11. But there is more to be done. The Australian government has been making some progress on a number of these issues, and I think it is important to acknowledge that in these circumstances. In PNG Australia helped immunise 900,000 children against measles and other childhood diseases in 2009. From 2003 to 2009 Australia helped reduce infant deaths by one-quarter in East Timor.

In terms of MDG5—maternal health—examples of achievements include the percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel in East Timor, which increased from 35 per cent in 2008 to 47 per cent in 2009. In Cambodia Australia's aid has helped deploy at least one midwife to each health centre in the country. In Bangladesh Australian support has contributed to a 40 per cent decline in maternal mortality over the last decade.

With respect to the expenditure on sanitation, I had the privilege of attending in Zimbabwe a visit to the Bulawayo Water And Sewage Emergency Response program, where Australia has provided some $4.6 million in aid for a two-year World Vision project in Zimbabwe's second largest city. We saw there the excellent work that was being done with that money, the excellent work that was being done to ensure that those communities had proper sanitation and health facilities. I urge all members to get behind this very important program and the Micah Challenge.

**Palestine**

Ms LEY (Farrer) (22:08): In four days time the Palestinians will take their case for statehood to the United Nations Security Council in New York. Democracy is sweeping the Middle East, and our sympathy for the Tunisians, Egyptians and Libyans must surely embrace the Palestinians, who seek only to be citizens in their own country.

Earlier this year I spent 10 days in the occupied West Bank as the co-chair of the parliament's Friends of Palestine. I joined a group of colleagues on a visit to this ancient place and want the House to be aware of what we saw, touched and felt. While the eyewitness may misunderstand, we at least have the benefit of a view unfiltered by media other than our own imperfect wisdom.

We met with the Palestinian Authority, non-government organisations, churches and very many ordinary Israelis and Palestinians at their homes, businesses, farms and on the street. The presentation of the Palestinian case to the UN is their Arab Spring. It comes with no threat of violence. As Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said to us in Ramallah: 'The doctrine of non-violence is the path of freedom. I believe in the transformative power of non-violence to inspire people to rebuild.' President Abbas has insisted that
this bid for statehood in no way delegitimises Israel. Indeed, I see it as renewing rather than bypassing the negotiations. Israel's concern that the Arab uprisings are causing the region to become more unfriendly is in danger of becoming self-fulfilling. The infant Arab states are right to expect genuine moves towards a two-state solution. I do not believe a secure Israel will be achieved in spite of a viable Palestinian state; I believe that it cannot be achieved without one.

In the West Bank I found a leadership exhausted by the occupation, the ongoing arguments with Hamas, the US brokered peace process that has no process and the demands of a population wanting tangible improvements to their everyday lives. The occupation is transforming Israelis and Palestinians into something they are not. Breaking the Silence publishes the testimonies of Israeli soldiers. Its spokesperson, Yehuda Shaul, told me without emotion, ‘When you place a teenage soldier with a gun at a checkpoint, there are consequences.’ The people are exhausted, too, from the checkpoints, permits, lockdowns, home demolitions and the relentless expansion of settlements.

The Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem told us the government had cancelled his residency permit in spite of family connections dating back to the British Mandate. I met my World Vision foster child in the village of Nahalin, surrounded by encroaching settlements, and stood in the treeless playground amongst the falling-down classrooms and tired soccer balls, looking just across the gully at the settlement school with its modern buildings and latest equipment. Visiting the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim, as I did high on a hill near Jerusalem, inside the West Bank on Palestinian land, the outlook is serene. The Jewish residents travel on Israeli-only roads straight to Tel Aviv and cannot even see the second road network or the villages hidden in the valley below. It is as if the Palestinians have been airbrushed out of existence.

It is a curious thing to see a donkey pulling a one-furrow plough in the midst of Israel's dazzling technical innovation. One tries to make sense of foreign aid providing a couple of beehives for a cottage industry in honey when a few kilometres away hydrologists from across the earth travel to witness Israel's capital-intensive achievements in hydroponics. If you could only combine the technology, research and institutions of the state of Israel with the energy of the Palestinian people, the world would see a powerhouse of productivity.

As I return to my rural electorate, I will recall the farmers we met who have been chased off their land and livelihood by illegal settlers and are now mendicant aid recipients. Many among the Jewish community share a real concern for their welfare, and I wish to pay tribute to the amazing Rabbis for Human Rights. I support the Palestinian bid for statehood in part because it will give heart to the ordinary people of the West Bank and Gaza. There is a flurry of diplomatic activity in the region designed to make sure the statehood bid stalls. I do not know whether those measures will succeed or fail, but I do know that, whatever the fate of the bid, we in the international community must stand in solidarity with those seeking the non-violent path to a secure Israel and an independent Palestine. After two generations of strife and war, are we going to admit to our children that their parents could not even find a path to peace or, worse still, that we did not even try?

Lake, Mr Paul

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (22:14): I am not given to speaking that much about other politicians, let alone those who are technically political opponents; however, I
will make an exception when it comes to Councillor Paul Lake of the Campbelltown City Council. Tomorrow Councillor Lake will stand down as mayor, and I think it is appropriate to record some of my thoughts about him and his commitment to the community. Paul was first elected to council in 2004 bringing with him a genuine community service background particularly in relation to junior sport. For the past 27 years Paul Lake has been a dedicated volunteer to junior rugby league, assisting children and their families within the community. In 1989 he was instrumental in forming the Western Suburbs Junior Rugby League Limited and was subsequently appointed chairman of the board, a position he held until 1999. His achievements and commitment to sport and the youth of the area were recognised in 1996 when he was awarded life membership of the junior rugby league.

In addition to his council commitments Paul still turns up on weekends to assist those volunteers without whose effort local sport, particularly sport in relation to young people, would simply not take place. Paul Lake is a genuine friend to junior sport and to all those who work so hard to make it happen.

Twelve months ago as a result of a cross-party agreement Paul was elected Mayor of Campbelltown. He brought to the position a genuine commitment of community service not simply as a means to a political end but as a reflection of his genuine commitment to the local families. I saw his tenacity on display in his pursuit of the new triathlon facility at Macquarie Fields. He lobbied hard and long and often I was the target of his efforts. It did not take long to realise that he is a man not interested in political games and who certainly can never be accused of putting politics ahead of the community.

Some time ago when I was the target of a concerted effort to remove me from my seat Paul Lake, as deputy mayor, took it upon himself to propose a council resolution with the view of achieving bipartisan support for my retention. Some would say that this was not politically smart on his part but for me it was deeply humbling that a person who I did not even vote for would take such an overt and courageous position on my behalf and particularly when there was no possible advantage in it for him.

It was not his actions in this regard that earned my admiration, as he had long impressed me with his very real commitment to the people of Campbelltown. Local government is vitally important given that it is the closest level of government to the people and that the issues related to the community are and must be paramount. Despite our political differences, from my observations Paul Lake has always acted in the best interest of his community.

Paul Lake is a good friend and I regard him as an excellent community representative. I take the opportunity to wish Anoulack Chanthivong who will succeed Paul Lake as mayor the very best in his term in that position. I know Anoulack very well and I am very confident that like his predecessor he will work hard to make a genuine difference for the better in his local community.

Restaurant and Catering Awards

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson) (22:17): As the House adjourns this evening, some of Australia’s top restaurants are being recognised by their peers at the Restaurant and Catering Awards for Excellence for Sydney metropolitan and surrounds, in Sydney.

Major award winners this evening include Caterer of the Year, Freshcatering at Redfern; Restaurant of the Year, Sydney
metropolitan region, Becasse Restaurant and Restaurant of the Year Blue Mountains Central West region, Darleys Restaurant at Katoomba. The Lifetime Achiever went to Robert Ho, Hall of Fame inductee was Stefano Manfredi and Restaurateur of the Year was Con Dedes.

I am pleased that culinary mastery is more than ever front and centre of popular culture—something that television shows like Ten's *MasterChef*, and Foxtel's *Aurora Eat, Play and Stay* has reinforced. Hospitality and tourism are all about the experience, and tonight's winners are individuals and teams who create memorable dining experiences for domestic and inbound tourists alike.

Australian restaurateurs are amongst the best in the world, and year on year it is clear that the standards achieved in cooking and presentation are continuously improving. These coveted awards do a great deal not only to recognise hard work and achievement but also to encourage competition within industry and ensure that restaurant industry standards are maintained. Now in its 13th year, the Awards for Excellence program gives restaurant and caterers well-deserved recognition of their hard work and promotional support, and helps to attract incremental business and to promote industry best practice.

The tourism sector provides employment for nearly 500,000 Australians and accounts for $92 billion of economic activity. When you add in the restaurant and hospitality sector, which also services non-tourists in Australia, you start to get a picture of the magnitude of this sector to our economy. Now is a critical time for restaurants, as under a carbon tax the restaurant and catering sector is significantly exposed. They will pay more to run their refrigeration, dishwashing machines, ovens, lighting, signage, cleaning machines, office and other equipment in addition to the increase in costs of food should Labor's carbon legislation pass into law. Of course, if the law is passed, Labor cannot be trusted to maintain its exemption for petrol which would further drive up input costs for restaurants and cafes around Australia, at the same time reducing disposable income that is absolutely vital to the survival of this industry. Restaurants are already reeling from a range of bad Labor policies, they certainly do not need to be burdened with the carbon tax.

One of the most damaging policies for restaurants since Labor came to office was to remove chefs and cooks from the skilled migration occupations list and the list of recognised occupations for which training assistance is available. Blind Freddy can see there is a skills shortage in this sector. The tourism sector is already at the mercy of seasonal and economic fluctuations and what this industry needs is a government that does not exacerbate their difficulties or create new problems.

As I mentioned in this place last week, 18 months ago, Labor thought it was fine to transfer workers from the bars and swimming pools of tourist towns to the draglines and trucks of the mines. This of course has created a hospitality industry skills shortage, as I said, exacerbated by Labor removing chefs and cooks from the business migration list of skills. Labor's proposed solution to this problem is to reverse its policy to exclude food professionals from the skilled workers list to fill vacancies—a solution that is long overdue, but we await the action to match the rhetoric. It is time for the rubber to hit the road, minister.

While we remain to be convinced of the merits of the Pacific guest worker scheme, one simple measure that government can
adopt is to solve the current problem of tourism sector workers gaining worker visas then leaving to work in other sectors. Last week, the government announced it will remove the burden on restaurants and cafes to provide separate menus on weekends and public holidays that incorporate service surcharges. This is a policy change that the coalition has been advocating for some time along with major tourism, catering and hospitality services representative organisations by people like John Hart of the Restaurant and Catering Association. This is a government that burdens small business with bundles of red tape then claims to be the champion when they remove it. Yet in the face of these challenges, the restaurant and catering industry is doing a sterling job. For the sake of this valuable industry, I urge members opposite to consider how their policies, in particular the planned carbon tax, will damage cooking and food service professionals such as those recognised at tonight's Restaurant and Catering Awards. I look forward to seeing all the finalists from across the nation at the National Restaurant and Catering HOSTPLUS Awards for Excellence on 24 October.

Holt Electorate: Manufacturing

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (22:22): I want to talk about manufacturing in Holt. The electorate of Holt is well known for its proximity to the manufacturing heartland of Australia in the Dandenong region. Some 22 per cent of the workforce in my electorate is employed in manufacturing, which is the most of any federal electorate in the country. The manufacturing industry, we know, is facing immense challenges, amongst them being the Australian dollar at an all-time high, economic confidence abroad being continually battered and the mining boom, which continues to take skilled workers out of industries like manufacturing.

During my last adjournment debate, I flagged concern about how people dismissed the manufacturing sector, forgetting the proud history and tradition of Australian innovation and industrial practices, with comments like 'eventually all manufacturing will go offshore, right?' Even economic and media commentators are saying this. Imagine my surprise to hear on radio a well-respected economist like Ross Gittins, who contributed to this sentiment recently with comments he made ABC radio. During the interview he said, 'Australians don't make things well.'

I reflected on this and I reflected on companies around my area—Jayco Caravans, Volgren buses, Icon Plastics, Southport Engineering, Bombardier trains—companies with excellence in manufacturing equal to any in the world. I found it very difficult to reconcile that with the comment 'Australians don't make things well'. I would suggest to Mr Gittins that he actually pays a visit to the manufacturers in my electorate who have been doing Australia proud by manufacturing products sought right around the world and known for their quality and innovation. Comments like this really dismay me, and my constituents who are employed in manufacturing are equally offended by insinuations that their jobs are dirty, menial or somehow of less value to the economy than other jobs.

Mr Gittins also suggests in an interesting and, as some might class it, patronising way that there are many lesser skilled jobs in the economy, suggesting perhaps that retrenched blue-collar workers including manufacturing workers pack up and move to construct new mines in the Pilbara and other mining regions. I guess my question to Mr Gittins is this: does he understand, as recently reported in the Sydney Morning Herald, that 70,000 people in the Dandenong region including many from Holt rely on manufacturing? Again, I ask him to have a
word with the workers from Dandenong South, Hallam, Hampton Park, Endeavour Hills, Fountain Gate—some suburbs just out and around my area—to see how they feel about this. They have toiled away, in some cases their whole lives, making enormous sacrifices for their families, paying off the family home and sending their kids to school, university or TAFE. The kinds of comments that we have heard undermine the skills and determination required to manufacture goods, be it for a machine operator, a boilermaker or a laboratory technician. These people literally make the country that we live in here today, and to hear them being disparaged in this way really offends me.

Think about the suburb of Doveton: it was built around the great companies that shifted to Dandenong in the 1940s, fifties and sixties—the GMHs, the Nissans, the Heinzs, and Pilkington glass. These are the people that made the cars, that made the glass, that made our country the country that it is today. So to say to a group of people that live in Doveton with that proud tradition that they are less valuable than other people within the community is un-Australian, in my view.

Again, I would like to suggest to Mr Gittins that he take a little trip down to Icon Plastics, where I have been recently. Icon Plastics is an Australian-owned and operated company with more than 40 years of experience in the design, the manufacture and the supply of plastic products for Australian and international markets. The company aims to be recognised as the best designers and manufacturers of extrusion profiles and injection moulded plastic products in Australia and throughout the world through innovation and best practice. These people have been doing so. The gentleman I met with at this company personifies Australian innovation and persistence of business smarts over cheap imported competition. In fact, they are exporting products to China. So next time Mr Gittins decides to talk about the future of Australia, the future of Australia still remains in manufacturing and I will not have workers that live in my electorate demeaned in that way on radio again.

Riverina Electorate: Kurrajong-Waratah

Mr MCCORMACK (Riverina) (22:27): On Saturday I had the honour and privilege of opening the new $1.5 million e-recycling facility at Kurrajong-Waratah's new plant in Chaston Street, Wagga Wagga. Hundreds of people turned up for the event, which is testimony to the fantastic work that Kurrajong-Waratah does for the community of Wagga Wagga and, indeed, the region. The whole of the Riverina will benefit from this new e-recycling facility, as will the city of Wagga Wagga, certainly, and the environment, our future, and most of all, the hard workers Kurrajong-Waratah employs.

The recycling plant will be home to 90 employees, of whom 60 have disabilities. Kurrajong-Waratah has been providing support, training and opportunities to people with an intellectual disability or developmental delay and their families and carers through its targeted services since 1957. It has an aim of meeting the needs of people with a disability and their families. The aim continues today with more than 700 babies, children and adults receiving daily help from Kurrajong-Waratah.

As a part of its aims, Kurrajong-Waratah continues to ensure that its programs are designed to create an awareness in the community of the needs and abilities of people with disabilities and, indeed, their families. I pay tribute to Michael Kennedy, Steve Jaques, and certainly to Cathie Smith who help run Kurrajong-Waratah, and I pay tribute to the hard workers. Their
camaraderie is to be commended. These people have a wonderful outlook on life. The thing you notice when you go to any one of Kurrajong-Waratah’s many services is that the people who are working there have a great love and respect for the people beside them working away diligently on all sorts of things—and I have to say it is much more than I have seen in a lot of other workplaces which I have been to. Mr Kennedy agreed that the new facility would provide ‘more light and more space’ for the disabled workers. It was locally built and I commend everybody involved in this project.

The SPEAKER: Order! It being 10.30 pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 22:30

NOTICES

The following notice was given:

Mr ALBANESE: to move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent:

(1) the time and order of business for Tuesday, 11 October 2011 being as follows:

(a) the House shall meet at 9am;

(b) government business shall have priority from 9am until 2pm;

(c) during the period from 9am until 2pm any division on a question called for in the House, other than on a motion moved by a Minister during this period, shall stand deferred until the conclusion of the discussion of a matter of public importance; and

(2) any variation to this arrangement to be made only by a motion moved by a Minister.
Constituency Statements

Canning Electorate: Paid Parental Leave

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (10:30): I rise today to speak on the issue of the red tape and compliance burden being imposed on employers by the Gillard Labor government with regard to paid parental leave—PPL—payments. The red tape affects many businesses in my electorate, particularly small businesses.

Mr Don Pember, the CEO of the Mandurah Retirement Village, tells me that the Labor government’s way of handling these payments is significantly affecting his business. Mr Pember has expressed his concerns with regard to the additional administrative work his organisation must undertake to make these payments. This is because the Labor government has chosen to dump the responsibility for making the paid parental leave payments on the employer. The extra administrative work is gained through the double handling of payments by both Centrelink and the employer.

When the Labor government decided that, from July this year, employers were to be responsible for processing the PPL payments and also having to deal with Centrelink to gain the initial funds to do so, they effectively forced employers to become PPL pay clerks. The coalition believes that the government expenditure incurred to establish the Centrelink-administered PPL system should have continued to deliver benefits to the Australian people beyond the six-month shelf-life the Gillard government determined.

Mandurah Retirement Village employs more than 100 female employees and at least five per cent of the workforce could be on maternity leave at any one time. This means more of the village’s resources are being dedicated to administering these payments. This includes familiarising the PPL pay clerks with their obligations and responsibilities; changes to payroll and accounting systems and software; the processing of payments; and compliance, verification and reporting requirements.

On top of this, there are significant fines that can be issued to employers who fail to comply with the various obligations under the scheme. I would add that the coalition, through the shadow Minister for Small Business, Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs, Bruce Billson, actually attempted to remove the unnecessary administrative compliance burden via the Paid Parental Leave (Reduction of Compliance Burden for Employers) Amendment Bill 2010. Unfortunately, those on the Labor side voted it down, and the burden continues for the Mandurah Retirement Village and other small businesses like it.

This is a disgrace. It just demonstrates that the Labor Party has no sympathy for small businesses on this compliance double handling. In fact they are not interested in small business at all; they are interested in red tape rather than in seeing a properly administered scheme that saves small businesses the extra time in compliance that this initiative has put on them.
Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (10:33): I rise today to speak about a very special club in my electorate, a club of which I am very honoured and lucky to be the patron—the Mellor Park Tennis Club in the suburb of Lockleys. I attended their open day not that long ago. They invited the community and the residents close by and it was attended by many people, including young people and families, and everyone had a shot at hitting the ball with the racket. It was a great day.

The club itself has been there for many years as a facility allowing local residents to participate in the great sport of tennis, whether people play it seriously or just for fun. In fact, I remember many years ago going down there myself and having a hit when I was a kid and a teenager, because I lived close by. I would like to congratulate everyone involved in the club; the president, Robbie Tregoweth; the vice president, Chris Brock; and the club captain, Anthony Mezic. They are doing an enormous amount of work on promoting the club in the area, on attracting new members on a regular basis and on ensuring that they let the community know about the club and that they are there for people to participate in that wonderful sport of tennis.

The club is currently seeking funding to refurbish and do some resurfacing of their tennis courts. It is interesting that the club courts are on the edge of Mellor Park, which is a park with massive gum trees. A couple of these gum trees are right on the edge of these courts. Fortunately or unfortunately they are significant trees, and they are lifting up the surface of the court. Therefore, we recently made representations to the council to ask for some funding. I was very pleased when the City of West Torrens confirmed that they are going to provide $60,000 in funding to resurface this particular project. You cannot cut down the trees because they are significant and beautiful 100- to 150-year-old gum trees, so they are going to lift the surface above the ground and keep the surface at a raised level so the roots do not interfere with the surface and they can continue to enjoy playing tennis on these wonderful courts in this wonderful park. I know the club are also in discussions with Tennis SA to see what further funding they can be provided with to pay for the rest of the project. I look forward to a very, very positive outcome. The club, as I said, services the community in a great way to allow people to exercise and to take up the wonderful sport of tennis. I wish the club members an enjoyable and very successful summer season, which is about to begin.

Petition: Live Animal Exports

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (10:36): I rise this morning to lodge a petition on behalf of Karryne Lake, who is a constituent of mine. Karryne's petition draws the attention of the House and of the people of Australia to the fact that Northern Territorians do indeed abhor the appalling treatment of our livestock in rogue Indonesian abattoirs. However, the blanket ban imposed by the Gillard Labor government has had a significant impact on the Northern Territory’s economy. It is an industry worth over $300 million a year and the ban has severely impacted businesses and families—families like Karryne's. While the trade has restarted, the impact is still being felt across Northern Australia. Karryne has asked me as her representative to remind the House that Territory families are still suffering as a result of the knee-jerk reaction by the Gillard Labor government to ban live exports. Everyone accepts that
animal cruelty is wrong. However, blanket banning Australian animals from being exported to Indonesia will not stop the cruelty. If we turn our backs on the trade, we lose our position to negotiate and resolve the issue. My petition has been through the committee and I would like to lodge it.

The petition read as follows—
To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives
This petition of...
Certain citizens of Australia
Draws to the attention of the House:
The opposition to the Commonwealth Government's blanket ban on live cattle export to Indonesia.
We therefore ask the House to:
Abhor the appalling treatment of Territory livestock in rogue Indonesian abattoirs as seen on the ABC's Four Corners program but oppose the Commonwealth Government's blanket ban on live cattle which will cost the Territory economy over $300 million a year, slash jobs and devastate families and businesses.
from 2,133 citizens
Petition received.

Mrs GRIGGS: On another matter, I would like to bring to the attention of the House, the fantastic win by Territory Thunder against Queensland's Morningside yesterday. It was a 98-point win, which will be forever recorded in the history books as the highest winning grand final margin in Queensland's history. The final score was Territory Thunder 26.22.178, to Morningside's 12.8.80. One supporter said to me, 'Natasha, Morningside was thunderstruck!' Well, I have to agree. It was really wonderful just to see so many supportive Territorians travel to witness history in the making. Jake Dignan was awarded the Joe Grant medal for the grand final best on field; Darren Ewing was the highest goal kicker for the season; and Thunder captain Cameron Ilett was awarded the Grogan medal. The win was also great for Will Farrer, who celebrated his 21st birthday yesterday. He had a fantastic day kicking some great goals and also displaying his marking capability. We all know Andrew Mcleod was a legend in the Crows but he has been even better in the Territory Thunder and it was great watching the game with his dad, Jock. He was as proud as punch, just like the rest of us. We cannot forget coach Murray Taylor, who did a great job. No-one can deny what an absolutely fantastic job he did. Well done to Territory Thunder. You did us proud.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper): And I am quite sure that there is a standing order somewhere that would prevent me from making a comment on that result!

Fraser Electorate: Superannuation

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (10:40): According to the Australian Taxation Office, Australians have around $19 billion in lost superannuation accounts. That is a bit over $1,000 for every adult in the country. Lost superannuation accounts arise when people change jobs and forget to update their superannuation accounts or when they take a career break. When you have your money spread across more accounts, you might end up paying excess fees or having your money invested in the wrong assets. Many people never claim lost superannuation so they do not enjoy the standard of living in retirement that is rightfully theirs. If
superannuation is a nest egg then lost superannuation is like those eggs at the bottom of the garden that you never find at the end of a treasure hunt.

To address the issue of lost superannuation, Chris Bourke MLA suggested that he and I run a campaign to letCanberrans know how to find their lost superannuation. Chris pointed out that lost superannuation is a particular problem in postcode 2615. In that postcode alone—which covers suburbs like Dunlop, Holt, Flynn, Melba, Spence and Macgregor—there is $45 million in lost superannuation. So we launched a campaign to letCanberrans know about theATO SuperSeeker website and the hotline, 13 28 65. In Civic we chatted to a part-time actor, who had recently found $6,000 in lost superannuation from a previous job. In Kippax we met Kevin Rourke, who had read about our campaign in the Northside Chronicle. Kevin logged on to our laptop on Saturday and found lost superannuation for a job he had as a panel beater in the mid-1980s. The employer had died and Kevin had not known which superannuation fund he had put the money in. Thanks to the ATO's SuperSeeker website, Kevin has been reunited with his retirement savings from a quarter of a century ago.

My thanks go to Louise Crossman and Barbara Phi from my office and Margaret Watt from Chris Bourke's office, who came up with the idea. I am also grateful to Lisa Mosley from WIN News, who helped us publicise the campaign locally. Quote of the day went to a shopper outside Charnwood Woolworths. Chris Bourke said to her, 'Did you know there is $45 million in lost superannuation in this postcode alone?' Quick as a flash, she replied, 'I'll take it!'

Finally, I want to use this chance to mention Eddie Sharp, who has been selling the Big Issue magazine in Canberra for over a year, working through the Woden Community Service. Eddie came up to say g'day when we launched the superannuation campaign in Civic. We were shocked to learn that he died of a heart attack the next day. Eddie was just 44. My condolences go to his family and his large circle of friends for their loss.

Barker Electorate: Exceptional Circumstances Exit Grants Package

Mr SECKER (Barker—Opposition Whip) (10:43): I rise to speak on this Labor government's failure to correctly deliver the exit grant package for farmers wishing to exit the industry. This was a Howard government initiative that we administered without a problem. Farmers situated in exceptional circumstance declared areas were made aware that government had extended the EC exit grant package as part of the 2011-12 budget. The total commitment from the Labor government was $14.4 million. An initial $9.6 million was allocated for the 2011-12 financial year. When the money ran out after a quick take-up exhausted the initial amount, an extra $4.8 million was provided, but that is still not enough. For farmers in Barker, this meant that many missed out on this package. My office has fielded calls from constituents who are rightly very angry and upset because they have made arrangements for their future on advice from agencies only to find out there is no more money.

For two families from the Riverland, this means that they proceeded to sell their properties after seeking advice from Centrelink and being pre-assessed as eligible. After successfully selling their respective properties in a tough market—as you can understand, given the hardship the EC areas have experienced—these families were then told the money had run out and they would not receive a grant. Many of my coalition colleagues have similar stories from their electorates of farmers having pre-assessments done and then, believing that they would
receive the $150,000 grant, selling their properties, often at a lower price, only to find out there was no more money—in some cases, after a very short time. I have written to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Joe Ludwig, and to the Treasurer, Wayne Swan, to inform them both about the problems occurring in my electorate, but I am yet to see any support or compassion. The agriculture minister told the *Australian* on Saturday that it was very clear that this program provided access to a capped amount of funding for exit grants. I would ask the minister: does he have the numbers on how many exit grant applications were banked up from previous financial years and how many new applications received the $14.4 million package? If it is the case that applications were banked up and the whole $14.4 million was used to clear those, then clearly the new applications should have been considered and the minister should explain himself. For many farmers it is a very difficult decision to leave the farm for a new life. Many of these people know of no other job than the land, and leaving it is a last resort.

**Formula One in Schools Program**

*Mr LYONS* (Bass) (10:46): Recently I had the pleasure of presenting an Australian flag to past and present students of Brooks High School in Launceston. They are now in Malaysia representing Australia at the Formula One Technology Challenge world finals.

The F1 in Schools program is a science, technology, engineering and maths based education competition implemented in high schools around the world. Through the appeal of Formula One racing, the program gives challenges in engineering and design while stimulating an interest in engineering related careers and connecting young people to the industry.

Over 35,000 Australian students take part each year. This year a team made up of current and former students of Brooks High School in my electorate of Bass have continued Australia's tradition of achievement in the program. The team, known as the 'PentaGiders', will compete in the world finals in design, analysis, testing, manufacturing and racing of CO₂ powered balsa wood Formula One cars. It was fantastic to meet the team marketing manager, Amy Winter, the design and aerodynamic engineer, Tristan McCarthy, and to hear about the benefits and achievements of the F1 in Schools program. The students have been enjoying the chance for hands-on learning while improving their public speaking skills, team presentation and awareness of modern engineering technologies.

The PentaGiders recently competed at the national titles in Sydney. They won the Australian Grand Prix Corporation fastest car award, the best energy efficient design, and became the first Tasmanian team to win the national titles and progress through to the world finals. Amy, Tristan, resource and graphics manager Nathan Clark and manufacturing engineer Jack Ball are today in Malaysia as the Australian representatives at the world championships. For those interested, the event will be broadcast today at 4 pm on the F1 in Schools website.

The F1 in Schools program has allowed the PentaGiders to develop close relationships with sponsors and local industry and business. Sponsors are recognised through local media events, on cars, posters and videos and on the team's uniform. Local industry is also closely involved with the PentaGiders. Businesses such as ACL Bearing, Dixon Plastics and Rio Tinto have been providing assistance to the team.
The PentaGliders are a fantastic example of the way the F1 in Schools program engages and inspires young people. I am proud that through the Department of Defence the federal government supports this program through sponsorship of the program manager, the Re-Engineering Australia Foundation. I take this opportunity to congratulate the team on their achievements so far and wish them well in the event today.

Bradfield Electorate: Home Insulation Program

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield) (10:49): I rise to speak of the impact of the government's failed Home Insulation Program on my constituent Mr Doug Mill and his long-established home insulation business, the Demand Group, in my electorate.

When the Rudd government announced the Home Insulation Program in February 2009, the Demand Group invested heavily in anticipation of the program—indeed, they felt there was little option. But things started to go very wrong. The problems Doug Mill observed included watering down the skill requirements of installers, the delay in auditing and the reduction in the rebate amounts, which, in turn, led to inferior products. The program began to unravel and was closed in February 2010.

It was in the latter stages of the program, and in the mop-up schemes after the program was cancelled, where, in the words of Mr Mill, the 'fun' really started for him and his business as they sought to comply with the new requirements that were imposed. For example, Mr Mill says he faced administrative failure when the government failed to register the insulation products his company used as approved products. Additionally, Mr Mill says, his applications for competency and compliance were rejected based on erroneous information.

Mr Mill has commented:

Our experience with dealing with this Program through this Government has been disastrous for us financially and has depleted our business to a third the size and is not therefore viable. By completing 1.1 million homes it has taken about 15 years of work away. By overlooking us for Home Insulation Safety Program it has excluded us from millions of dollars of Inspection and rectification work and by allowing untrained people to install it has taken work away from legitimate businesses like ours …

The Demand Group, together with similar businesses, has made a legal claim for compensation against the Commonwealth. When these businesses met the Commonwealth lawyers they were told that the Commonwealth was not liable. But the government lawyers suggested they consider making a claim under the Scheme for Compensation for Detriment caused by Defective Administration, the CDDA scheme. Mr Mill therefore made an application to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. After the four different inquiries and investigations that have taken place into the Home Insulation Program, it is clear that there was defective administration in the operation of the scheme, suggesting that the threshold requirement for the application of the CDDA scheme has been met.

Long-established businesses in the insulation sector, such as but certainly not limited to the Demand Group, have paid a very high price for the Rudd government's incompetent administration of the Home Insulation Program. I call on the minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency to give careful consideration, in good faith, to the claims lodged by the Demand Group and other affected insulation businesses.
Big Steps Campaign

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (10:52): I recently had the pleasure of meeting with seven Western Australian representatives from the Big Steps in childcare campaign, all of whom are managers of early childhood education centres in the Perth metropolitan area. They talked to me about the critical need to ensure the provision of professional wages for professional people in this industry. The Big Steps in childcare campaign, which is supported by the childcare workers union United Voice, aims to tackle the inequities currently present in the childcare industry and to thereby stop droves of childcare professionals leaving this industry for better paid, lower stress, lower responsibility jobs.

The people I met shared with me their commitment to the essential work of early years learning and development education. Their vocational passion and expertise are inspiring, and the time during and after conventional work hours that they commit to their profession is above and beyond the pay and conditions they receive. The group presented me with over 30 letters from other centre managers and workers, all expressing their concerns and requests for the improvement of the early childhood education sector.

They identified some of the contributing factors towards this crisis as follows: low wages paid to employees, usually not much above the minimum award rates, and absence of pay parity between early childhood workers and school education sectors. The average salary for childcare centre managers in Australia is just over $52,000 a year. For a principal of a small primary school it is $113,000. In WA a first year state school teacher will be on over $55,000 plus allowances compared to an annual salary of around $34,000 for a certificate III childcare worker. Other factors include the lack of opportunities for career progression, expectations on workers to perform unpaid labour and lack of adequate programming and staff development time.

The WA representatives I met with explained to me that they will be expected to implement the new early childhood national curriculum in their centres but will not get the same, if any, level of training, support and development as school teachers are predicted to receive. It is not acceptable that people in whom we place the responsibility of educating and caring for those among the most vulnerable in our community—our youngest—who enter this profession because of their love for children and for the educational task, are under-recognised and undercompensated for their work.

I was happy to see the support shown by my caucus colleagues when representatives from the Big Steps campaign visited federal parliament last month. Senator Carol Brown spoke in support of the campaign, and I know that many other members of the government are supportive of the cause, including Senator Kate Lundy, who has established the childcare champions group in the Labor caucus. The government is keenly aware of the importance of creating a sustainable and professional childcare sector that can provide affordable and high-quality education and care for Australia’s children. For that reason I support further reform and funding to deliver a fair and proper set of working conditions.

Macarthur Electorate: Relay for Life

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (10:55): This weekend I took part in the Camden Rotary Relay for Life at the Camden showground. More than 1,000 people came together for the event, which raised over $100,000 for the New South Wales Cancer Council with more
money expected to come in this week. I would like to publicly congratulate the Rotary Club of Camden for their hard work organising this event, especially its committee members: Greg Eagles, Chris Evans, Bruce Farquharson, John Lee, Rowan Moore, Peter Claxton, Kevyn Moore, Ken Macaulay, Alan Redman, Dylan Evans, Lindsey Thomas, Tania and Brian Franzman, Cindy Cagney, Jo de Souza, Aaron Hodges, John Saunderson, Stephen Humphries, Warwick Richardson and Ross Newport.

The Relay for Life brings members of the community together for a night of fun, entertainment, celebration and remembrance. Each Relay for Life event is organised by a local volunteer committee on behalf of the Cancer Council. The atmosphere in Camden on Saturday was electric, with everybody coming together to celebrate life, remember those we have lost, support local carers and offer hope to those living with cancer. On Saturday I met with Team Footprints, a team made up of two families who have both lost their mums to cancer. The Spain family walk each year in memory of their mum, Jill, who died from lung cancer in 2007. Their friends the Barry family walk to remember their mum, Cathy, who died in 2006 from breast cancer. The group have been friends for many years and said that taking part in such a positive event is what their mums would have wanted. This is the fourth relay the group have taken part in. The first walk was on the first anniversary of Jill's death. The group thought it would be a nice way to honour her fight against cancer.

When I met the families on Saturday, they said they supported the Cancer Council because it raised money for research and drug trials which gave them extra time with their mum. Jill was extremely sick when she began a medical trial 16 months before she died. The trial was working really well and Jill went from being on an oxygen tank to going to the gym and walking on a treadmill. The tumours were shrinking but unfortunately the trial drug eventually stopped working. The Spain family said the trial gave them an extra 14 good-quality months with their mum and that inspired them to help raise funds for the Cancer Council each year.

The Cancer Council is Australia's leading cancer charity and is dedicated to beating cancer through research. Its groundbreaking work in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer has saved thousands of lives. Sadly, statistics show that one in two of us will still get cancer at some point in our lives. On Saturday I learnt that more than 200 people are diagnosed with cancer in the Camden local government area each year. The Cancer Council's vital work, funded entirely by the public, will help ensure that thousands will survive. On Saturday I was very moved to see local survivors and carers walk the first lap of the event together while the rest of us cheered them on. A candlelight ceremony of hope was held at dusk to remember those who we have lost to cancer, and many locals made a personal pledge on how they would make a change to help fight cancer. I felt very proud to see so many people from my community come together on Saturday night to support each other and share in a common hope for a future without cancer, a future where families like the Spain and Barry families would never have to say goodbye to the ones they love.

**National Disability Insurance Scheme**

Ms KING (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing) (10:58): They say a measure of a society is the way that it treats its most vulnerable. That is a fairly discomforting thought when you consider the state of Australia's disability sector. Early in August the Prime Minister released...
a report by the Productivity Commission into the long-term care and support for Australians with a disability, and I want to take this opportunity to put on record my support for a national disability insurance scheme and also commend the work of Every Australian Counts.

The Productivity Commission found that Australia's disability services system was unfair, underfunded and fragmented. The report states that fundamental change is needed to provide the kind of care we expect for people with disabilities. The Gillard government agrees. We commissioned the report from the Productivity Commission because we knew that the system was not working as well as it should and that reform was necessary. I know that across the electorate of Ballarat there are hardworking agencies and organisations and many generous and wholehearted volunteers doing much to make the lives of people with disabilities in our community as fulfilling as possible, but the government knows that there is much more that needs to be done. Many parents who care for their children with disabilities do not have confidence that, when they are too old or frail to shoulder the responsibility, the system will provide the right kind of care for their children. Some people with disabilities do not have the confidence that, when they need basic medical aids like a wheelchair or access to services like rehabilitation, which can help them get into training or work or into independent living, they will get the support they need. Australians who acquire a disability, or whose children or grandchildren might be born with disability, do not have confidence that the system will be there to support them into the future. The Productivity Commission has recommended that Australians should be insured against significant disabilities so that people with disabilities get the kind of care and support we expect for them and so Australians can have peace of mind that, if they acquire a disability through accident or disease, they will get the helping hand that they need. Reform of this kind does take time. The Productivity Commission has said that it would take at least seven years to transform disability services, but we do want to get started right away and I am pleased that the government has committed some $10 million to commence that very important early work. We do have a lot of work ahead of us to deliver the kind of care and support for Australians with disabilities that we expect. This report is the first step and there are many, many more to come. Disability does not discriminate and can and does affect families every single day. We all deserve to have the confidence to know that, if something did happen to us, our partner, our parent or our child, there is a strong system of support in place.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper): Order! In accordance with standing order 193 the time for constituency statements has concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

National Standard for Fertiliser Products

Debate resumed on the motion by Mr Pyne:

That this House:

(1) notes that consumers currently have little information made available to them in choosing which fertiliser product for private and domestic use will suit their needs, and which fertiliser products may damage their plants;

(2) recognises:

(a) that existing voluntary standards produced by Standards Australia, such as AS 4454, do not always provide consumers with sufficient information to ensure their fertiliser product is fit for its purpose;
(b) that the industry has made calls to urgently address anomalies between all compost standards, particularly contaminant levels, to ensure a high quality product that will improve soil health and productivity; and

(c) the recommendation of the Senate Select Committee on Agricultural Related Industries in its pricing and supply arrangements in the Australian and Global Fertiliser Market report, to implement, as a matter of priority, uniform description and labelling of fertiliser products to ensure consistency between jurisdictions; and

(3) calls on the Australian Government to work with the States and Territories to establish a national standard for fertiliser products for private and domestic use that are made available for sale in Australia:

(a) requiring uniform labelling; and

(b) prescribing the acceptable range of ingredient levels for fertiliser products such as nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and pH.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Manager of Opposition Business) (11:04): This motion seeks to contribute to the growing success, usability and uptake of one of Australia's emerging sustainable industries—the industry for compost, soil conditioners and mulches. The motion extends to all fertiliser products sold for private or domestic use, including the use of compost, soil conditioners and mulches as forms of fertiliser products. The motion calls on the government to work with state authorities towards standardising the labelling of compost products and prescribing the acceptable range of ingredient levels to be included in compost made available for sale for private or domestic use.

This is an important matter that was brought to my attention by Desmond Kerr in my electorate. Mr Kerr has experienced firsthand the consequences of not having proper industry standardisation and labelling in place. When we think about the benefits that compost can have in gardens for private and domestic use, Mr Kerr's story is particularly relevant to understanding the risks dedicated gardeners face in purchasing compost without proper labelling and standards. Mr Kerr purchased compost from a local distributor that had a pH level that was dramatically higher than the neutral level of seven, where I am advised compost pH should roughly sit. Rather than aiding Mr Kerr's plants to grow, by having the incorrect ingredient mix this compost was not fit for purpose and began suffocating his plants by preventing them from receiving the nutrients they required.

Purchasing plants and maintaining a garden can be a very expensive pastime. Australians who understand the benefits of compost should be able to purchase it knowing that what they are buying will in fact help their plants and not kill them. Like Mr Kerr, all gardeners should know what is in the compost we are buying, what the pH level of the compost is and what other ingredients it may contain. I understand there are a range of factors influencing the optimal growing potential of compost. Some compost may be more appropriate in certain conditions than others. Some compost products currently being sold, such as the one purchased by Mr Kerr with a pH that was drastically inappropriate for the growing conditions of the area and without proper labelling or standards, create a confidence crisis among gardeners who understand the benefits of purchasing compost and have an impact on the industry.

According to key findings published by Nursery and Garden Industry Australia, 86 per cent of Australians have a lawn, implying some form of garden where compost could have an affect either on the growth potential or on the amount of water consumed to maintain their
Data reveals that over 57 per cent of Australians and over 62 per cent of married couples grow their own vegetables, herbs and fruit plants. Noting the increasing cost-of-living pressures that face families under this Labor government and the benefits gained by growing vegetables, herbs and fruit plants at home, these statistics reinforce the importance of supporting a viable compost industry.

Mr Husic: I am staggered that you can make a political point out of this.

Mr PYNE: The member from the Labor Party thinks this is tremendously amusing. It is far too practical, common sense and man-on-the-Clapham-bus for the Labor Party to take any interest in these matters these days. What happened to the old Labor Party, who actually cared? What happened to the old Labor Party who used to care about people in their electorates?

With over 72 per cent of Australians intending to purchase plants for their garden during spring, this motion seeks to ensure that these Australians are provided with information on the quality of the compost they intend to buy, creating greater consumer confidence that increases demand for compost across the country. The compost industry in Australia has a turnover of more than $600 million per annum, employs more than 1,900 full-time employees and has an investment in capital of over half a billion dollars. It is growing increasingly larger and developing intellectual property with huge environmental potential. This motion, which seeks to encourage the uptake of compost for private and domestic use, would contribute to the future growth of this important Australian industry. The initiative would contribute to better nourishment of plants and gardens and would have a real impact on the environment by diverting landfill to create quality compost.

The compost industry recycles more than 5.8 million tonnes of organic material each year and has the potential to recycle an additional 13 million tonnes from landfill. Given this extra potential, if the industry's long-run supply curve could shift rightward, reducing landfill, methane and CO₂ emissions, then we as policy makers must consider what factors would need to change to increase the demand for compost. This motion recognises the good work that the industry is already doing to rewrite AS 4454, and calls on the government to bring their political will to fast-track this work to ensure the future of this important Australian industry.

Concepts of compost quality and labelling were essentially unknown worldwide as recently as 1985 when governments began understanding the importance of establishing an acceptable framework for the industry to operate in. In 1992 the compost quality seal was established by the German Compost Quality Association. It is suggested that this quality seal provided a good starting point for recognition of quality in the industry and has now been adopted by the European Commission in developing the European Ecolabel seal for soil improvers. Globally, countries are recognising the significant developments that are occurring in the compost industry and are implementing processes for quality control and labelling, including by statutory means, to ensure this emerging sustainable industry is able to flourish.

This motion seeks to support the good work already occurring at an industry level and to maintain Australia's high standards and commitment to composting. I am aware that AS 4454, the Australian Standard on composts, soil conditioners and mulches, is currently being reviewed by industry and that industry are taking steps to ensure labelling and product consistency between jurisdictions in Australia. The industry, and in particular industry bodies such as Compost Australia, should be commended for their significant contribution to the
standardisation of procedures in this area, particularly with respect to required markings and health and hazard warning labels, which I am advised are some of the most robust hazard warning labels in the world.

Notwithstanding the good work of the industry to date, it appears that one of the factors that is recognised as presenting a barrier to broader market acceptance of compost has been uncertainty about the consistency of compost. I am aware that this has been recognised in the discussion paper *Does AS 4454 adequately benchmark compost quality?*—required reading for anybody interested in this subject. I am sure the member for Chifley has read this paper. This discussion paper went on to report that:

Analysis of 52 different garden organics end-products showed that the Victorian limit for copper was exceeded on 46% of occasions, 63% of occasions for zinc and 50% of occasions for chromium. These data support the need for a revision of the heavy metal limits used in the Australian Standard for composts, soil conditioners and mulches …

Further, and as members of this House may recall, the first recommendation of the Senate Select Committee on Agricultural and Related Industries in their report on *Pricing and supply arrangements in the Australian and global fertiliser market*, a catchy title, was that:

… the states and territories should consider, as a matter of priority, adopting uniform description and labelling of fertiliser products to ensure consistency between jurisdictions.

While the compost industry should be applauded for taking steps to standardise the labelling and ingredient requirements of compost products in Australia, the government must also take responsibility. To drive investment in this industry and to support the uptake of compost technologies with lasting environmental benefits, the government must be prepared to roll up its sleeves, to adopt the recommendations of the senate committee's report and to work with the states in developing these compost standards that will see lasting environmental and productivity benefits for Australia. The government must be prepared to stand up for recreational gardeners like my constituent Des Kerr and to ensure that the quality of compost made available for private and domestic use is fit for purpose, with the appropriate ingredient mix and compost labelling. I thank my colleagues who intend to take part in this debate for their support on this motion—the member for Longman and the member for Riverina, and also the Labor members of parliament, who will make inadequate contributions but will do their best. I commend the motion to the House.

*Mr HUSIC (Chifley—Government Whip) (11:10):* I welcome the opportunity to discuss this motion. I also welcome it on the basis that it presents a diversity of issues that need to be considered by us all. I think it is timely, particularly given that there is a lot of interest in these issues within households. You only need to turn on a TV to see the different lifestyle programs that talk about what people can do in their homes and about installing and maintaining gardens. Also people's interest in sustainability issues is something that is continuing to grow. People are wanting to grow their own vegetables and herbs—and, as the member for Sturt indicated, between 67 and 52 per cent of people, depending on what demographic you pick, are doing so.

As much as I was supportive of the member for Sturt raising this matter today, I could not help a wry smile when he managed to insert political points in a debate that I think is worthy of having in this place. He gave me cause for reflection on some of the issues he sought to have a go at on the way through his speech. Nonetheless the matter is worthy of
consideration. The member for Sturt referred to his constituent, Des Kerr, who has serious concerns about what he perceived to be a misrepresentation about pH levels in the fertiliser that he had purchased and was using on his property, that the PH levels were much higher than stated on the product packaging.

It is worth reminding all consumers to make inquiries of merchants about whether a product is fit for purpose, and that certainly includes fertiliser products. If consumers are not sure about a product, obviously the golden rule is to ask and to test the representations that are made. Fortunately, consumers have protections under Australian Consumer Law—ACL. This government has taken steps to strengthen the ACL and those took effect in January this year. Consumer guarantees under the ACL cover any type of goods or services costing up to $40,000 sold in trade or commerce. The big message here is that for people concerned about representations made about what is in fertilisers or composted products—though more often than not it is fertilisers; a lot of people are taking up the opportunity to compost on their own property using waste products—the ACL provides a range of protections for any product under $40,000. People should definitely avail themselves of those protections. Consumer guarantees also allow consumers to seek redress if the goods they buy are not fit for the purpose specified by the people selling the product.

It is worth noting that the ACL consolidates up to 20 Commonwealth, state and territory laws into one single harmonised law. The member for Sturt said that we need to take a national approach on this issue and the government are seeking to do just that in terms of Consumer Law. For consumers seeking to purchase fertilisers for home or business use there is some sort of protection regardless of where they live. Consumers will also be interested to know, especially businesses that operate in more than one state or territory, that the benefit of having a single consumer law generates commercial and consumer benefit. The Productivity Commission believe that about $4.5 billion of benefit to the Australian economy flows as a result of having a unified Consumer Law. As I mentioned earlier, there are about nine guarantees for products. These include suppliers and manufacturers guaranteeing that goods are of acceptable quality; secondly suppliers and manufacturers guaranteeing that the goods will be reasonably fit for any purpose the consumer or supplier specifies, especially in terms of the matters that are brought here before the Main Committee; suppliers and manufacturers guaranteeing that the description of goods is accurate; suppliers guaranteeing that goods will match any sample or demonstration model; suppliers and manufacturers guaranteeing that goods will satisfy any extra promises made about them in the form of express warranties; suppliers guaranteeing that they have the right to sell the goods being supplied or that no-one will try to repossess or take back those goods; suppliers guaranteeing that the goods being supplied are free from hidden securities or charges; and, finally, manufacturers or importers guaranteeing that they will take reasonable steps to provide spare parts or repair facilities for a reasonable time after purchase. Not all of those guarantees, obviously, relate to the matters at hand, but the guarantee regarding the accuracy of the description of the goods and the guarantee that the goods themselves be reasonably fit are certainly important protections, particularly in reference to the matter that the member for Sturt raised about whether or not pH levels were matching the representations made to the consumer on the packaging.

As the member for Sturt referred to, there has also been a voluntary product safety standard in place since 2003, AS 4454, covering compost, soil conditioners and mulches, which
includes guidance on required pH levels. Any products that purport to meet the voluntary standard but which are found not to, in fact, meet that standard, risk breaching the misleading representation provisions of ACL, some of which I mentioned earlier, and they could face significant penalties. While we would acknowledge that individual members of the public have, from time to time, expressed concern about labelling requirements for fertiliser products, the government is not aware of a wider community concern about excessive pH levels in these products.

Coming back to the point I made at the start of my contribution today, the raising, particularly within parliament, of these types of issues gives us an opportunity to take note of the fact that there is a concern out there. While the member for Sturt has raised this issue on behalf of his constituent, it is obviously incumbent upon us all to take steps to monitor whether there is a wider concern—and to act accordingly if there is. However, at this point calls for a mandatory standard would definitely increase the regulatory burden and on-costs for business, and any additional cost would ultimately be passed on to consumers. We have to be certain that there is widespread concern to justify consumers paying more.

We have undertaken significant regulatory reform to lift those burdens on businesses. One critical step we have taken has been the bringing in of harmonised consumer laws, but we have also brought in reforms in a range of other important areas, such as standard business reporting, trade licensing, consumer credit and national construction codes. While not related to this matter, these reforms demonstrate that we are trying to take steps on a number of fronts to reduce those burdens on businesses, especially small businesses.

While there are concerns, as have been expressed so far in the debate, we need to be balanced in deciding at what point we take action and whether or not that action would be disproportionate to the issue raised. If there is evidence of a widespread problem, the government will certainly consult further with states and territories. I would certainly encourage them to do that and I think that is part of the call being made here today.

One of the other points raised by the member for Sturt was the fact that, while at the moment 5.8 million tonnes of compost are being recycled, by extracting out of landfill there is the potential for another 13 million. At that point, depending on whether or not the concerns are as widespread as may be suggested, then, given the size of that potential, we need to look at what the standards need to be. But at this point, while the issue is definitely one that needs to be taken on board, there is a matter of whether or not the response needs to be as widespread or as definite as what has been outlined so far. But I certainly welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate and to learn more about an issue that has obviously sparked some concern in the member for Sturt's electorate.

**WYATT ROY** (Longman) (11:20): I rise to support and second the member for Sturt's motion, which calls for uniform guidelines for the labelling and regulation of fertiliser products for private and domestic use in Australia. This motion rightly recognises that the information currently available to individuals purchasing fertiliser products is limited and that, in many cases, consumers are not being provided with information sufficient to determine whether a product is appropriate for the purpose they require it, including if a product might be damaging to some plants or hazardous to health. The current system of voluntary regulation for labelling and composition of fertilisers varies across all states and territories and ultimately impacts consumers' ability to make an informed purchase decision.
The Senate Select Committee on Agriculture and Related Industries reported in its report *Pricing and supply arrangements in the Australian and global fertiliser market* that the fertiliser product industry has been largely left without any regulation in the area of product labelling. The report highlighted that the industry itself has been calling for uniformity in compost standards to ensure that fertiliser products are of a high standard. The report's first recommendation was that the states and territories should consider, as a matter of priority, adopting uniform description and labelling of fertiliser products to ensure consistency between jurisdictions. It is clear that there is an urgent need for regulation of labelling of this industry in the form of a national standard for labelling of fertiliser products, which is actually what this motion proposes.

As it currently stands, the industry is without accountability to consumers, most obviously with residential consumers, who rely completely on information available on the packaging of the product and on anecdotal evidence available to them. The percentages of the three active ingredients in fertiliser products—phosphorous, potassium and nitrogen—are not currently required to be defined on labelling. However, the percentages of these ingredients, when combined with the factors of soil pH and the type of plant, require varying amounts of these active ingredients to prosper. Without detailed labelling consumers are simply not in a position to effectively determine what is appropriate for their specific requirements. These choices often turn into a trial and error process in determining what products will be effective for their prize roses, backyard lawns or veggie gardens.

Consumers should not have to risk using a fertiliser product that is so completely unsuited to their needs and risk damaging their plants in the process. Information about the composition of the fertiliser, the pH levels and the types of plants it is suited to should all be provided to the consumer through detailed labelling on the product itself. As a country, we have a national regulation requirement for products in many categories. Why should fertiliser products be different or have any less uniform labelling than these?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper):** Order! The honourable member's time has expired, as I understand it. In fact, I do apologise to the member for Longman. There has been a malfunction in the clock. The honourable member for Longman continues to have the call.

**WYATT ROY:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I would always respect your ruling, but I will continue.

I freely admit that I do not have a strong personal understanding of the complex and varied nuances of soil balances and fertiliser composition. However, coming from a farming family, I do understand the importance of maintaining excellent soil quality and using all means necessary to achieve and maintain high soil quality. I also understand that, unlike residential consumers, farmers have access to extensive advice from government departments, agricultural consultants and professional soil testing, all of which guide farmers on their choice of fertilisers according to the specific needs of their local environment.

Residential gardeners, local small business landscapers and gardeners themselves do not have access to any of this detailed information. Rather, their advice comes from the hardware sales assistant or perhaps a neighbour or a friend. Detailed labelling for these products is then, for obvious reasons, very significant. The call for a national standard and more detailed labelling on these products goes beyond providing consumers with adequate information.
These products are purchased by and large by individuals who are recreational gardeners with little understanding and experience of using hazardous chemicals and composting materials. Detailed and consistent information is essential to ensure the personal health and safety of these consumers when using fertiliser products.

As a community, we are striving for sustainable and healthy living and we endeavour to make positive changes in our lives to achieve these qualities. Organic fertilisers are considered to be environmentally and ecologically safe, and their use should be encouraged. All fertilisers need to be handled with caution. All individuals who handle these products need to be made aware of the possible risks and hazards involved with these products in order to make appropriate decisions and take appropriate precautions—for instance, using masks and gloves. These conditions may be particularly dangerous for the health of those individuals with pre-existing lung conditions or immunodeficiencies as they are particularly susceptible to contracting bacterial infections from strains of nocardia or similar bacteria.

Consumers need to be informed about the risk of these products, which is only possible through the employment of consistent and detailed labelling—labelling which identifies what safety precautions need to be taken before, during and after the handling of these products. It is interesting to note that Australians on average spend over 20 minutes each day caring for their pets and gardens. Clearly this is a significant Australian recreational activity, and every effort should be made to provide clarity and consistency of information. This is why I support this motion, a motion that is calling for a uniform national standard for the labelling of fertiliser products and prescribing the appropriate composition of active ingredients in fertiliser products.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (11:26): It gives me great pleasure to speak on this motion concerning a national standard for fertiliser products. It is interesting that the opposition, who always argue against mandatory standards, are bringing a motion before this parliament requesting that mandatory standards be put in place. The opposition are supposed to be friends of business, but if they were the friends of business they should be aware that by putting this regulatory burden on business they would be increasing the cost of doing business and making it harder for business. I question whether they are really the friends of business. This motion shows that the people who really listen to the needs of business are on this side of the parliament.

I am fresh from being back in my electorate. My husband did gardening at the weekend and part of that gardening involved fertilising plants. I was not in the garden with him as the lifestyle of a member of parliament means that we do not get too much time to enjoy being outdoors looking after our plants. The reason I am talking about his contribution to our garden is that he approaches it in the way that I think all people approach gardening. He knew that he needed to put some fertiliser on the lawn so he went to the local store to purchase the required fertiliser. He talked about what he needed to fertilise with the shop assistant working there. He was given a breakdown of the types of fertiliser that were included and he took the advice of a well-trained sales assistant who knew the right kind of fertiliser to use on the lawn, the plants and the vegetables. He walked away with a few bags of fertiliser and was ready to work in the garden. I know that in a couple of months we will see the reward of his finding out about the right kind of fertiliser to use. The member for Longman talked about using masks and gloves. I think any sensible gardener uses masks and gloves. My husband was in the
garden wearing a mask and his gloves. So I would encourage all consumers to do what Lindsay did: make inquiries of the merchant about whether a product is fit for the purpose for which it is to be used.

This does not apply only to fertiliser products. We use many commodities in our daily lives. If you have a doubt about anything, check to see whether it will be appropriate for the intended use. I am very careful about what I eat. A number of people have allergies to food—for example, to peanuts. We, as consumers, go out of our way to work out what is in those products. If a person is not sure about the product—this goes to every product we use, not only fertilisers—then the golden rule is to ask. If you cannot find out, do not use it. If you are not comfortable with it, do not use it.

Under the Australian Consumer Law, the ACL, consumers have protection. Under the ACL, consumer guarantees cover any types of goods and services costing up to $40,000 sold in trade and commerce. As members of parliament, it is our role to ensure that consumers are aware of this guarantee. This provides a safety net to all consumers. Consumer guarantees allow consumers to seek redress if the goods they are provided with are not fit for the purpose specified by the consumer. There is also a voluntary product safety standard in place; that is AS4454-2003—the Australian standard for composts, soil conditioners and mulches—which includes guidance on a required PH level. This motion calls for us to move away from voluntary standards—the voluntary standards that those on the other side of this parliament always argue in favour of—to mandatory standards. Any product that purports to meet the voluntary standard but is found not to meet the standard risks breaching the misleading representation provision of the Australian Consumer Law and people could face significant penalties.

I have been involved in the voluntary standards that relate to breastfeeding, which is quite a different area. Members on the other side of this parliament argued very strongly against mandatory standards in that area. Members on the other side of this parliament also argued very strongly against mandatory standards in relation to food labelling. They argued that the best way to achieve it is by a voluntary industry standard. But in relation to the motion before us today, the opposition is arguing that the government should move away from voluntary standards in the area of fertilisers whilst keeping in place voluntary standards in those other areas—are which are very important to the health and safety of our community. So there are double standards involved in today's motion. The reason for the member moving this motion in parliament is not apparent to me. I have heard him argue against mandatory standards in other areas. His colleagues on the other side of this parliament argue against mandatory standards. As I said in the beginning, a call for mandatory standards would increase the regulatory burden and the cost for business, something that those on the other side of the House obviously have no qualms about doing. Again, they would have to go out and explain to their business constituency how they can justify this increased cost to and regulatory burden on them. Any additional increase in cost ultimately increases the cost to consumers. We need to be certain that there is widespread concern that would justify making consumers pay more. This motion is really about increasing the cost to business, increasing the cost to consumers and therefore increasing daily living expenses—something that those on the other side of this parliament do not mind doing. If there is evidence that there is a widespread problem then I urge the members on the other side to consult with the government and,
further, with the states and territories and the fair trading regulators to determine whether or not further regulation is needed.

**Mr McCORMACK** (Riverina) (11:36): An urgent need exists to address inconsistencies between all compost standards and the government regulations which override them. A review completed by Robyn Neesen of Yanco in the Riverina highlights anomalies between compost standards in federal and state regulations. The report refers particularly to contaminant levels and the need for action to ensure a high-standard product which will improve soil health and productivity. There are currently no compulsory guidelines prescribing the quality of compost sold to recreational gardeners for private and domestic use. Many gardeners, be gardening their livelihood or just a hobby, have no way of knowing if the fertiliser they are purchasing will do more damage than good to their plants.

In the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries winter edition newsletter, the main article was headed 'When compost ain't compost'. It was a telling heading and an interesting piece. When it comes to compost, things are not always as they ought to be.

**Mrs Griggs:** Really?

**Mr McCORMACK:** Yes, really, Member for Solomon, and I will continue, because this is an absolutely interesting subject and one that is very important. While this might not seem important in the overall scheme of issues on the national agenda at present, it is something which, if passed, will ensure consistency and uniformity in an area in which many people participate.

Gardening is one of Australia's most popular pastimes. I am sure the member for Solomon probably spent the weekend in the garden when she was not busy taking care of her constituents—as she does, because she is a very good local member. A nice garden shows that people take pride in their most important investment: their home. I am sure the member for Bendigo probably spent his weekend in the garden, too. A working garden produces fresh fruit and vegetables—so crucial to healthy living.

Australians love gardening. From the very enthusiastic gardener who spends every waking moment either thinking about or actually mulching and tilling their back yard, to the very casual fellow who phoned in his thoughts about rugby league to Sydney radio station 2GB's continuous call team yesterday while enjoying a quiet drink and pulling out a weed or two to make out he was working hard in the garden, Aussies love working with plants in the great outdoors. You also only have to look at the number of gardening shows and 'do-it-yourself' programs that are so popular on television and radio to realise the emphasis Australians put on gardening.

On average, Australians spend 22 minutes per day on grounds and animal care, which includes the work of many conscientious gardeners. That equates to about 134 hours per year that the average Australian may be spending tending to their garden, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Those are 2006 figures, I might add; the statistics, I feel, would actually be increased in 2011 and will increase beyond that. Gardening is enjoyed greatly by Australia's seniors, and so it becomes even more important given that we have an ageing population. With no standard or requirement to prescribe the ingredient levels of fertilisers made available for private or domestic sale, residential gardeners cannot possibly know if the fertiliser they are purchasing will do more harm than good to their precious
plants. Fertiliser is not cheap, so people should know what they are getting. Those who work in gardening stores and compost supply companies are not always aware nor do they have the time on all occasions to explain all the details about the products. Plants are not inexpensive either and gardeners need to know that what they are growing them in or sustaining them with is what will be best for the plants. Robyn Neeson’s recent review entitled *Compost comparison: organic standards AS 4454: the need for consistent, high quality compost standards and regulations*, reported that regulations of consistency are paramount for organic and conventional agriculture. She emphasised what anyone who knows anything about improving soil quality has known all along—that is, that farmers are encouraged to use organic compost to improve soil health and to sequester carbon. However, the inconsistencies make it difficult for users to assess the quality of the product and ensure its suitability for use.

Earlier this year, Ms Neeson exhibited a poster and submitted a paper to an international symposium on compost use in horticulture. She has reviewed the three Australian organic standards for their compost requirements: *Organic and Biodynamic Products*, AS 6000-2009; *Australian Certified Organic Australian Organic Standard 2006*; and *National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia Organic Standard 2008*.

All organic standards reviewed concurred that organic certification standards should restrict compost inputs to natural materials such as animal and plant wastes, and naturally mined minerals and trace elements. Both the Australian Certified Organic standard and the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia standard prohibit the use of biosolids on food crops, but AS 6000-2009 made no reference to biosolids.

It is a requirement of all organic standards that they also comply with relevant government regulations. Ms Neeson found that the levels of contaminants acceptable in organic farming standards varied between standards. She reported compost is a primary source of nutrients in organic farming systems and the higher levels permitted by some organic standards for elements such as zinc presumably aim to reflect this requirement. In some instances, ambiguous terms such as ‘none or low level’, AS 6000-2009, and ‘not containing synthetic chemicals’, ACO, are used in preference to precise limits. This is not about the information on the back of compost packs not being right and not giving quite all the information, and thus being an impost on businesses; this is about giving the correct information to consumers—information that they need and rightly should expect given the fact that they are spending so much money on fertilisers and composts.

Australian Standard *Composts, soil conditioners and mulches*, AS 4454-2003, specifies physical, chemical, biological and labelling requirements for composts. In addition, all products and their application must comply with federal and state regulations. The standard also details the best-practice guidelines for composting. The AS 4454-2003 permits the use of organic materials, including biosolids as feedstock ingredients. Mixtures of organic waste which contain non-organic materials are permitted—for example, plastic, glass and metal from household waste—but restrictions are placed on the proportion and size of these contaminants.

All compost standards, organic and AS, defer to federal or state regulations with regard to minimum standards in feedstock material, application techniques and contaminant levels—heavy metals, organic contaminants and pathogens. The review also found that these
regulations varied across state jurisdictions. It is time to get this sorted. We need a national standard for fertiliser products. This motion will enable that.

We heard only last week in parliament of the importance of precious petals. The Prime Minister must be a keen gardener for she is obviously aware of the need to take care of our precious petals because she raised it during Tuesday's proceedings. This motion will take care of precious petals as well as all other plants which benefit from compost and fertiliser. Moreover, it will put in place safeguards for gardeners and heighten their knowledge of the product they are buying and using, something which should be stated consumer information. I implore the government to help pass this legislation.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (11:44): It is with great pride that I stand to talk about this important matter before the chamber which has been put forward by the member for Sturt. This motion comes in good time as spring is almost upon us, when it is a nice warm day here in Canberra and when it was certainly a warm weekend in Brisbane. This is the time when we should be applying 'Weed and Feed' to our lawns and fertilising our gardens in preparation for the growing seasons. Unfortunately, one of the downsides of this job is that my garden does not always get the attention it deserves. But this motion has, at the very least, prompted me to turn some attention to my garden in the coming weeks. The member for Sturt is right. Like most products, fertilisers can be used in the wrong way and occasionally with damaging results. I once heard a story of a bloke—I am pretty sure he was a constituent—who was gifted a square of grass from the Gabba cricket ground, because now they drop in ovals and the like and they do resurfacing. And so precious was this grass, especially in Queensland, that he took it home, planted it in his backyard, nurtured it, watered it and, for those cricket and Aussie Rules fans, developed his own piece of the Gabba or his own slice of history.

When he moved house years later, he dug up a sample of the grass so that he could take it to his new property so that he had a little slice of the Gabba at his new home. However, the next year he went to fertilise his precious lawn that he had taken with him as he moved house but, instead of applying fertiliser, he poisoned it with something like Roundup. Therefore, he ended up killing his own backyard piece of the Gabba forever. It just goes to show that you can make mistakes in applying simple fertilisers. It makes me wonder what has prompted this motion from the member for Sturt. Has he had a strange or a bad experience in his garden? Has he been exposed to too much manure?

Mr Gibbons: Or is he a precious petal?

Mr PERRETT: I take that interjection, but I am talking garden wise not policy wise, Member for Bendigo. Has he applied the wrong fertiliser and inadvertently killed his hydrangeas? Who knows? I hope not, for his sake. Nevertheless, Australia certainly uses a lot of fertiliser. Each year Australians apply between five and six million tonnes, obviously, mostly in farming but a lot is still applied to domestic gardens. We export up to 400,000 tonnes of fertiliser a year. Any fertilisers imported into Australia must meet strict quarantine requirements for maximum permissible concentrations of certain impurities.

All states already have rules regarding the labelling of fertilisers and that is obviously appropriate. These labels concern appropriate use and application guidelines. Fertiliser labels generally must include the name of the fertiliser, the quantity by weight or by volume, the name and full business address of the wholesaler and all the relevant warnings, particularly
about safe handling and all those other occupational health and safety requirements that we need to be aware of.

The gentleman I mentioned earlier, who perhaps could have saved his Gabba turf had he simply read the label or asked for advice from the staff at his local hardware store, particularly if it is a small hardware store rather than one of those big megastores. If in doubt, consumers need to make inquiries at the place of purchase about the best product for their desired purpose. If a customer is given the wrong advice, then obviously they are protected under normal consumer law protections. All consumers are able to seek redress if the goods they buy are not suitable for the purpose that was advertised. In Queensland, this would be as per the Sale of Goods Act, and there is similar legislation throughout Australia.

I understand that these consumer guarantees cover goods and services up to the value of $40,000. It would be hard, though, to compensate or replace the original Gabba turf—it is not the sort of thing that you would go to court to receive recompense for—or, if you are a Victorian, a piece of the MCG or whatever your particular piece of special grass.

I do appreciate the concerns of the member for Sturt. However, I think there is a little bit of hypocrisy here. He does not come in here and talk about a national curriculum to drive improvement to our children's education. He does not believe in national education standards for our children but, through this motion that he has introduced, he has shown that he is very passionate about establishing a national standard for fertiliser and compost products. I guess that, sometimes in politics, you just have to follow your heart. Australia already has a voluntary safety standard in place: AS4454. The Australian standards for compost, soil conditioners and mulches include guidance on the required pH levels so that you can guide even a novice gardener like me through to what is required. Significant penalties can apply where a product that claims to meet Australian Standard 4454 yet does not. This may breach the misleading representations provisions of the Australian consumer law. Obviously it is difficult to enforce these things, especially if you are just a normal suburban gardener—it is not the sort of thing you would probably rush off to the courts to enforce but there still are those protections there.

The member for Sturt may have more people going through his electorate door who are keen to talk about compost. However, I have only been in parliament for about four years and I think I could say that I have not had anyone come to my office, write to me, email me or make contact in any way to talk about fertiliser labelling or excessive pH levels in these products. Lots of people have come to talk to me about carbon levels, but never about the pH levels in the products. They are concerned about the impact if the opposition votes against the Carbon Farming Initiative—a lot of people have spoken to me about that but never about pH levels, but I live and wait. I do understand that when government increases regulation the compliance costs will in turn increase for business, and obviously consumers will lose out in the end through increased product costs.

As there is currently no widespread community concern, we simply cannot justify making consumers foot the bill for what, on the surface, would appear to be quite an unnecessary government regulation. However, if the member for Sturt does have evidence of a widespread problem in the fertiliser and compost industry, the government will talk to the state and territory fair trading regulators. That would be the more appropriate body to regulate this because, as I said, there is already an established process.
We have paid a lot of attention to fertiliser over the years after we saw the amazing situation a few years back in the United States where a building was blown up by people inappropriately using fertiliser so now it is much more controlled. There is a much healthier approach to what fertiliser should be sold and where it should be sold. I would suggest to the member for Sturt—and I am not sure if he is the best gardener in the world or not, if he has time for that—that he turn instead to the state and territory fair trading regulators and the approaches they have to controlling the fertiliser industry.

As I said earlier, now is the time—with September upon us and the equinox this week—when people will be turning to their gardens in the school holidays or in their spare time and they will be able to decide how best to use their fertiliser to improve their gardens. Obviously it would be much more appropriate to do that by consultation with the person who sells them the fertiliser rather than by being concerned with the motion put forward by the member for Sturt. I have a lot more faith in our state and territory fair trading regulators and I am sure that they will be able to work out what is needed to be done in this area, and they are best placed to assess any need for further labelling regulations. (Time expired)

Debate adjourned.

National Police Remembrance Day

Debate resumed on motion by Mr Hayes:

That this House:

(1) recognises and acknowledges the significant contribution that officers across all Australian policing jurisdictions make to our local communities as we approach National Police Remembrance Day on 29 September 2011;

(2) remembers and commemorates the ultimate sacrifices made by all police officers who have been killed in the course of their duties, in particular, that we commemorate the lives of:

(a) Detective Constable William Arthur George (Bill) Crews of the NSW Police Force who was killed in Sydney on 9 September 2010;

(b) Sergeant Daniel Stiller of the Queensland Police Force who was killed on 1 December 2010; and

(c) Detective Sergeant Constable Damian Leeding of the Queensland Police Force who was killed on 1 June 2011;

(3) honours the courage, commitment and memory of the many fine men and women who lost their lives during the execution of their official duty made in serving our community;

(4) pays respect to the work of Police Legacy which undertakes vital services in looking after the families and friends of the fallen police officers; and

(5) supports and thanks all serving police throughout Australia for their invaluable dedication and commitment to make a difference, defend our way of life and safeguard our communities.

Mr Hayes (Fowler) (11:53): National Police Remembrance Day is observed on 29 September. This day holds an especially significant position in the national police calendar. It is at this time we pause to honour the lives and memory of many fine men and women who, in serving their community, have had their lives tragically cut short in the execution of their duty. National Police Remembrance Day is a significant occasion for police and the general community to gather to reflect on the invaluable service and commitment rendered by our police. It also is an opportunity to remember those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice while they go about their normal day-to-day duty of serving our community.
The National Police Remembrance Day is observed on St Michael's Day. St Michael is the patron saint of police and, according to Christian tradition, the protector of good over evil. This year we recall the tragic deaths of three fine police officers: Detective Constable William 'Bill' Crews, who was tragically shot during a drug raid in the south-west of Sydney while attached to the Middle Eastern crime squad; Sergeant Daniel Stiller, who died near Mount Larcom in Queensland while riding a police motor cycle on official escort duties; and Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding, who was shot during an armed robbery on the Gold Coast.

The National Police Memorial, which is located in Kings Park on the northern side of Lake Burley Griffin, preserves the memory of the 749 police officers around Australia who have been killed on duty or have died as a result of their duties since 1803 when Constable Joseph Luker was killed in Sydney. The memorial, in a very solemn and respectful way, captures the qualities such as courage, duty and integrity shown by every one of our fallen police officers. When visiting the National Police Memorial, there is one thing that is impossible to ignore: that is the number of blank plaques. They are there for those officers who, sadly, will join their colleagues in the years to come. It is a stark reminder of the unique nature of policing and the dangers faced by police in protecting our community.

Last Saturday I joined with more than 1,200 police officers and their supporters in the Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance. The police commissioners from New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Federal Police also participated in the ride, with the remaining commissioners joining the gathering when we all assembled at the National Police Memorial in Kings Park. Apart from commemorating fallen colleagues, the ride is a major charity effort. Importantly, the funds raised from the ride will go to Police Legacy to support the partners and children of officers who have been killed on duty.

I know policing comes with a degree of risk that, thankfully, most of us will never in our lives have to face. Through my close association with policing over many years, and having grown up in a police family, I understand that it takes a special type of person and a special type of courage to wear the police uniform. We are truly indebted to the men and women who choose to do so. My father was a member of the New South Wales Police Force, with a career that spanned 34 years. He retired as an inspector and an officer in charge of police communications. When I spoke at his funeral two weeks ago, I recalled the conversation I had with him when I was young when I asked: what motivated him to join the police, given the risks, the dangers and the sacrifices associated with police work? I am sure what he told me then reflects the views of every police officer, including Bill Crews, Daniel Stiller and Damian Leeding. My dad told me he joined the police force to make a difference. Today is also the day we remember the loved ones of all those police officers who have been killed, people whose lives have been affected forever with the passing of a partner, a father, a mother, a sibling, a workmate, a friend or a colleague. We should never forget the families of those who have given their lives for the protection of our community. I particularly commend the work of Police Legacy.

Today is also a historic day for policing, with the Prime Minister awarding the first of the National Police Service Medals to 16 police officers selected from each of our state and territory jurisdictions and the Australian Federal Police. Commissioners from each of the
jurisdictions participated in today's event. Once again, it is a reminder of the good work, dedication and commitment shown by all our police officers. The function was also attended by the President of the Police Federation of Australia, Vince Kelly, and representatives from each of the police associations and unions from around the country.

In the short time I have got available I will also mention that we have here today in the public gallery Detective Inspector Brian Rix. Brian was part of today's medal presentation. He was also one of the instigators of the Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance. Brian recently retired from the Victorian police force and was President of the Police Association Victoria. In the time that he has served the people of Victoria, he served in the homicide squad, drug squad, armed robbery squad, special response group, tactical investigations squad and many others. He had a career that spanned 35 years. Looking after Victorian police came with his role as president of the association. Looking after police across the country and serving the memory of the fallen came from his commitment to doing something positive, such as the Wall to Wall Ride. I wish him all the best in retirement, as I do Shirley, as they embark upon a new and different set of challenges. One thing I do know is that police genuinely care. Streets in Melbourne are far safer through the diligence and commitment of Brian Rix and people like him.

I also see, sitting behind Brian, retired Commander Max Pope, who I have known for a long time in the Northern Territory. I am not sure of the length of his career in the Northern Territory. He has certainly been there far longer than I have been involved in national policing. I acknowledge the role he played and the dedication he showed in the Northern Territory Police.

I would like to conclude with the police ode. This is to all of those serving police members across Australia to show that we do appreciate the genuine difference they make in our community. On behalf of a grateful community, not only do I say thank you, but I recite the ode:

As the sun surely sets,
dawn will see it arise,
for service above self
demands its own prize.
You have fought the good fight,
life's race has been run,
and peace your reward,
for eternity begun.
And we that are left
shall never forget,
rest in peace friend and colleague,
for the sun has now set.
We will remember.
Hasten the dawn.

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (12:03): I rise to support the motion put forward by the member for Fowler. I also acknowledge the significant contribution that officers across all Australian
policing jurisdictions make to our community as we approach National Police Remembrance Day on 29 September 2011. I acknowledge the National Police Memorial here in Canberra, which has, as the Member for Fowler said, the names of 749 police officers recorded on it. These police forfeited their lives in the service of the community. Although there are members of the Northern Territory Police Force recorded on the monument, it is significant to note that Northern Territory Police Force has been indeed fortunate not to have had to acknowledge the supreme sacrifice of any additional members in the past 12 months. The Northern Territory, by its nature, is demanding upon its police. I firmly believe that there could be no finer, more committed group of men and women than those involved in law enforcement in the Northern Territory. They have my respect and support.

As I have said many times in this place, I am a long-term resident of the Northern Territory, having grown up in Alice Springs and having lived all of my adult life in Darwin. This, coupled with being the wife of a Northern Territory police officer, has put me in a position to know firsthand the impact that policing has had, not only on society but on members of the police force and their families.

Like many members would, I remember the days when police officers held an automatic position of status within the community. I certainly recall the days when the local cop was part of the community and continually engaging with it. It was when there was respect for the officer within that community. It was the tone of law enforcement that moulded the way the community was.

I recall the days when the local police officer was respected and had the support of the community to deal with issues at a local level. They knew the kids, they knew where they were, what they were up to and, if necessary, they would give them a clip behind the ear before sending them home—knowing that mum and dad would be told about their activities which, in most cases, resulted in any penalty or punishment being meted out at home and not in the courts, where often little or nothing occurs.

Yes, times have changed. Society has moved forward and continued to develop. But I think at times this movement has not necessarily been for its betterment. We live in a community in which people show little or no respect for each other, let alone for their police. In some communities our police are in many cases simply a service provider; faceless uniforms dealing with the outcomes of a slow social decay—decay that is evident across all the demographics of society.

Where are the days of being able to leave your house unlocked, your car open in the street? Today is a far cry from what I saw no more than 20 years ago. Not only do we have to lock our doors; there is the requirement to install an increasing array of security measures. A locked door was once all that was needed; now we talk of security screens, motion sensors, home alarms and, in some cases, panic rooms.

What happened to the front yard being a place where the local kids could meet and kick a footy? What happened to knowing your neighbours, engaging with your neighbours, sharing a story over the back fence? Sadly today increasingly neighbours do not engage. Front yards are examples of modern fencing often supported by the chorus of barking dogs.

Our police officers today are servants to a community that can at times view them as the opposition, an object to taunt or a game. I suppose I should ask why we expect those elements
of the community who do not even respect themselves to respect our police. In addition, police officers on the street are often hamstrung by ineffective legislation that puts the balance in the hands of the offenders and severely limits the capacity of police to respond effectively to the demands of our community.

In days gone by our police were proactive. As I have said, they knew their communities because they were out engaging with the community: visiting businesses, talking to the owners, walking the streets and meeting the people, attending community meetings, dropping by the local school and engaging with the kids. They were the coach of the local footy team or ran the local police club. The local police officer was known as a police officer regardless of what their role was within the community or how they were dressed. It was never just the uniform; it was the person inside who made an effective police officer.

In the Northern Territory Aboriginal communities, particularly those in the Arnhem Land region but also in others, the police officer was often called the 'jarmon'. They were a respected member of the Aboriginal community and placed in a family group by that community. The 'jarmon' was respected regardless of their mode of dress and whether they were on or off duty was not a concept ever to be considered.

A long-serving police officer and my friend Max Pope, who is here with me today, has served 35 years in the Northern Territory police force. He has spent many years serving across the Northern Territory including many in remote communities. He was telling me that after hearing the term 'jarmon' being whispered amongst the people he one day asked one of the elders, 'What does that term mean?' He was told that when non-Aboriginal police officers came to the Territory there was a need to have them placed in the family so that their place could be known to the community. More significantly, the term referred to a person who feared nothing, a person who would walk into a camp of armed tribesman and exert their will to enforce the law. It was said that the old people were amazed that anyone could be so cheeky and fearless.

The Northern Territory is a collection of communities and, in most, people know who their police officers are. In this environment a police officer is a police officer regardless of whether he or she is in or out of uniform, on or off duty. Those who may be critical, criticising a member for taking actions in a social environment, are usually the same people who would be critical where a member fails to respond to a breach of the law regardless of the police officer's duty status at the time. The focus of society, driven by the changing face of politics, is governed more by the 24-hour news cycle and the voice of minority groups than by the governance required to build better communities. Our courts continually demonstrate the spiral of police importance and status within the community. Increasingly, court records demonstrate examples of language and behaviour brought to answer which the court determines as acceptable in terms of such language or behaviour police should expect and deem as acceptable in the course of their normal duties.

We regularly see reports of offenders brought before the court to answer allegations of assault or injury to police, only to see the offender dealt with by a slap on the wrist. Not only does this result further undermine the value and importance of our police services, it adds weight in the minds of those who perpetrate such acts, the ramifications of these behaviours mean nothing. In some cases this behaviour is now seen as a rite of passage or a badge of honour.
The responsibilities placed upon our police members are ever increasing. We expect our police to act as social garbage collectors without definite mechanisms to deal with or address these issues from an ongoing perspective. The real truth of the matter is, policing the community is expensive. Governments of all persuasions grapple with how to provide value policing against a backdrop of increased costs and reduced budgets. As we all know, the wheels of change in terms of good governance move slowly. Meanwhile, the face of change in the community is occurring at a rate rapidly outpacing our capacity to identify, prioritise, develop and implement the change that is needed.

From the perspective of the Northern Territory, statistically we have one of the highest rates of police officer representation to head of population. Look at the Northern Territory demographically; it is a remote locality with a small total population. There are only two centres of significant populace; the remainder are spread far and wide across the expanse of the Northern Territory. Our police officers are in many respects the most capable, diverse and resilient of police personnel. They work in a culturally diverse community, in many instances miles and hours from any level of backup support. They deal with a greater cross-section of offences than most general duties officers of similar comparative experience outside the Northern Territory. Our police are some of the best; a small police force in number, but one where the importance of bond and police brother/sisterhood remain strong. It is a police force where the loss of a member is heartfelt and resonates across all levels of the force. It is felt within the community and in many respects is felt as deeply in those communities as within the force.

I applaud and support any action to recognise police officers across the country. Police Remembrance Day is a day of significance and importance to police officers within my home in the Northern Territory, and indeed Australia. Remembrance Day is a day to honour and remember fallen colleagues. Certainly, within the Northern Territory we have been fortunate. Increasingly and sadly, though, each year the list of police names recalled and remembered on this day increases.

Mrs D’ATH (Petrie) (12:14): Today I rise to speak in support of the National Police Remembrance Day motion moved by the member for Fowler, and it is my pleasure to second the motion. On Thursday, 8 September, dozens of Queensland police officers commenced a 1,400 kilometre motorbike journey to Canberra for the Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance. Their journey was to remember those lost in the line of duty and to raise awareness for Australian police legacies. Today, I rise to do the same.

This House remembers and commemorates the ultimate sacrifices made by our police officers and we particularly seek to remember those whom we have lost over the last 12 months—the lives of Detective Constable William Arthur George Crews of the NSW Police Force who was killed in Sydney on 9 September 2010; Sergeant Daniel Stiller of the Queensland Police Service who was killed on 1 December 2010; and most recently Detective Sergeant Constable Damian Leeding of the Queensland Police Service who was killed on 1 June 2011.

On 20 June this year, I stood before this House to offer my condolences to the family of Senior Constable Damian Leeding, whose tragic loss in the line of duty rocked the Australian public and reminded us all of the sacrifice our officers and their families make. In the lead-up to National Police Remembrance Day, nothing makes me prouder than to stand here again
and extend my gratitude to all those who have served and continue to serve to protect our community. I also wish to express my sincere condolences to the wives, husbands, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, partners and bureaus of Australian police force who have suffered the devastation of a life cut short in the line of duty.

I am the proud wife of a police officer who has served the Queensland Police Service for more than 17 years. I have spent nights waiting and worrying when he does not come home on time. I have seen him come home with bruises and blood on him. I have heard the stories of him being spat on and yelled abuse at when trying to help the injured or victims of crime. If only every person in the Australian society could spend a day in the shoes of a serving police officer, we would see that respect returned to our serving police officers.

We should acknowledge that the role of our police officers is not just to react to incidents. We should also acknowledge the positive work that they do to help educate our seniors and to educate people in our community about how to stay safer. Importantly, I have to say how proud I am of the work being done in recent years on youth crime prevention. I talk to a lot of the local police officers in my electorate of Petrie who are doing amazing work trying to help our youth straighten out their lives and hopefully stay out of prison.

We know that we are going to be remembering 749 lives lost this year. Queensland has lost 139 police officers in the line of duty and National Police Remembrance Day gives us a day to pause, reflect and honour the officers whose lives were cut short.

It is also a time to say thank you to the work of the Police Legacy who assists the families of the police officers killed in the line of duty. Currently Queensland Police Legacy supports 45 families, including meeting the educational expenses of 77 dependent legatee children. This support and that offered by other Police Legacy branches across the country to ensure families have the emotional and financial assistance they need in the wake of tragedy cannot be overstated. For their invaluable work, I say thank you.

As a wife of a policeman, I understand the dangers our officers face every day as our protectors and our heroes. It is for this reason that I stand here to offer my condolences and gratitude to the officers and the families who have sacrificed for our community. I ask that the House and the Australian people take a moment to honour their sacrifice in the lead-up to National Police Remembrance Day.

I would like to acknowledge the member for Fowler for all the work he does in relation to the serving police officers across the country and also to acknowledge those members who are speaking on this motion today. I ask the Australian people that, on 29 September 2011, they stop and remember just for a moment the great work that our past and current serving police officers do and to acknowledge, most importantly, those who have lost their lives and their families.

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (12:19): I rise to speak on the motion on the coming National Police Remembrance Day on 29 September. I have also had the great honour to serve as a sworn member of the Australian Federal Police and, while that was only for a couple of years back in the 1980s, I do recall seeing enough of the realities of life in Australia to know that the risks that sworn officers, police in uniform and plain clothes detectives, take are very grave indeed. So often society is a little bit negative towards police until such time as a person on the street feels a personal threat—at which point they are very glad to see that blue
uniform. It is always the case that when the public needs uniformed police they call and call very loudly.

In Western Australia I am honoured to have a number of excellent officers and stations around my area. We have got Wanneroo Police Station and Warwick Police Station and also a very active crime prevention team within the north-western district of the Western Australian police in the urban areas.

Looking back over events of the last few years, we have had a couple of pretty bad incidents in Western Australia. There was a very grievous attack on Constable Matthew Butcher, though it did not cost him his life. It was a completely unreasonable and dastardly attack, where he was assaulted from behind with a flying head butt. As a result he was very seriously injured and will probably have to live with those injuries for the rest of his life. That is a great tragedy.

What is really required is respect from members of the public. Unfortunately, there are a lot of terrible people out there who see the police as a problem for their normal activities, and I guess we will always have criminals. But, in the case of Constable Butcher, what made it worse was that there was no attempt to confront him, only an attempt to take him out from behind. That was a terrible thing. As a result of that, the state government in Western Australia has taken a very firm line on assaults against public officers, which is resulting in jail terms. I think that is entirely appropriate. I would go so far as to say that not only should assault of police officers come with a jail term upon guilt being found, but that swearing at police officers should also require specific action to remind people that it is unacceptable.

I would also like to talk briefly about Constable Damien Murphy, who died on 15 February 2007. Constable Murphy, having just dealt with a domestic violence incident in the suburb of Craigie, tried to flag down a vehicle on one of the major roads and was struck by that vehicle. This was a real tragedy—he was a young bloke with a young family who left behind a wife—but these things unfortunately happen when police officers put their lives on the line for community safety.

It is important that state jurisdictions in particular take a very firm stand against assault or abuse of police officers to make sure they are protected as much as possible, to look after them when they are putting their lives on the line for the community. I say, ‘Thank God they are there; thank God there is someone out there willing to stand up and be counted and do these things.’ I wish them well and hopefully there will be no more of these assaults.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (12:24): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this motion and, in doing so, can I commend the member for Fowler for bringing it to the attention of the House. I know he has spoken in the past about the importance of our police around the country and he is committed to the work that they do. As I have said, I commend him for bringing this motion to the House and for his speech earlier on.

Earlier today the member for Fowler, a number of others and I attended the presentation of police medals by the Prime Minister to the first 16 recipients of that medal. Firstly, I say congratulations to all the recipients of those medals at today's presentation. Officers from around the country were there and it was good to see the different states and territories represented at the presentation. I particularly congratulate the South Australian recipients of the medal, Sergeant Bill Bampton and Senior Constable Jessie Hughes, who I met for the first
time this morning and who I know are very worthy recipients of the medal and will do the medal proud. I also congratulate South Australian Police Commissioner Mal Hyde who, on behalf of his commissioner colleagues, addressed the gathering. As a fellow South Australian and as I know Commissioner Hyde, it was good to see him standing up there, representing the national police commissioners from around Australia, and also to hear his words. He spoke very well. He was very well supported as well by the South Australian Police Association President, Mark Carroll, and the state secretary of the association Andy Dunn, who is in the gallery with us here today and I acknowledge his presence. Before I go on to my other remarks, I also acknowledge the 42 South Australian police riders who participated in the 1,230-strong motorcycle contingent to Canberra in the Wall-to-Wall Ride for Remembrance. I am sure for them it would have been both an enjoyable ride and a very long ride from Adelaide to Canberra.

I thought the Prime Minister, in her address this morning, spoke eloquently and she covered all of the important comments that needed to be made in respect to this motion and the work of our serving police officers around the country. Essentially, she made the point that every day some 56,000 police officers around the country leave their home to go out to work not knowing what to expect, not knowing if they are going to return home safely. Simultaneously, their families see their loved ones leaving to go to work not knowing if they will see them come back at the end of the day and not knowing, if they do come back at the end of the day, if they will be in one piece—and so often that is not the case, and we have just heard the member for Petrie speaking about her personal experience with her partner. For them and their families it is a pretty tough ask to say that you are going to leave to go to work not knowing what to expect. For us in the rest of society, we get up and we do the same—we go to work—but we go with the comfort of knowing that we are relatively safe because of the work of police officers around the country. It is quite reassuring to have people out there doing exactly that so that we can get on with the rest of our lives in the way that we would like to do so. It is not just in respect to safety in the broader sense. Every day we are confronted with different crises from around the country, whether it is a crime scene, a motor vehicle accident or domestic violence and so on, and whenever there is a crisis who do we first call? The police, and we ask them to be there to try and reassure us, take control of the situation and get things back in order. It is a huge responsibility on the serving police officers of this country, as other speakers have said.

In the brief time I have left to me, I simply want to make a couple of points. On previous occasions I have spoken about some of the South Australian police officers who have been killed or injured in the line of duty and I have talked about Senior Constable Derrick McManus, who in 1994 was shot 14 times, and Senior Constable David Barr, who was killed at Salisbury in 1990. But today I want to very briefly talk about Constable Nathan Mulholland and Constable Tung Tran, who on 25 May 2010 were shot when they responded to a call for assistance at a residential address. The person who shot them actually called them to go to the home because he 'needed assistance' and when they got there he shot both of them without any reason at all. I know Constable Tran sustained a very serious head injury. That is the kind of job police officers are confronted with. I say to those police officers that 29 September is a day when we remember your services. It is fitting that the monument in Canberra has inscribed on it the name of each and every officer who has lost their life to protect ours.
Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (12:29): I want to thank the member for Fowler for this motion. It is important that we acknowledge and recognise police officers who have given of their lives in the course of their duty. I also acknowledge our serving policemen and women but in particular National Police Remembrance Day, which is celebrated every year on 29 September. Since 1829 there have been over 10,000 people who have served in the Western Australian police service, protecting our way of life on a daily basis. They go out to work each day and their mission is to enhance the quality of life and the wellbeing of all people in Western Australia by contributing to making our state a safe and secure place.

Services will be taking place all around the country to remember our brave men and women in the police services who have lost their lives in the course of their duty. The National Police Remembrance Day service commemorates those Australian police officers who have been killed in the course of their duty or have died as a result of their duties. Equally, I want to acknowledge those who have also been injured whilst performing their duty. We often see photographic evidence of police officers with injuries that leave you mind-boggled by the fact that somebody who is protecting society has been injured in such a heinous way, because it is not of their making.

Police around the world have a day of recognition observed of the main feast day of Saint Michael the Archangel, patron saint of police. In Western Australia there have been 79 police officers killed in the line of duty since Captain Ellis was speared in the Battle of Pinjarra in 1834. In more recent times, Constable Damien Murphy was killed in a traffic accident in 2007 in Perth while attending to the issue of a domestic violence situation in the suburb of Craigie. Many Western Australians will also still remember the dark day of 26 January 2001, when four officers were killed in a plane crash outside of the remote town of Newman.

The majority of West Australian police officers killed in recent times have died as a result of traffic accidents or plane crashes. This reflects the unique challenges faced by WA police services. Western Australia is the world's largest non-federated police jurisdiction. It covers some 2.5 million square kilometres and is bigger than many countries around the world. Deaths in travel reflect the difficult terrain and the vast distances that our police services are required to cover in their daily working lives.

I have a strong working relationship with the police in my electorate of Hasluck. This comes from their involvement in the Gosnells and Midlands—the PCYC and officers at the Gosnells, Forrestfield and Midland police stations, who in their efforts combat hooning and anti-social behaviour within my electorate. The police do a tough job and work 24 hours a day to keep the people of Hasluck and Western Australia safe. I think that this is a point often forgotten by some people. When there is a noise in our house at night or a violent situation, who we call is always important and it is always our local police. It is their job to put themselves in harm's way to protect us and, sadly, a number have paid the ultimate price over the years. Their families are affected because it is difficult for any of us to accept a loss in our families, and the gap that is left is challenging. It not only impacts on a partner; it impacts on children, it impacts on the mother and father, the father- and the mother-in-laws and the other members of the family. They also know that their son or daughter served in the line of duty.

The community also suffers at the death of a police officer. This is a person who dedicated their professional life to protecting Western Australians and we are weaker for the loss. I welcome this motion and stand here today to recognise our police in Western Australia and
police officers all around this nation who go and stand where others fear to tread in the name of protecting our society and way of life. I have had the privilege of being associated with the police force through being a mentor to a squad within the Western Australian academy and it is a privilege that I will always cherish and remember. I understand the principle of the police family and the way in which they connect with each other and support each other in times of both need and crisis.

Ms GRIERSON (Newcastle) (12:35): I commend the motion moved by the member for Fowler in acknowledging the contributions made by police officers from across our Australian communities. I acknowledge the member for Fowler’s former role within the Police Federation of Australia and New Zealand. On National Remembrance Day on 29 September this year we will commemorate the lives of Detective Constable William Arthur George Crews, Sergeant Daniel Stiller and Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding—brave men who have each made the ultimate sacrifice whilst in the line of duty protecting our Australian communities.

The Prime Minister noted this morning that those who serve in uniform do not seek recognition; they do so because they are honoured to serve. It is our duty to recognise those who have served and who continue to serve in the interests of our community, for each day as they go out to work their parents, their partners, their children and their friends can never be certain that they will return to their homes that night. It is for this reason that we honour and pay tribute to those who take these risks on a day-to-day basis to keep our communities safe. It is also for this reason that we honour and pay tribute to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

In late August a 7½-hour police siege occurred within my own electorate of Newcastle in the early morning in Mayfield West. This siege involved a stand-off, with negotiators and heavily armed police from the State Protection Support Unit present. Thankfully, the event was resolved without incident due to the skill and sheer professionalism of those officers on the front line. Unfortunately, as we know, events like these do not always end without incident, as it is impossible to know what can occur. We should for a moment reflect upon and imagine if our loved ones did not return at the end of the day from their workplace. For the majority of us that worry does not affect us, but for the families of those officers who serve across the nation's police forces it is a sure bet that it certainly does.

It is well known that my city is one that has had a great deal of problems with binge drinking. Alcohol related violence statistics are the second highest of anywhere in the state, and I know that front-line police deal with this every week, every weekend, day in, day out and that it is wearing them down. I have been at the openings of Law Week in my electorate, where barristers and the law societies have stood and talked about the difficult problem that drugs like ice now cause in law enforcement. It is an uncontrollable time of great irrationality and great violence, and it is our police who are at the front line of that. So I pay my respects to and congratulate the inaugural National Police Service Medal recipients today for their past and future dedication to the integral role and service they provide.

I also note that Hunter local Inspector Bruce McGregor, a Lake Macquarie duty officer, recently took part in a second Wall to Wall Ride of Remembrance from Sydney to Canberra in honour of his fallen mates. Each year, the special service held in Newcastle by the Police Association and by the police themselves is one that is well attended and is one that is an
opportunity for us to say thank you and to pay our respects. It is important to honour and remember those who have fallen, for it is a consistent reminder of the gravity and sacrifice associated with the role police officers play within our society. It makes us truly thankful, as we should be, for their heroic service to our nation.

In dealing with the local police commander in my electorate, he has raised with me the concerns of police officers who suffer stress and trauma in their job. It is time that state governments took on some of those issues. I know that many people would say that policing today is a job in which perhaps one would consider some early retirement opportunities, as we do with the defence forces and other forces. It seems to me that front-line work in the police can have a very long-term cost, and I certainly am one to suggest that that debate needs to happen. I thank the member for Fowler for moving this important private member's motion today and give it my full support.

Debate adjourned.

**Coptic Christians in Egypt**

That this House:
(1) recognises that Coptic Christians in Egypt are suffering ongoing and increasing persecution;
(2) condemns the recent attacks on Coptic Christians in Egypt;
(3) expresses its sympathy for Coptic Christians who have been victims of recent attacks in Egypt; and
(4) calls on the Government to:
   (a) issue a public statement condemning the ongoing attacks against the Coptic Christian minority in Egypt;
   (b) make immediate representations to the United Nations to end the persecution of Coptic Christians in Egypt; and
   (c) strongly urge the Egyptian Government to provide equal rights and protection for all Egyptian citizens regardless of race or religion.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (12:40): I rise to speak on this important and most timely motion. In advance I thank all the other speakers who will follow my contribution here today. I also thank my coalition parliamentary colleagues who have supported me in this motion.

Egypt is currently experiencing a period of unprecedented transition, the success of which hinges on full respect for the rule of law and compliance with international human rights standards, including freedom of religion. However, while the world has been preoccupied with the so-called 'Arab Spring' little, if any, attention has been paid to the increased persecution of Christians and religious intolerance in the Muslim Middle East.

Coptic Christians are the descendants of the original inhabitants of Egypt. They descend from the pharaohs, who built the classic Egyptian civilization along the Nile Valley in cities such as Luxor, and the builders of the Great Pyramid of Giza, which remained the tallest man-made structure in the world for more than 3,800 years. The Copts have a long and proud history as Christians, which dates back to the fourth century. In the year 641 AD, when the Arab Muslims invaded Egypt, Christianity was the majority religion in Roman Egypt. Despite the political upheaval following the invasion, Egypt remained a mainly Christian land until the end of 12th century.
Since becoming a minority, Christians in Egypt have experienced centuries of discrimination. However, the position of the Copts did improve in the early 19th century. During this liberal period Copts participated in the Egyptian national movement for independence and occupied many influential positions in government and society. Although they represented about 10 to 20 per cent of the population, they were so economically prosperous that they held more than 50 per cent of the nation's wealth.

However, following the 1952 coup d'état, led by Nasser, the conditions of the Copts have slowly deteriorated. A prejudicial legal framework has created a permissive environment that allows Egyptian officials to freely discriminate against Christians with impunity. Christian religious courts were closed and the regime confiscated land and church properties. Permits to construct new churches were delayed. The Nasser government also adopted socialist policies, which further adversely affected the Copts, as they mainly depended on private business for their livelihood.

The economic pressures and resurgent discrimination under Nasser led many Copts to start migrating to countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia and Europe. Today there are about four million Copts living outside Egypt, including an estimated 100,000 Coptic Christians in Australia, who have successfully assimilated into our nation and who have made an invaluable contribution to our economic prosperity.

However, today, as a religious minority the Copts are subject to ongoing and significant discrimination in modern Egypt and are the target of attacks by militant Islamic extremist groups. The following are just a few examples of the recent attacks on the Christian minority in Egypt. On 6 January 2010, in the town of Nag Hammadi, three men sprayed automatic gunfire on Coptic churchgoers leaving a midnight mass. Seven people were killed and several others were injured.

On 1 January 2011, a bomb detonated in front of a Coptic church, the Two Saints Church, in Alexandria, where a New Year's prayer service was being held. Twenty-three people died as a result of the attack, all of them Coptic Christians, and 97 more people were injured. This was the deadliest act of violence against Egypt's Christian minority in more than a decade, since a massacre in 2000 left 21 Copts dead.

On 11 January, 2011 an off-duty police officer opened fire in a train in Minya province, killing one Christian and injuring five others. In early March this year 13 people were killed and nearly 150 wounded in clashes in Cairo that erupted during large-scale demonstrations by Christians protesting the destruction of a church in the provincial town of Sol. The 2011 report by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom makes sobering reading. The commission is an independent bipartisan US federal government commission. Its commissioners are appointed by President Obama and the leadership of both political parties in the House of Representatives and the US Senate. Its report notes:

The Egyptian government engaged in and tolerated religious freedom violations before and after President Hosni Mubarak stepped down on February 11, 2011.

Serious problems of discrimination, intolerance and other human rights violations against members of religious minorities, as well as disfavoured Muslims, remain widespread in Egypt. Violence targeting Coptic Orthodox Christians remained high during the reporting period.
This high level of violence and the failure to convict those responsible— including two of the three alleged perpetrators of the 2010 Nag Hammadi attack— continued to foster a climate of impunity, making further violence more likely.

The Egyptian government has failed to protect religious minorities, particularly Coptic Christians, from violent attacks, including during the transitional period when minority communities are increasingly vulnerable.

Since February 11, military and security forces reportedly have used excessive force and live ammunition targeting of Christian places of worship and Christian demonstrators.

... ...

In addition, the government has not responded adequately to combat widespread virulent anti-Semitism in the government-controlled media.

For the first time the commission has recommended that Egypt be designated as a country of particular concern for its systematic ongoing egregious violations of religious freedom. In addition to violence, Christians face official and societal discrimination in Egypt.

Although the Egyptian government officials may claim that there is no law or policy that prevents Christians from holding senior positions, the Coptic community faces de facto discrimination in appointments to high-level government and military posts. Despite representing 10 per cent of the population, there are only a handful of Christians in the upper ranks of the security forces and the armed forces. There is just one Christian governor out of 28 and one elected member of parliament out of the 454 seats. There are no known university presidents or deans and very few legislators or judges. Under Egyptian law Muslim men can marry Christian women but Muslim women are prohibited from marrying Christian men. For all Christian groups government permission is required to build a new church or even to repair an existing one. The approval process for church construction is time-consuming and inflexible. The majority of applications made more than five years ago have yet to receive a response. Egypt continues to have a number of repressive policies and practices that violate freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.

Although the attacks against the Copts were carried out largely with impunity under the indifferent Mubarak regime, the recent announcement that the Muslim Brotherhood movement would now seek the imposition of Islamic law in Egypt is sending shock waves through the Coptic community both in Egypt and worldwide. There is a real danger of the Arab spring falling into a dark Islamic winter.

Religious intolerance and extremism are incubators of violence. If radicals grow in influence, they might destroy any new democratic system that takes root, as democracy does not mean that 50 per cent plus one of the electorate has absolute rule over the rest. The true test of any democracy is how it treats its minorities. However, there are some hopeful signs. After a popular uprising that toppled Mubarak in February this year, ending 30 years of autocratic rule, the press in Egypt is now more free and vigorous, and Egypt will start parliamentary elections on 21 November. It still could work out. A real democracy in Egypt with some measure of tolerance of personal liberty may yet still emerge. However, there can be no real freedom for Egypt, there can be no real stability and there can be no economic growth lifting millions of Egyptians out of poverty and into prosperity unless there is full religious freedom in Egypt, not only for the Coptic minority but for all other moderate voices.

Now is not the time for silence or appeasement by the international community, for as the
Copts go so ultimately may go the entire the Middle East. If a Christian minority cannot live within a country which has a Muslim majority population without persecution or institutionalised discrimination, the future looks bleak. Although a number of world leaders, including President Obama and Pope Benedict XVI have expressed serious concern about the dramatic attacks against the Coptic Christian community, the current Australian government has so far been silent. This motion gives this parliament an opportunity to end its silence. Finally, I would like to thank leading members of the Coptic community in Australia, including Father Tadros Simon, Father Antonis Kaldas, and Father Mathew Attia. I commend this motion to the House and I trust it will have the support of all its members.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley—Government Whip) (12:50): I rise in support of the motion that has been moved by the member for Hughes and welcome it as an important stepping stone within the process of, in our own way, providing a voice but also, more importantly, seeing potentially improvements in the quality of lives of Egyptian Copts. Like many Australians, I watched earlier this year the historic people's revolution unfold on television, which resulted in the departure of President Mubarak from a position that he had held for 30 years. The revolt was praised at the time by leaders worldwide, hoping that it would usher in a new era of peace and democracy for all Egyptians, I stress that—for all Egyptians.

In July I spoke in this chamber about the fears of local Coptic Christians in Chifley for friends and relatives at home in Egypt. I was actually approached, while holding a mobile office in Woodcroft, by a number of representatives of the local community who had met with me to discuss their concerns on behalf of family and friends and their fear of genuine persecution for Coptic Christians living in Egypt. The fears that were expressed to me all those months ago continue to exist today, as the transitional government works towards fresh elections and drafting a new constitution. The constitution itself and the parliament remains suspended.

Members will remember with horror the outrageous suicide bombing of an Egyptian church in January, as Orthodox Christians celebrated the new year with 21 innocent lives lost in this attack on the Church of the Two Saints. There could be nothing worse than people who are observing their faith having that observation shattered in such a violent way. I certainly condemn it, as many others do and rightly should worldwide.

Although Christians are a minority in Egypt, the Coptic Orthodox Church has existed there, where it was founded by St Mark in the first century. Since the 1952 coup in which the Republic of Egypt was formed Copts have faced increasing marginalisation and restrictions. Religious freedom is guaranteed by the now suspended constitution; however there still remain restrictions on building new churches and for people converting to Christianity.

I welcome the Egyptian government's statements condemning sectarian violence and their commitment to bringing those responsible to justice, a necessary pre-condition for Egypt to truly be able to say that it is celebrating democratic rights, religious freedom and freedom for all religions. I would hope that the transitional government and the government that follows commit to protecting religious freedom and affording all those in Egypt equal rights as enjoyed by the majority.

I am grateful that the member for Hughes has kept this important international situation in the spotlight here, and I am more than happy to support him and lend my efforts, albeit small, in supporting what I think is a very important move. I know the Australian government is
closely watching to see how minority rights are respected in Egypt's political transition and is deeply concerned by recent escalation in sectarian tension. Certainly, from my own point of view, I have expressed within government, my concerns about the situation and, if there are situations where there is persecution, I have raised being able to provide some sort of humanitarian avenue to assist those people who have that genuine fear of persecution and fear for their lives.

Our government has long expressed its concerns for Egypt's Coptic Community, both publically and in diplomatic exchange. I am advised by the foreign minister that Australia's ambassador to Egypt has met with and written to his holiness, Pope Shenouda III, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, to convey the government's condolences for the 1 January attack and to discuss the situation effecting Christians in Egypt. I understand the member for Griffith, Mr Rudd, raised the situation of the Coptics with members of the Egyptian government when he visited Egypt in February this year and in December last year. I am also told that he met with Bishop Suriel of the Coptic Church in Melbourne in February and the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Mr Bowen, met with the bishop in early February as well in a sign of how important this issue remains for the government.

Australia's position on religious freedom in Egypt is consistent with our proud legacy of defending human rights at the multilateral level, particularly in the UN. Australia co-sponsored the UN general assembly's resolution on the elimination of religious discrimination in 2010, sponsored the mandate of the special rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief at the UN Human Rights Council and is involved in the UN Alliance of Civilisations, which promotes interfaith dialogue, an exceptionally important exercise in ensuring that people of all faiths work together for the common good and that avenues for religious persecution are minimised, with the ultimate aim of ensuring that it does not occur at all.

In February last year, the government also submitted a written intervention in Egypt's universal period review at the UNHCR, seeking advice on the status of the Egyptian National Council for Human Rights' proposal for a unified law on the construction and renovation of houses of worship. The government welcomed the interim Egyptian government's announcement in May that it would draft such a unified law and urge the swift adoption of final legislation which will significantly simplify regulations governing the construction and renovation of churches. I hope they take this opportunity to enshrine in legislation all the elements of political freedom which Christians in Egypt have long been denied or have been pressured to not be able to enjoy, and I look forward to seeing progress on this front.

Again, for the vibrant Coptic community that exists and for the schools and churches within Chifley, I state in this House my strong commitment and desire to speak up for them on this critical issue. They, like all others, should be able to celebrate and observe their faith free of persecution. Anything that I can do to help them in this cause and to represent this matter elsewhere I will do with every vigour I possibly can muster.

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (12:57): It is a great privilege to rise to support this timely motion from the member for Hughes. I second the motion in relation to the Coptic community in Egypt and note my support for the Coptic community in Australia today. There are about 100,000 Copts in Australia. My own experience with that community is that they are making a fantastic contribution to our nation in a peaceful way and are integrating well with our organisations and institutions.
Following all that has been happening in the Middle East in recent times—the people's revolution in Egypt and the revolutions that have been sweeping through the Middle East—it is important that we stand up for the principle of human rights and defend people's right to practice their own faith and to exist in freedom and peace. I note in particular that Egypt is a signatory to the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which states in article 18:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

I think it is important to note those words because all of the evidence we are seeing out of Egypt and that we are hearing from the Coptic community in the international media is that this is not occurring in Egypt today and has not been occurring for some time. The Alexandrian bombing, of course, was one of the most serious and more brutal examples of that, but even a brief summary of the violence and the outrageous acts going on in Egypt today provided by the Coptic community in Australia runs to some four pages, with incident after incident recording horrific tales of injury, bombings, attacks, murders, rapes and other serious crimes affecting the Coptic community in Egypt. It is right that Australia, also a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, stand up and articulate our position that we want to see a constitution and a system of government in Egypt that recognises the human rights of all individuals. That is what is at stake here in this motion today. We are expressing our support for the constitution of Egypt to universally respect human rights in Egypt and ensure that this continuing campaign of violence is ended. It is important to note that, with the removal of Mubarak, there is a historic opportunity to do this. He was a corrupt dictator, and estimates of his personal wealth run up to some $70 billion. For a leader to accumulate $70 billion off the back of his own people when some 40 per cent of them are living on $2 a day is a horrific example of corruption and wrongdoing by Mr Mubarak.

His removal during the people's revolution there represents a great opportunity. It also represents an opportunity for extreme groups to seize power. We express our support for the 21 November parliamentary process which we hope will see a tolerant and pluralistic regime in Egypt that will support Coptic Christians as well, realising that they are only 15 million and are a minority within the Egyptian population. They have the right to practise their faith, which is an ancient faith, as they practise it in Australia today.

I want to endorse the actions of the Australian Coptic community in holding many peaceful rallies, particularly one in January at Martin Place, where statements of support were read out by various members of this House and by ministers within the government. It is appropriate that we call upon the government to ensure that we are doing all that we can to support the Coptic community in Egypt and to use all our available organisations and resources to ensure that the process in Egypt delivers an outcome that will recognise the rights of the Copts to practise their faith, free of this intolerance and systematic abuse of their rights.

We know from the member for Hughes that many high-ranking jobs and other positions are out of reach for Coptic Egyptians, in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and that there is a systemic problem in the Egyptian constitution in not recognising their right of freedom to worship, in direct contravention with Egypt's international obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At this juncture, I want to record my great support...
for the Coptic community in Egypt and also in Australia. I recognise their peaceful nature and willingness to practice their faith in peace and freedom with others.

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (13:02): I would like to thank the member for Hughes for this motion which allows us on both sides of the political divide to talk about an issue that causes great concern to members of our community, the Coptic Christian community. I am very blessed, I guess I would have to say, in having a very large and vibrant Coptic community in my constituency. As you drive along the Princes Highway towards the Fountain Gate shopping centre, you can see very clearly from Princes Highway this beautiful church, St Mina and St Marina. It is growing, as the Coptic community is growing, and it is evolving. One of the great things about being the local member of parliament is being able to go to an Easter service or a Christmas service and to share that with friends in the Coptic community, particularly my good friend Father Abanoub, from this particular parish.

In doing that I have a window into an ancient faith, practised for thousands of years. For those people to share that with you is a humbling experience that opens a window into the Coptic community's feelings, spirit, soul and history, which are all very rich. Reflecting on that, and speaking to Father Abanoub and to His Grace Bishop Suriel, it pains me deeply to see the distress within the Coptic community about the atrocities being perpetrated on them. As I said, you can drive along Princes Highway and you can see this place of worship, and you can practise your faith there, without oppression, persecution, hate or fear. There is nothing more lovely than walking out after those services and sharing discussions with these great people, watching how successful their community has been.

In my parish, I would say, I have close to 2,000 Copts, made up of about 600 families. One of their community, Councillor Sam Aziz of the Casey Council, of whom we are all very proud, has asked me to mention a few things about the community, particularly given his knowledge of the motion that has been put forward by the member for Hughes. He would like to say that over the last 10 years a number of families have come to Melbourne after fleeing persecution in Egypt. He would like to say that amongst these families there are a number of doctors who fled after their businesses were burned down. Since coming to Australia, these doctors have passed Australian accreditation and have opened their medical practices. A number of these refugees have also gone into business, opening retail franchises and construction companies. He wanted me to point out that, after fleeing the persecution that they had experienced, there are so many successful lives that have been led in this community by members of the Coptic community.

We all thank them for the contribution that they make to this country, but we share their grief at what is continuing to occur: the fundamental breach of human rights in their continual persecution. Here is one thing that staggered me, particularly when I heard about this unbelievably outrageous suicide attack on the Coptic church which occurred in January 2011—the 22 people that died and the 97 people who were injured. Remember how I was talking about being able to walk out after sharing a spiritual experience with a community. But the perpetrators of this evil atrocity knew that that would cause the maximum impact to that particular community. It was a very powerful message—a message of fear, a message of hate and a message of trying to destroy a community practicing its inalienable human right—and that has to be condemned. It cannot be condoned.
There have been further atrocities that have been committed, and the great thing about the Coptic community, led by His Grace Bishop Suriel—whom I have met, whom we have heard the foreign minister has met and whom my colleague Michael Danby has met as well—

Mr Ruddock interjecting—

Mr Byrne: The member for Melbourne Ports—apologies. They communicate this so powerfully. I am running short of time here, but can I say to you: thank you very much for this. We cannot continue to allow these people to suffer in silence. Their voices must be heard. This persecution must be stopped. You must be allowed to practise your faith without being persecuted, without being killed and without being oppressed.

Mr Ruddock (Berowra) (13:07): Can I congratulate my colleague the member for Hughes on moving this motion and doing it so eloquently and thoroughly. Although I did not arrive in the chamber immediately, I heard his early introduction in my office, and he has outlined fully and comprehensively the plight of Coptic Christians in Egypt now. It is very timely that he has done so. It is not the first time these issues have been raised by members. I noticed the member for Aston has spoken in the House on the matter. The member for Hinkler and the member for Menzies have spoken on it, and the member for Holt has spoken previously. I note also that this motion had previously been considered in the Senate.

Mr Danby, the member for Melbourne Ports, will be summing up shortly, and he may be able to clarify for me the government's position on this very important matter. I note that this resolution has been strongly supported by the two members who have spoken before—the member for Chifley and the member for Holt—but, on the occasion on which this same resolution was considered in the Senate, Senator Joe Ludwig, responding on behalf of the government, said:

We do not support the motion.

I will read that again:

We do not support the motion. It has been a longstanding practice of the government to not deal with complex foreign policy matters by way of simple motion.

If that is the government's position, it should be stated in this debate. I would hope it is not, because I would hope that we will give you an opportunity at some time to vote on this matter in the main chamber.

The Copts have been present in Egypt since the establishment of Christendom. The role of St Mark, as one of the apostles of Christ taking the message to the people of Egypt, was very much a founding member of the early Christian church, and the Copts have played a very significant part in Christian history. I am one who is strongly of the view that, in the Middle East, Christians still have a proper role. It is where their history is rooted and where early messages were established. I would hope that the tragedy of these events will not lead to people evacuating the Middle East. I think for that reason our encouragement and support is absolutely essential.

I have had the great privilege of meeting Pope Shenouda on two occasions. I do know Bishop Suriel, I know Bishop Daniel from Sydney, and I have dealt with the Very Reverend Father Tadros El-Bakhoumi OAM, JP in Sydney, who has been many times Pope Shanouda's personal emissary. I have a small Coptic Church in my own electorate, at Galston—St Mary and St Sidhom Bishay. I was there only yesterday with the congregation. I am one who has
played a part in helping to secure sanctuary in Australia for Copts who find it very difficult to survive, particularly those people who have been the subject of conversions. They are sometimes put under very significant pressure at later points in time. Australia has played a valuable role. I hope that is a role that will continue.

For me, the resolution that has been moved builds on the support that we and the Liberal Party have been able to offer to the Australian Coptic community. We have had a number of very significant demonstrations, one as recently as 21 May in Sydney, in Martin Place. I sent a message on that occasion, because it was after the attack on the Coptic Church in Alexandria in which, as has already been referred to, 21 parishioners lost their lives. The escalation of violence against the Copts, including kidnapping, rape and forced conversion is something that has to be condemned by all fair minded Australians. That is why I am gratified that we have this motion that we can vote on and send a very clear message to the Coptic community here in Australia that we support them and we support their fellow Egyptians in the freedom that they seek to exercise, the fundamental right of freedom of religion, which we here in this country respect.

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (13:14): I congratulate the members for Hughes, Holt, Berowra and Chifley for raising this issue and for their excellent points of view. As the member for Holt pointed out, it was New Years Eve this year when Egyptian Christians were celebrating at the Saints Church in East Alexandria when 22 men and women were killed and 98 people severely injured in that Jihadist suicide attack on Alexandria's premier Coptic church. The Copts represent 10 per cent of the 80 million people of Egypt, and are the largest Christian community remaining in the Middle East. They are a link to ancient Egypt, because their Coptic language is the last remnant of the language of the hieroglyphs. Their culture and traditions predate Islam. The attack was not isolated and came after months of escalating violence against the Copts in Egypt, some of which continues to this day and to which the member for Berowra referred. Many of the victims of this atrocity have relatives in Australia, where the Coptic community is 80,000 strong. Violence against the Copts in the Middle East has consequences here too. On Coptic Christmas, 7 January, four churches in Sydney were listed amongst 64 worldwide as targets by Al-Qaeda. We have seen attacks on Christian churches on 5 March in the village of Sol after a report of a romantic relationship between a Christian man and a Muslim woman; the killing of nine Coptic Christians protesting in the Mokattam Hills by a mob while the Egyptian military stood by; and the Imbaba Church attacks on 7 May 2011 against the Coptic Christian Church in Saint Mina.

The dramatic attacks on Coptic Christians in Egypt had, as I said, that immediate consequence in Australia—the possibility of churches here being attacked. The Jerusalem-based reporters of Australia, unfortunately, have not given this sufficient attention in my view. As a leading writer on the Middle East in the Atlantic Monthly noted, this coverage of the siege under which Christianity finds itself in the Middle East was a 'lackadaisical coverage' of the most important story coming out of the area now.

Just last October—we have to set this in context—Al Qaeda boasted of its slaughter in a Baghdad church. There Jihadists murdered 58 men, women and children in church, including priests who were praying at the altar. Eighty per cent of Iraqi Christians have had to flee the country because it has been targeted by Al Qaeda and Iraq.
Christians are also under siege in the Palestinian territories. Counterintuitively to the stereotypical world view of the Middle East, only Israel has seen the number of Christians increase, from 34,000 in 1948 to 152,000, according to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics report of 2010. I would hope that Oxfam, World Vision and all of the other aid agencies that are so concerned about this part of the world would speak out on behalf of persecuted Christians in the Middle East, including the Christians in Egypt. We have heard too little from those agencies on that.

In contrast, Pope Benedict of the Catholic Church insisted that the Egyptian government had to do more to protect its religious minorities. The former leader of Egypt's maladroit response to his Holiness the Pope was to withdraw the Egyptian ambassador to the Vatican. Pope Benedict argued, 'Words are not enough in confronting religious intolerance, there must be a concrete and constant effort by the world's nations.' In contrast to Mubarak, US President Obama and French President Sarkozy specifically denounced the anti-Coptic violence.

I am pleased that the member for Berowra and members of the Liberal Party have been attending to the Coptic community in Sydney. Similarly, in Melbourne I took part in a very serious meeting with all of the Coptic fathers, including Bishop Suriel. This meeting was led on the government side by Minister Martin Ferguson. It was a very useful meeting. We have to continue the non-partisan policy of support for the Coptic community in Australia. I pay particular tribute to my good friend Peter Khalil, the former national security adviser to the member for Griffith, who is a Coptic Christian himself. Peter Day, writing in the *Australian Spectator*, noted that the violence against Egypt's Christians meant its fate was on the line.

Homegrown Jihadists are what we in Australia have the most to fear from in their attacks on the Christian and Coptic churches. I want to congratulate all of the people who spoke in this debate. This is a very serious issue. The fate of Egypt will be partially determined by how Coptic Christians are treated by that country in the future.

Debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 13:18 to 16:01

STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE

United States of America: Terrorist Attacks

Debate resumed.

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth) (16:01): Mr Deputy Speaker Slipper, when I was interrupted last week shortly following your remarks I was about to compliment you on the very fine account you gave of the scale of the attack and the consequences of it in New York. It was one of those extraordinary moments in world history. I have no doubt all people who were alive at the time can remember where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news, just as many of us can remember quite precisely where we were and what we were doing at the moment we learned that John Kennedy had been assassinated.

On the occasion of the attack on the World Trade Centre my wife and I had come home. It was late in the evening. We were rung by her brother who told us that he had seen pictures on the television of one of the towers being hit. We were horrified. We were particularly anxious, not least because our own son had just recently travelled to the United States to go to college in Boston, and we were not sure whether he was still in New York or not. He had, in fact, left.
shortly before, so he was in Boston at the time, but we were not sure of that when her brother rang. So we turned on the television and saw one tower burning and smouldering, then saw the second plane hit. It was an extraordinary moment.

Those towers—probably more than any other buildings in the world—symbolised the triumph of American capitalism, the triumph of New York as the great global city. They were symbols of modernity, symbols of modern civilisation, and they were brought down before our eyes and the eyes of millions of other people watching at the time.

The tragedy of the attack is indescribable. Who will ever forget the pictures of people leaping out of the building? Why were they leaping? Were they leaping hoping for a miracle, hoping that perhaps they might fall on something that could save their lives or had they given up all hope and felt that anything was better than being burnt alive in that inferno? It is very hard to say. But it was a day of indescribable tragedy and a day also of great courage. Who will ever forget the heroism of the firefighters who battled their way into those buildings to bring people out, so many of them losing their lives in the process? Who will forget the courage of the passengers on United Airlines 93 which, so we believe, was headed for the US Capitol?

Those passengers, becoming aware of what was going on through their cell phones, took the self-sacrificing step, clearly, of breaking into the cockpit and overpowering the pilot with the consequence that it fell, crashing into a field in Pennsylvania and killing everybody on board but saving the US Capitol from that attack.

We can only imagine what the impact of 9-11 would have been if, in addition to bringing down the Twin Towers and attacking and destroying a wing of the Pentagon—the symbol of American military might—that the home, the symbol, the place of American parliamentary democracy in the United States were turned into a smouldering wreck like the Twin Towers by that plane. It would have been an even more extraordinary day than we witnessed. There were many things to be appalled by and there were many great things to remember. As always on these occasions these tragedies seem to bring out the worst but also the best of the human spirit.

On 11 September this year the US Consul-General in Sydney, Mr Niels Marquardt, and the former Australian Consul-General in New York, Ken Allen, and their wives, Judy Marquardt and Jill Allen, organised an interdenominational ecumenical memorial service, which was held in St Mary's Cathedral. There was present, of course, the host, Cardinal George Pell, the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney. There were also present the Imam of the Zetland mosque, Sheikh Dr Mohammed Anas, and many other clergymen and religious and community leaders. Among the faith leaders there was the senior rabbi of the Great Synagogue in Sydney, Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence. In the midst of that enormous congregation, and in the midst of some outstanding speeches by the two diplomats and by the other clergymen, Jeremy Lawrence gave a most remarkable speech. I want to read a portion of it into the record today. He asked:

How do we respond to the evil destruction of an iconic landmark and symbol, thousands dead, thousands more lives ruined?

He said:
This very question was posed by the rabbis of the Talmud writing of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the magnificent home of monotheistic belief:

—the home of the Abrahamic faiths, the three largest faiths in the world: the original Jewish religion and then the two faiths derived from it, Christianity and Islam. Of the three remarkable faiths, two, Christianity and Islam, are the largest faith communities in the world.

He said:

When the Rabbis of the Talmud posed the question after the fall of the Temple, one school, the Mourners of Zion decreed that there could be no further happiness. Jerusalem should remain without music and celebration until it was blessed with messianic redemption. In Hebrew, the expression "Zecher LeChurban" means remembrance of destruction. Within Jewish practice today every home is supposed to have a "Zecher LeChurban" a remembrance of the destruction with a prominent area left unpainted or undecorated. We should have a constant reminder that our lives have lost some of their lustre. At every Jewish wedding we shatter a glass, Zecher LeChurban. However great our joy at the occasion, we remember the Temple with solemnity and sadness. All joy is incomplete and fragmented in the remembrance of what has been lost. Another school—Rabbi Lawrence notes—remembered the Temple with a different slant. "Zecher LeMikdash" means a remembrance of the sanctuary. Every Passover we eat unleavened bread in a sandwich that the sage Hillel recalled as a Temple practice. On the feast of Tabernacles today we process for seven days with the palm, which used to be done only in the Temple. "Zecher LeMikdash" exhorts the rabbis. We should celebrate and honour the buildings and the lives lost by incorporating their memories, their virtues and their values into our ongoing lives.

How must we respond to tragedy? Do we focus on the churban, the destruction or the mikdash, the sanctuary and its vibrancy. For sure, we do not forget. We do not abandon. Nor do we lose ourselves and augment the ruin.

With twin responses we confront the ambivalence of our psyche expressing on the one hand our profound grief that our world is damaged and that we are bereft. But we express on the other, defiance and ongoing struggle; a striving to renew and rebuild. The physical may crumble but the spirit endures. We must not let ourselves be defeated by acts of destruction; nor may we lose hope that we shall see reconstruction and redemption; nor ought we dishonour those who showed faith and resilience in the face of adversity through our own hesitation. We respond by living better lives, through celebrating life and imbuing it with meaning.

Rabbi Lawrence there, reaching back to the destruction of another great building, beautifully describes the two emotions, the two approaches that we have to the destruction of the World Trade Centre. We remember the disaster but we also remember the values for which those towers stood—values of freedom—and our commitment to defend those values now and in all the years to come.

And a very costly battle it has been. The wars that 9-11 spawned have spanned the world. There is a war that goes on in our own midst: the war against Islamist fundamentalist terrorism. It is a war that is being fought by Australian soldiers in Afghanistan. It is a war that has been fought by Australian soldiers in Iraq. Hundreds of thousands have died in the course of these battles, and they are not yet over.

Are we winning in Afghanistan? We believe we are winning, but it is a war, as General Petraeus said, that cannot be won in the sense of a complete military victory. Any victory inevitably will be a negotiated one; any outcome will be one negotiated with the Taliban.
Already, we can see that there are considerable steps being taken by the Americans towards achieving that.

In the battle in Afghanistan, the counterinsurgency has been undermined or weakened by the fact that the Afghan government itself, the official government headed by President Karzai, is, in many parts of the country, corrupt and inefficient. So persuading the local people that they should abandon their ties with the Taliban and cleave instead to the new government will be unconvincing if that government itself lacks appeal, legitimacy and authority or is seen as not acting in their interests.

The whole objective of counterinsurgency of course is to suppress the insurgents for long enough for the legitimate government to take charge, but if that government we regard as legitimate is not an appealing and attractive one, a government that can obtain and secure the support of the people, then all of the counterinsurgency efforts will be for nought. So, while there are many people who criticise the business of nation building and disregard it, the fact is that without effective nation building the counterinsurgency cannot succeed.

We are also faced in that arena with a very dangerous combination of elements in Pakistan. We have there a country which is unstable, which has nuclear weapons, and which has, or has through the operation of certain individuals in Pakistan, in the past shared nuclear weapons secrets with other states, notably North Korea. We have a situation in Pakistan, if you note Anatol Lieven’s recent, excellent book Pakistan: A Hard Country, where a majority of the population, in Mr Lieven’s view, regard the 9/11 attacks as having been an event staged by the Americans to justify their invasion of Iraq. That seems incredible. If someone stopped you on a bus or a train, as people have occasionally stopped me, and told you that 9/11 was essentially a fraud perpetrated by the Americans to justify an attack on the Islamic world you would regard that almost as the utterings of a madman, but it has very wide currency in Pakistan.

We also recognise that the Taliban in Afghanistan are now regarded in Pakistan as a group worthy of support because, firstly, they are seen as the group that will be there after the Americans inevitably leave. Of course, after the Americans leave, the Pakistanis will still be in Pakistan. The Americans and Australians may have gone but the inhabitants of the countries in that region will still be there. Secondly, the Taliban are seen as being a counterweight to the power of India asserting itself in Afghanistan. From a Pakistani point of view, focused always on the rivalry with India, more strength is given to the Pashtun Taliban in Afghanistan as that counterweight.

There are no easy solutions in sight, nor is there an easy end in sight to the wars that 9/11 began. Nonetheless, we have no choice but to continue waging them, perhaps in different ways and perhaps more effectively—we should always aim to do that. But the thread that ties all of our efforts—some more successful than others—together is the thread of freedom. It is the thread of those values of economic freedom, political freedom, modernity and liberalism, in the truest sense of the word, that were symbolised by the World Trade Centre, which was attacked by al-Qaeda because of the values it symbolised just as the Capitol would have been attacked, had it not been for the heroism of the passengers of United Airlines 93, because of what it symbolised.

We mourn the events of 9/11. We honour those who lost their lives on that day and those who have lost their lives defending freedom ever since. The words of the rabbi were
profound, reminding us that in the midst of grieving we must also celebrate the values which we have stood for and which were represented by the structures we have lost. In conclusion, I seek leave to table the speech of the senior rabbi.

Leave granted.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (16:18): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this motion. A decade has passed since the September 11 attacks on the US, yet for me the images of planes flying into the Twin Towers, the attacks on the Pentagon and the panicked rescue scenes immediately after remain vivid in my mind. The scenes of aircraft flying into the Twin Towers and the towers crumbling were surreal—it was like watching fiction. But they were real and they heralded the dawn of a new era in global affairs. Sadly, it was not a turn for the better, and 10 years later, for all our efforts, insecurity caused by those events still haunts people around the world. The way we go about daily life is no longer the same, and the additional costs associated with the way we now live are probably unquantifiable. Those additional costs have in my view contributed to the global financial crisis. In the light of the ongoing global financial insecurity, some would say that the September 11 attacks, therefore, were successful in bringing down the USA and the Western world. There is little doubt that the counterterrorism efforts and security costs incurred by governments around the world since September 11, 2001 have skyrocketed. In addition, the Iraq and Afghanistan wars have each had their own human and financial tolls.

The harsh reality is that, as is the case with all crime, as detection prevention techniques become more sophisticated, so too do the methods of the terrorists. Furthermore, as with all criminal behaviour, new individuals and new cells emerge as others are contained or eliminated. It is a never-ending problem. The changes to airport security alone have been profound, yet I for one hardly feel safer because of them. The killings in Norway in July this year showed just how quickly and how easily it is still possible to bring about the mass killings of innocent lives. The prevention of terrorist acts in all places at all times is simply not possible. The most effective strategy would be to address the underlying motive for such attacks, but even then that would not rule out the actions of fanatics such as those of the recent extremist in Norway.

For me September 11, 2001 has a very personal relevance. Andrew Knox, who was killed in the Twin Towers attack and whom I have spoken about in this place on previous occasions, was a Labor Party colleague and a friend. I recall that in my last telephone conversation with him before he left for New York he spoke optimistically of my election to federal parliament as the member for Makin. As it turned out, it was not to be until some years later. For me, however, Andrew Knox's death is a constant reminder of September 11, as is the death of Angela Golotta, whom I have also spoken about in this place and who was subsequently killed in the Bali bombings. Andrew and Angela were both young people with their lives ahead of them. Both were taken without warning as they went about their lives as any of us do each and every day. They had done nothing wrong and had not provoked in any way the attacks on them. It is that senseless killing of innocent lives that makes the attacks even more abhorrent.

I recall being called by Tabitha Lean, a mutual friend who had remained in regular contact with Andrew after he relocated to New York, to be told that Andrew had been killed in the Twin Towers attack. I was told that Andrew had been on his mobile phone relaying what was
happening when he had to abruptly end the conversation. I can only imagine what it must be like for Andrew's mother, father and brother or for Angela's mother, father and brother. Of course we focus on September 11 or the Bali bombings, but the reality is that all too often innocent lives are lost in terrorist attacks. For many of those losses there is no public recognition, no public memorials, no public sympathy, yet each of those lives was just as precious.

Extreme views in society are nothing new. There have always been people who have held extreme views on matters. We are seeing it right now in relation to the climate change debate. The problem arises when those views culminate in acts of violence against those with opposing views or, more often than not, opposing interests. In today's world violent reactions initiated by extreme views can result in catastrophes because of the range of tools and opportunities available to anyone driven to an extreme act of violence. It does not take much to provoke an extremist or deranged person—nor does it take much to provoke a person filled with hate and revenge. It is therefore of concern—and should be of concern—to all responsible people to see the level of provocation and incitement that is creeping into civic life in recent times. Community leaders should remain cognisant of the language and tone they use. They can fuel the fires of hate just as they can calm troubled waters. It troubles me that in recent times I have observed in both public and private discourse a level of hatred between opposing views on a range of matters, including immigration policy, refugee matters, religious and even environmental matters that is neither appropriate nor healthy. Incidents such as the shooting and bombing in Norway and the shooting of US Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords in January this year occurred at a time when extremist views were becoming regular utterances of community leaders.

Likewise the level of hate mail, malicious statements and sexist attacks on Australia's Prime Minister should be and would be of concern to all decent, fair-minded people. The derogatory way in which the Prime Minister is treated by some says far more about them than it does about the Prime Minister. Regrettably some of the instigators of that behaviour are public people in civic leadership positions. Of course, it is not unusual for political leaders to be the target of politically motivated acts of violence against them. History is littered with such acts. In 1605 Guy Fawkes unsuccessfully tried to blow up everyone in the British House of Commons. In Australia, on 21 June 1966, Labor leader Arthur Calwell was shot and wounded by Peter Kocan as he was leaving a public function at the Mosman Town Hall. Nineteen-year-old Kocan is quoted as saying that he shot Mr Calwell 'because I do not like his politics'.

It is my hope, and I believe the hope of most people, to lead a peaceful existence in this world with family and friends. My view is that life is much too short for acts of hatred and extremism. All people wherever they are feel the pain, heartache and emotions that we do. I have seen the tears in the eyes of the Bosnian people, the African people and the Sri Lankans as they talk of the atrocities committed in their homelands. I have followed the strain of the families in Chile, China and New Zealand when miners were trapped underground and the elation of their rescue. It was an experience we were familiar with in Australia. I can only begin to imagine the fear in the eyes of the September 11 victims, and the pain and anguish in the hearts of the families and friends of those who lost their lives. For those who survived and for the families and friends of those killed, their lives were deeply scarred and will never be as
they could have been. The annual public remembrance of September 11 and other public reminders will not allow them to put the events behind them even if they want to.

I therefore hope that 11 September becomes a salutary reminder of the devastation that extreme acts of hatred and violence can bring. I also hope that those who are inclined to perpetrate such acts see the futility of such acts in the long term. There may be some temporary gratification from such acts, but ultimately they will amount to very little other than considerable grief, suffering and loss of life for innocent people who are neither the problem nor the solution to the fanaticism of the perpetrators. On the 10th anniversary of the September 11 attacks we remember those who were killed or injured, the grief and heartache of the families and friends and colleagues of those killed or injured and the rescue efforts of all those associated with rescue efforts on the day, as well as the ongoing support that they continue to provide to the victims. We also should take a moment to acknowledge the ongoing daily efforts of our police and security organisations in this country and around the world that do an extraordinary job in helping to keep us safe. Perhaps it is only fitting that today in this place we discussed a motion in recognition of the current serving police officers in Australia.

In closing, it is appropriate that we remember September 11 for all the reasons that I and all other speakers have referred to. As I said in the course of my speech, I hope we and people around the world can learn from September 11 in a way that ensures that we go into the future in a better world.

### BILLS

**Extradition and Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation Amendment Bill 2011**

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr KEENAN (Stirling) (16:29): I rise to speak on the Extradition and Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. With crime becoming increasingly global, it is vitally important that Australia has high levels of international cooperation to ensure that criminals are not able to evade justice by simply crossing borders. This necessitates a working extradition regime that includes appropriate safeguards. Australia's extradition relationships with other countries exist to allow Australia to ensure the effective administration of criminal justice here in this country. Our extradition relationships also allow us to cooperate with partner countries to fight crime and to prevent Australia from becoming a safe haven for people who have been accused of serious crimes in other countries.

Australia also needs to ensure that criminals cannot evade investigation, prosecution and asset confiscation action simply because the evidence or proceeds of their crime are in different countries. The coalition strongly believes this requires a responsive mutual assistance system to combat domestic and transnational crime, again, with appropriate safeguards built into that system. In relation to mutual assistance, the bill will increase the range of law enforcement tools that Australia is able to offer to other countries—for example, allowing surveillance device warrants to be obtained at the request of a foreign country.

I turn now to extradition, which is the process that allows one country to apprehend and send a person to another country to face criminal charges or serve a sentence. As was pointed
out in the *Bills Digest*, extradition is not actually an obligation under international law. Rather, it is a favour accorded by one country to another. Extradition obligations between countries therefore arise principally from reciprocal treaty arrangements between states. The extradition treaties to which Australia is party are given effect by the Extradition Act. Separate extradition is mutual assistance, which is the process countries use to provide and obtain formal government-to-government assistance in criminal investigations and prosecutions.

As was the subject of an earlier bill debated in the House, the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Amendment (Registration of Foreign Proceeds Crime Orders) Bill 2011, mutual assistance is also used to recover the proceeds of crime, which is integral to the fight against serious and organised crime. It was also pointed out in the *Bills Digest* that, although a number of treaties exist between Australia and other countries about mutual assistance in criminal matters, the Mutual Assistance Act does not depend on the existence of a treaty with the relevant overseas country. As our current laws relating to extradition and mutual assistance and criminal matters were passed over 20 years ago, it is important to ensure our measures are responsive and effective. A number of reviews have been conducted since then of the Extradition Act and the Mutual Assistance Act, including a 2001 Joint Standing Committee on Treaties report, a government review in 2006 and, more recently, discussion papers on both acts in 2009 and in January 2011.

It is well known that there have been significant changes in the nature and scale of global crime since that time, attributable to globalisation and changes in technology. The Australian Federal Police have expressed concerns that the legislation as it stands has not kept pace with the advancements in technology, including the pervasiveness of technology as it exists today. In a public hearing held by the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs the AFP voiced concerns about the fact that it is possible to make phone calls that do not go through Australian exchanges and it is possible to store data on devices and servers that are not in our jurisdiction. The AFP stressed that in order to be successful in the fight against organised crime and in protecting national security this must be addressed. The coalition strongly supports giving the AFP the tools they need to protect Australia's national security.

Turning now to the specific measures contained within the bill: notably, it makes amendments in a number of areas. In particular, it amends the following features of our extradition and mutual assistance regimes:

- Expansion of the existing grounds for refusing an extradition request to include discrimination on the basis of a person's sex or sexual orientation;
- Expansion of the existing grounds for refusing a mutual assistance request to include discrimination on the basis of a person's sexual orientation;
- Extension of the availability of bail in extradition proceedings;
- Expansion of the circumstances in which a person may be prosecuted in Australia in lieu of extradition;
- Inclusion of an express prohibition on providing mutual assistance where it may expose a person to torture, as well as improvements in how the risk of torture is considered in extradition determinations;
- Expansion of the death penalty grounds for refusal in mutual assistance requests to cover situations where a suspect has been arrested and detained but not charged; and
• Expansion of the grounds for refusal to cover mutual assistance requests which relate to all stages of the investigation, prosecution and sentencing of a person.

The coalition support in principle the amendments made in these areas. However, we believe it is important to ensure that the extradition and mutual assistance regimes keep pace with changes in technology and global crime syndicates.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs inquired into this bill and tabled their report in the House last week. I wish to thank the honourable member for Pearce, who was the deputy chair of the committee, and the honourable member for Murray, who was the acting deputy chair for the second half of the inquiry. The committee made four recommendations on the bill. Recommendation 1 states that the committee recommends that the bill be passed by the House. Recommendation 3 states that:

… the Attorney-General's Department be required to provide in its annual report a record of any substantive breach of an undertaking given by a foreign country in relation to extradition or mutual assistance processes.

Recommendation 4 proposes:

… that, within three years of its enactment, the Attorney-General's Department conduct a review of the operations of the amendments contained in the Extradition and Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation Amendment Bill 2011.

The coalition supports recommendations 1, 3, and 4. However, we do not support recommendation 2 as it proposes:

… that the Australian Government give consideration to removing the presumption against bail which operates in the Extradition Act 1988 by allowing individuals to be granted bail only in special circumstances.

The status quo on the presumption against bail is appropriate as there are significant risks in granting bail to people suspected of serious criminal offences who could potentially attempt to evade justice. Take, for example, the recent case of accused Serbian war criminal Dragan Vasiljkovic, also known as Daniel Snedden, and his disappearance from the High Court in Canberra just one day before it ruled against him in an extradition request from Croatia, resulting in a subsequent 43-day man-hunt. The man-hunt to find Vasiljkovic involved up to 40 police and a four-day covert surveillance operation by the AFP, which eventually led to his arrest. The coalition agrees with the position of the Attorney-General's Department:

The current presumption against bail for persons sought for extradition is appropriate given the serious flight risk posed by the person in extradition matters, and Australia's international obligations to secure the return of alleged offenders to face justice in the requesting country. The High Court in United Mexican States v Cabal has previously observed that to grant bail where a risk of flight exists would jeopardise Australia's relationship with the country seeking extradition and jeopardise our standing in the international community.

Evidence given to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties during their inquiry indicated that the presumption against bail was included in the legislation on the basis that there was a very high risk of a person escaping, particularly since in many cases the person had fled the jurisdiction for Australia to evade justice. Other like-minded countries, such as the United States, also uphold the presumption against bail, only allowing suspected criminals to be granted bail in special circumstances.
The coalition supports the passage of the Extradition and Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. We support measures that ensure Australia is not seen as a safe haven for criminals and the profits of their crimes. We also support measures that contribute to improving Australia's international crime cooperation legislation. We believe this bill does that and that is why it will receive the opposition's support.

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (16:39): Mr Deputy Speaker, as you are probably aware, today is a very significant occasion with respect to law enforcement. Today the Prime Minister handed out the first of the 16 National Police Service Medals. It was very good to see the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and a number of ministers there to show their support for people who are on our thin blue line in such a tangible way. By the end of this week we will move to Police Remembrance Day. On the weekend I rode the Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance from Sydney to Canberra with over 1,200 police officers and their supporters as a fund raising activity for policy charity but also recognising the 749 police officers who have died since the formation of Australian policing. The first person killed in 1803 was Constable Joseph Luker. It is a salient exercise to stop and think that we have lost so many police in the line of duty. One of the things we do is try to do our best for law enforcement officers, equipping our police as best we can, not only with the technologies they need to go about their day-to-day role but also the regular regime they need through the justice system to bring criminals to heel.

One of the facts often quoted in this place is that organised crime costs this country about $31 billion per year—an extraordinary reach by criminal activity—and flowing from that the global reach from crime in this country is huge. We might be a very big island and we might be surrounded by sea but with technology as it is now available, the commissioning of criminal enterprise does not have to occur on our shores to necessarily have an impact on us. Things can be commissioned elsewhere and also the movement of criminals has certainly changed the shape of law enforcement. Hence extradition and mutual assistance in criminal matters becomes so important. We cannot just look at these things here and now in Australia; we have to make provisions so that we have the right suite of laws to protect our citizens and the right regulatory regime for when we need to extradite people, sometimes from foreign regimes, for the purpose of prosecuting criminal acts.

This legislation has not really been adjusted for the last 20-odd years. A very comprehensive review took place, as I understand, in 2006 when discussion papers were released and public consultation occurred. As a consequence, there have been 40-odd submissions made to the public consultation since 2009. The intent of this legislation is to ensure fairness is maintained. It also looks at the global reach in the commissioning and committing of crimes and, in addition, realises the fact that we are part of a world that needs to work together if we are going to ameliorate the effect of crime and criminal activity. We cannot treat ourselves as an island to that extent; we have to become part of the world agenda.

The Extradition and Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 does a range of things. The Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act 1987 is amended to increase the range of law enforcement tools available to foreign countries with their investigations and prosecutions. The bill will strengthen the protection against providing assistance where either the death penalty or torture concerns exist within the country making the request. It will streamline the existing processes for providing forms of assistance.
Amendments will also be made to the Extradition Act 1988 to streamline the early stages of extradition and reduce delays, extend the availability of bail at later stages in the extradition process and extend the circumstances in which a person may be prosecuted in Australia as an alternative to extradition if a person is an Australian citizen or should the extradition process be waived for various reasons.

The bill therefore has two main objectives: to update and modernise the process of extradition to ensure that Australian authorities can offer a comprehensive range of assistance to our international criminal justice partners; and to increase international cooperation, which is essential to ensure that we address the challenges posed by the effects of globalisation. It is clear that the world is becoming so interconnected, whether it be via technology, communication, travel or whatever. While that is all highly beneficial, particularly to us in an economic sense as well as culturally and socially, it does present challenges to which we need to respond to ensure that perpetrators of crime do not escape justice as a consequence of being able to move from one country to another. Australia's current extradition laws are, quite frankly, dated. They have not kept up with the rapid advancements in technology or the movements across borders. These are things that we need to take heed of as we move these bills through the House. This bill represents a very timely and appropriate answer to those discussions I mentioned in 2006 that called for a fundamental review and reform of Australia's international crime cooperation laws and procedures, including the area of extradition and mutual assistance.

The bill will also ensure that Australia does not become a safe haven for criminals. Currently, a person can be prosecuted in Australia in lieu of extradition where extradition has been refused on the basis that the person is an Australian citizen. This bill will extend that arrangement in that it will now be able to be applied to any person to be prosecuted in circumstances where extradition has been refused. Those things are very important; it was not all that long ago that I spent some time with a number of Australian citizens who are currently on death row in Bali. If, for instance, a person committed an offence in Indonesia that attracted the death penalty and they escaped from Indonesia to Australia, we would have difficulty sending that person back. But if we did not do it—if the person was not an Australian citizen and we did not send them back for trial—that would mean that that person could almost evade justice by being over here, making a new life in Australia without any intention of ever going back to face trial in their country of origin. This legislation will allow that person to be tried in our country for the crime that they perpetrated elsewhere. In that way, we would not breach our commitment to not return a person to a country where they might face torture or the death penalty—we would maintain and honour our commitment in that respect—but we would also be doing the right thing in respect of criminal justice. We cannot be a safe haven. We cannot let people slip through the cracks simply by moving across the border.

To that extent, this is certainly an overdue piece of legislation. Something that I have often spoken about in this place when we are talking about criminal justice, whether it is the commission of crime or the way we respond to crime, is that technology is an ever-changing space. It is certainly changing at a very rapid rate. We cannot take the view that simply because the way things were done before—in this case, 20 years ago—was for very good reason at that particular point in time means it should be what applies in perpetuity. We owe it
to all our people on the thin blue line, the 55,000 police we have in this country that go out there day after day and risk their own lives to protect our community from the rigours of criminal enterprise itself and to uphold our justice system. We owe it to them, and to everybody else associated with the criminal justice system, to ensure that we do not have loopholes people can escape through.

We also need to recognise that we are part of a wider global community when it comes to the administration of criminal justice. We should not make any apology for being forthright in that respect. We have a role to play. This bill is a timely reminder of our responsibility to ensure that our systems and our suite of laws and regulations are up to date, not simply so they can be reviewed by some other form of judicial committee but so they operate to the extent that is fundamentally required if we are to ensure justice prevails regardless of where crimes are committed.

I support the bill and commend it to the House.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (16:51): I commend the member for Werriwa for his contribution and particularly note his mention about the Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance: 1,200 motorcycles and no speeding tickets given out the entire ride, I am sure, Member for Werriwa. It is a fine thing to acknowledge the almost 200 years of sacrifice by the police.

The Extradition and Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 is a piece of legislation I have much familiarity with, having been the Chair of the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, which conducted a short inquiry into this bill. I see the research officer, Mei-Lin Wang, who was seconded to the committee, in the chamber here this afternoon.

The bill proposes a number of significant reforms to streamline and modernise Australia's laws on extradition and mutual assistance. It is the classic balancing act as represented by Lady Justice, with the scales of justice in her left hand and the sword in her right. I am sure you know that statue, Mr Deputy Speaker Slipper, from your time in the law and on the legal affairs committee. The history of the statue is from the Egyptian goddess Isis and the Hellenic deities Themis and Dike and represents their ideas about divine order, law and custom et cetera. I have read that Justitia is a combination of several goddesses who embodied the right rule for the Greeks and Romans: there is the blindfolded Roman Fortuna, which is fate; the Hellenistic Greek Tyche, which is luck; and the sword carrying Nemesis, which is vengeance. Justitia carries the scales of justice and a double-edged sword in her right hand, symbolising power. The blindfold represents justice being handed out objectively and without fear or favour, regardless of identity, money, power or weakness.

Balancing justice is obviously what we as a government are trying to do with this legislation, because it represents a balancing act in acting at the appropriate pace but also making sure that there are appropriate checks and balances so that the minister does not rush through any particular process and so that no foreign country railroads the rights of an individual. It is a classic balancing act in making sure that we look after the appropriate criminal investigations, as mentioned by the member for Werriwa, but also safeguard human rights, especially when we are dealing with international people because obviously they have connections with other nations, have passports and might be inclined to flee. So, in looking at decisions about granting bail, the committee looked closely at the statutory presumption against bail in extradition cases. There needed to be some guiding principles when dealing
with federal magistrates and the decisions they make as to whether there is a flight risk, and
the committee recommended the government take a very close look at that. We need to
consider storage of personal information because—as the member for Werriwa touched on—
things have changed a lot in the last 20 years. The computers of 1991 were completely
different. The internet was a few years off being broadly available to the world yet now the
idea of a world without the internet is preposterous. Consequently, criminals have seen the
opportunity. The carpetbaggers of today are sitting on laptops all around the world taking
people's information and creaming off money in a way that a burglar in the night taking a
couple of silver candles could never dream of.

This bill will make important amendments to Australia's laws. It will give the modern law
enforcement agencies modern tools so they can work with foreign countries on investigations
and prosecutions. We have also strengthened the protections where there are death penalty or
torture concerns because as a nation we hold those activities to be abhorrent. Despite the
fluctuating talkback radio treatment of such things, we know that as a nation we need
protections against such things, so we are streamlining on the one hand yet on the other hand
also putting in the safeguards.

There may be circumstances in which a person can be prosecuted in Australia as an
alternative to extradition. We have extended that provision to any person, not just Australian
citizens. Rather than a person getting off scot free, they might be prosecuted in Australia not
sent to their country where they could face the death penalty or torture. Another technique I
think has been used recently in the US is giving people the opportunity, if they so wish, to
waive the extradition process, subject to certain safeguards, so that they make informed
decisions with their rights being looked after and perhaps getting the appropriate legal
advice—that is, in the interests of sorting out some charges or pending charges, letting that
person waive the extradition process altogether.

The other thing that this bill does is reduce the time it takes to conduct extradition
proceedings. These measures are about reducing duplication of decision-making and cutting
through some of the associated red tape, not getting rid of due process or natural justice but
making sure that it is a tidier process. The amendments relating to extradition are
straightforward. They reduce delays. They allow someone to waive the extradition process.
They also allow a person to consent to being surrendered for a wider range of offences as long
as there are certain safeguards.

We have modified the definition of 'political offence' to clarify that this ground of refusal
does not extend to specified crimes such as terrorism. We all know there will always be
arguments as to who is a terrorist. The member for Werriwa commented earlier about some of
the police deaths. You only need to look at the various treatments of Ned Kelly. Depending
on what side of the law or history people are on, they consign him to either being a brutal
murderer or some other sort of character in Australian history.

The legislation changes allow the Attorney-General to give a legally enforceable
undertaking to a country as to the maximum sentence that could be imposed on a person if
they are extradited to Australia. They strengthen some of the protections against torture
concerns and also require Australia to refuse to extradite a person if he or she may be
prejudiced by reason of his or her sex or sexual orientation following surrender. This is not
something that is a particular issue in Australia, but it is in countries where someone's sex or
sexual orientation can cause them to suffer at the hands of the criminal justice system. It is something for us to consider. The amendments relate to mutual assistance. They increase the range of law enforcement tools looking at things like surveillance devices and forensic procedures and make sure there are the appropriate safeguards in place. They also deal with sharing with other countries lawfully obtained telecommunications and make sure that there are protections against death penalty concerns and also the ability to refuse assistance if there are concerns about torture. The bill amends some of the grounds relating to the proceeds of crime actions to make sure that they are more logical. It streamlines the process for authorising the proceeds of crime and allowing registration enforcement of foreign non-conviction based proceeds of crime orders from any country. There is greater sharing between Australia and other appropriately recognised law enforcement agencies around the world. There are also significant changes as transnational crime has changed along with technology, globalisation and the like, and it is important that we respond appropriately. This is a great piece of legislation and I commend the minister for bringing it into the House.

Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR (Gorton—Minister for Privacy and Freedom of Information, Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Justice) (17:01): I would like to thank the honourable member for Moreton for his contribution, the honourable member for Fowler for his contribution and indeed the honourable member for Sterling for his support and contribution to this debate on the Extradition and Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation Amendment Bill 2011.

The government thanks the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, which the member for Moreton chairs, for its detailed and comprehensive advisory report on the bill which was tabled in the House on 12 September 2011. In this report the committee noted the rigorous process of public consultations this bill has been through in reaching this point with the exposure draft of the bill released in both 2009 and in January this year. The committee's inquiry is a welcome final stage of scrutiny in the development of this very important legislation.

The committee has made several recommendations which the government accepts are well considered and which we will implement. Firstly, in accordance with recommendation 3 of the report the government agrees in principle to report all breaches of undertakings that come to the attention of the government. Any such breaches will be included in the annual report of the Attorney-General's Department. The appropriate minister or ministers will also be advised of any serious breach of an undertaking to allow the breach to be reported immediately to the parliament. Secondly, in accordance with committee recommendation 4 the government undertakes to initiate a review into the operation of the amendments within three years of the bill's enactment if the amendments are passed by the parliament.

The bill currently before the House is the first major reform to extradition and mutual assistance laws in over 20 years. A review of the amendments would provide a valuable opportunity to examine the extent to which the reforms have achieved the intended goal of streamlining the law while maintaining appropriate human rights safeguards. The government also notes the committee's comments in recommendation 2 regarding the current presumption against bail in extradition matters and has given careful consideration to this matter. Unfortunately, reporting and other bail conditions are not always sufficient to prevent individuals who wish to evade extradition by absconding. In extradition cases there is an
increased risk of persons absconding before they can be surrendered to the requesting foreign country. This is particularly the case where there are allegations that the person specifically left the requesting country and came to Australia to evade foreign law enforcement. If a person who has been remanded on bail disappears in the middle of the extradition proceedings it can jeopardise Australia's ability to extradite the person in accordance with Australia's international treaty obligations. Ultimately, it could also lead to a state of impunity where a person can disappear and continue to evade law enforcement authorities. I also note that bail can be granted in special circumstances and the government has shown recently a willingness to not oppose bail when these circumstances arise. For these reasons the government considers the current presumption that bail should only be granted in special circumstances as appropriate and it should be maintained. The bill before the House makes important reforms to Australia's extradition and mutual assistance legislation. The bill will modernise these laws to ensure that Australia's international cooperation activities effectively combat crime in a new era of advanced technology, travel and criminal enterprise. The bill will do this by streamlining the process for extradition so that the time it takes to conduct extradition proceedings will reduce which in turn will reduce the time a person spends in custody.

Importantly while the bill will seek to reduce the time it takes to conduct extradition proceedings, there is no devolution of the existing protections and safeguards afforded under the regime. The bill will, in fact, build upon existing safeguards by allowing a person to seek bail at several stages in the extradition process and extends the grounds for refusing extradition to include instances where the person may be discriminated against on the basis of his or her sex or sexual orientation.

Further, the bill will strengthen measures to ensure criminals do not escape justice by allowing for their prosecution here in Australia where extradition has been refused. In the mutual assistance context, the bill will ensure that Australian authorities can offer a comprehensive range of assistance to our international criminal justice partners subject to the appropriate safeguards. This will include allowing forensic procedures to be carried out and surveillance device warrants to be issued for the purpose of assisting with foreign law enforcement. These new powers will be subject to safeguards which have been modelled on our domestic safeguards to protect privacy and human rights of individuals.

The mutual assistance reforms will also extend existing legislative safeguards and protections relating to the death penalty, torture and discrimination. Ultimately the bill will ensure that Australian law enforcement agencies are able to work effectively and efficiently with their international counterparts to combat crime across the world while also ensuring that accused persons are afforded fair treatments. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR (Gorton—Minister for Privacy and Freedom of Information, Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Justice) (17:07): I present a supplementary explanatory memorandum to the bill. I seek leave to move government amendments (1) to (6) as circulated together.
Leave granted.

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR: I move government amendments (1) to (6) as circulated together:

(1) Schedule 2, item 68, page 32 (line 11), omit "the issue of", substitute "surrender under".

(2) Schedule 2, item 74, page 33 (line 23), omit "the issue of", substitute "surrender under".

(3) Schedule 2, item 82, page 35 (line 7), after "magistrate", insert "or, if a court made the order releasing the person on bail, before that court, ".

(4) Schedule 2, item 128, page 42 (lines 21 and 22), omit "the extradition country, to a person appointed by the extradition country", substitute "New Zealand, to a person appointed by New Zealand".

(5) Schedule 3, item 112, page 75 (lines 22 and 23), omit "that a person in a foreign country is capable of giving assistance that", substitute "carrying out a forensic procedure on a person in a foreign country".

(6) Schedule 3, item 112, page 76 (lines 3 and 4), omit "a person in a foreign country is capable of giving assistance in relation to", substitute "carrying out a forensic procedure on a person in a foreign country may result in evidence relevant to".

Question agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Ordered that this bill be reported to the House with amendments.

CONDOLENCES

Jull, Hon. David Francis

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the House express its deep regret at the death on 13 September 2011 of the Honourable David Francis Jull, a Member of this House for the Divisions of Bowman and Fadden from 1975 to 2007 and Minister for Administrative Services, and place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra) (17:08): I very much want to be associated with this condolence motion. I served with David Jull for all of the time that he was in the parliament, as member for Bowman between 1975 and 1983 and member for Fadden between 1984 and 2007. I saw him last on 28 July this year. It was an occasion when those of us who had served with John Howard in his ministry came together in Brisbane. There were some 20 or more of us present on that occasion. David was not well and that was fairly obvious, but it gave us all an opportunity to share another moment or two with him. He was a person who had served Australia very soundly. I might say it was always obvious that he might do so. I was interested in a piece in About the House magazine in March 1987 because it told us something of David and his personal qualities. He was a journalist. He was the member for Bowman and then the member for Fadden. He spent most of his school life at 'Radcliffe' in Queensland. Then it says:

He left the Church of England Grosvenor School to become a radio cadet with Macquarie News Brisbane, where he was mostly involved with news programs and did the state parliamentary round—at the age of 14!

Mrs Prentice: Nineteen.
Mr RUDDOCK: It says '14' here—a typo, in About the House Magazine! I am glad to have it corrected. David then moved to Channel 10—or 'Channel 0'; you'd correct that, too, I am sure—where:

… he was over ten years a newsreader, journalist and Show Host (he even compered "New Faces") …

Why do I mention these matters? He had the most resonant voice in the parliament that I have ever heard. Gary Hardgrave's may have come close, but certainly I do not think his had the same quality that David Jull's had.

More importantly—and this will be reflected in some other remarks I make—this journal records:

His attractions to Liberal Party philosophy dates from when as a boarder, he was given leave to steer a campaign speech delivered by Sir Robert Menzies in the Brisbane City Hall. The contrast between "Ming" Liberalism and the ideas of … John Gorton led Jull to join the Liberal Party in 1969.

When I went to David's maiden speech, I thought it was important to note some of his observations because they say something of him as a Liberal, and that is something to which I very much related. He said this:

We as a government have a very real responsibility for small businesses throughout Australia, because it was the small businessman, the Australian who was prepared to get out and have a go, who was prepared to work hard, who helped build this nation and who made it great. Even today some 42 per cent of the population is employed by small businesses …

He was saying this in 1976. He spoke about the importance of encouraging the private entrepreneur and noted that, if you were going to keep unemployment at low levels, it was very important to have productivity. This is what you might regard as being the traditional Liberal approach. But he went on to say:

An electorate such as Bowman, because of its nature, has more than its fair share of social problems too.

He was a person with a social conscience, and one of those who reflected, I think, the Liberal view that if you are going to be there to build a bigger Australia it is to ensure that you can bring along with you those people who have needs who cannot necessarily well provide for themselves.

David got involved very early in his public life here in Canberra in tourism. I thought it was of note that he had the opportunity to serve on one of the early committees of review from 1976, the House of Representatives Select Committee on Tourism. In later years he had a role in the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation between 1983 and 1984—that short time that he was out of the parliament. And he brought all of that experience not only to serve the electorate that he represented but to highlight the needs of tourism in Australia, in a way which I think few have been able to do in the time they have been involved in public life.

I very much relate to David Jull because of the length of his service. There are not many who have had the opportunity to serve as long as he had the opportunity to do. I noted in his last speech he said:

This is … the 371st speech I have made since 1981 … I suppose you could add 100 on to that—so we are probably getting very close to the 500th speech …

What that really tells you about David Jull is that he was a substantial contributor to the public life of this nation. I do not believe I have seen, in a very long time, a list as long as that
which is before us of those who will be contributing to this condolence debate today. That says something about David Jull and our friendship and our love for him. In concluding, my leader said that he mourns David's passing and he expressed deepest condolences to David's former wife, Erica, his brother, Peter, his sister, Gwen, and his sons, Stephen and Andrew.

Mrs Prentice interjecting—

Mr RUDDOCK: I am being helped by my colleague again. I am not familiar with all the family members. Would you like to speak up? Who have I forgotten?

Mrs Prentice: The sons are Michael and Jay. Steve and Andrew are his nephews.

Mr RUDDOCK: His nephews. I am glad to be corrected and I hope Hansard will note that.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Sidebottom): I am sure they will note that.

Mr RUDDOCK: All of us had a great affection for David for what he stood for. He was a great Liberal and we miss him a great deal.

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (17:16): I rise today on this motion of condolence and commend the member for Berowra for his eloquent comments about his former colleague. I wish too to pay tribute to David, who lost his battle with cancer recently. In reflecting on David's life, we know he was born in Kingaroy, Queensland, and was previously the member for Bowman in this place from 1975 to 1983 and the member for Fadden from 1984 to 2007. We also reflect on his service as Minister for Administrative Services from 1996 to 1997.

I was very fortunate and also very pleased and very honoured to work with David on the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security for a brief period of time before it became that particular committee and for two years afterwards. David was chair of this parliamentary committee and was also chair of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation from 1997 to 2002, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD from 2002 to 2005 and its successor, in which I shared the bulk of my time with David, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security between 2005 and 2007.

It is of note that David served as chair on this committee, particularly in that tumultuous period of time and with the introduction of legislation that was introduced to combat the emergence of the terrorist threat. It was at a time when, as a consequence of 9-11 and events afterwards, the intelligence and security services were expanded massively to cope with the threats of and the war on terrorism. David, in his work on that committee, played a key role in terms of the legislation.

What I particularly found about David was that he was always impartial. He acted in a very fair and impartial manner. We served with each other on various committees and various manifestations of committees and I certainly saw the equanimity that David had, and his unflappability, particularly in dealing with some pretty difficult subject matter and sets of circumstances and with some pretty complex pieces of legislation.

The committee itself we cannot really talk terribly much about, but I certainly saw in David's discharging his service as chair of the committee someone who was eminently suited to the task—and it was a substantial task, particularly with some of the reports that he oversaw as chair. Immediately after 09-11 David chaired two important reports, the first being
an advisory report on the Intelligence Services Bill 2001 and the Intelligence Services (Consequential Provisions) Bill 2001 and certain parts of the Cybercrime Bill 2001 in 2001, and the second being an advisory report on the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Bill in 2001. As I said, in reading through a number of the reports that David oversaw in his capacity as chair of that committee in its different manifestations, I was particularly struck with the work that he did on the Intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction report in 2003—an absolutely seminal report which dealt with the realignment of our intelligence agencies and a report that certainly, in terms of its recommendations, resulted in the betterment of our national interest and national security.

As chairman of the parliamentary committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD, David also led an important review into the operations effectiveness and implications of ASIO's questioning and detention powers in 2005. This review supported authorities to have expanded powers so they could detain people on reasonable grounds for questioning, in order to obtain intelligence that is important in relation to a terrorist offence. Another important report that he led as chair of the committee was the Review of security and counter terrorism legislation in 2006. This report proposed a series of modest refinements to improve specificity, clarity and fairness in a way which we believe is consistent with Australia's antiterrorism objectives. In particular, a recommendation arose out of that report as to an independent reviewer of terrorist legislation; that is now the National Security Legislation Monitor. The first report that recommended that was the report that David chaired.

I made some inquiries with the staff who had worked with David when he was chair, particularly in my period of time. They were all very deeply saddened to hear of his passing. What they—this was Margaret Swieringa, Jane Hearn, Donna Quintus-Bosz and Cathryn Ollif—wanted to say, particularly to David's family, was how much they had enjoyed working with him and how deeply sad they were to hear of his passing. As I said, this particular committee is not an easy committee to be a member of. It requires a very special person—a person of character, a person of substance.

In closing, can I say, in my remarks to this condolence motion, that, on behalf of the Labor members of the current intelligence and previous intelligence and security committees, I wish to pay my respects to David and his family. They should be very, very proud of what he achieved in this role, as we are, because what he has done has resulted in better terrorist legislation working in the national interest.

Mr SOMLYAY (Fairfax) (17:23): I first met David Jull not when I was an MP but when I was a staffer back in 1975 until 1980. There were only three ministers from Queensland at that time and of course Queensland as usual was underrepresented on the front bench. We all got to know each other pretty well. The ministers, ministerial staff and all the members travelled together up and down to Canberra from Brisbane and David was one of the characters of the new set—bearing in mind that after 1975 there was only one Labor member from Queensland. The member for Berowra will remember; I think that was Bill Hayden at the time. We formed a very closely knit club of people who travelled together up and down to Brisbane.

One thing about David Jull, even in those days, was that he had a wicked sense of humour. He could make something serious sound so funny and that was a way of getting his message over. You would never see anger in David Jull but you would see a lot of humour and a lot of
seriousness at the same time. I was reunited with him in 1990 when I was elected to parliament in the seat of Fairfax. At the time I was Australia's northernmost Liberal, and David mentored and helped me as a new member of the parliament. He was the shadow minister for tourism and aviation; that was his passion. Sir Frank Moore, who was head of the QTTC and of radio station fame, took David under his wing, and he worked for the QTTC during the period he was out of the parliament. When I came in he made me chairman of the tourism and aviation committee, the backbench committee. So I worked very closely with David for the six opposition years under John Hewson, Alexander Downer and John Howard.

In 1996 David was very happy to become a minister. It is the ambition of everyone who comes to parliament, I think, to have the title of 'The Hon.' and to earn it. It is a great thing to be proud of—the fact that you have played for Australia—and David did a great job as Minister for Administrative Services. It was an absolute tragedy, in my opinion, that circumstances led to David leaving the ministry. It doubly impacted on me, because I replaced David in the ministry when he had to leave. While I was very happy to be elevated, I was not happy that it was at the expense of a great man like David Jull. I served with David until 2007. I was on the ASIO committee with him. He was also a very good member of the Joint Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee.

David had a passion for Thailand. When I first came to parliament, David Jull used to put out a booklet called A Visitor's Guide to Thailand, so any MP who was visiting Thailand could take Jully's document and find anything in it: how to greet the Thais, what they expect of you, their customs, their laws and a shopping guide. The shopping guide was very valuable. When I walked into a shop he recommended in Thailand with my wife and produced David Jull's card, I was treated like royalty. You have never seen anything like it. The reputation that he had overseas as well as in Australia was second to none.

It was an absolute tragedy when David was diagnosed with lung cancer. It was the same year that I had my second round of open heart surgery, so we used to share stories across the corridor about who felt the worst. When David had his operation and had his lung removed, he had a lot of difficulties but he stayed on in parliament. He would catch the 9.35 plane back to Queensland on Friday mornings, and it was very difficult for him, with only one lung, to actually walk up the aerobridge. It was also difficult for me because a year before that I had been sawn in half as well. We had a lot of young members of parliament then who were very anxious to get off the aeroplane as soon as they could when they got back to Brisbane, and I used to try to get poor old Jully's bags down and we would struggle up the aerobridge and laugh about it.

He will always be remembered by everyone in this House with respect. You cannot sum up 30 years of service and dedication in a few minutes in the Main Committee or in the main chamber. David's funeral is being held on Friday, and I am sure it is going to be one of the biggest that Brisbane has ever seen. I offer my condolences to his family. I, along with the member for Berowra, was at the lunch which we had in Brisbane because we knew that David was extremely ill and that it would probably be the last time that we saw him. That in itself was a memorable occasion. I thank the House.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (17:29): My first knowledge of David Jull actually preceded my coming into the House. Back in the period when the Australian newspaper was indeed a quality publication with excellent coverage of international affairs and the national
election results around the world—you could even find out how many tries Wynnum-Manly scored against Redcliffe in the Queensland rugby league premiership—there was a front-page story in the *Australian* about this Liberal member of parliament called David Jull, who I had never heard of up that point. He had taken up the rights of underpaid workers in a sawmill in Queensland. Basically a company there had picked up derelict homeless men, paid them extremely substandard wages and here was this Liberal member of federal parliament campaigning for those workers. It really struck me. I do not want to be too stereotypical in my views of the opposition, but to see somebody from that side of politics campaigning for workers rights really struck me.

I then had the advantage of spending a period in the state parliament where, it being a smaller building, people live on top of each other and friendships across the house more readily arise. Coming here, he was an extremely friendly person on the other side of politics. I cannot recall him saying a bad word about anyone. He was extremely cooperative and helpful to people. On the foreign affairs committee that I participated in with him, he was always a person who worked to get a consensus and see if we could actually come to agreement about any report that we were undertaking. I know that many members do that, but I think he had a particular propensity for it—seeing whether there was a possibility of getting conflicting views on the one line.

People have referred to his interest in tourism. I recall going to Thailand with him on a foreign affairs delegation. I am often assailed for my dress sense, but I recall him taking virtually the whole delegation to a place there and buying suits. He knew were to go in Bangkok to get suits for everyone and arrange it all. I said that despite my image with regard to suits. That was probably one of the better ones I have purchased.

**Mr Tony Smith:** I just said it was probably the last one!

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON:** Yes, probably! He was always great to have on those delegations. Since the member interrupts, I will recall another foreign affairs delegation. This is something that perhaps the opposition should bear in mind. I was with Bob Halverson, who was later to become the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Bob was there with us. He was making phone calls to Australia every five minutes. He confessed that he had been a close supporter of John Howard but had actually told him that he should get out of politics because his career was over, that he should go back and become a suburban solicitor again—ironic how things occur in politics in this country.

David was a much-admired and respected person in the House. He was person who, more than most, was able to form friendships across both sides of politics. I think he was essentially a liberal, progressive and fair-minded person. I join with other members in recognising his contribution, particularly in the area of contacts with overseas countries, relationships and knowledge of the world. Perhaps it is more common these days, but back then he was probably at the forefront of people who had an interest in Asia. These days you can do everything on the internet, but in those days he had knowledge of where to get the cheapest fares for every trip around the world. He advised members on both sides of politics in relation to that. I join with other members in wishing the best for his family in this very difficult period and in recognising his contribution to the Australian parliament.

**Mrs PRENTICE** (Ryan) (17:33): David Jull was a good friend of mine. Indeed, I knew him for more than 35 years. He was a good principled man who served our country well.
'Jully,' as he was fondly and widely known, will always be remembered for his absolute dedication to his electors. The truly outstanding aspect of his work as a member in his electorate was that he was just as dedicated and just as effective in his final term as he was in first. As has been widely reported, he served in the federal parliament for more than 30 years. When he underwent major lung cancer surgery during his last term between 2004 and 2007, he did not reduce his electorate work, he just restructured it to take account of his reduced capacity to physically get around. Even in his final years here as a member, he would do what he did just about every Saturday morning: drive to one of the shopping centres in his electorate, sit in a prominent place at one of the coffee shops or cafes and talk to his residents. Then he would visit as many shops in the centre as he was physically able to.

When members gained access to modern communication mediums with their electorates, such as email and the internet, David embraced them. But he did not diminish his personal face-to-face contact with his electors or the many schools, churches and community groups within his electorate.

Anyone who is aware of David's upbringing would not be at all surprised at his personal attention to the needs of his electorate and the community. His father, the Reverend Canon Stephen Jull, was a much-loved clergyman in the Anglican church. David was born in Kingaroy, where his father was a rector. His father spent many years as the rector at Redcliffe, where the parish centre is named after him. His mother, Olwyn, was world president of the Anglican Mothers Union, and a trailblazer for women in the church. David often told the story that he was only able to attend the Anglican Church Grammar School in Brisbane because his father's position as a parish priest enabled him to secure a substantial reduction in fees.

Before politics David had a career in radio and television, both on air and in administration; first, in commercial radio and then as the first face seen on the new Channel 0, now Channel 10. What probably sparked his interest in a political career was when at the age of only 19 he became the Queensland state parliamentary roundsman for Macquarie Broadcasting Services when Nicklin was premier. An old friend, Peter Farrell, recalls him as a young publicity manager at Channel 0. Peter was writing the Veritas TV column, and recalls that those were the days of Number 96 and The Box, big publicity budgets, promotional junkets and many long lunches. As Peter says, David was a man of principle, good humour and loyalty.

At the end of his time in parliament, David was back on radio—community radio in Logan City, where David shared his favourite music with the wider community. As part of his arrangements with the station he negotiated the right to play his choice of music, which was of course dominated by Dionne Warwick, Motown and classical music—an eclectic mix.

In his early days David had a commitment to community service that his parents obviously instilled in him. That commitment encouraged David to seek Liberal Party nomination for the seat of Bowman prior to the 1974 election. He was successful in winning nomination and, after losing in 1974, he won the seat in 1975. It was a seat which he held until the 1983 poll. Less than 18 months later he returned to parliament as the member for Fadden, the seat he held for 23 years until his retirement four years ago.

Fadden became a rapidly growing and changing electorate between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. At each redistribution—and they were frequent, given the population growth in South-
East Queensland at the time—the boundaries of Fadden changed radically. It began as a seat centred around the south-eastern suburbs of Brisbane, then became a Logan City seat and ended up being a northern Gold Coast seat.

Despite all the boundary changes, David assiduously served his electorates and the organisations within his electorate. I am told he moved his electorate office three times as member for Fadden to ensure it was able to service the changes the redistributions caused. He began in Upper Mount Gravatt in suburban Brisbane, then moved to Springwood in Logan and finally to Coomera in the Gold Coast City Council area. As far as David was concerned the electorate came first. His personal convenience or inconvenience was irrelevant.

The electorate rewarded him with increasing majorities. Appropriately, his last election delivered the strongest majority in his long career. In the 2004 election, David's primary vote in Fadden was 60 per cent—a swing in his favour of more than six per cent when compared with the 2001 election result.

The other hallmark of his long career as an elected member was the loyalty of his electorate office staff, resulting in what must surely be the lowest turnover in an office, especially given the long period he served. Anne Quinlan, or 'Quinno', as David always called her, served as his secretary from 1975 until she retired in 1997. She had previously been his secretary when David was an executive at Channel 0 in Brisbane.

One area David embraced with enthusiasm at every opportunity was tourism, and despite being on the opposition benches he did enjoy his role as shadow Minister for Tourism and Aviation. While not a great fan of our national airline, which he referred to as the 'flying red rat', he nonetheless had an encyclopedic knowledge of every aircraft flown domestically by Qantas and Ansett, and the history of individual planes. He was always generous with his travel advice and assistance. When friends and colleagues were questioned about their travel plans they regularly responded confidently that they had nothing to worry about as they were flying 'Jull Air'. This usually meant that David had either suggested the itinerary or, in many cases, had made the bookings for them. David Jull was also the highly respected chair of the parliamentary committee on the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation 1997 to 2002 and of its successor, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security formerly the Parliamentary Joint Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD since 2002. In this capacity he presided over the committees inquiry into the performance of the Australian intelligence services in relation to Iraq's weapons of mass destruction in 2003-04.

David was not just loyal to his electors, not just committed to his parliamentary and committee duties he was also loyal to the party that enabled him to seek to represent them in the first place, the Liberal Party. He was a member of the Liberal Party and more recently the LNP for over 40 years. He believed in the Menzies tradition of the Liberal party. He embraced the reasons why Sir Robert Menzies wanted his party to be known as the Liberal Party, not the conservative party. David was a moderate in its proper meaning. He could not tolerate people who stood on the extreme. As an initial instigator and the unofficial moderator of the Liberal Forum known by its members as Black Hand, Joel used all of his influence and humour to ensure that his Liberal colleagues and friends did not become too full of themselves. He did so with the generosity of spirit and with a firm conviction that Liberals were in fact Liberals.
Even when David lost his ministry in circumstances many, myself included, regarded as unfair and unjust, he did not complain. His loyalty to the Liberal party remained unquestioned. When the Liberal and National parties merged in Queensland, he remained loyal to the new entity the LNP. Until his final illness prevented him from doing so, David was helping the LNP candidate in this local state seat Ian Walker with his campaign for the forthcoming state election.

On a personal note, Jully had a wicked sense of humour and was not constrained by any sense of political correctness. He did not need these constraints because his own values and principles were based on common sense and decency. I can still recall, as those members who served with him would recall, his satirical send-ups and of course his iconic bowling set. Simply put, David Jull was a genuinely good bloke. As he said in his final speech to the House four years ago in December 2007, 'some of my good mates in this place come from both sides of the House'. Tragically, the wishes of the Speaker at the time that it was 'the view of all members that the honourable member deserves a very long and healthy retirement' were not to be. I know the state president of the LNP Bruce McIver and the party organisation across Queensland join me in acknowledging David's outstanding service to the nation, his outstanding service to the parliament and his outstanding service to his electors over 32 years as their member and the LNP and the Liberal Party.

Mr GIBBONS (Bendigo) (17:43): I rise also to pay tribute to the life of David Jull. I first got to know Jully, as everybody called him, as a new member of this place. I got appointed to the then Standing Committee on Transport, Communications and the Arts of which David was a member along with that wonderful old character from Corangamite Stewart McArthur and Paul Neville, who was the chair of the committee. The member for Barker might have turned up occasionally too. That was a great eye-opener for a new MP because I had not set foot in this place prior to being elected so I had little understanding of the processes or the way that it will work. You could not get a better apprenticeship from the other side of politics than from those three blokes. We became good friends and still are. Unfortunately we lost David last week. One of the things I remember most about those three blokes, David in particular, was that they never played any party political games on those committees that I served on with him. I can remember David and the others say on a couple of occasions when we were preparing a report, 'The minister is not going to like this.' Nevertheless, they wanted in the report because that was the evidence we had gathered. That was a great influence on me. I have not tried to play party-political games on committees, have I?

Opposition members: Never!

Mr GIBBONS: That was David Jull's influence—and, I must say, that of a lot of people on my own side too, of course. We had a great time. He was great company, as indeed they all were, and I will never forget him for that.

I also remember quite fondly a trip to the Middle East, when the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade were en route to Afghanistan on a goodwill visit to our troops there. I was participating in an Australian Defence Force parliamentary program that involved being in the Navy, serving on the frigates *Melbourne* and *Arunta* on blockade duty. We all flew over on the same piece of equipment, a Russian Aleutian 77, which was altogether a hair-raising experience, and then the other group moved onto Afghanistan. I was with the ex-member for Wannon, David Hawker; the member for Moncrieff; and another
good friend of mine, the member for Farrer. I must say I have made a lot of good friends on
the other side, more so than on this side, and I think, on that basis, it is probably time I gave
this caper away! On the other delegation were Senator Marise Payne, the member for
Maranoa and my good mate Graham Edwards. We all met back in Dubai, when the two
attachments finished, and it happened to be Senator Payne's birthday so Jully organised a
party at one of the restaurants in Dubai. It was a great night and I remember it fondly. In his
inevitable style, he got up and compered our little table—we had a separate room—and gave a
running commentary on the participants not only on both sides of the houses but also on that
delegation, and it was hilarious. He was great company and one of the greatest storytellers I
have ever come across.

The last time I saw David was at a Birregurra branch of the Liberal Party dinner in Geelong
two years ago—

Mr Tony Smith: What were you doing there?

An honourable member: I ask the same question constantly!

Mr Gibbons: I see that has raised a few eyebrows across the room, but please let me explain; it is all legitimate! As I mentioned before, that wonderful old character the former
member for Corangamite, Stewart McArthur, was a good mate of mine, and the Birregurra
branch of the Liberal Party had organised a testimonial dinner for him. I was invited and more
than happy to attend. I was fortunate enough to be seated at David Jull's table. Accompanying
David was a bloke named John Crook, who was a Bendigo television identity back in the
BCV8 days. He had moved up to Brisbane and had obviously become good friends with Jully.
It was really entertaining listening to stories from both men about their early days in
broadcasting. Jully told me some wonderful stories about his background in radio. He used to
play music—I think it was called being a disc jockey in those days—for one of the big
popular music stations in Brisbane, and it was the most popular station. Because of his role
there, whenever the big, international rock acts came out to Australia and played in Brisbane,
he would inevitably get the job as compere; and, as happened if you got the job of compere at
these big rock concerts—I am talking about acts like the Rolling Stones and other really big-
name acts—he was always invited to the after-concert parties, and that is where the stories got
very, very interesting. I do not propose to go into any of those stories for obvious reasons: a
lot of the central characters are still alive, which in itself is a remarkable achievement, given
some of the stories that David Jull told us!

So it was a great night. I remember that, when I walked in and was ushered to Jully's table,
I saw the whole room was decked out in green and yellow balloons, and I said to Jully: 'My
God, McArthur's jointed the National Party!' He was quick to point out that, no, he had not
joined the National Party; the balloons were the colours of the McArthur tartan, hence it was
the colour scheme for the evening. It was David, John Crook and a good friend of mine, the
former member for Corio, Gavan O'Connor, who was also a good friend of David Jull's, at
that dinner, as well as Stewart McArthur, of course. It was a great night and we all had the
opportunity to speak. It was great.

I guess that is as good a last meeting as you can get with somebody, being in that
environment. I know he was not well, and that was apparent during the night. You all know
what it is like when you meet up with people you like, you are friends with and you have not
seen them for a while—appointments are made, 'Next time I'm in Brisbane, we'll catch up for
lunch,' and all the names and addresses are taken down. I have been to Brisbane once since then and never had time. Now, of course, it is too late and, boy, do I regret that. He was a wonderful man, a wonderful bloke and a great credit to his party. He never had the tunnel vision or the fanaticism of some of the younger and newer members of the other side of politics. He was always a fair man but he was a fierce supporter of his own political side and its philosophy. I think the Libs will certainly miss him and I think the nation will miss him. I think he was a great servant to his country and a great credit to himself. My deepest sympathies go to his family and his friends.

Mr SECKER (Barker—Opposition Whip) (17:50): I thank the member for Bendigo for his input to this debate. I think it very well reflects the fact that David Jull made friends wherever he was—not just in parliament. In parliament he made very close friends with some people whom you might have thought would be enemies. I think that was very much David Jull's approach to life.

We all know that he was a long-serving member—11 terms in parliament. I certainly do not wish to emulate 11 terms in parliament, but David Jull liked parliament as an institution—and he was an institution in this parliament. He represented the division of Bowman from 1975 to 1983. Unfortunately, he then lost his seat due to the Hawke landslide, but it was not long before he was back in the parliament in 1984. He started off with a marginal seat and ended up with quite a safe seat. That does not happen unless you are doing your job in the electorate and you have the respect of the people in the electorate. He served until 2007 and indeed when he actually left the parliament he was the fourth longest serving member of parliament ever, out of over 1,000 members of parliament. That is a pretty extraordinary record.

We know that he had lung cancer in 2005. That was a sad time for all of us—the fact that he had it and that he had to have a lung removed. But, true to the spirit, he said, 'I am going to make sure I get back to parliament.' And so he came back. He obviously was not quite as strong, we all knew that—his big, booming voice was not quite so big and booming any more. Like the member for Bendigo, I last met him at David Hawker's 25th year celebration—that was about two years ago, when we were in opposition. It was great to catch up with him. He had not changed. Obviously, though, he was not quite as fit as he had been.

He was a member of the shadow ministry from 1989 to 1994. When we became the government in 1996, he became the Minister for Administrative Services and served in that role from 1996 to 1997. It was often said—and I repeat: often said—that Jully, as we fondly knew him, was the unluckiest MP in parliament and deserved to serve as a minister for much longer than he did. When he no longer served as the Minister for Administrative Services, he became chair of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation from 1997 to 2002 and of its successor, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security—formerly the Parliamentary Joint Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD—from 2002. So from 1997 to 2007 he served as chair of one of the most important committees. To be the chair of that committee—or even a member of it—you needed to be someone in whom absolute trust could be placed. The fact that he was appointed to that position shows that people respected his abilities.

In this capacity, he presided over the committee's 2003-04 inquiry into the performance of the Australian intelligence services in relation to Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. As the
member for Bendigo said, the committee did not pull any punches. The minister may not have liked it, but David Jull was not going to gild the lily. Coming back to him being unlucky, he almost certainly deserved to serve much longer as a minister. I supported him in a vote for the Speaker because I believed he would have served in that role with distinction. I believe he had all the qualities needed for the role of Speaker. He had the experience, there was no doubt about that, and he had the excellence. He had the knowledge of how parliament works—when to use standing orders and, probably more importantly, when not to use standing orders. He had gravitas and he had authority. He had a booming baritone voice. He would not have needed a microphone to rule from the chair.

I had the wonderful experience of sitting directly in front of him for nine years. I do not know if anyone else can claim that. I think it was a blessing to sit in front of him for nine years. I heard every humorous comment that he made. I do not think I ever heard him being warned, because he was clever enough to speak at the right time and just loud enough but not too loud to be called to order by the chair. It was really interesting to hear some of his comments and I will reflect on a few of them. I will not say who they are about because some of these people are still in parliament. He had a comment about every member of parliament. His descriptions included, 'ugly as a robber dog's backside'—that brings up an interesting vision—and 'Bob Hawke's love child'. Another one was 'one of the beagle boys'—as an avid reader of Donald Duck comics in my youth, I knew exactly what he was on about. Others were 'member for Nagger Nagger', 'promoted way beyond his abilities' or 'better as a front-rower than a frontbencher'—I think that was something about rugby. He had many, many more, but they were always very apt. He certainly did have a way with words.

I might reflect on his wine palate because he had one of the best wine palates in the parliament. One night we went out and somebody bought a bottle of '92 Grange—I would never have been able to afford it—and a bottle of '93 Area Red from Langhorne Creek. Not too many people would have heard of Area Red; it is not one of the great wines. But we all agreed that the '93 Area Red from Langhorne Creek was actually better than the '92 Grange. I happen to know the winemaker because I had played cricket with him. It was part of my electorate and also I spent about 20 of my younger years in that area. I rang the winemaker on the off chance that he had some left. Michael Potts, the winemaker at Bleasdale, had made this wine for Vintage Cellars and Michael said, 'No, I do not have any left, but I will try to find if there is any left in Australia.' True to his word, he rang me the next morning and said: 'There are four dozen left in Australia. Would you like them?' I said yes without even thinking. But I did ask how much per bottle and they were only $28 per bottle—actually a bargain. The first thing I did was to phone Jully and I said, 'Do you want half of these?' Jully said: 'Yes, please. When can you get them to me?' At least I was able to provide some pleasure in his later years with a fantastic wine that we had all enjoyed. David Jull, I drink to your memories and toast a champion. Vale, Jully.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 17:59 to 18:15

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (18:15): I rise to join in the remarks of all members who have spoken on this condolence motion for David Jull. He was someone who served in this parliament with distinction for such a long period of time. He was someone, as we have heard, Mr Deputy Speaker Adams—and you know this yourself—who had friends on both
sides of the chamber. He was a quintessential character in the parliament. He enriched the Liberal Party and the parliament over what was an incredibly distinguished career. I count myself as fortunate to have gotten to know him not just as a member of parliament from the time of my election in 2001 but prior to that when I was a staff member for the Howard government and even prior to that when we were in opposition between 1990-96.

David Jull was so many things. As we know from those who have spoken, he was a good bloke. He was a dedicated parliamentarian. He was a dedicated Liberal. All of the previous speakers have made the point about David Jull’s essential decency. His parliamentary career of 11 terms, spanning 32 years less 18 months, tells the story of incredible individual achievement. When people look at his parliamentary career, they see what he did for the parliament as well as the Liberal Party in the years to come. I know that David Jull’s memory will go on in this place.

As the member for Ryan said just a few minutes before the suspension, David Jull started as a journalist. When you look at his career—and I took the time to dig out his maiden speech from 1976—he achieved a lot at a young age. He was a cadet radio journalist at the age of 19 and became the state political reporter. He describes this very well in his final speech to parliament back in 2007. That career was critical in so many ways because it introduced him at an early age to political reporting and to covering great political events as they were in the state of Queensland. In his final speech to parliament, he tells the story of how he gradually became more and more drawn to the Liberal Party and that the critical element was the election of the Whitlam government and then the experience of that. He became a candidate in 1974. Like so many of that generation, he was swept into parliament in the landslide election of 1975, and he stayed until the tide went out in 1983. He was out for only 18 months. His dedication to the Liberal cause and his commitment to our party and to this parliament is illustrated so much by his determination to come back just 18 months later. It would have been very easy for an ex-journalist to serve seven or eight years and put that down as a wonderful experience and then move on to another phase of their life. The reason he came back was his commitment to the cause. He said in a profile in the mid-1980s that, once politics got into his blood, it was like malaria: it stayed there and re-emerged. Look at David Jull’s maiden speech and his final speech. It is touching to look at his ambition for the country and his Liberal philosophy. In 1976, he very much laid down the markers that he thought were important. His concluding comments in that speech on 2 March 1976 were:

… one should have a passionate devotion to a cause but I am aware that unless the passion is guided by a sense of responsibility it can be wasteful and indeed harmful to society.

He said:

I know that I am young and idealistic—
and he was young; he was only 31—
but I hope that my stay in this House does not breed that cynicism which has become so prevalent of late.

He finished by quoting the words of Winston Churchill condemning socialism. I think, when you look through all those years, three and a bit decades, he did not become cynical, but he had his ups and downs in politics. The Leader of the Opposition, speaking in the House, made the point that David had been a minister—and, we would make the point, for too short a time—and how his passion was to be a tourism minister. The Leader of the Opposition is
right. He would have dearly loved to have been a tourism minister. But I think the strength of his character is marked out by the fact that, from 1997 until his retirement in 2007, he became a quintessential parliamentarian, an expert in foreign affairs and intelligence, and he played a critical role in the parliament on those issues.

We have heard from some on the other side about how Jully—and I can call him that—had friends on both sides, and he did. We heard from the member for Bendigo, who said that they were great mates; in fact, David mentioned the member for Bendigo, and the work they did together, in his final speech.

I got to know David better as a colleague after I had entered this place in 2001. As a staff member I had known him, and his friendliness and decency were always there. He had a welcoming smile and a welcoming hand and he was there to be a mentor to anyone on our side who so desired. He was, from all evidence, a very loyal person. One of his closest friends, the member for Sturt, is sitting next to me, and I know that he was a source of great encouragement, strength and advice to the member for Sturt. They lived together here in Canberra.

Mr Pyne: For 14 years.

Mr TONY SMITH: For 14 years. The member for Sturt entered this place at the very young age of 25, and David Jull was pretty young. The member for Sturt is one of a handful of people whom David Jull counted as very close friends. Despite that, he had many mates in the parliament. When we look back on David Jull we will remember a decent man, a man who came here to make a difference and certainly made a difference.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina) (18:25): I endorse the very eloquent remarks from the many members who have already spoken in this condolence motion. To have given this parliament, and thereby the nation, the service the late David Francis Jull did is a measure of the man, his dedication and the ideals for which he proudly stood. It is said a week is a long time in politics. David Jull experienced more than 30 years of the hurly burly of Canberra and represented the Queensland seats of Bowman and Fadden during that time, 30 plus long years—more than three decades of fine public service.

I wish to place on public record the reminiscences of the former member for Riverina, Kay Hull, who was deeply saddened when I told her of David Jull's passing. 'He could be raucous and gruff,' she recalled, 'but he was also kind-hearted and an amazing individual. He was an incredibly good politician who was admired and respected by all who knew him on both sides of the political divide. David Jull was a good mentor, a great friend of the tourism industry and someone who will be sadly missed.'

May I say the world is poorer for David Jull's death; this parliament is a far better place for the enormous contribution he made. May he rest in peace.

Mr Pyne: Mr Deputy Speaker, I beg your indulgence: I know that we are supposed to have this motion until 6.30 but I note that the member for Blair is in the chamber and could potentially begin his debate on his motion. I do not think I will be able to speak on David Jull for two or three minutes and I am wondering whether the government and the chair would give me the indulgence to perhaps start my remarks tomorrow, rather than have them split in two.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DGH Adams): Thank you, Member for Sturt. I will actually—

Mr Pyne: If that is possible.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is possible. It being approximately 6.30 pm, in accordance with standing order 192, the debate is interrupted. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting and members will have leave to continue speaking.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Disability Services

Debate resumed on motion by Mr Neumann:

That this House:

(1) welcomes the Productivity Commission's final report into disability care and support, released on 10 August 2011;

(2) notes the assessment of the Productivity Commission that the current system of disability care and support is unsustainable, underfunded, unfair and does not deliver appropriate levels of care and support to Australians with disability;

(3) supports the vision set out by the Productivity Commission for a national disability insurance scheme which delivers individualised care and support for Australians with significant disability over the course of their lives, and provides universal insurance for care and support for Australians in the event of significant disability;

(4) commends the Australian Government’s commitment to fundamental reform of disability services, and the start of work to prepare for a scheme, consistent with the recommendations of the Productivity Commission;

(5) recognises the work of the Australian Government to increase funding and put reform to services to Australians with disabilities on the national agenda, including improving access to early intervention services for children with disabilities, record increases to pensions for people with disabilities and their carers and doubling funding to the States and Territories to deliver disability services; and

(6) welcomes the agreement of the Council of Australian Governments to immediate action to deliver foundation reforms necessary for a national disability insurance scheme.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (18:27): One of the profound privileges of being a member of this parliament is meeting inspiring individuals, individuals who make incredible sacrifices with little or no recognition and who, in doing so, leave a lasting impression in the fabric of our local community. One of those individuals in my community is Carmel James. I mentioned her late father Kev Dwyer in previous speeches, a former deputy mayor of Ipswich, a loyal unionist and Labor Party stalwart and a great community advocate. Carmel's life bears the imprint of her father's life. An assistant principal in curriculum at St Edmonds' College in Ipswich, she has had daily impact on the lives of boys who attend the school, but it is as a mother that she makes the most sacrifices and has the greatest impact but receives the least accolades. Carmel is mum to three children: Ben, Lauren and 11-year-old Andrew, who is profoundly disabled with medical and intellectual disabilities. Carmel exemplifies the contrasting natures of motherhood: grace and love, juxtaposed with ferocity and strength.

Over the past 11 years, Carmel and her husband Tony have become fierce disability advocates. Just ask the Assistant Treasurer, the Hon. Bill Shorten, who met Carmel in Ipswich
when he was the Parliamentary Secretary for Disability Services. Carmel and Tony have used their experiences to tackle inclusivity issues while advocating for a national disability insurance scheme for a number of years. I cannot imagine the depth of concern of having a child with a disability who is reliant upon care—

Sitting suspended from 18:29 to 18:33

Mr NEUMANN: The Productivity Commission report into disability care and support makes it clear that the current system of disability care and support is unsustainable and unfair. The report outlines that a national disability insurance scheme would address this issue. I am pleased the Prime Minister announced that the government is immediately starting the work of building the foundations for an NDIS. Essentially this will entitle all Australians to appropriate levels of support in the event of significant disability. That support will be there regardless of whether a child is born with a disability or it is acquired. We know that transformational reform of disability services is needed and that work has to start straight away.

For 12 long years, the coalition ignored people with disability and their carers—they effectively defunded the system. Disability funding under the coalition grew by 1.8 per cent a year—less than the rate of inflation. The previous coalition government showed little support and little interest in the area of getting people with disability into work. Those with disability who wanted to work had to wait for up to a year to get help through the disability employment services and, when they did, their pensions were reviewed almost immediately.

The Welfare to Work program was another coalition failure. The coalition paid lip service to the sector with a succession of failed attempts to support disability pensioners who were keen to contribute more actively in the community. At the last election, the coalition proposed to support just 6,000 children with disabilities and their families. I wonder what the 158,000 students with special needs in Australian schools—and their families—would think. I am confident the coalition do not have a plan to address the 164,000 students in Australia living with disability.

I am proud that, in the last budget, we allocated $200 million to support young people with disability in our schools. I have spoken to former and current principals and teachers at Ipswich Special School and Ipswich West Special School—people like Peter Davis, Andrew Thompson and Steven Leese. They warmly welcomed this funding. In my electorate of Blair, those living with disability are well served by a host of providers. Blue Care and UnitingCare provide invaluable nursing services to those living with disability, respite support for those who are carers and employment services to assist people with disabilities gain and maintain employment. Ozcare Ipswich, CODI, ALARA, Community Access and Transition Services Inc., known as CATS, are just a few of the organisations providing support and care for my constituents in Blair. Focal Extended is another great local organisation which rose out of the ashes of de-institutionalisation and the closure of the local Challinor Centre. These wonderful organisations and so many others provide individual support through personal care in-home and community access support. There is after hours school care in Ipswich Special School, vacation care during some of the school holidays, the independent pathways program and the independent living program to support those over 18 years of age.
These organisations do terrific work and we are going to make sure that those with disability are not overlooked or ignored. Their families and their carers need support and care. On 10 October I am expecting a large number of care providers and local agencies to attend a forum where the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon. Jenny Macklin, and I will discuss the NDIS in the Ipswich and West Moreton community.

Further to that, on 2 December I will stage the second Blair Disability Links, an expo where disability care and support providers set up information stalls in the Brassall Shopping Centre for members of the community. Last year I held the inaugural event—a very successful event it was—with the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, the Hon. Senator Jan McLucas attending. These events connect people with the appropriate services so they have a greater chance to realise their potential by increasing engagement with employment, education, training and, indeed, sport. More than that, they provide a networking opportunity for these service providers.

It can be a difficult pathway to navigate when you suddenly have a child who has a disability or when your life is turned around through a profound accident that leaves you with a disability. Carmel and Tony James will tell you that one of the most frustrating things for their family is dealing with the mountain of bureaucracy involved in accessing funding and programs. As a schoolteacher, Carmel often sees families who do not cope with these stresses and sees that they get support. But they need more, and it takes determination and energy to ensure you get access to everything you need.

Even then in the Ipswich and Somerset region, in spite of the myriad of great services, you cannot get overnight respite easily. I am proud to be part of a federal Labor government that is turning the spotlight onto those with disability and confronting the cold, hard reality that we can no longer ignore the fact that by 2030 an estimated 2.3 million Australians will live with a profound or severe limitation.

I am proud that the foundations of an NDIS are being addressed. We no longer want in our country those with disability feeling invisible. Based on the Productivity Commission recommendations, the government has begun the foundations to this major reform, delivering an immediate additional $10 million to support the technical policy work, establishing a COAG select council for ministers from Commonwealth, states and territories to lead the reform, establishing an advisory group to the select council led by Dr Jeff Harmer to provide expert advice in delivering the foundations for reform. This vital work will be crucial for the care providers and its agencies in Ipswich and the Somerset region.

We are also providing additional funding of $147 million for the Better Start for Children with Disability initiative. This will be a great help for early intervention. There is the $60 million Supported Accommodation Innovation Fund. That is all in addition to the $7.6 billion provided to the state and territory governments through the National Disability Agreement to deliver increased and improved specialist disability services such as support accommodation, target support and respite.

The Productivity Commission recommended that the reform process will take seven years to be done right and to be financially sustainable. I know the James family has been fighting for 11 years to see significant reform. They appreciate that unravelling the various Commonwealth, state and territory systems and programs will be a mighty challenge. But,
like them, we want to see reform sooner rather than later. As their federal member, I still have
to look them in the eye and explain why the process is long, but we are determined to deliver
an NDIS. Only then will people like Carmel and Tony James have the confidence that
Andrew and others like him will receive the care and support that he and others will need
throughout their lives. As their local federal number and part of a government that makes the
tough decisions in the nation's interest I am pleased to support a national disability insurance
scheme. I will continue to advocate for families like the James's, for kids like Andrew and for
the many carers and support agencies in Blair that have committed themselves to supporting
those with disabilities.

Carers Queensland say that there are more carers in my electorate than in any other
electorate in all of Queensland. This is not just a peripheral issue. This is a mainstream issue
that affects average families and individuals throughout the length and breadth of this country.
Communities like mine, the Ipswich and Somerset regions, will benefit greatly from an NDIS.
I commend the motion to the House.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland) (18:40): I welcome the opportunity to speak about issues
facing people with disabilities and their carers. I would also like to thank and commend the
member for Blair for presenting this motion. I do not thank him for some of the party-political
ranting which started his address, but he eventually got past that and started to talk more
constructively about the issues facing people with disabilities.

I believe there is a need for bipartisanship as we deal with the very real challenges facing
people with disabilities and their carers. I also refer to the Productivity Commission's final
report into disability care and support, which found that the current system of disability care
and support is unsustainable, underfunded and unfair and that it does not deliver the
appropriate levels of care and support to Australians with a disability. I am certain that is not
news to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and it is not news to me or to anyone else who has spent
any time at all meeting with people, getting to understand their issues and trying to deal with
the many inconsistencies that exist in the current system.

The current system of support for people with disabilities and their carers is broken. It will
be expensive to fix it but we are, I hasten to add, a very wealthy nation. The question should
not be: can we afford to do better? The question should be: can we afford to let the current
situation continue? We need to deal with the big issues in the disability sector. There are big
issues such as the differing levels of assistance provided, depending upon how you acquire a
disability; young people with disabilities who are forced to live in aged care homes because of
a lack of residential care available for them; the lack of respite care for carers, who are doing
the toughest job in the world but who need a helping hand; providing more funding for basic
facilities like wheelchairs and modified vehicles, which often require volunteer fundraising
activities in each of our electorates; and providing caseworkers to guide parents as they
navigate their way through the maze of support services when they first are told that their
child has a disability such as autism.

In my very first speech in this place I spoke about the need for increased funding in
regional areas for support services for children with a disability, and I will continue to support
efforts from both sides of this chamber for a better system. The opportunity presents itself
today for me to publicly acknowledge the work of the former Parliamentary Secretary for
Disabilities and Carers, the member for Maribyrnong, and also the shadow minister, Mitch
Fifield, for their efforts over the last several years to champion the rights of people with a disability. Arguably the greatest achievement of the member for Maribyrnong in his time in parliament is the way he has been able to provide some hope to people with disabilities and their loved ones. It is a hope that someone in a position of authority is on their side, and I congratulate him for his capacity to champion in this place the needs of people with disabilities.

In that same vein, I would like to congratulate the Premier of Victoria, Ted Baillieu, for being at the forefront of this debate at the state level, for being prepared to advocate for a national disability insurance scheme and for offering Victoria as the ideal location for a trial of a national rollout of such a scheme. I would also like to congratulate the people who work in special schools and other facilities who are directly involved in providing support services for people with disabilities in my electorate. They do an amazing job with great love and tenderness for the people in their care. It can be a very difficult job at times and it is an unforgiving role in many ways, and I know the families certainly appreciate the support they receive from you.

People with disabilities and the people who care for them often feel that they are alone in our community. They often feel that they are outcasts and that they are the problem that no-one else wants to deal with. I would have preferred tonight to have this debate about the national disability insurance scheme in the main chamber. I would have preferred that we debate this all week. Rather than talking about the carbon tax, which I believe is a multibillion dollar cost on the budget for something that may or may not happen in several decades time, in the disability sector right now we are talking about something that is very real on a minute-by-minute basis, an hour-by-hour basis and a day-by-day basis for people in my community. It is happening today. People need help today and it will require a multibillion dollar commitment from this and future governments. The case for the national disability insurance scheme is compelling, and I have spoken about it publicly on many occasions in my electorate. I acknowledge the member for Blair. In his comments tonight he made it sound as though, just by announcing it, the NDIS is already in place. I am sure he did not mean it to sound like that, but people in the disability sector are very concerned. The Labor Party made the in-principle announcement that it is on side and certainly the coalition has made an in-principle announcement that it supports that position. If I have any criticism, it is that I am worried about the time frames. It seems to be a very slow pace for reform and I believe we have to move as fast as we possibly can to achieve a fair and workable system. I take on the member for Blair's comments that we do need to achieve this sooner rather than later. It is a big reform, but we need to keep in the back of our minds that people need help today.

We need a system that puts people with disability at the very centre of the equation and provides them and their carers with flexible packages to access the services which most meet their needs in their own particular communities. I think we can do a lot more to help keep families together, as they are the ideal units to care for a person with a disability. I fear that too much of our current debate in the disability sector is crisis driven. The families at the centre of this issue are often left to soldier on. If they are not directly in crisis at the time, they are often left to fend for themselves, but there is no question that they do need more help.

It always seems to me that it is very difficult for governments to loosen the reins of control and let local communities develop some local solutions that suit the needs of local people,
particularly in regional areas, but we are going to need that flexibility in the new scheme. We must not use planning for the National Disability Insurance Scheme as an excuse to stop the other reforms that are required from occurring in the meantime, as there are many steps that we can take now. On a cautionary note, I am wary of state governments backing out of their current levels of commitment under the guise of preparing for the NDIS.

Time is going to prevent me from talking at any great length about some of the other issues, but I would like to pass on some of the direct comments from local residents that I met with just last Friday in my electorate. I was there with the state member for Gippsland East, Tim Bull, who has been another great champion of people with disabilities in my community. I met with a parents and staff members associated with the MyTime program. For members who are not aware of MyTime, it is a very good program. It provides respite for mums, dads and grandparents, or anyone who is caring for a child with a disability. It gives them a couple of hours on a weekly or fortnightly basis to get together. Their child with a disability is looked after by a professional carer while they have got the opportunity to meet and discuss issues of concern to them. Its ongoing funding is uncertain in the sense that groups are forced to fundraise to make sure they can afford to pay for the extra help. I think the funding is committed to about 2013. I call on both sides of the House to remain committed to this program and to ensure it continues into the future.

One person who attended the meeting was Shirley, who is one of the coordinators in Sale. She said to me:

I just look at these wonderful parents and think to myself - what is being done for them. Everything they do is for their children.

The My Time program is one little thing we can do to help them. It gives them a chance to get together and network and learn from each other's experiences.

Christina, who drove 50 minutes to attend the Sale MyTime gathering, put it this way:

I can talk to my family and friends but they don't get it like the parents in this room. It is not just to have a chat - it's to share information too - it's a great support to me.

I would also like to refer to a letter I have received from Jane and Shannon Nash, who describe themselves as 'parents and advocates for a child with a disability.' It is disappointing that they have to describe themselves as advocates, but in many cases parents have to go into bat to make sure they get access to services for their child. A couple of points that Jane and Shannon raised in this letter are that case management should just be a given when a family has a child who is diagnosed with a disability. They write: 'Our experience was tough. We found we had to self-advocate because professionals we were in contact with did not have the time or the knowledge and expertise to access the system for our child. Our experience has been that the system is inadequately funded and under-resourced. This results in families such as our own being ignored and turned away because they are not considered to be in desperate need.' The letter I have got here from Jane and Shannon I will pass on to the minister.

The really strong point they make towards the end of their letter relates to the family in a situation where you have a child with a disability. There is not a lot of support for the siblings, who often make many sacrifices because parents quite naturally have to put more time and effort into the child with a disability. They make this point: 'We are a family of a five. Our son's siblings are troopers and they love him very much. There is no support for siblings who have a brother or a sister with a disability.' They go on to say, 'Parents like us are trailblazing.
for those that come after us in the hope that conditions are made better for these wonderful but vulnerable children.'

Decisions made in this place are not academic and when it comes to the disability sector they have a real impact on real people. In the little bit of time I have left I will take as an example the government's decision to withdraw funding for the Take a Break occasional childcare program, which has caused enormous concern in my electorate where in many towns the occasional child care provided by that program was the only child care available to these people. Kristin met with me last week and told me about the support the Take a Break program had provided to her and her son Tyson, who has autism. I will also be passing this letter on to the minister, but I would like to quote from it:

Tyson was recently diagnosed with high-function autism, which has been a huge challenge for me over the years. Michelle Brooks has helped me for two years now with Tyson and the change in him has been amazing. Tyson wouldn't be making friends if it wasn't for the centre and its fantastic workers. Tyson is also coming along in leaps and bounds with his speech because of the interaction with all the other children. Michelle goes out of her way for my son and to lose that now when he is doing so well would break both our hearts.

The Take a Break program is one the government should not have ever thought about defunding and I call on the minister to change her mind. I am confident that, more broadly speaking, we are on the right path with the bipartisan plan to introduce a national disability insurance scheme. As always, the devil will be in the detail but we do have this opportunity and we must get it right for the sake of people with disabilities and their carers throughout our nation.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (18:50): I congratulate the member for Blair for bringing this motion to the parliament and the member for Gippsland for his contribution to the debate. Before entering parliament I worked with people with disabilities and I believe that the National Disability Insurance Scheme is a big step in the right direction, something that is very long overdue. I have great pleasure in supporting this motion before the House today.

The Productivity Commission Report into disability carers support was groundbreaking and I have to congratulate the member for Maribyrnong for the role that he played when he was parliamentary secretary. He was totally committed to ensuring that people with disability actually got a better deal than they have had in the past. The report highlights the importance of funding, it highlights the importance of access to services and it really details the issues that are important for people with disabilities and their carers.

I do not think there would be a member in this parliament who has not had the parents of a child with a disability come to see them and express their fears and worries about what is going to happen to that child as they become older: that there are not the proper supports in place and that there is not the availability of care and accommodation that their child will need. This Productivity Commission report that the government has given an undertaking to support and introduce is going to address those issues. I have two young girls with disabilities who come into my office and work and I know that their parents are concerned about them having the opportunities that they need in life. One concern is about making sure that one of the young women can find suitable living accommodation, and the other young woman is keen to enter the workforce.
I must congratulate the Prime Minister on already giving an undertaking of $10 million. The issues that I have found over the years that are terribly important to people with disabilities and their families are access to funding; care and support for carers; obtaining the aids, appliances and equipment that people with disability need; housing; living independently; and work. Work is an issue that has been very difficult for a number of people with disability, and I see that this will create opportunities for people with disabilities to enter the workforce, to be able to compete for jobs and to have the support in place that they need to be able to obtain employment.

The National Disabilities Support Scheme will provide assistance for a person throughout their life. Instead of trying to grab a little bit of money from here and a little bit of money from there, trying to get assistance from some employment brokerage or agency, it will all come as a package. The needs of that person will be paramount in where they are going. As somebody who has worked in this area and fought for people with a disability to get the piece of equipment that they need and to find a suitable place for them to live in, I know that when the disability insurance scheme is fully operational it will not only make a difference to their lives but actually change them. No longer will there be fundraising for a chair for a person who may be a quadriplegic or a paraplegic. That will no longer be necessary. Rather, they will have the right to expect to live a full life just like other Australians. The scheme will take seven years to be fully implemented, but it is important that we do it properly. It is important that we have in place the right sorts of frameworks, and the Disability Insurance Scheme put forward by the Productivity Commission in its report will ensure that the lives of people with disabilities are changed forever.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (18:55): I am pleased to rise to speak on this important motion. I enter this debate in a unique position as someone in this parliament who, alongside fellow carers across the country, watches with interest the announcements about changes to the disability sector, knowing full well that the current patchwork state and federal system of disability support is inadequate. The Productivity Commission's report into disability care and support has reinforced what people who live with disabilities and their carers have long known, which is that the current system is broken and needs a full overhaul. For a parent caring for a physically or intellectually disabled child, it is a lifetime's task and, with such poor assistance available, they have little choice but to abandon any hope or thought of a career in order to take up life as the family carer, which is often lonely, arduous and poorly compensated. For carers there are no sick days, there is no holiday pay and there is no superannuation. A parent caring for a physically or intellectually disabled child lives with the fear and stress of what will happen to their child when they are too old or too frail to care for them anymore. This is a story that I have heard and felt countless times from devoted carers, and it is also a fear that I myself have personally felt. The time and emotional energy involved in caring can significantly influence the dynamics within a family, and so it is little surprise that when parents have a disabled child the chance of marriage breakdown almost doubles.

We are a wealthy and compassionate nation. The time has come when, as a society, we must find ways to provide a generous and practical response to properly assist those with severe disabilities and their carers. While the blame game is not as evident in disability support as it is in other aspects of our health system, the responsibility for disability support is
fractured across federal and state jurisdictions and that has lent itself towards needing closer examination for some time. Currently, the federal government has responsibility for specialised employment assistance and income support, while state and territory governments are primarily responsible for accommodation support, community support and access to respite services.

In its draft report on disability care and support, the Productivity Commission reinforced the coalition's long-held position that disability support is a core government responsibility and must be treated as such. In response to the release of the report's recommendations, Carers Australia President Tim Moore described feelings of 'great hope' and that 'Australia would at last introduce a scheme that would provide quality care and support to all people with a significant disability'. Indeed, that is the hope of all Australians. But, as always, the devil will be in the detail.

It is important that the legislation surrounding this reform is focused on three core deficits in the current system. They are: community and workforce participation and assistance; increased support for those with disability and their carers; and a simpler support system and advocacy support to help people navigate the bureaucratic maze. A national disability insurance scheme must be the goal of this parliament to work towards, but we must get there sooner rather than later. Talk of it being introduced nationally in seven years should be unacceptable to everyone. The Second World War was fought and won in less time.

In quantifying the unmet need for care and support for Australians with disabilities, the Productivity Commission has established the figure that it will take to provide the sort of care and support that rightfully should be expected of Australians who suffer with severe disabilities and their carers. The Productivity Commission prices the scheme at $6.5 billion, which is no small cost, but it is one that should be, and indeed must be, achievable under a responsible government. It is a national disgrace that the equivalent of the full cost of financing this important scheme will now have to be paid out in the annual interest payments on the debt this Labor government has racked up in just four years. To be able to afford the cost of providing the resources that those with disabilities and their carers need and deserve we must have the economy firing on all cylinders. We must end the waste, we must end the mismanagement and we must end the indulgent schemes. Support for disabilities is not welfare. It should not be. It is an entitlement to assistance and participation in our community.

Mr MELHAM (Banks) (19:00): With the member for Blair, I commend the government for its initiative, endorsing the vision set out in the Productivity Commissioner's Disability care and support report. The main recommendations of the Productivity Commission are:

- A National Disability Insurance Scheme should be created to provide all Australians with insurance for the costs of support if they or a family member acquire a disability. The scheme will provide individually tailored care and support to around 410,000 people with significant disabilities.
- A National Injury Insurance Scheme should be created to provide no fault insurance for anyone who suffers a catastrophic injury.

The report also identified a seven-year time frame to transform disability services. As a result of the report, the Prime Minister is in the process of establishing a select council on disability reform at the next meeting of the Council of Australian Governments. This would bring together Commonwealth and state treasurers and disability ministers to do the work needed to lay the foundations for change.
In response to the Productivity Commission’s recommendations for the states and territories to harmonise their approach to catastrophic injury, the government will also convene a working group, led by the Assistant Treasurer, to work with state and territory governments, lawyers and other stakeholders to progress this important complementary reform.

In my role as the member for Banks, I meet regularly with people who have disabilities and their carers. Some of the key points of the Productivity Commission report are similar to those which have been raised with me by those individuals. The inconsistency within the current systems is the outstanding issue, together with the difficulties for individuals in establishing what community and government support mechanisms are available to assist.

There is obviously significant work to be done in setting up the disability insurance scheme, so it will not happen overnight. As with any national project of such significance, it is best that it is done correctly from the outset. In the short term, the government has moved to deliver an immediate additional $10 million consistent with the Productivity Commission recommendations to support the technical work, move to establish a COAG select council of ministers from the Commonwealth, states and territories to lead reform in this area at COAG and take steps to establish an advisory group to the select council led by Dr Jeff Harmer to provide expert advice on delivering the foundations for reform and preparation for launch.

On its website, the Productivity Commission highlights the following—and I think it is worth stating:

• Most families and individuals cannot adequately prepare for the risk and financial impact of significant disability. The costs of lifetime care can be so substantial that the risks and costs need to be pooled.

• The current disability support system is underfunded, unfair, fragmented, and inefficient, and gives people with a disability little choice and no certainty of access to appropriate supports. The stresses on the system are growing, with rising costs for all governments.

That is on the Productivity Commission website.

This is an area that deserves cross-party support. It is an area that does not deserve political point scoring. For too long, all sides of politics have looked the other way. We have an opportunity to build on the Productivity Commission report and to do good. I happen to be one who believes that it is imperative on government to provide a safety net for the vulnerable, the disadvantaged and the disabled in our community. I do not apologise for that. It is the role of the more fortunate to help the less fortunate and we should not apologise for it.

Normally I am one who is critical of the Productivity Commission, because their philosophy has been very different to mine over the years. But in this instance I have no problem in fully embracing each of the recommendations of the Productivity Commission report. For the Productivity Commission to be giving politicians a wake-up call in this area is something I find quite interesting. I commend the motion of the member for Blair to the House. I think it is good that we have an opportunity to put our point of view in this place.

Mr McCormack (Riverina) (19:05): The member for Banks put it very, very well: the more fortunate helping the less fortunate. I commend his remarks. As the population ages, as medical intervention at birth increases and as health know-how improves, the number of people with a disability will increase. At the same time the number of unpaid carers—family members and friends who are willing and able, financially and physically, to provide
support—will decrease. It is therefore time to take stock and plan adequately for the future. We need a vision for equity, for fairness and for justice for those with a disability and for the fantastic people who look after them.

On 6 April this year at the Wagga Wagga RSL Club organisers of an information session held about the National Disability Insurance Scheme put out 200 chairs. Another 200 were required; more than 400 people turned up to tell those politicians present—and I was one of them—and others how much this is needed. All Australians feel the need to have control of their own lives and it is incumbent upon the Commonwealth government to provide this freedom.

By highlighting my utmost support for this program I was told I was the first parliamentarian in New South Wales to sign up to the wonderful Every Australian Counts campaign. I would do it all over again, as I feel this is an extremely valuable scheme for our society. A national disability insurance scheme represents a fundamental reform to the way services are funded and delivered. In a budget of $350 billion, surely we can find it in our hearts as well as our finances to find the necessary dollars. As the member for Hughes said, it is an extra $6.5 billion. But I see this is an investment, not a cost.

The member for Hughes also stated what a compassionate nation we were—and we are—as well as acknowledging the fact that the current system is broken. The Productivity Commission certainly thinks we can find the money. We just need the political will, hopefully the bipartisan will. The economic case for reform for the National Disability Insurance Scheme has been described in terms of the number of people with a disability increasing significantly in the next 20 years, while at the same time the number of people willing and able to provide unpaid care will fall. Government is responsible for funding the difference between the two.

The resulting increase in costs has the potential to overwhelm already overburdened state treasuries. If current growth continues, the amount spent on specialist disability services alone will double in 14 years. A National Disability Insurance Scheme will ensure governments have the ability to meet current and future needs, whatever the economic climate. It will also provide other important economic benefits. As I said, I see it as an investment. By focusing on early intervention and identifying those support services which are most effective and efficient, the scheme will maximise the potential of and facilitate greater independence for those who most need it.

By providing people with what they need when they need it the scheme will ensure people with disabilities, their families and their carers have every opportunity to reach their full potential. Surely this is such an Australian ideal. This is about providing people with a disability with what they need when they need it and it should also reduce the pressure currently experienced by families of those unable to fully participate in work, life and the community. It will also enable much-needed respite.

The scheme could be funded by all taxpayers through general revenue or through a Medicare-type levy. Financing will have to be arranged. The modelling also needs to be worked out. As I said, the Productivity Commissioner said that we can do it, so surely we need to follow that lead. If the commission says we can do it then we have to find the necessary political will to be able to do it. This needs bipartisan support. Funding for essential care, support services, therapy, aids and equipment could then be drawn from this consistent
pool of funds. The principal beneficiaries would be people whose disability has a significant impact on their daily life. Most importantly, the scheme would provide support no matter how that disability was acquired, because it can happen to anyone at any time. People born with a disability or who acquire a disability through accident or injury or as result of a medical condition or mental illness would all be eligible for assistance. Recipients with a lifelong disability should not, as they are now, be required to constantly prove their disability to continue to receive assistance. Eligibility for the scheme would be transparent, based on careful assessment. The system could be person centred and individualised, based on the choices of the person with a disability and their family. It would focus on early intervention and provide the supports that provide the best long-term outcomes.

Importantly, as I said, we must not forget that disability can happen to anyone at any time. Let us not wait for what might happen; let us act now and put in place a system for those who may need to rely on a little more assistance than many of us do. We need to plan properly for this and make sure it is done correctly but put it in place as soon as is humanly and legislatively possible—not in seven years time. As the member for Hughes said, that is far too long.

Debate adjourned.

**Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service Export Service Rebate**

Debate resumed on the motion by **Mr Cobb**:

That this House:

(1) requires the responsible Minister to:

(a) immediately commission an independent study on the legitimate costs to the Government of Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) Export Service Inspection Fees and Charges for the six affected industries (Meat, Fish, Dairy, Horticulture, Grain, and Live Export) as evidenced at the AQIS – Australian Meat Industry Council joint ministerial taskforce meeting No. 15 on 7 May 2010; and

(b) table in the House:

(i) a document that explains how the Government will provide a reduction in annual regulatory costs to the export industries in the order of $30 million per year from 1 July 2011; and

(ii) a document that outlines the completion of reforms that were to be delivered as part of the agreement to remove the AQIS Export Service rebate between the Government and the six affected industries;

(2) notes that the above commitments were part of a package agreed to by the former Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in return for the passage of the Government’s legislation to remove the 40 per cent AQIS Export Service rebate; and

(3) calls on the Government to continue the AQIS Export Service rebate until the reforms are delivered, as agreed to by the Government.

**Mr JOHN COBB** (Calare) (19:11): As a citizen of a country that is very dependent on exports, whether it be primary industries, minerals or food and fibre, I rise today to speak in support of this very important motion, which is around the AQIS export service inspection costs, the rebate, which has just been knocked off by the government, and the efficiencies that were promised as part of the deal struck back in 2008-09. This motion is important, as the industries have without doubt been left in the lurch following the government's axing of the 40 per cent AQIS export service inspection rebate. The Labor government has failed to
deliver on its side of the bargain. On 1 July this year, the inspection service rebate ceased, yet promised reforms and efficiencies have not been in place, putting significant strain on the six most affected industries: horticulture, meat, dairy, fish, grain and live exports, as well as many small niche industries involved with them.

This government has once again failed to deliver on its promise and, as a result, I have introduced this motion into the parliament, calling on the government to keep the AQIS export service rebate in place until the government upholds its end of the bargain. There was an understanding by all industries that the promised reforms would be put in place by the time the rebate period cut out, which was 30 June-1 July this year. This clearly has not happened, and the government should be, and is being, held accountable.

The reforms in 2009 came after the Senate disallowed moves by the Rudd Labor government to axe the AQIS export certificate rebate, which was worth approximately $40 million annually and higher, depending on the amount of produce exported. As a result of our standing shoulder to shoulder with the industries and not allowing the government to simply walk over the top of them, as they normally do with agriculture, the former minister for agriculture, Tony Burke, announced he would offer the industry a $127.4 million export certification reform package to fund efficiencies, reforms and the AQIS costs until July of this year. Now, we agreed to this and, in a letter of agreement written to me and signed by Minister Burke, he stated:

Successful implementation of these reforms will provide a reduction in annual regulatory costs to the export industries in the order of $30 million per year from 1 July 2011. It will also provide the opportunity for removal of substantial costs from the export supply chain for industry and AQIS.

That was in the letter we got. But now, as we have come to expect of the Rudd-Gillard government, the government has not fulfilled its side of the agreement. None of the reforms and efficiencies were actually delivered by the time the rebate cut out. There was also a commitment by Minister Burke for an independent study of the legitimate costs of government as agreed by the minister. This has not even commenced. The minister has claimed that this is an audit of AQIS's cost—and I acknowledge the member for Lyne, who is polite enough to indicate he wants to table that. I have no problem with that. But that is a separate commitment. The government has not delivered on its commitment for a legitimate cost-of-government survey. Let us remember that our main competitors, Brazil and America, require almost no contribution from industry. They pay 85 to 90 per cent of similar costs in their countries.

The minister is wrong. As a legitimate cost-of-government survey it was a commitment to examine if any of the costs related to AQIS export service inspection fees and charges were related to costs that serve the broader Australian public, to establish the level of that broader public benefit, beyond those directly involved in the industry, and whether a clean reputation for exports or the ability to resolve problems arising quickly has a broader benefit to the Australian community, as indeed the high level of Australian agricultural and fishery commodities do. The government has acknowledged that there are certain activities that are not costs that industry should have to pay for, but instead of maintaining the vital activities it is just discontinuing the services in its desperate search for cash.

Market maintenance and improvement activities, technical operations and assistance and overseas inspector capabilities to deploy when issues arrive all have a broader benefit to
Australia and our export reputation. Our competition provides these services and does not expect industry to have to bear the costs. The government has made a promise, yet no reforms have been delivered, no efficiencies have been gained and no legitimate cost-of-government studies have been delivered. Despite not delivering on its promise, the government has collected on its side of the deal and removed the 40 per cent rebate as of 1 July.

Let us look at the horticulture industry, for example. That industry reform process alone has cost a staggering $1.6 million over the past two years in an attempt to increase efficiency within the industry, but there has been no progress. The horticulture industry is one of the success stories in Australia in recent times, and the fruit and vegetable part is one of those where it is line ball as to whether they are importers or exporters. The horticulture industry taken as a whole is a huge growing industry and is contributing a lot to exports. Yet if we send the wrong signals to the industry that the government will stand beside it we limit its desire and its need to expand. The government has tried to simply move the responsibility of inspections from government to industry, yet for such a diverse and seasonal industry with many small operators it is unlikely to work. Operators are not large enough to absorb the cost of inspection staff and it is going to be very difficult to find and train staff for such seasonal work. The government cannot even clarify whether the export industries involved will be comfortable with AQIS’s proposed approach. This is not reform; it is just cost shifting. As of 1 July 2011 all industries involved are facing increased costs. With the removal of the rebate the industries will have no choice but to pass these costs on to producers.

Because of the coalition making it plain that we would once again stand with our export industries, we have introduced this motion to show that even though the meat industry has done a deal with government—

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr JOHN COBB: Only because you had to. Because the industry asked us to we have agreed to sign off on that and we are not going to use the opportunity given to us to stand aside. However, there are five other industries which still need the government to work with them to sort it out. This is especially important as the government is also about to hit these meat processors with the world’s biggest carbon tax. I could talk about that for a long time, but I will not. Do not underrate the effect that has on the meat industry and the processing industry, whether it be horticulture, meat or whatever. One of Australia’s better abattoirs looks to be going to get costs—because they will trigger the carbon tax, and there will be their power bills—of $3 million a year extra. At a time when we are crying out for export industries to help us, that is not a great way to help them.

The government has been forced to act on the meat export industry and I now call on the minister to provide a similar package for each of the other export industries and to carry out the legitimate costs of government study it promised under the original agreement. It is ridiculous that the government has had over two years to implement efficiency measures, but two years on they are no closer to any reforms. They have had to concede that with the meat industry they are three years behind because the current deal does assist in some measure those in the meat industry to get the efficiencies that were originally promised of $30 million a year. In three years time they will far exceed that. I ask the current minister to fulfil the deal put forward by Tony Burke, who was then the minister, in 2008-09 because Australia’s export industries, agriculture and fisheries, need them.
Mr ADAMS (Lyons) (19:21): Being an old meatworker, over the years I have scrutinised the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service, especially under Liberal governments. I once studied meat inspection so I know a bit about lymph nodes and other things. But I did not go on because other things intervened, especially politics. I believe there is a need for change, and change is certainly coming around. There were inherent inefficiencies in the system that the previous government had not addressed in 2001. I will come to those later. However, since this government has been in there has been considerable change. Maybe the honourable member opposite has not been keeping up with those changes. There has been an investment of $127.5 million over three years in the development of a modern export certificate scheme that maintains Australia's reputation as a producer of high quality safe food products; $85 million was in export certificate rebates and the remainder was a project and AQIS staff redundancies, which had to occur. We have also finalised a review of the fee structures and the overhead allocations that have set new fees and charges, which we will be able to see on the department's website, and which will cover all the industries that the member for Calare has sought. I would like to table the independent review of AQIS fees and charges in the meat program. This was tabled on 8 May 2010. I seek leave to table it.

Leave granted.

Mr ADAMS: The government has approved a cost recovery impact statement and it is available on the department's website. I see that in 2001 the then government took 40 per cent off the export fees and put it on to the budget. That was real efficiency! It is probably why the constituents of Lyons lost out on some of their health budget coming through to Tasmania—because some of it was taken off by that sort of process. It was not about making industry more efficient et cetera—I concede that the member for Calare was not the minister at the time.

There has been extensive consultation with the Australian Meat Industry Council, in particular, the budget for the meat program in 2011-12 and that will be $56 million. For last financial year the budget was about $78 million, and the previous budget for that was closer to $85 million. So this will allow not only costs to be reduced but also more meat to be processed in Australia. It brings down the cost of processing. The budgets for respective programs are all subject to a process of consultation and ultimately become part of the public record. The government has been working hard to ensure our major trading partners, including United States, understand that proposed reforms to the meat inspection system will provide at least equivalent outcomes and greater transparency than the scheme under which we operate now.

The US has the most complex regulatory requirements, as I remember from my days in the meat industry, followed by the EU and some northern Asian markets. Meat exports exceed $5 billion per year, so it is a considerable industry for our country. Therefore, we should get these reforms right. I am told the US formally accepted the proposed export meat inspection service model in March this year and we are moving towards a full roll-out of the AEMIS across all red meat processing establishments to reduce government program costs from around $80 million per year to approximately $56 million per year. So the government and industry have been working hard to find efficiencies in each of the export certified programs. The member for Calare might note that it has been a collective effort. We could reduce costs
even further but the government and the meat industry are not interested in efficiencies if they compromise market access.

On 5 September the minister announced that the government would implement the Australian export meat inspection scheme from 1 October and provide $25.8 million in transitional assistance. I understand that the opposition has begrudgingly—I heard the members say this—come to the party, announcing it would support the regulations underpinning the reform. I am pleased that they have done that. The minister has told me that he has arranged a briefing for Mr Cobb on the status of the meat program and advised Mr Cobb and Senator Colbeck that the government is continuing to work on a sector by sector basis on reform. Government is continuing its reform process but there is no one-size-fits-all approach to these matters. The minister says he will continue to liaise with the export sectors to discuss their proposals.

So this motion from the member for Calare is rather behind the times in as much as what he is asking for has already been covered and he has not recognised the amount of work already undertaken in this area. Perhaps he has not been briefed by his own side. Maybe he needs to talk more with his own people. I think the opposition is trying to give the impression that something is wrong when the government and the industry are getting on with the business of supporting regional jobs and reducing red tape, making our industry more efficient and more effective, as we need to do. I think that new technology is being drawn down to help reduce these costs. Of course, that will add to productivity and improve our export prices and our overall position. Australian processing and our manufacturing sectors do have to be price sensitive, especially with the price of Australia's dollar.

We need to keep this industry up on its training, to engage people to enter the trade, enter the work and work in the meat industry. I am sure you, Madam Deputy Speaker Livermore, who have quite a works in your electorate, would always be thinking about where labour is required to get into our regional works. There are lots of regional jobs in Australia. My local works, which is pretty much a large one from Tasmania's perspective, employs hundreds of people and this works, where I worked many years ago, has been employing people for 50 to 60 years. It is tremendous to see that that is still occurring. We need to continue making our industries more effective and more efficient, but it is not about government carrying costs for industry. Industry has to carry its own costs. We need high-performance meat inspection and a certification model which is at the forefront of international expectations to carry us into the future. This industry is worth many billions of dollars to us. We have to make sure that it is efficient and effective and we need to always make sure that we do that. We have started that across several of the sectors which are important to us, but it is no good trying to say that you can do this half-heartedly. You have to go in, negotiate right across the industries and achieve an efficient outcome. The international market access across all commodities through this will help us regain more market access, I believe, over the next 18 months. I oppose the motion.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (19:31): I rise tonight because I seconded this motion. I thank the member for Lyons for his contribution but I would point out to him that the government only came to the party and delivered the $25.8 million to the industry after this motion had been moved in the House. I think it would be fair to say that the only reason that they did this was because this motion was moved and they were probably deeply concerned that this motion would be passed.
Mr TEHAN: Those on the other side may laugh, but I would like to highlight that the coalition has once again played a very constructive and positive role in producing an outcome, in this instance for the meat industry. I would like to especially recognise the member for Calare for the role that he has played in bringing about this positive outcome.

It is a positive outcome, but there is still more to be done. I do not think that those opposite should rest on their laurels and think that because they have delivered this money that that is the end of it. There are still very deep concerns, especially amongst the smaller players in the industry, about the implication that this move to full cost recovery will have. As a matter of fact, last week I had a representation from industry in my electorate asking me to once again take up this issue, and that is something that I will be doing. I have asked the constituent to provide me with the relevant information and I have said that I will approach the minister. I intend to do that and I hope the minister will be prepared to listen.

For the benefit of the House, I just want to outline what the member for Calare and I, in seconding this motion, set out to achieve. We wanted an immediate commission of an independent study on the legitimate cost to government of AQIS export service inspection fees and charges for the six affected industries as evidenced at the AQIS-AMIC joint ministerial task force meeting on 7 May 2010 and we would still like to see that. Obviously we have the horticultural industry, the fish industry, the dairy industry, the live export industry and the grain industry still waiting to see what the government will do. We have also called on the government to table in the House a document that explains how the government will provide a reduction in annual regulatory costs to the export industries in the order of $30 million per year from 1 July 2011. We would still like very much to see that document and also a document that outlines the completion of reforms that were to be delivered as part of the agreement to remove the AQIS export service rebate between the government and the six affected industries—the meat industry, the fish industry, the dairy industry, the horticulture industry, the grain industry and the live export industry. We would still very much like to see this.

We also noted that the above commitments were part of a package agreed by the former Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in return for the passage of their legislation to remove the 40 per cent AQIS export service rebate. We called on the government to continue the AQIS export service rebate until the reforms are delivered as agreed by the government.

As we saw, the minister has, to the tune of $25.8 million, come to the table, sat down and negotiated with the Australian meat industry to get a resolution. It is not by any means a perfect resolution, but it is better than where we were and I am happy to say that. I commend the industry for having sat down with the government and for being able to put a strong case to get that $25.8 million. That is a good outcome of the motion that we have put in the House and a good outcome that it has pressured the government to sit down with the industry and deliver this $25.8 million. I know that those opposite are not very good at giving credit where credit is due, but if some of them do I am sure the member for Calare would gratefully receive that feedback. If you were going to be fair about it, that is what you would do.

I hope the government are going to sit down with the other five affected industries and come to a similar resolution with them, because this is too important an issue to those five other industries for the government to sit back, rest on their laurels and say, 'We have done
this for AMIC, so that is where it is going to stop.' I hope we will see the government continuing to sit down, listen and deliver much-needed resources to those other industries as well.

I would say once again that I also think the government needs to consult with the smaller businesses, especially in the meat industry. We have to recall that ultimately what we are doing is passing on to business 100 per cent of the legitimate costs for inspection services. There is no other country in the world that does this. We are passing 100 per cent of the legitimate costs for inspection services onto business. This is a big step. We have to make sure that our meat industry remains as competitive as possible. If we do not, they operate in an international environment and our meat producers will suffer as a result.

Let us not forget that the government is also putting additional costs on the meat industry. The meat industry is a trade-exposed emissions-intensive industry. What they are about to be hit with in the carbon tax legislation is going to make them less competitive and is going to put their costs up. We are going to be doing this at a time when we are also hitting them with this extra cost to their business with regard to inspection services. So I plead with the government: reconsider the way you are going to treat meat processors under your carbon tax legislation. You are going to put a huge additional cost on the meat processors and they are trade exposed and emissions intensive. So think about that. You might have come to the table late with your $25.8 million for the inspection services—and there are still concerns around the smaller processors—but, when it comes to your carbon tax legislation, you could be doing insurmountable damage to the international competitiveness of meat processors. So think long and hard about that and think whether you have that right.

It has given me great pleasure to second this motion, because one of the most efficient and best meat processors you will come across globally is in my electorate of Wannon. I refer to Midfield Meat. They are a huge employer, they do an outstanding job, they are mechanised to a standard that you cannot find anywhere else in the world and they are also a terrific community based company which puts a significant amount back into our local community. I also have smaller meat processors right across my electorate who do outstanding jobs as well.

This is an important motion; it got the government to act—just before time. Let us hope the government now will act on its carbon tax legislation as well.

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (19:41): I was going to start off somewhere else but, having listened to the honourable member for Wannon, I have to give a few targeted rebuttals to some of the absolute nonsense I have heard here tonight on this motion. The honourable member said to give credit where credit is due, so I will start by noting, with respect to the move to full cost recovery, two things which relate to what the honourable member for Wannon said. Firstly, he said that it does not happen anywhere else. Yes, it does—that is not what the meat processors and others say and they are people that I talk to regularly. Secondly, I note that it was under the Howard government that this system started. So I am happy to give credit where credit is due—not like you, coming in here when you end up in opposition and pretending that you had nothing to do with it and did not know about it. You come in here and all of a sudden just do a complete turnaround—180 degrees.

Mr Tehan: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker: I do not think the member is being relevant to the submission.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms K Livermore): There is no point of order.
Ms SAFFIN: I am being very relevant—I am talking about the absolute political and popular opportunism of the National Party in bringing this motion before the House. You talk about relevance, but this motion has no relevance to what is going on.

I will turn to what is going on. The conversation on this issue, as members would know, is a conversation that takes time because we are working across a number of highly significant industries. The meat industry is the one that I know most about but I have information about all of them. That conversation continues. It is, in fact, more than a conversation; it is a consultation, conversation and deep engagement with the industries and with the government.

Before I go into that, I will go back to ‘credit where credit is due’ and I want to pay credit to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Ludwig, for the work he has done and for the agreement he reached recently with AMIC. I have seen the letters and I have been involved in it. The chairman of the Australian processor council and of the Australian Meat Industry Council, Mr Gary Burridge, is also the CEO of the Northern Co-operative Meat Company, which is in my electorate. So it is an issue that I am engaged in at a local level but with which I also have some familiarity at the national level. The agreement is something that AMIC is really pleased about—they put out media releases on it. It is what they have been working towards and it is what I have been supporting them working towards. It is no good writing a three-part motion, coming in here, getting up and just mouthing off—mouthing words and not doing any of the hard yards and the work to support the industry. A key area where they need support is particularly around access.

Yes, we can talk about money and, yes, we can talk about certification, but we have to maintain that market access and we have to have regulatory schemes in place that do not impede or damage that market access. That is where the government, through the minister, is doing a lot of work with the industry. That is what it is about: cooperation. It is not about the nonsense that we have heard here tonight.

I have a couple of points I would like to make. Firstly, in the honourable member for Calare's motion he talks about immediately commissioning an independent study on the legitimate cost to the government of Australian quarantine and of AQIS. It goes on about the six industries. If you read it, it is designed to engender some urgency, as though there is some panic around it. There is not. There is a lot of work that has been happening and it is just part and parcel of that modus operandi.

My understanding is that there is a review of the fee structures and the overhead allocations. All the honourable member has to do is go onto the DAFF website, for a start, and it is there to read. I am really pleased with the agreement that was reached with AMEC and the terms of reference also for the AMEC-government joint ministerial task force with the export meat program and export certification reform.

The work that has been happening and the work that still has to happen is really clear with those joint terms of reference. The government has invested a lot of money in this. The government has invested $127.5 million over three years in export certification reforms. That is money well spent and money that I want to see spent in that area. I understand that $85 million of that was in export certification. The government also approved the cost recovery impact statement. The budget for the meat program, as I have outlined, was subject to extensive consultation and we know what the budget allocations are from 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12.
The industry and the government are always working to find efficiencies, and that helps productivity as well as savings. That is part and parcel of what industries do and what governments do all the time. It has been a great collective effort. We talk about credit where credit is due, and I know that in my local media I claimed some credit: I crowed too, because I represented the local industry. I worked collaboratively with the minister and with the local meat industry to ensure that there was that support in moving to that full cost recovery with the export certification scheme. The industry has been really sensible in moving to this.

With the motion that we have before us it would be more useful if the time were spent even talking about how we can collaborate to some of the members who are seized and concerned with these issues. There is nothing against that in this place. It does not matter what party members come from, they can do that. We do that from time to time, and when we do that we do it well. And yet, time after time I am in this chamber and find myself speaking on motions like that which the honourable member for Calare has put up that are both out of time, out of date and irrelevant to what is actually happening at government level and in the industry.

My seat is a rural seat. I have agricultural industries, and I care about them and work with them. What galls me is seeing the National Party members just playing around all the time with this. When they are in government they are with the Liberal Party as part of a coalition and they support free trade and those things. Yet they come in here and say something else and go out into the electorate as though they do not. I have seen it with bananas and I have seen it with apples. They just go out and say what they want to and what they think somebody in the electorate wants to hear. That is not conscionable, it is not fair and it is not real to do that to farmers and to the industry. We have an obligation to be absolutely upfront with them about what is happening.

We are a trading nation. In the meat industry alone a lot of the chilled and packaged meat is exported. I want to give support where I can, and that is why I work to make sure that we, like the transition with the cost recovery and the certificate scheme, give support where the industry can work to find its efficiencies, where it can work to ensure that it stays competitive and where it can ensure that it continues to have market access but also develop further market access. That is what it is about: staying competitive and staying relevant. It is not about these nonsense motions that we have before the House.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Opposition Whip) (19:51): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Calare. I note that the motion states:

That this House:

(1) requires the responsible Minister to:

(a) immediately commission an independent study on the legitimate costs to the Government of Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) export service inspection fees and charges for the six affected industries (meat, fish, dairy, horticulture, grain, and live export) as evidenced at the AQIS—Australian Meat Industry Council joint ministerial taskforce meeting No. 15 on 7 May 2010; and

(b) table in the House:

(i) a document that explains how the Government will provide a reduction in annual regulatory costs to the export industries in the order of $30 million per year from 1 July 2011; and

(ii) a document that outlines the completion of reforms that were to be delivered as part of the agreement to remove the AQIS export service rebate between the Government and the six affected industries;

MAIN COMMITTEE
The motion continues:

(2) notes that the above commitments were part of a package agreed to by the former Minster for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in return for the passage of the Government's legislation to remove the 40 per cent AQIS export service rebate; and

(3) calls on the Government to continue the AQIS export service rebate until the reforms are delivered, as agreed to by the Government.

The motion touches on the fact that the coalition came to an agreement with the former Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Tony Burke. This was in exchange for an agreement to remove the 40 per cent AQIS export service rebate with an eventual move to full cost recovery. A $127.4 million package was supposed to be offered to the industry to fund efficiency reforms.

The government has not, as we know, fulfilled its side of the agreement. There has been no independent study of the legitimate costs of government as agreed by the minister. None of the reforms and efficiencies will actually be delivered by the time the rebate cuts out. Some of the review of the reforms of the industries to increase efficiency actually led to more costs, more paperwork and more bureaucracy, contrary to the aims of the review. There is more than one industry involved here. It is not just the beef industry. It is the horticulture, meat, dairy, grains, fish and live animal industries. There was an understanding by the industry that these reforms would have been completed by the time the rebate period ran out, but this clearly has not happened.

While I am speaking on this issue, as a dairy and beef farmer myself I want to touch on an issue that I would very much like the minister to address. It is the issue of industrial action taken by AQIS vets in the export abattoirs in my electorate, such as V and V Walsh and Harvey Beef. V and V Walsh sent me a letter recently. It said:

V & V Walsh Proprietary Limited, in operation since 1957, has never in its history had its day-to-day meat processing operations interrupted by industrial action.

The company has been made aware about protected industrial action by members of the Commonwealth Public Sector Union who perform the on-plant task of meat inspection under the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service and is likely to occur on site in coming weeks. The company is likely to be subject to work stoppages each day which will impose significant financial hardship on both the company and its employees. Over the past three months the company has been operating on a four- and three-day week due to a range of issues and is just beginning to increase its production. The disruptions will not only have financial implications but the flow-on affects for export production, storage, transportation and customer distribution will be a costly, unforeseen add-on which will have significant impacts on the company and its daily operations.

This is a major issue in my electorate which has been going on for nearly six weeks. It affects not only the abattoirs but their workers and their families, those on single incomes and I understand that these are now four-hourly rolling stoppages. So this is a very serious issue for each of the individuals, as it is to the workers and their families. I call on the minister to resolve this issue. I really want to know what is the basis of the industrial action by the AQIS inspectors? What impacts does the minister consider this is having on the abattoir management, on the economics and on the workers? I would really like to know whether worker's incomes geed adversely affected and to what degree and what action has the minister
taken to resolve this dispute. As we know, meat processing can be an extremely finite business. We also know how important it is in regions like our own, particularly given the impacts of the reaction the government had to the banning of live exports. It has had an impact right throughout the whole of the south-west as well as in the north-west of our state.

I do notice that the Beale quarantine and biosecurity review commissioned by Labor called for hundreds of millions of dollars to be spent on AQIS and quarantine annually just to provide real and proper protection for our nation's borders, but instead of responding to this report, the government has failed to act, expect to spend the 2½ years since its release running down the report and stripping out its assets.

Australian agriculture and food producers rely on our clean green image and on our capacity to produce some of the best quality food in the world. Agricultural production in this country drives $155 billion a year in economic production, which is over 12 per cent of GDP. This generates about 1.6 million Australian jobs and $32 billion a year in farm exports. And we do not always compete on a level playing field. It is very important that we do everything we can to protect our borders and our biosecurity.

It should not be underestimated. Anyone who lives in a regional area does not underestimate the importance of the beef industry and even the industries mentioned in this report. I have beef, dairy and horticulture in my electorate. I do not have grains but certainly I have horticulture, meat, dairy, fish and live animals represented in my electorate. So the issues that the member for Calare has raised in his private members motion are extremely relevant to growers and to the industries in my electorate.

In relation to the AQIS vet issue, the minister does need to respond. There have been six weeks now of this particular action. It is having an impact on the families in my electorate. It is having an impact on the businesses in my electorate and each one of those needs to get on with what they do best. I call on the minister to act. What action has the minister taken to resolve this dispute? What is he intending to do so that not only the abattoirs but the workers and the communities surrounding them can continue to do what they do best?

I finish my speech by simply saying that I support the motion by the member for Calare. The issue of the legitimate costs to government of AQIS export service inspection fees and charges is not just for one single industry; it is for all of those mentioned. As I said, we have half a dozen different industries: the fish industry, the dairy industry, the meat industry, the horticultural industry, the grain industry and the live export industry. These are not resolved yet. In the same way as the industry action in my electorate with the AQIS inspectors has not been resolved, these broader issues have also not been resolved by the minister.

I call on the minister to act on all of these issues. We should not take this industry for granted. This industry has done it particularly tough. A number of the growers have found continuing to produce some of high-quality produce very tough in the circumstances that they have found themselves in.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (22:01): I oppose this AQIS export service rebate motion. In the four years I have been in this place I have seen some conservative claptrap and Tory tosh but this motion takes the cake. Those opposite take credit for school funding in their electorates when they came into this place and opposed it under BER. They take credit for roads and community infrastructure in their electorates when they opposed it under the Nation Building
and Jobs Plan we have had. Now we have the member for Wannon taking credit for $25.8 million when they have not even supported it. They finally came grudgingly to the table and now say they support it. They are taking credit for it when they did not actually support it in the first place. They say one thing here and go back to their electorates and say another thing.

This motion is such a waste. We could be doing so much good. We have had a motion this evening about a national disability insurance scheme. We have had bipartisan support for that scheme. There are motions on lots of important issues. This is such rubbish.

The coalition has grudgingly now come to the party and announced it will support the regulations that underpinned the reform. This has been a collective effort between industry and the federal Labor government. On 5 September we announced that we would implement the Australian Export Meat Inspection System from 1 October 2011. We have provided $25.8 million in transitional assistance. I did not see that budgeted in the coalition’s $11 billion black hole when they were wanting to come into government before the last election. I did not hear them talking about that at any stage. As a number of speakers from this side have said, we have invested $127.5 million over three years for export certification reforms and, as the member for Page said, $85 million in export certification rebates.

This motion tonight is another example of the coalition’s constant carping, moaning and bleating. They give the impression that something is wrong when in fact it is not. The government and industry are working together to build regional jobs and support the industries that previous speakers on the opposite side have talked about by cutting red tape and getting rid of prescriptive rules—making sure we get rid of the bureaucracy—and making sure our agricultural, horticultural and meat export industries are as efficient and effective as they possibly can be.

The member for Calare has form. He was rolled by the Liberals with respect to the dangerous legislation to ban New Zealand apples, which would have put at risk Australia’s $32 billion agricultural exports industry. Now he is looking around for a degree of relevance, so he has put forward this motion. The only risk to the meat industry in this country is from those opposite. This is typical of the National Party. We are used to it in Queensland. When they get back to their electorates they are all sympathetic and sensitive but down here they will follow the Liberals mindlessly. That is exactly what they are like. We have made a big difference in this industry. It is an industry that is particularly important in my electorate, because I have meatworks such as Kilcoy, which supports about 750 jobs; Coominya; Churchill, a small meatworks which deals mainly with domestic work; and, of course, the largest meat processing plant in the country, owned by JBS Australia, at Dinmore, where I started my working life as a cleaner. The CEO, John Berry, who is a member of the Australian government’s meat ministerial task force, has informed me that, as of 1 October this year, JBS will implement the Australian Meat Inspection System, AEMIS, in 11 processing sites across the country. Under the current certification system, JBS would have paid $15 million in AQIS inspection charges. Under the new model, with the $20 million three-year assistance package, they will pay $9 million.

The minister is conducting similar consultations with various sectors. These reforms will take place sector by sector. The member for Calare has been informed of this. Once again, he is playing politics. He is trying to drive the wrecking ball of negativity from those opposite through our reforms. Those opposite are simply miffed that Australia’s meat exporters, whom
they believe should be their good mates, colleagues and comrades, are negotiating and making arrangements with a federal Labor government. It is all about the Nationals over there and the Liberals from the country areas being miffed that their people are dealing with a federal Labor government.

The meat exporters overwhelmingly support the outcome announced by the minister in early September. The member for Calare has come to the party. He now says he will support it. But you would not know that if you listened to the drivel he was going on with. There is mindless negativity stamped all over this motion. When it comes to good policy, those opposite have been found wanting on this motion and on so many others. Of course, this motion is from the same people who stripped millions of dollars out of the biosecurity system when they sold off Australia’s post-entry quarantine facilities in 2001 and then leased them back. This federal Labor government is committed to reforming our biosecurity system because we know that regional Australians rely on a strong biosecurity system for their livelihood. It is obvious that the previous coalition government was more committed to eroding the national asset base.

Under the watch of members opposite a string of foreign pests invaded Australia—pests that continue to plague numerous parts of my home state. Now my constituents now find their livelihoods under threat from the Asian honey bees, fire ants and equine influenza. In 2007, then Prime Minister John Howard admitted they had been warned about changes to the quarantine laws which would allow equine flu into the country. The Leader of the Nationals, a previous agriculture minister, received letters from the Australian Racing Board warning of the potential dangers in 2004 and 2005. So those opposite, when it comes to a whole range of agricultural industries—horticulture, racing, a whole host of areas—have failed.

I cannot count the number of speeches I have heard from National Party members opposite in which they have rabbited on about honey bees, but the truth is those opposite did nothing to eradicate them when they were in power. It is their policy, they say, to return to full recovery with respect to this particular issue, but they are bereft of ideas on how to do it. They might as well throw the—

Mr Haase: Madam Deputy Speaker, I seek to intervene to ask a question.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs D’Ath): Is the member for Blair willing to give way?

Mr NEUMANN: I do not wish to take the question, Madam Deputy Speaker. Those opposite have not given any indication of how they would fund the 40 per cent AQIS export rebate that the member for Calare was talking about. Perhaps it is going to be thrown into the $70 billion black hole, or maybe the $11 billion black hole they had at the last election. As I said, they have cobbled together this motion to distract us from the fact that they did nothing during the 11½ years there were in power to address the failures in Australia’s biosecurity system. And they have done nothing in opposition. They are a policy-free zone on this issue—not just policy-free, but funding-free, because they have not come up with any ideas as to how they would fund any of these sorts of things. Since becoming the shadow spokesperson, the member for Calare has not put forward a single proposal—not one proposal—for how to make AQIS’s service delivery more efficient. Those opposite are not fair dinkum about supporting our initiatives for export certification reforms. Why? Because good policy is something that is entirely gone from their agenda. They have no interest in it. Motions like this clearly show that that is the case. We are doing work with the industry, and
on 6 September—let's talk about the facts, not the fiction—Gary Burridge from the Australian Meat Industry Council and the minister announced a new regulatory reform for meat exports: the Australian Meat Export Inspection System, which would be implemented on 1 October 2011 along with, as I mentioned before, the $25.8 million in Australian government funding to support the transition to new arrangements. The industry supported it. AMIC, Gary Burridge, the chair of the ministerial task force, said, 'AMIC will work closely with the Australian government as we implement the new system.'

That is what it is all about. They hate the fact that people they believe belong to them are working with the federal Labor government. That is what this motion is all about. It is an attempt by the member for Calare to be relevant. They hate the fact that an industry that they feel should be supporting them is working with the federal Labor government. I oppose the motion.

Mr SECKER (Barker—Opposition Whip) (20:11): I point out to the member for Blair, who is leaving the chamber as quickly as he possibly can, that he entirely misses the point of this motion. This is about the fact that this government and the previous minister had promised support for the industry in return for these changes. I will expand on that later, but the fact is that the government has again welshed on their promise.

I thank the member for Calare for raising this important issue. Australia has a proud export history, and I think it is important to ensure that this country can continue exporting viably into the future. This motion calls on the responsible minister to commission an independent study of legitimate costs to the government of AQIS export service inspection fees and charges for the six affected industries as evidenced at the AQIS/AMIC joint ministerial task force meeting on 7 May 2010. What could be more innocent than asking for an independent study of legitimate costs?

This motion also calls on the responsible minister to table in the House a document that explains how the government will provide a reduction in annual regulatory costs to the export industries in the order of $30 million per year from 1 July 2011 and also a document that outlines the completion of reforms that were to be delivered as part of the agreement to remove AQIS export service rebates between the government and the six affected industries, as I mentioned earlier. The motion also calls on the responsible minister to note the above commitments were part of a package agreed by the former minister for agriculture in return for the passage of their legislation to remove 40 per cent of the AQIS export service rebate and calls on the government to continue the AQIS export service rebate until the reforms are delivered, as agreed by this government.

The previous Labor government minister responsible for agriculture made promises that to date still have not been fulfilled despite the current minister offering some band-aid assistance. In 2009, the then Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Tony Burke, announced that, in exchange for axing the 40 per cent AQIS service inspection rebate, he would offer the industry a $127.4 million export certification reform package to fund efficient reforms. For two years this government failed to deliver on that promise. The 40 per cent export rebate ceased on 1 July this year, but up until last week there was still no action from the current minister. Because the government had refused to offer assistance to any of the export ministries affected, despite the 2009 promise, John Cobb, the shadow minister for agriculture, introduced this motion. The minister finally last week recognised that there was a
problem—about time—and announced the establishment of a $25.8 million package for the meat export industry. This is a small contribution to fix the large problem caused by this government. More needs to be done.

The minister has only offered to the meat industry a package where there are five other industries affected by the removal of the 40 per cent rebate—horticulture, dairy, fish, grain and live export. This package offered by the government only covers a small section of the reforms promised in 2009. An established pork abattoir in my electorate has raised concerns about the government's lack of reform also. The pork industry is required to pay 100 per cent of meat inspection costs with no government contribution. The regulatory costs are a huge burden to the business on top of the removal of the rebate from 1 July 2011. The majority of pork export abattoirs have successfully operated under the meat safety export program for the last 13 years and frankly this package that the government has announced will do nothing to assist abattoirs such as the one I have mentioned. In fact this government could do very well to cost the abattoirs such as this one one more. (Time expired)

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (20:16): I really do thank the opposition for giving us this opportunity just to focus for a while on a very good success story that this government has. I will outline the success story in my speech. In around two weeks time a brand-new food safety regulatory system is coming into force and it will be a world first. It is designed to give local producers, local industry, local workers much better control over their product, their workforce and the success of their export lines. This is the substance of the motion before us and yet those opposite have chosen to focus on something else again on themselves. That is no real surprise here. My colleagues have spoken and we heard previously many of them speak on these distractions that are already taking place. The great reform that is the substantive subject of this motion is exemplified by the new Australian Export Meat Inspection System. It is considered great and it is a great opportunity for current and new employers and industry players and also a great example of how Labor and industry work together to achieve superior outcomes for all those involved.

The reforms we focused on are broad applying to a range of foods but with the very limited time I have in this speech this evening I will only be able to focus on the example of a seismic change that is occurring within the meat export industry. Graintec Scientific have referred to this overhaul as the most significant reform in decades. Australian Meat Industry Council manager Steve Martin describes the reform as the culmination of five years of AQIS and AMIC work on maximising efficiency and productivity replacing a system based on the world of some 30 or 40 years ago. He said:

We needed something that better reflected the needs of 2011 export market access.

I am not quoting the minister there these are the words of Steve Martin manager of the Australian Meat Industry Council. This is a fact that the government has known to be correct. This is the goal that this government has striven to achieve. This is the outcome that this government will deliver next month. Industry support for this change is evident in the Australian Meat Industry Council's presentation of the 2011 Red Meat processing innovation award to a Queensland family run meat processing company called Nolan Meats. This award was presented less than two weeks ago on 7 September. Nolan Meats was presented with this prestigious award for what Beef Central describes as:
... its work in pioneering the application of food safety reform under the ground-breaking Australian Export Meat Inspection System.

So I want to read into Hansard some of Beef Central's account of Nolan's meats historic success piloting the new Australian export meat inspection system:

Nolan Meats has long had a goal to gain access to all international markets, with company people fulfilling the meat inspection role. It saw such a move as simultaneously providing a stronger career path for personnel, and greater flexibility and efficiency within the role carried out by meat inspectors.

"Most importantly we believe AEMIS enhances product safety," company director Tony Nolan said.

"It's about building-in quality at all points of the supply chain to reduce costs: not putting faith in government to 'inspect quality in' at greater cost, at just a couple of points in the chain."

"Quality and safety are our responsibilities under the system," Mr Nolan said.

"Having our own personnel take ownership and responsibility for meat inspection enables us to have a QA culture that embraces 'total accountability' instead of the government's 'all authority and no accountability' culture," Mr Nolan said.

As a result, productivity has been greatly improved, by having meat inspectors multi-tasking and performing all or part of other tasks necessary to allow smooth and efficient production flow. It also allowed valuable feedback to be transferred back up the supply chain where problems were identified.

The company has now achieved market access to countries that had been considered, under Australian Government Market Access terms, to be 'too sensitive' for the new AEMIS system. These included Japan, Taiwan and Korea.

All costs were borne entirely by the company and it says it expects to achieve a five-fold return on its investment. So we have evidence of the potential for productivity gains, and while my colleagues have talked a lot about the meat industry, it continues (Time expired)

Mr Haase (Durack) (20:21): I rise this evening to support this motion because my concern in this whole issue is that the government has not honoured a commitment. I still believe in a sense of honour being displayed in this place. In 2009 the Senate disallowed moves by the Rudd Labor government to axe the AQIS export certification rebate, which was worth approximately $40 million annually, depending on the amount of produce exported. The coalition came to an agreement with the former minister for agriculture in exchange for an agreement to remove 40 per cent AQIS export service rebate with an eventual move to full cost recovery. Mr Burke offered industry $127.4 million package to fund efficiency reforms. Mr Burke claimed that his export certification reform package would make reform of the AQIS export certification program a main priority. In addition, he also committed to a study by an independent authority that would examine the legitimate cost to government of inspections. In a letter of agreement signed by Minister Burke he stated:

Successful implementation of these reforms will provide a reduction in annual regulatory costs to the export industries in the order of $30 million per year from 1 July 2011. It will also provide the opportunity for removal of substantial costs from the export supply chain for industry and AQIS.

Well, guess what. That has not happened. The government have reneged on a deal and we have to listen tonight to drivel from the government about how this is about other things and it is about who is mates with whom and whether or not the industry is currying favour now with the ALP instead of its traditional supporters in the coalition.

That is irrelevant. What is pertinent here is the fact that the government committed to a deal and government have not honoured that deal. And that is what I personally find
absolutely offensive. And the industry has now in the latest move agreed to a compromise situation that will allow the meat aspect of the industry to move ahead, to clear out some of the cobwebs of the past, to clear some of the costs as they now move to self-trained, self-employed veterinary inspectors et cetera in the industry.

What about the other five industries that have been left out in the cold in this regard? What about the fishing industry? The dairy industry? The horticulturalists? The grain industry? The live export industry?

The live export industry knows where it stands with this government—slaughtered. We know that the horticultural industry is trying to make a positive move in solving the global food delivery situation. They are trying to expand export businesses. They are trying to grow products that are suitable for the export market. They are trying to analyse and develop those markets overseas and do they get assistance from this government in line with this commitment package? No, they do not. That is my concern. There seems to be a great deal of concern and lip service to the repartee in this debate but no-one is really concerned about who is hurting out there in industry; who is looking for a break so their effort is represented and supported by government by equal effort? It is a tough game developing new markets, especially in horticulture. My mob from the Ord, my mob from the Gascoyne in Carnarvon are trying to expand their horticultural markets because they are prepared to make a quid and put in the extra hard yards to develop Australian exports. They get no help whatsoever from this government because the government sees it all as populace moves and if they can win the votes by making a popular decision, that is what is important to them.

I can tell you from my growers, and it is horticulturalists I am speaking of specifically here, that there is no support coming from government and support is needed. When you are trying to compete in a global market a long way from home, you need all the support you can get. Some support from this government would be support, so I support this bill. It is a necessary wake-up call to government. Something ought to be done; the minister ought to do the honourable thing and step up to the plate. (Time expired)

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (20:26): This motion is nothing but a stunt by the member for Calare. As he well knows, the minister has in fact arranged briefings for him on the status of the meat industry and has also advised him that the government is continuing to work on a sector-by-sector basis on the necessary reforms to the agricultural sector of this country. The member for Calare has been made aware of that and could take up the opportunity of the briefings that the minister has arranged for him.

In the year 2000 the coalition government introduced a cost recovery for export services and while it later introduced a 40 per cent rebate on export services costs, this was a temporary rebate that should have lapsed. The fact of the matter is that when the member for Wide Bay was in the cabinet the Howard government had intended the rebate would finish in June 2008. It had made no provision whatsoever for it in the forward estimates.

Mr Haase: Madam Deputy Speaker, I seek to intervene.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs D’Ath): Is the member for Makin willing to give way?

Mr ZAPPPIA: No, I am not. My time is being wasted in terms of my opportunity to speak on this matter. It is interesting that neither did the National Party’s 2000 election platform make any financial provision for the continuation of that rebate. The Nationals had entrenched
a cumbersome certification system and agreed to provide transitional funds to extend the rebate until 30 June 2011 whilst developing reforms to enable industry and AQIS to introduce efficiencies to become more internationally competitive. That is typical of the National Party in government. As far as Australia's biosecurity system was concerned they were all talk and no action. When the leader of the Nationals was at the cabinet table he agreed to sell off all of Australia's post entry quarantine facilities, stripping hundreds of millions of dollars out of a future budget.

I repeat it will cost the Australian taxpayer hundreds of millions of dollars to reinstate Australia's post entry quarantine facilities sold by the leader of the Nationals with no regard for changes in land use, no plan for maintaining and apparently no regret for putting Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries, Australia's research community and Australia's medical practitioners without a guarantee of continued access to the best genetic resources in the world.

Since he became the spokesman, the member for Calare has not provided one suggestion for how Australia could improve its quarantine and biosecurity system. He has not secured one single dollar in the shadow cabinet to reform Australia's quarantine system in the way it needs to be. It is all right to come into this place and argue for changes, but I suggest that the first place he should argue for those changes and secure them is within his own party room. He has not done that. He simply came here quite clearly as a stunt to try and appease people in his own electorate. As usual, the Liberal Nationals left the hard work of reform to the Labor Party. Not only is the Labor Party delivering, we are doing a better job than those opposite could do.

In December 2009, the Labor government commenced the $127.8 million export certification reform package to develop a modern export certification system that maintains Australia's reputation as a producer of high-quality safe food products. The government established six task forces to develop and deliver reforms and efficiencies to the system. If the member for Calare wants to find out about this legitimate costs of government then he need only visit the departmental website where he will find a report which the department commissioned as agreed by the former minister—that is, Minister Burke. It is an independent review of AQIS fees and charges. If those opposite want an update on the progress of all of those activities of the task forces they need simply visit the department's website. It is all there for them to see.

Meanwhile the Gillard government is getting on with the business of implementing better government service delivery for Australia's food exporters. A fortnight ago, the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Australian Meat Industry Council announced the commencement of the Australian export meat inspection system together with up to $25.8 million in funding to support the transition to the new system. The Gillard government will continue to provide the most cost effective flexible export certification system that can be implemented whilst maintaining export market confidence. The Gillard government is getting on with the job of improving service delivery and jobs in regional Australia.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs D'Ath): Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.
Surf-Lifesavers

Debate resumed on the motion by Mr Lyons:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges the:

(a) surf lifesavers who risked their lives to perform approximately 11,000 rescues in Australia last year; and

(b) work done by surf lifesavers in northern Australia as its surf season comes to an end;

(2) recognises the:

(a) importance of water safety in Australia as we head into the warmer months in the southern parts of Australia; and

(b) vital work of Surf Life Saving Australia and its efforts in patrolling our beaches and educating swimmers; and

(3) encourages all:

(a) Australians to learn to swim so that every Australian is a swimmer and every Australian swimmer a lifesaver; and

(b) users of aquatic environments, such as pools, rivers, lakes and the surf, to understand those environments and be safe as they swim.

Mr LYONS (Bass) (20:32): I rise to speak to the motion on the importance of Surf Life Saving Australia. For more than 100 years, Australians and tourists have been drawn to Australia's beaches. With an estimated 100 million beach visitations each year, safety on the beach is vital. As I have stated before, Surf Life Saving is an active part of Australia's local communities. Our movement prides itself in offering mateship, education and experience. In doing so, it is giving back to the community. I am proud to be a member of both the Bridport and Launceston Surf Life Saving clubs in Tasmania. I have had a long association with the movement.

Surf Life Saving Australia has played a valuable role in reducing the number of deaths in our coastal waters. It has provided a safe and educational environment for all ages to enjoy on Australia's popular coastline. Its work is to be commended. Unfortunately there are still some tragedies in our waters. Surf Life Saving Australia released its 2011 National Coastal Safety Report last week. Among the key findings of the report was that there were 61 coastal drowning deaths last year. However, this is below the seven-year average of 89. Fifty-two, or 85 per cent, were males; 14, or 23 per cent, were aged between 20 and 29 years, the most common age group; 21, or 34 per cent, were of foreign ethnicity of which five per cent were international visitors. Over 40 per cent occurred during summer which is why I want to highlight this topic now as we are coming into the warmer months.

Nineteen, or 31 per cent, were attributed to swimming or wading; 17, or 28 per cent, were attributed to boating; and six, or 10 per cent, were attributed to rock fishing. Out of all our coastal drownings, 12, or 20 per cent, were attributed to rip currents. Education is important in avoiding these tragic drownings. Forty-eight per cent of drownings occurred at the beach and 22 of the victims lived less than 10 kilometres from their drowning location. Thirty-one drownings occurred less than five kilometres from a lifesaving service. Peter George, the Chief Operating Officer, noted that there was a downward trend in coastal drowning deaths over the past seven years. We need to be out there educating communities about how to be
safe in the water. Peter George also highlighted that men continued to be overrepresented in
the coastal drowning data and that this is down to a mixture of bravado and an inflated sense
of ability. We are still seeing too many young men's lives cut short. We should be educating
our communities about the importance of water safety.

I was pleased to host the second meeting of the Parliamentary Friends of Surf Life Saving
Australia last Wednesday. We had great attendance by members, senators and their staff. The
SLSA President, Graham Ford, Chief Operating Officer, Peter George AM and CEO Brett
Williamson OAM presented certificates to members and talked about the national coastal
safety policy. In October this year at Parliament House, Surf Life Saving Australia will be
releasing a report on the economic contributions of surf lifesaving in Australia. The
Parliamentary Friends of Surf Life Saving are encouraged to attend that preview. Something
that you can talk about to those in your electorates who have iPhones or iPads is a free
application provided by Surf Life Saving Australia called Beachsafe. Beachsafe displays
beach safety information for visitors to Australian beaches and provides the day's beach
information such as real-time hazards and beach status information when lifesavers are
present.

Community education plays a vital role in SLSA's aquatic safety. SLSA provides a number
of courses to help people understand the surf, along with community courses in first aid and
resuscitation. The important message is that the only way to swim safely at a beach is
between the flags. We also recommend that people swim with a mate and to refrain from
swimming at night and also if they have consumed alcohol.

Surf Life Saving is the largest volunteer movement of its kind in Australia, and I would
encourage people to join and support the important work of Surf Life Saving. With summer
fast approaching and the patrol season commencing, people who want to learn the skills of
surf-lifesaving can contact their local club. With the skills I have learnt in Surf Life Saving, I
have carried out seven resuscitations, and one of my daughters, Michelle, has successfully
resuscitated two people. You could help save the life of someone close to you one day. I
encourage people to stay safe at the beach and to donate to and participate in Surf Life
Saving. Every Australian should be a swimmer and every swimmer should be a lifesaver. Every
Australian can help save a life.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (20:37): It gives me great pleasure to rise tonight to support the
motion put forward by the honourable member who has just spoken, the member for Bass.
Can I also commend the member for Bass for the fact that he has helped to resuscitate seven
people in his service as a lifesaver. That is truly commendable. I think all of us here
acknowledge what a fantastic effort that is.

Mr Lyons: And lost one.

Mr TEHAN: The member for Bass has just interrupted to say that in that process he lost
one person. I think that also shows the true impact of this work and how great and important it
is, because it is serious business and people can lose their lives. I think that actually makes
what the member for Bass has done all the more commendable, because that could not have
been an easy process for him. I once again acknowledge the significant role that he has played
as a surf-lifesaver.
It gives me great pleasure, as I said earlier, to stand in support of this motion. Early last year, one of the first things I did as the member for Wannon was to have the Leader of the Opposition come down to my electorate. It was fantastic, because I was able to take the Leader of the Opposition to one of my Surf Life Saving clubs, the Port Fairy Surf Life Saving Club. This club has been in operation since roughly 1924 and it has been doing fantastic work since then.

The club welcomed the Leader of the Opposition with open arms. It was very much a bipartisan event. There was a bit of a sausage sizzle, and then the Leader of the Opposition went out on a surf boat—out over the waves. I must say that I do not think he had been in one of those boats for about 10 years, but he sat in it and went over the waves like he had been doing it all of his life. I think the rest of us probably would have found it quite an exhausting process but he managed to do it without really taking a breath. It was a fantastic day, and it really hit home to me the important role that surf-lifesavers play. I would like to support the member for Bass in encouraging people in Australia to get involved with their Surf Life Saving club, because the Port Fairy club, for one, has a workload that is falling on fewer and fewer people. They need new members and they need younger members because they are getting to the stage where they are beginning to wonder whether they can patrol that beach for the whole of the summer. I think this is an excellent motion that the member has brought forward. I would once again encourage every Australian to think about joining the local Surf Life Saving club. It is absolutely important work that is done. We have to make sure that like every volunteer organisation the workload is not left for a diminishing few. We especially need to encourage the younger generations—and I take that as my generation and those below—to make sure they continue to get involved with community organisations because it is absolutely vital work that they do.

In my electorate we also have a Surf Life Saving club in Warrnambool. I was very privileged to go there and help open a new room they have just built at the Warrnambool Surf Life Saving Club. It has been in operation since 1930. They do terrific work there as well. It is a fantastic club. It has terrific facilities and it is a fantastic beach. As a matter of fact, it is such a terrific beach because not only can people swim at it but they still take the local horses there to train them. It is a terrific multiuse of the beach. It has led to Warrnambool now being one of the best training facilities in Victoria.

Port Campbell also has a terrific Surf Life Saving club and they do terrific work there. Once again, it has got one of the best views, as most Surf Life Saving clubs do, of the coastal area and the magnificent coastal area that goes along the southern border of my fantastic electorate.

In summary, I once again reiterate what the member for Bass has said. Surf-lifesaving is a great volunteer activity. We need to encourage more and more people to get involved. As summer approaches, if we could all take a step back and think, 'Do we have the time?' and, if we can, get involved with surf-lifesaving.

Ms Rishworth (Kingston) (20:42): I rise in support of this very important motion which goes to acknowledging the great work of our surf-lifesavers and highlighting the importance of water safety. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the member for Bass for bringing this important matter to the attention of the House.
This motion rightly acknowledges surf-lifesavers who risk their lives to perform rescues in Australia every year but in particular last year, and also recognises the contribution of surf-lifesavers in Northern Australia as their surf season comes to an end. Surf-lifesavers have been protecting the lives of beachgoers for over a century. Surf Life Saving is one of Australia's largest volunteer organisations with a total membership of around 130,000 and an active team of around 40,000 people who patrol our coastline on a regular basis.

It is estimated that surf-lifesavers spend more than a million hours patrolling our beaches each year. If you think about it, a million hours is such an incredible contribution: patrolling our beaches, performing rescue operations and using support services such as helicopters and rescue boats. Together each year surf-lifesavers rescue around 11,000 people, provide emergency care to 35,000 and give safety advice to more than 600,000. These dedicated Australian volunteers spend their time creating a safe environment around our beaches through patrols and education initiatives.

When faced with hazardous and potentially life-threatening scenarios, surf-lifesavers frequently demonstrate exceptional courage and skill in order to protect and save the lives of their fellow Australians. I cannot speak highly enough of the selfless men and women who give up their own time to protect and save and promote life along our coastline. In my electorate we have five great Surf Life Saving clubs and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the members and volunteers at Aldinga Bay Surf Life Saving Club, Moana Surf Life Saving Club Southport, Surf Life Saving Club, Port Noarlunga Surf Life Saving Club and Christies Beach Surf Life Saving Club, which I have the privilege of also being a member of.

This motion recognises the importance of water safety as we head into the warmer months in the southern parts of Australia. Taking the family for a day at the beach is part and parcel of the Australian way of life and I would certainly encourage everyone to come down to my electorate, which has 31 kilometres of beach on pristine coastline. However, while we have some beautiful beaches it is also vital to remember that we must stay vigilant about water safety. Unfortunately, in my electorate we have had a tragic start to the warmer months with a scuba diver drowning at Port Noarlunga only a few days ago. The stark reality is that beaches are dangerous environments and the demand for vigilance is important for every Australian.

The National Coastal Safety Report compiled by Surf Life Saving Australia, released last week, reported a total of 61 coastal drowning deaths between 2010 and 2011. While this figure is below the seven-year average of 89, which I think is really important to note, it remains that every life lost is one too many. The report also reveals that almost 50 per cent of drowning deaths occurred five kilometres or more from the nearest surf-lifesaving station. These figures suggest that surf-lifesavers are an effective means of preserving the life of swimmers. The motion also urges 'users of aquatic environments', including 'pools, rivers, lakes and the surf', to understand that those environments are dangerous and to exercise caution. Drowning does not just happen at the beach or in swimming pools. It can happen in rivers, in creeks, in streams, in lakes, in dams or in lagoons.

One disturbing trend has seen a substantial increase in the proportion of drownings occurring in the over-55 age group and in the under-five age group. Learning to swim is a really important part of the Australian lifestyle. I would certainly encourage people to take advantage of the wide range of educational programs available through Surf Life Saving.
Australia. I note that the motion does urge people to think about learning to swim and I would like to say—given my previous life as a swimming teacher, having taught mums and bubs classes as well as adult learn-to-swim classes and everything in between—it is never too late to learn how to swim. I say to anyone out there that improved water confidence could be the thing that saves your life. I would like to conclude by again commending the member for Bass on this motion which provides a valuable opportunity to recognise the wonderful work of our surf-lifesavers in protecting lives at the beach. Also, it provides a timely reminder to all Australians to ensure that they are water smart, as summer sets in in the southern areas of Australia, and to listen to the advice of surf-lifesavers and always swim between the flags.

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (20:47): I would like to commend the member for Bass for bringing forward this motion about surf-lifesavers. It is a very important motion. I rise to speak on it because the history of Higgins is inextricably linked to one of the most tragic events in our nation's history, the loss of Prime Minister Harold Holt, at Cheviot Beach in 1964. Harold Holt, as all of you would know, was a former member for Higgins and he brought, through this tragic event, into the nation's consciousness the danger of our waters and our beaches. The beach culture is one of the defining features that make Australia the greatest place in the world in which to live. Be it the calm waters of Port Phillip Bay on a summer's day right through to the world-famous surf beaches of Bells Beach and Bondi Beach, surf, sand and sun are iconic elements of the Australian social and cultural fabric.

However, with these simple pleasures come inherent dangers and that is why I stand to applaud and pay tribute to one of the very significant volunteer organisations in this country, Surf Life Saving Australia. This volunteer organisation has been with us for over 100 years. The first lifesaving group appeared at Bondi Beach in 1907. It quickly developed into nine affiliated groups around Sydney beaches and by the 1930s state organisations had been established in New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland. By 1952 all states had established their own associations and today there are over 307 clubs nationwide including 57 in my own state of Victoria. The organisation still operates on a volunteer basis with around 15,000 active volunteers registered. This is truly an inspiration. As with other emergency services, there is no higher calling than to risk one's own life to save another, and we have heard from the member for Bass about his experiences in this regard. The ability to see somebody in danger, identify that risk and run towards that risk in order to save them is something that is truly noble. On most recent figures in Victoria we know that there were over 423 rescues performed last year, and 1,190 people required first aid, delivered by lifesavers. Thankfully, according to this year's national coastal safety report, drowning deaths are down. But even though those deaths are down—as has been so eloquently mentioned by my colleague just before—one drowning death is one too many.

It is important to understand and become confident around water. That is why the junior lifesaving organisation, the Nippers, is so important. It involves over 8,000 kids aged six to 13. This is also run by volunteers who give up their time on the weekends and during holidays to teach children about water safety and surf rescue. Being a land girt by sea, sea salt is in our veins. From Ian Thorpe to Grant Hackett, swimming is a key component of the Australian way of life. Just like these champions, swimming must be taught at an early age to help reduce the risk of any potential disaster.
While it is important to know about water around beaches, it also terribly applicable around the home as well because tragedies are not limited to beaches alone. In fact, half of all drownings for children aged between one and four occur at the family home. According to KidsHealth.org, children can drown in water as shallow as six centimetres. That is why I am helping to promote the Kids Alive—Do the Five program coordinated by legendary swimming coach Laurie Lawrence in my electorate of Higgins. The DVD produced by Laurie Lawrence and the government outlines the five necessary steps to ensure kid safety around water. It is something that I will definitely be promoting even more actively in the lead-up to summer later this year.

Of course, learning to swim is not simply about survival. Swimming is a fantastic way to stay fit. The beauty of swimming is that all you need is a body of water. Swimming can also be very social. In my final moments I want to mention the Malvern Marlins. The Marlins consist of two groups: over-20s and seniors. Both groups compete in a number of national competitions and have a rich history of success, taking home a number of trophies. Beyond competing they also get involved in social activities, with frequent dinners, barbecues and events being a common occurrence.

I want to finish by highlighting the volunteer nature of surf-lifesavers. Volunteers are the glue that binds our society together. Giving one's time to serve others without seeking reward is a truly gracious calling and its significance cannot be overestimated in the complex tapestry that is Australia.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (20:52): I want to thank very much my colleague, the member for Bass, who has a lifetime of involvement in surf-lifesaving in his sporting life. He is a passionate advocate. He had a lot to do with surf-lifesaving in my electorate of Braddon—when he did not need permission to come into Braddon! On my staff, Kay Eastley is a dedicated surf-lifesaver and is an example of the many volunteers that make up seven of Tasmania's 14 clubs on the north-west coast of Tassie. I want to thank each and every one of those surf-lifesavers, as my colleagues on both sides of the House have been thanking those representatives of surf-lifesaving clubs in their electorates on this motion tonight.

Australians love the water. We have been attracted to the coast for a long time—over a hundred years. We have something like a hundred million beach visitations per year, something like 11,600 beaches and 36,000 kilometres of coastline, some of the best of which are in Tasmania. Since 1907, Surf Life Saving has done everything possible to help educate our communities about water safety and also have patrolled our beaches and our coastlines—none more so than on the north-west coast of Tassie.

In Tasmania there are 14 clubs: of those, Boat Harbour, Burnie, Devonport, Penguin, Port Sorell, Somerset and Ulverstone are on the north-west coast. Just for the record, and proudly so, 99 lifesaving rescues were made last year in Tasmania, 350 first aid treatments were administered and 1,931 preventative actions were taken to avoid tragedies from happening in the first place. Those statistics are very admirable, but nationwide, just as in Tasmania, there is a lot more that we need to do. Any assistance that surf-lifesaving clubs can receive from communities and from government in particular is very well used. I will demonstrate this with an example. A recent merger of offshore rescue groups has seen Surf Life Saving Tasmania grow to 15 clubs and services, and some affiliates, I must add, and is now capable of
delivering inland, inshore and offshore rescue services to complement existing emergency services. To complement these services a state-wide 13 SURF phone activation system has been introduced in conjunction with a radio repeater network linking all clubs and services. This has enabled effective and efficient coordination of the state's clubs and services and 3,000 volunteers for any aquatic incidents. This future lifesaving repeater network was enabled using federal black spot funding. This three-year federal black spot drowning intervention program has contributed to a significant reduction in drowning across the nation, not just in Tassie, with figures coming down from 81 to 61 in the past two years through programs introduced by Surf Life Saving Australia.

Tasmania unfortunately has one of Australia's highest drowning rates—3.5 per 100,000 people per annum—which highlights the need for further funding for continuation of appropriate drowning intervention programs in Australia. Being an island state, we have 1,269 accessible beaches, let alone other waterways and dams, and thousands of potential drowning areas.

Finally, this summer will see the launch of a purpose-built all-weather jet rescue boat on Tasmania's north-west coast, complementing existing police vessels in Circular Head and Devonport. The vessel is capable of shallow water and large surface rescue. The craft can be launched in very adverse conditions and is a welcome addition to our beautiful yet occasionally treacherous coast. Again, I thank all those members of Surf Life Saving Australia and Surf Life Saving Tasmania for volunteering their services and doing such a marvellous job. I thank the member for Bass for his abiding interest in surf-lifesaving matters Australia-wide in this parliament and in Tasmania.

**Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (20:57):** I recently took the opportunity to speak in this place about some of the surf clubs on the southern Gold Coast. Today I would like to go into some further detail about some of the ventures that are currently being undertaken by the Surf Life Saving Queensland Point Danger Branch. The Point Danger Branch is entering its 88th year and as a branch supports 11 of the 13 surf-lifesaving clubs within my electorate, including Tallebudgera, Pacific, Palm Beach, Currumbin, Tugun, Bilinga, North Kirra, Kirra, Coolangatta, Tweed Heads and Rainbow Bay. There are a total of approximately 6,796 members of these clubs within the Point Danger Branch and these same members are also teaching local nippers in surf sports as well as training new members so that they have the necessary skills to be able to assist with all aspects of beach patrols. These members are part of one of the largest community volunteer organisations in the country.

Recently, eight volunteers from clubs within the Point Danger Branch received awards at the Queensland annual awards dinner. I would like to congratulate Claudia and Sam Fien from Rainbow Bay, Jessica Attenborough from North Kirra, Marsha and Chris Maynard from Currumbin and Anthony Cassone from Kirra. I would especially like to congratulate Bev Walsh from Currumbin and Ray Fien from Rainbow Bay for also winning awards on the night and for being nominated for the national awards in October this year.

One of the concerns for surf-lifesaving clubs in general has been the decrease in the number of volunteers. However, the Point Danger Branch membership numbers remain strong and they are proud of the quality of lifesaving services that they provide. In addition to these services, the Point Danger Branch are continually looking at opportunities to get the local community involved. They are putting programs together that include School Surf Talk
visits, youth development initiatives and programs aimed at attracting the retired community into surf lifesaving. The School Surf Talk program has been designed to educate primary and secondary students on surf safety and surf awareness. This program intends to educate around 4,500 Gold Coast students, including students from Caningeraba State School, Currumbin Valley State School, Currumbin Primary State School and Hillcrest Christian College. In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the president of the Point Danger branch, Mal Barnes, along with the deputy president, Tony Wischnevsky, and the rest of their committee for their commitment to the local surf-lifesaving club. I would also like to thank Kerrie Barnes, who manages the branch, for keeping me up-to-date on the branch activities in the local community.

Debate adjourned.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Debate resumed.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs D’Ath): The question is:

That grievances be noted.

Adhesive Arachnoiditis

Mr IRONS (Swan) (21:00): I rise in this evening’s grievance debate to speak about a situation where potentially thousands of Australians contracted the disease adhesive arachnoiditis after receiving a spinal injection of the chemical dyes Myodil or Pantopaque in the period from 1945 to the late 1980s. I bring to the attention of the House the sense of injustice and abandonment these people feel and to call for a parliamentary inquiry into their situation. At the outset, I would like to thank one of my Queens Park constituents, Mr Max Scott, a sufferer of adhesive arachnoiditis, for bringing this matter to my attention. Mr Scott attributes his contraction of arachnoiditis to his treatment with Myodil at Rivervale hospital in 1977. I would also like to thank the Parliamentary Library for the information that they have provided, which has been of great assistance as I have pursued information from Australian health authorities and as I prepared this speech.

Arachnoiditis is a debilitating neurological disease and, I think it would be fair to say, one of the most unpleasant diseases that one could suffer from. The condition itself is an inflammation of the arachnoid membrane. In many people, it affects the nerves running to the lower back and legs. The most common symptom is pain, but arachnoiditis can also cause (1) tingling, numbness or weakness in the legs; (2) sensations that may feel like insects crawling on the skin or water trickling down the leg; (3) severe shooting pain that can be similar to an electric shock sensation; (4) muscle cramps, spasms and uncontrollable twitching; and (5) bladder, bowel and/or sexual dysfunction. In its most severe form, this is an almost unbearable disease and, sadly, there are reports that many sufferers contemplate suicide. It slowly shuts the body down over a period of time.

When my constituent first raised this issue with me, he was able to walk into my East Victoria Park electorate office after driving himself from his home in Queens Park. Now, just a short time later, he is wheelchair bound and on the path to becoming a paraplegic. He suffers daily pain and there is little that can be done, as arachnoiditis is largely an incurable disease.
There are a variety of causes of arachnoiditis, one being the injection of a foreign substance, such as contrast media, into the spine. Unfortunately, the injection of the contrast media Pantopaque and Myodil, proprietary names of the chemical iophendylate, occurred widely in Australia between the 1940s and the 1980s. Iophendylate was injected into the spine and used as a radiological dye prior to the availability of MRI and CT technology. Once the dangers of the contrast medium and the link to adhesive arachnoiditis became apparent, the drug was withdrawn from the market across the world, but by then the damage had been done. Withdrawal did not occur at the same rate. There were reports that in Sweden it was banned in 1948, while in Australia it died a natural death in the eighties when MRI and CT scanning equipment became more widely used. Many questions have been raised as to how this contrast medium could have continued to be licensed for use in Australia up until the late 1980s.

This is a matter that has been raised in parliament before. Indeed, I acknowledge that this is not the first time that there have been calls for such an inquiry in this place. In 2002, the former member for Throsby, Jennie George, introduced a motion calling for an inquiry into this matter. Ms George referred evocatively to a 'conspiracy of silence about the incurable disease adhesive arachnoiditis', which she estimated to affect up to 60,000 Australian citizens. Ms George said questions needed to be answered about how a drug that had been introduced in Australia in 1945 and banned in Sweden in 1948 could have been used widely in Australia until withdrawn in 1987. I note that the current members for Boothby, Moore and Shortland also spoke on the motion. The member for Moore provided some details on the Commonwealth's role, stating:

Myodil was on the Australian market from at least 1959 and Pantopaque from at least 1961. Both agents were therefore available before the introduction of a therapeutic regulation program and requirements for premarketing evaluations in 1970.

The member for Shortland said that it was absolutely necessary that this is investigated. However, there was no subsequent inquiry, and the issue seems to have been put on the backburner ever since by governments of both persuasions.

An inquiry into this issue is long overdue, but now is an appropriate time. The slow decline in health for sufferers has meant that many people who were injected in the seventies and eighties are just beginning to suffer the ostensible effects of this disease today. It is in this context that Mr Scott approached me, asking for my assistance in getting to the bottom of this matter and seeing if there were any action he could take to achieve some assistance from the government.

I came to the chamber today to make this speech having made a great number of inquiries on his behalf to the Australian health establishment, and having received unsatisfactory results to date. I want to quickly brief the House on some of this correspondence now.

We wrote to the Minister for Health and Ageing on 27 July 2010, and this was responded to on 18 August by the head of the Office of Medicine Authorisation in the Therapeutic Goods Administration. In this reply we were referred to the Medical Board of Australia. Accordingly, I wrote to the Medical Board of Australia on Mr Scott's behalf on 7 September 2010. After some time without a response it was followed up by a personal letter from Mr Scott on 31 October 2010. The response of 10 November referred us on to the Office of Health Review. Accordingly, a third letter was written to Anne Donaldson, director of the
Office of Health Review on 17 November 2010. She replied on 1 December, stating, 'Whilst I sympathise with Mr Scott's situation, this office is unable to assist him on this occasion. This is because our legislation prescribes that we should not deal with a complaint that is older than 24 months. While there is some discretion available, we are unable to deal with a complaint about matters that occurred prior to 1995.'

This handballing from one organisation to another suggests that either these organisations are unaware of their functions or that this is an issue that they just do not want to deal with. I suspect there may be a bit of both going on.

Given these unsatisfactory responses, I thought the appropriate course of action to take was to contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman, which I did on 13 January this year. However, to this day I still have not received an official written reply from the Ombudsman and nor has Mr Scott.

I am beginning to understand why the member for Throsby in 2002 spoke about a conspiracy of silence. It is this lack of interest and communication that has been an unending source of frustration for those affected by the disease, and it is why I call today on the parliament for an inquiry into this matter. The lack of interest from the Commonwealth Ombudsman is particularly disappointing, given the positive role played by the UK ombudsman in extracting information from Glaxo. According to the Parliamentary Library, an article written by Judy Jones in the British Medical Journal said that a member of the public complained to the ombudsman in 1998 after the UK Medicines Control Agency refused to disclose information about the safety, quality and efficacy of Myodil that had been considered in reaching the decision about the product licence in 1987. After the ombudsman's intervention the agency agreed to disclose a substantial amount of the information about Myodil.

As I have mentioned already, it is not just Australia where people were injected with this contrast medium. It happened across the world and, as such, it is worth considering what has happened overseas. In the UK Pantopaque was marketed as Myodil and was withdrawn from the market by its manufacturer, Glaxo, in 1987. According to research undertaken by the Parliamentary Library, Glaxo paid out £11 million in 1995 to 425 claimants in the UK, USA and Australia without accepting liability. The terms of the Glaxo payout were confidential, and there seems to be no information on how compensation has worked or was judged. The case that Glaxo regularly mounts in its defence is that by definition, people who had myelograms were already back sufferers.

In the US, where the substance was marketed under the Pantopaque name, the company was successfully sued by one person, but the settlement took place out of court. In New Zealand, the Accident Compensation Corporation made payments to a number of sufferers of iatrogenic arachnoiditis. Payments varied from person to person and, again, the details of the exact payments, the persons to whom they were made and the nature of the evidence available were not in the public domain.

Many support groups around the world have made allegations of an alleged conspiracy by manufacturers to continue to promote the use of the agent and compliance by medical staff in maintaining the use of the contrast mediums Myodil and Pantopaque, despite the knowledge of a link with arachnoiditis. I understand that drug companies have settled many legal claims
in the US, the UK and Australia out of court and on an individual basis, and that lawyers have deemed class action not to be viable.

The best committee to look into this matter is the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing, of which I am the deputy chair. Fortunately, the chair is in the chair here tonight. I requested of the committee chair that the committee initiate such an inquiry, and spoke in favour of it meeting in March. The committee has agreed to reconsider this as its next major inquiry, and I look forward to this happening.

In conclusion, it does seem that, whatever avenue one pursues, there is always a brick wall in the way. Even the Parliamentary Library has reported to my office that it is finding it difficult to get answers to some of its questions. The Prime Minister often talks about tearing down brick walls, and this is an ideal opportunity to do just that. It is time for an inquiry, and I thank you for your time because I have run out of time.

Steel Industry

Mr GIBBONS (Bendigo) (21:10): I want to use this grievance debate tonight to talk about recent developments in Australia's manufacturing industry. As members of the House will be aware, the recent announcement of plant closures and job losses at BlueScope Steel is of serious concern on many levels. First and foremost, it is devastating news for the thousands of people who are likely to lose their jobs both at BlueScope and at its suppliers and subcontractors. Secondly, it is a stark warning that the current commodities boom and the high Australian dollar exchange rate are having a severe impact on our non-mining industries, including manufacturing, agriculture and tourism. Thirdly, it is a wake-up call that we need to take action before any damage to those industries becomes irreversible. This includes doing what we can to encourage greater purchasing by both government and private companies from local suppliers.

Australian governments from both sides of politics have been thoughtful promoters of free trade, but let us be clear about one thing: many of the world's largest economies and advocates of free trade use domestic content requirements as a way to support their local industry. For example, the country most people associate with the free market, the United States, has a long history of extensive local content requirements for its government purchasing, in particular since the implementation of the Buy American Act in 1933. This legislation was specifically intended to support the US manufacturing industry by ensuring that products used and taxpayer funded projects are sourced from US firms. Most US government projects require at least 51 per cent local content, and some, such as roads and rail, have a 100 per cent local content requirement. What is more, US firms do not even have to match the price of an imported competitor to secure business from the government. Prices charged by large US suppliers can be up to six per cent higher than that for equivalent foreign products before a government department can use cost as a reason for not buying locally. If the product is from small US businesses, the price can be 12 per cent higher than the imported equivalent. In the case of road and rail projects, the Secretary of Transportation has ruled that domestic content must be used unless it costs 25 per cent more than imports. In 2008, the US Government Accountability Office summarised the benefits of these policies as:

… protecting domestic employment through national infrastructure improvements that can stimulate economic activity and create jobs; protecting against unfair competition from foreign firms as a result of
foreign government subsidies; and maintaining national security interests through the continued use and
development of certain industries within the U.S. economy, like the iron and steel industries.

Exactly the same argument should apply here in Australia. The economic significance of
Australian industry participation extends beyond direct participants in major projects to all of
the suppliers and subcontractors involved through the industry supply chains. All levels of
government must be committed to maximising the retention of skills and jobs in Australia,
and they should gear their procurement practices accordingly, having due regard to the whole-
of-life value-for-money considerations and Australia's international trade obligations.

Let me give you an illustration from my own electorate of Bendigo. Members will know
that the defence manufacturing industry is an important part of Bendigo's economy. One
locally based manufacturer, Thales Australia, sets a good example by buying the steel for its
Bushmaster protected mobility vehicles from BlueScope Steel. Each Bushmaster contains 15
 tonnes of steel. That means 838 vehicles to be supplied to the Australian Defence Force will
have generated orders of more than 12,500 tonnes of steel from BlueScope, and that does not
include the export orders from the Dutch and the United Kingdom governments. Should
Thales be awarded an order for its Bushmaster utility vehicle, each of which contains five
tones of steel, not only will this create more jobs and retain skills in Australia but a contract
for, say, 500 vehicles would result in steel orders of another 2,500 tonnes from BlueScope.
This example clearly demonstrates that, when it comes to government procurement, there is
more to acting in Australia's national interest than buying from the currently cheapest
supplier. While mentioning Thales, I will make one observation about the current light
protected vehicle tender which the company will bid for with its Hawkei program. I draw
members' attention to an article by Henry Thornton which appeared in the Australian on 6
September. As many members will know, Henry Thornton is the nom de plume of Peter
Jonson, a former head of research at the Reserve Bank of Australia and a former candidate for
Liberal Party preselection. He is hardly known as a trade protectionist and certainly not
known for his radical views. In this article, however, Dr Jonson writes:

As long as the possibility of serious global conflict exists, no sensible nation should rely entirely on
global free trade, which will immediately be disrupted in any serious conflict.

He goes on to say that the process for considering alternatives for the Hawkei is:

… no way to treat a strategic Australian defence business. It amounts to anti-protection (giving
advantage to foreigners).

It is not just government purchasing that is relevant here. Australia's private sector also has to
take greater initiative with its procurement.

If recent reports about the Australian mining industry sourcing its steel requirements
overseas are correct, it is a matter of great concern. While the current mining boom has
brought and continues to bring significant benefits for mining companies and their
shareholders, its impact on the nation is far more mixed, as the Australia Institute's recent
research report has highlighted. According to this report, the mining boom is negatively
affecting other sectors of the economy in several ways. These include driving up the exchange
rate; driving up the cost of skilled labour for businesses in other sectors; driving up the prices
of raw materials used in mining, such as concrete; and driving up the cost of other services,
such as construction.
Despite some of its well-financed propaganda, it appears that mining is not the extensive employer and highly productive industry it likes to claim. It employs just 1.9 per cent of Australian workers, making it a smaller employer than the arts and recreation sector, and its record on productivity is woeful. It is one of the biggest users of, and advocates for, individual employment contracts. Despite this, its labour productivity fell by half between 2000-01 and 2009-10. What makes this result even more startling, according to the Australia Institute report, is that productivity in the rest of the economy is growing rapidly. In other words, the mining industry is holding back improvements to our national productivity, one of the key factors that contributes to increasing a country’s standard of living.

Furthermore, much of the profit from the mining industry is leaving Australia. In 2009-10, according to the Australia Institute again, mining profits were $51 billion, of which 83 per cent, or $42 billion, accrued to foreign investors. Over the next 10 years, profits from mining are expected to be about $600 billion. If the present levels of foreign ownership continue, about $500 billion of these profits will end up in the hands of overseas shareholders. It is reprehensible that largely foreign owned companies, operating in Australia to take advantage of its political, legal, financial and social stability, should have no qualms about buying from an overseas supplier on the sole basis of short-term cost.

If companies wish to operate in this country, they have an obligation to act as responsible corporate citizens and to contribute to furthering Australia’s national interests as well as those of their shareholders. The mining industry in particular should be very careful about their behaviour as corporate citizens because, perhaps more than any other industry, they are critically dependent on a social licence to operate.

The nature of the industry means it has some inherent drawbacks as far as the wider community is concerned. Exploration and production need to take place where the deposit is, which is often not in the most suitable social, environmental, logistical or economic location. Any suggestion that the mining companies as a group are failing as corporate citizens, including failing to support local suppliers and the wider Australian economy, may have significant long-term negative consequences for their shareholders.

I welcome the Prime Minister’s remarks at the recent Australian Steel Convention in Canberra. Mining companies that are undermining our manufacturing industries by buying offshore should be publicly named and shamed and I urge her to ensure that this happens as quickly as possible. I encourage all levels of government in this country to review and strengthen their own procurement practices and ensure that local suppliers of products and services are given priority. I encourage more private sector firms to see beyond short-term price when it comes to their buying practices.

Home Insulation Program

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (21:19): I am very pleased to speak in this debate and I grieve for my constituent Mrs Pamela Ranks. She recently contacted me about the lack of attention given to her home by the Home Insulation Safety Program of the current Gillard Labor government—I say ‘current’ advisedly. This insulation program may have been forgotten by some but not by some of my constituents, particularly Mrs Pamela Ranks of Pinjarra.

For those who need clarification this program runs a check that the insulation installed in people’s homes under this failed insulation program is actually safe. On 2 March 2011, and I
have the letter here, Mrs Ranks received a letter from the government's Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. The letter said she would shortly be contacted by telephone with an offer to have the insulation that was installed in the ceiling of her home under the Home Insulation Program inspected. Remember that marvellous program, that beautiful program that was going to save all these greenhouse gases, run by that former magnificent rock star singer, the member for Kingsford Smith, who said he was going to save the world, the one who demonstrated against Pine Gap and all these other things that he did before he became a member of parliament? This is the man who put insulation in a million roofs in Australia and now people are too scared to go into their roof cavities.

The letter said, based on the history of pink batts burning, wrecking people's homes and putting lives at risk, that of course Mrs Ranks wants her home inspected. This program, as I have already said, was linked to 200 house fires and four deaths. Four people died as a result of this magnificent program run by the member for Kingsford Smith and it was a disaster. It was a $2.45 billion taxpayer funded program for insulation and it was an absolute disaster. My constituent would like her home inspected and rightly so. She got all the necessary receipts together as was asked of her by this letter from the department on 2 March this year. The work order number was 90128043 and they said they would come and inspect the house.

A month later there was no call from the department or any of the contractors undertaking these inspections. When my constituent called the department's contractor a month after not hearing from them she was told, 'Oh no, we're not anywhere near your home yet.' How's that? So six months after that she sent me a letter because there had been no further action on behalf of the Gillard Labor government or its department to ensure that my constituent's home was safe and protected. Let us hope her house is one of the safe ones—one that was not installed by these incompetent installers such as those who stapled through an electrical cable onto a rafter or cut through wiring in the roof. Let us hope it is not one that is sitting there ticking away waiting to burn or electrocute somebody who gets into the roof cavity.

It is unbelievable to think after what we have seen go so terribly wrong with the Labor government's dodgy pink batts program that people across Australia could still potentially be sitting in these unsafe homes. It is unbelievable that—knowing what they know, based on the past record of 200 house fires and four lives lost—this Labor government is not doing more to properly complete these inspections in a timely manner. I think they hope that everyone has forgotten about this debacle, this Home Insulation Program, where constituents like mine are sitting on time bombs. They are hoping that events have transcended and moved on for constituents like Pamela Ranks. I have sent a letter to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, the Hon. Greg Combet, on 23 August this year. I wrote to him telling him how concerned I was about this program and that my constituent Mrs Pamela Ranks had received a letter in March, and that in August they were still too far away from inspecting her roof. Today is 19 September and still no reply from the minister. He is not interested in my constituents and their issues. He is more interested in putting a toxic tax on carbon in this country rather than in the real issues surrounding constituents like Mrs Ranks who is very concerned about her live roof, or potential live roof. I expect better from the minister and from this government who told everybody that they were going to save the world with this environmental program. Constituents like mine are very serious and they hope that the minister will respond in a timely way. As I said, he has not responded to my letter and he
needs to respond promptly to enable Home Insulation Program safety inspections on my constituents' homes.

In the time left, I would just say that this is on top of the most recent debacle in the budget this year, the decision to put set-top boxes in people's homes. Whichever genius in the Labor Party came up with the set-top boxes program, I will never know—over $300 for a set-top box for an analog TV! You can actually go to Harvey Norman and get a good LCD TV—high definition with all the tuners—for $300, yet the government want to put a dodgy set-top box on top of an analog TV! They fall in, they fall out, and they pixelate.

Put this in the context of really understanding what the Australian community want and then you say: are they really in contact? We have had the live cattle export industry. We have got the current immigration crisis—we were going to East Timor and we are still trying to go to Malaysia. There has been the sabotaging of the Tasmanian forest industry, and the waste of billions of dollars on overpriced school halls, particularly along the east coast—they have been good value for money in Western Australia. There has been the disastrous Cash for Clunkers scheme. Are you getting the picture, Mr Deputy Speaker? This is a government that really lurches from one disaster to another. There is the failed Green Loans scheme, the hundred billion dollars of debt that has been created—they had a positive $25 billion when they came to government. There are the budget deficits. There is the submarine fleet, based in Western Australia, that cannot go to sea. Dare I say, this is a government that is a carcass swinging in the breeze, waiting to be chopped down.

People like my constituent Mrs Pamela Ranks deserve better. She deserves a response from the minister. I have written to him and he has not even got the decency to respond on behalf of somebody who is very concerned about the safety of her home and her family.

**Education**

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (21:28): I rise tonight to put on the record my support for the government's historic and unequalled reform to the education system of Australia and to discuss the unwarranted and destructive attacks that they have drawn from some members of this place. Education, as I have said so many times before, is an area in which I have a deep and strong commitment. It is a silver bullet for solving problems and all sorts of social and economic issues from health to productivity to employment.

All the research shows that the better educated the individual, the happier they are, the healthier they are, and the more productive they are. It is for these reasons that this Labor government has embarked on a series of reforms and programs designed to deliver to every Australian student and every Australian parent an education system for the new millennium, an education system that will deliver a productive, informed and creative population capable of tackling the challenges of today and the unknown challenges of tomorrow. This is a government that has invested in every level of the education system from primary schools to PhDs, a government that supports every student, every apprentice, every parent, every school, every university and every TAFE, to provide an education system that delivers opportunities that change lives permanently. As of July this government has delivered a doubling of funding to schools, investing $60 billion over four years, and record funding through national partnerships to deliver $1.5 billion for disadvantaged schools, $540 million to improve child literacy and numeracy and $550 million to improve teacher quality. We delivered at the end of the June quarter close to 600,000 computers through the national school computer fund.
with many more computers delivered since. We are well on the way to one computer for every Australian student between year 9 and year 12. We are providing greater feedback and transparency to parents through the MySchool website. We are also delivering a national curriculum with my own community here in the ACT already beginning to see the rollout.

We have provided $1 billion for 288 projects as part of the Trades Training Centre program which will give school kids access to all sorts of benefits of learning a trade and which addresses the skills shortages facing this country—skills that are in high demand here in Canberra. I am particularly happy with the $5.7 million Trades Training Centre that is based at St Mary Mackillop College in my electorate. This centre is a joint initiative that will benefit not only the students of St Mary Mackillop but also those of St Clare's College, St Francis Xavier College and Merici College.

Of course, we have the Building the Education Revolution, the single largest investment in education infrastructure in this country's history, an investment to upgrade school infrastructure to make sure it is equipped for the next century. Every Australian School, some 9,500 schools, has benefited from this program. At the end of May this government had delivered over 4,000 new classrooms and over 5,000 new libraries and multipurpose halls.

Those opposite love to deride these programs. At the last election they vowed to end the Trades Training Centre program, costing thousands of students the opportunity to learn a trade. Not a day goes by when they do not take a cheap shot at the Building the Education Revolution program. Their comments and policies just go to show how out of touch they are and how much distance there is between them and the Australian community when it comes to education policy.

It has been my privilege to attend many openings of projects around my community and I have yet to attend one where the school has said to me they did not want the facility. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Every school community from kindergarten students to teachers and principals to parents and families has welcomed with open arms their new facilities. They have been overjoyed. Only a few weeks ago I attended the official opening of St Bede's primary school's new multipurpose hall and library. It was a fantastic community event and everyone was so proud of their new buildings and what they would mean for their education. At that event I was warmly welcomed by the chair of the school board who said in her speech to the school community: 'This is an extraordinary opportunity for a school such as St Bede's, where only four years ago this community had to raise money to fully fund the installation of air-conditioning in our classrooms and to put shade up for the children to play safely in summer.' She also said the facilities themselves are: 'bright and shiny, functional and spacious. They give our children a place to run and stretch and worship the god of soccer on a rainy day and they give our children an inviting space in which to read, explore and learn more about our world.' Any reasonable person hearing that speech would not conclude that this was a school who thought they had been rorted. These are the words of a school community so proud of and grateful for the facilities and opportunities made possible by the Building the Education Revolution program. I mention the speech not because it is unique but because it is so common: it is representative of the feedback I always get at these events.

Our reforms do not stop there. This government is investing $3 billion in the Building Australia's Future Workforce which will deliver 130,000 high-quality training places. We have invested $100 million to mentor apprentices through their training. Currently only 48 per
cent of apprentices complete their first year of training. This funding will help stem this loss of skills. The government is also providing $281 million to provide tax-free payments to encourage apprentices in their trade. This $1,700 bonus will support some 200,000 apprentices over four years, with over 4,000 of these in my own electorate. These initiatives have seen a 5.4 per cent increase in the number of students entering a trade, an amazing achievement, and, most significantly, an 11 per cent increase in the ACT, which is incredibly welcome given the skills shortage we have here.

We have also increased the number of Australians going to university with over one million students enrolled in higher education in 2010, a 5.1 per cent increase. This year we saw more than 480,000 undergraduates, an increase of 10 per cent since 2009. In all, this government has seen a 22 per cent increase in Commonwealth supported students since we came to office. We do these things because the government understands the transformative power of education. This government, like the Labor governments before it, knows that when you provide education to a person you give them more than just a skill; you give them an identity, you give them confidence, you give them self-esteem, you give them opportunity and you give them hope for the future.

This is a government that knows that by funding education you invest in a nation's future. You invest in a strong and productive economy and you provide a measure of protection against unemployment and the inflationary effects of skill shortages. This has always been part of the DNA of the Australian Labor Party and I am glad to be able to take my seat in this house at this very exciting time for education.

These policies, which have brought so much benefit to this country, so much benefit to my Canberra community, have been opposed at every turn by those opposite, by an opposition who in government watched as the skill shortage came upon us, watched and did nothing. They were a government that stripped funding from universities, which took us to the bottom of the OECD in terms of funding for higher education. They did nothing, despite their massive surpluses, to protect this country from the hard times. They failed to invest in the future.

I am glad that this is a government that will not commit the same mistake. We are deeply committed to improving education for all. We are deeply committed to reducing the chronic skill shortages we have in this country, particularly in Canberra. We are deeply committed to ensuring that Australia has the community it needs, the skills and training it needs, for its future prosperity. And that commitment is deeply underscored with our significant, historic investment in education.

Leichhardt Electorate: Insurance Industry

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt—Chief Opposition Whip) (21:37): I rise this evening to express a very serious grievance I have relating to the activities of the insurance industry and what they are doing in my electorate. I have some serious concerns that there are companies there that are engaged in a serious gouging effort in ramping up prices after taking over market dominance in the area. I will give you an example. A few years ago we had a new player come into the strata title market, the unit market, in Far North Queensland, a company by the name of Zurich. They were very active in undercutting other insurance quotes and over a relatively short period of time effectively achieved a significant part of the market. What has happened is that as soon as this market dominance was achieved they
started ramping up their premiums. They used as an excuse for the ramping up the fact that they had a major exposure in the area and they claimed that exposure put them at greater risk. We have seen insurance premiums on body corporate buildings in the Far North Queensland region increasing as much as 800 per cent. In the inner-city area of Cairns, we have quite a large number of very modest one- and two-bedroom apartments. Many of them are owned by owner occupiers. A lot of people on fixed incomes—-independent retirees and a lot of single individuals on fixed incomes—of $35,000 or $40,000 a year have been living quite comfortably. Suddenly the body corporate insurance has started to ratchet up. We now have a situation where body corporate insurance has got to a level where the body corporate fees makes those units almost impossible to sell. Unfortunately, because these people are on a fixed income, they cannot afford to pay for these additional body corporate fees and so we have a situation where they cannot sell their unit and they cannot afford to pay the fees, so they are actually borrowing money to pay for their body corporate fees. This is totally and absolutely unsustainable.

As Zurich has increased its interests, if you like, in the area we have seen many of the other insurers disappear. Suncorp-Metway Insurance has withdrawn from the residential body corporate insurance market. Ace Insurance Co. has also withdrawn, and it has withdrawn nationally, from the body corporate insurance market. As I say, Zurich Australia has increased its body corporate rates, initially by 25 per cent in September 2009 and another 35 per cent in March 2010. It then withdrew all policy discounts and then increased its rates again by 35 per cent in September 2010. It will not underwrite any business with sum insured or asset values over $20 million. They certainly have taken over a very significant part of the market. The Allianz Australia insurance company no longer underwrites risk in Far North Queensland for a value over $6 million. QBE Insurance is reluctant to provide even quotations in the area. AMP insurance will not underwrite any risks over $5 billion, and CGU Insurance Pty Ltd, strata title underwriters, have applied what they call named cyclone excesses. If a cyclone is named, the excess goes through the roof—it makes it not practical to even insure. Of course RACQ Insurance will only provide quotations for non-holiday complexes to a maximum value of $5 million.

This has had a profound impact in our region. Acme agents have told me only today that Lumley Insurance has now made a decision that it will be no longer providing insurance in postcodes north of 4373, which means that from Rockhampton north you will not be able to get any insurance from this company. I have examples where insurance premiums in 2008 were $11,000, in 2009 they were $12,000, in 2010 they were $23,000 and the recent one that has just arrived from Zurich is $92,500. This is totally and absolutely unsustainable. I have contacted the Insurance Council of Australia to raise concerns. They claim it is all because it is a cyclone area. When units started to be built in Far North Queensland it was a cyclone area. When insurance companies started insuring all those years ago it was a cyclone area. There has not been a major cyclone that has actually hit these major areas of Cairns and Port Douglas and places like that. There has not been any devastation there. To use that as a justification is an absolute nonsense. I will show you the stupidity of the whole situation. I have a timber house in the region insured for $476,000, and the insurance premium on that is $1,778—that is the current one. There is a duplex valued at $347,000, and the insurance premium on that is $1,647. For a block of strata title one-bedroom units, average size 47
square metres, currently selling for $110,000, the average price is $1,400, for an overall cost of $35,900. These are buildings that have been built to cyclone-proof specifications.

We have the added problem up there that we have to pay—and have had to pay for many years—the cost of building to cyclone-proof specifications. These buildings are much, much stronger than anything you are likely to see in the southern states, but they are using the cyclone area to ramp up these prices. They are using exposure because of market dominance as an excuse to increase prices to levels where they are totally unaffordable. People up there are saying, 'If we've got to pay $95½ thousand to insure we should be looking at self-insuring.' Unfortunately, they are over a barrel because they cannot take third-party insurance. The insurance companies are saying, 'We won't give you third-party insurance unless you take our premiums.'

There needs to be some sort of common sense brought to this situation. Mum and dad investors from all over Australia have invested in very modest strata title units in our region and they have no hope of selling them. The first six to eight months of their rental goes to covering the insurance premiums alone. Again, it creates an impossible situation for an area that is already struggling. I believe this is something that needs to be referred to the ACCC. We need to investigate these companies that have market dominance. We have to question those companies that have decided to exit this market and go for high-yield investments in superannuation without spreading some of the risk. I am calling on these insurance companies to consider the implications of what they are doing. I will be referring this to the ACCC in an effort to get some sort of understanding.

I have spoken to the Insurance Council of Australia about this, but the representatives I spoke to offered no solution at all and basically said, 'You're in a cyclone area.' I said: 'Wait a minute. Since strata title units have existed in Far North Queensland you have had no problem insuring them in the past. There have been no major events where there has been significant damage to strata title units. These buildings pose no greater risk than anything else up there.' It is an absolutely shocking situation. (Time expired)

Workplace Relations

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (21:48): I rise today to talk about a matter of importance to my electorate, workplace fairness. Fairness in the workplace is a core value of the Labor Party. This Labor government believe strongly in ensuring that all Australians have the right to the benefits of work, but we also believe that people should be paid fairly for this work and that they should have entitlements such as lunch breaks and tea breaks.

In 2007 Labor was elected with a mandate from the Australian people to abolish the previous Liberal government's industrial relations policies, which were hurting workers not only in my electorate but right around Australia. I am proud to say that we kept that promise and dismantled the grossly unfair industrial relations system that took away the basic safety net that had existed for almost a century. You would have thought that the Liberal Party would take a clear message from the Australian people at that election, but it seems they have not listened. Instead, Tony Abbott is committed to continuing to pursue radical industrial relations policies that Australian workers have already rejected.

Over the past few weeks we have seen the Leader of the Opposition starting to signal that he wants a return to Work Choices. He sent out his shadow minister for employment and
workplace relations and got him to call for a renewed debate on workplace reform, a move that has received support from Liberal members of this parliament. We have the shadow Treasurer touting the importance of increased flexibility for workers and for employers. We all know what that means—flexibility for employers. And we have seen the Leader of the Opposition reminiscing about Work Choices and condemning the Labor government for its workplace reforms that have taken, as he said, 'the pendulum from one side and swung it right back to the other side.'

With the leader of the coalition preaching about greater freedom for employers and Liberal Party members like the member for Mayo talking about increased workplace flexibility, I think it is important that we establish exactly what the coalition mean when they talk about flexibility. They mean a return to Work Choices, perhaps under another name. The Leader of the Opposition made a promise to the Australian people that Work Choices was 'dead, buried and cremated' and now we have front-row seats as he tries to weasel his way out of this promise and resurrect an industrial relations framework that left ordinary Australians unprotected and ultimately worse off.

Let us be clear about what the Howard government's Work Choices policy meant for ordinary hardworking Australian families. Work Choices meant less money for Australian workers and it meant increased pressures on household budgets for Australian families. The Australian workplace agreements that were at the crux of Howard government workplace reforms stripped away basic conditions and dramatically reduced job security. Workers lost penalty rates for weekend work, shiftwork and overtime and they lost the right to protection from unfair dismissal. Under Work Choices, studies have shown that casual and part-time sales assistants lost an average 12 per cent of earnings. We also now know that Work Choices was especially bad for women workers. Female workers on AWAs took home on average $87.40 per week less than male workers.

The statistics speak for themselves when it comes to the impact of Work Choices: 64 per cent of AWAs cut annual leave loading, 63 per cent cut penalty rates, 52 per cent cut shiftwork loadings, 51 per cent cut overtime loadings, 46 per cent cut public holiday pay, 40 per cent cut rest breaks, 36 per cent cut declared public holidays and 22 per cent provided workers with no pay increase, some for up to five years.

As someone who was personally affected by the former Liberal government's first wave of individual contracts, I know too well the impact of these regressive policies on some of our most vulnerable workers. As a young, 19-year-old employee of a large retail company I was presented with a 'take-it-or-leave-it' AWA. When I decided I did not want to sign this individual contract and tried to negotiate it to what the ad had said, the company indicated that I did not have to sign, but I would not receive a wage increase until it was signed. As a result, I was faced with an ultimatum that, either way, meant an erosion of my working conditions.

I am proud to be part of a Labor government that abolished Work Choices and replaced it with a new industrial relations system that returns fairness to Australian workplaces. It was this Labor government that brought an end to the AWA individual contracts that stripped away the pay and conditions of Australian workers. It was this Labor government that established Fair Work Australia as the independent umpire to help employees and employers resolve workplace disputes. And it was this Labor government that provided a fair minimum
safety net for Australian employees comprising 10 national employment standards and a modern award system. We introduced the new no-disadvantage test to make sure collective workplace agreements left workers better off. This side of the House restored protection from unfair dismissal to 2.8 million Australians and now seven million employees are eligible for unfair dismissal compared with just 4.2 million under Work Choices. This Labor government's strong record on workplace relations demonstrates our commitment to ensuring all Australians have the opportunity to benefit from fair employment. This is a record that stands in stark contrast to that of the coalition.

In a desperate attempt to make a case for a return to Work Choices, the coalition has suggested that this Labor government's industrial relations reforms are to blame for Australia's stalling productivity. We have seen that stalling productivity in this country for over a decade. It is simply not the case that Work Choices was a panacea to improve productivity. In fact we know that after the introduction of Work Choices, rather than an increase in Australia's productivity as one might expect, productivity continued to stall. Addressing our nation's productivity is a challenge that this government is taking very seriously. Unlike those opposite, we believe it is a more complex issue than just cutting wages and conditions. This Labor government has a strong agenda to increase our nation's productivity by reforming our vocational education and training system to equip Australians with the skills they need to get high-skilled, high-wage jobs. We are investing in innovation through a system to help Australians take ideas to market, and we are investing in the infrastructure critical to traditional economic infrastructure such as roads, rail and ports but also investing in infrastructure for the 21st century through high-speed broadband.

The opposition continues to underestimate the impact that high-speed broadband will have on this nation's productivity. In fact, I think the Leader of the Opposition called it the 'entertainment revolution'. I have to say that that just shows how out of touch this opposition leader is. It is ICT, the ability to get fast, high-speed broadband, that will significantly revolutionise and improve our productivity. The Leader of the Opposition's great vision for the future of Australia is to join a race to the bottom of low-skilled, low-wage countries. The opposition seems to think that sending Australian workers home with less money in their back pockets and without penalty rates, leave loading and public holiday pay is somehow going to make workers more productive.

Unfortunately the Liberal Party cannot come up with new policies that look to the future, but rely on their good old favourite ideological hobby horse that has never really been about productivity. At the same time, we will talk about productivity; we will look at how we can better this country and improve our nation for the future. Unfortunately, recent calls from senior members of the Liberal Party to re-evaluate industrial relations policy and to increase flexibility for employers is really just bringing back the worst aspects of Work Choices.

It is a furphy—and I hope, Mr Deputy Speaker, that that is parliamentary—to say that the new Fair Work Act does not allow for flexibility. Indeed, there is significant flexibility available under the Fair Work Act. Agreement making at an enterprise level is at the heart of this new system. We know that enterprise bargaining, unlike AWAs, does promote flexibility and efficiency. It is through genuine enterprise bargaining that we have seen the kinds of productivity gains that are essential to improving our nation's economic performance.
The Liberal Party might have an agenda to return to a rebranded Work Choices under the guise of improving productivity, but this will not happen under the Gillard Labor government. I would like to put on record that the Fair Work Australia Act is working well, with continued decreases in industrial disputes, record levels of agreement making and contained wages growth. To be honest, if the opposition does want to throw this act out the window—an act which is working well, that is actually doing a good job in delivering for both employers and employees—then they will have to answer for that. *(Time expired)*

Debate adjourned.

*Main Committee adjourned at 21:59*
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Visas

(Question No. 552)

Mr Morrison asked the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, in writing, on 25 August 2011:

Of the 54,243 applications made for visas under the offshore component of Australia’s Humanitarian Program in 2010–11, how many were granted by (a) post and offshore humanitarian processing centres, and (b) country of birth?

Mr Bowen: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Of the applications lodged within the offshore component of Australia’s Humanitarian Program in 2010–11, 3,112 visas have been granted as at 5 August 2011.

Table 1 shows the number of this cohort who were granted a visa, by Post. Table 2 shows this same information, broken down by country of birth rather than Post.

Table 1: Grants to persons lodging applications for subclass 200, 201, 202, 203 and 204 visas¹ in 2010–11, by Post, as at 5 August 2011²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amman</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgrade</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairo</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaka</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Visa categories: 200 – Refugee Visa; 201 – In-country Special Humanitarian Visa; 202 – Special Humanitarian Visa; 203 – Emergency Rescue Visa; 204 – Woman at Risk Visa
² Note: Data for decisions made in 2010–11 is current as at 30 June 2011. Data for decisions made in 2011–12 is current as at 5 August 2011.

Table 2: Grants to persons lodging applications for subclass 200, 201, 202, 203 and 204 visas³ in 2010–11, by country of birth, as at 5 August 2011⁴

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of birth</th>
<th>Grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>757</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³ Note: Data for decisions made in 2010–11 is current as at 30 June 2011. Data for decisions made in 2011–12 is current as at 5 August 2011.

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of birth</th>
<th>Grants</th>
<th>Country of birth</th>
<th>Grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3112</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Visa categories: 200 visa – Refugee Visa; 201 – In-country Special Humanitarian Visa; 202 – Special Humanitarian Visa; 203 – Emergency Rescue Visa; 204 – Woman-at-Risk Visa

4 Data for grants made in 2010–11 is current as at 30 June 2011. Data for grants made in 2011–12 is current as at 5 August 2011.

5 The country of birth of principal visa applicants is applied to secondary visa applicants.