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SITTING DAYS—2012

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FORTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SEVENTH PERIOD

Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, Companion of the Order of Australia, Commander of the Royal Victorian Order

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Steven Georganas MP
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry Adams MP, Mr Darren Cheeseman MP, Mrs Yvette Maree D’Ath MP, Ms Sharon Joy Grierson MP,
Dr Andrew Keith Leigh MP, Ms Kirsten Fiona Livermore MP,
Mr Geoffrey Raymond Lyons MP, Mr Robert George Mitchell MP, Mr John Paul Murphy MP,
Mr Robert James Murray Oakeshott MP, Ms Deborah Mary O’Neill MP,
Ms Amanda Louise Rishworth MP, Mr Michael Stuart Symon MP,
Mr Kelvin John Thomson MP, Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP,
Mr Anthony Harold Curties Windsor 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 Griffths 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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**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

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Clerk of the House of Representatives—B Wright  
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills
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<tr>
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**Federation Chamber**

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Thursday, 29 November 2012

The SPEAKER (Ms Anna Burke) took the chair at 09:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

BILLS
National Disability Insurance Scheme Bill 2012

First Reading
Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Ms Gillard.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading
Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (09:01): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Few actions in public life give me greater pleasure than introducing the National Disability Insurance Scheme Bill does today. The scheme to be established by this bill will transform the lives of people with disability, their families and carers. For the first time they will have their needs met in a way that truly supports them to live with choice and dignity. It will bring an end to the tragedy of services denied or delayed and instead offer people with disability the care and support they need over their lifetimes. This is a complex bill, yet at its heart is a very simple moral insight:

- Disability can affect any of us and therefore it affects all of us.

To be born with or acquire a disability is to encounter one of those ‘shafts of fate’ of which Ben Chifley spoke in his last great speech as prime minister. The existence of disability in our community cannot always be avoided. But the consequences of disability— isolafood, poverty, loss of dignity, stress, hopelessness and fear of the future—can be avoided. Every 30 minutes on average, someone in Australia is diagnosed with a significant disability. Only those of considerable wealth could possibly afford the costs of lifetime care that are required in response. Most Australians with disability cannot bear the burden alone, nor should they be left to. Yet in relying on public provision, they are forced to endure a level of care that is often shameful and generally insufficient.

It is a system that reacts to crisis. A system that metes out support rationed by arbitrary budget allocations, not real human needs. A system that I have rightly compared to a lottery—a cruel lottery where even the best outcome is far from satisfactory. So today our nation says enough. Our current system is inadequate and indefensible. It must be replaced.

The risk of disability is universal, so our response must be universal. The only solution is therefore a nation-wide, demand-driven system of care tailored to the needs of each individual and established on a durable, long-term basis. That can only be accomplished through the united effort of the community through the positive action of government, supported by the Australian people through our public revenues. Therefore, this bill will inscribe in our laws a substantial and enduring reform that will fundamentally change the nature of disability care and support in this nation:

- the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The scheme is ambitious, and necessarily so. Because more than 400,000 people are living with significant and permanent disabilities. Because carers are required to stretch the bonds of obligation and kinship past breaking point. Because the nation is being robbed of the human and economic potential of people living with disability and the contribution they can make to our shared future. Because while the promise of fairness
and equality that lies at the core of our national ethos is denied to some Australians, we are all diminished. The need for this bill is urgent, and the wait has been too long. My distinguished predecessor Gough Whitlam sought to introduce a national compensation scheme 40 years ago. Today, a new generation—no less idealistic—seeks to perfect and complete that work. So I am proud to present this bill to the House today.

This bill has two principal purposes:

- To establish the framework of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
- And to establish the National Disability Insurance Scheme Launch Transition Agency, to operate the first stage of the scheme in five locations around the nation starting from July 2013.

The bill reflects the extensive work on design, funding and governance undertaken with states and territories and with people with disability, their families and carers, and with key other stakeholders. This bill will be subject to scrutiny, to further work, too. The government intends to refer this bill to a Senate committee to allow consideration in detail. And we will continue to work with the states and territories, with people with disability, their families, carers and advocates. We will also undertake public consultation on the legislative instruments that will be developed in conjunction with the bill. Any comments received through NDIS consultation processes will be considered. It is our intention to bring a final version of the bill for a vote in the budget session of parliament next year ahead of the start of the first stage of the NDIS from July 2013.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme represents a transformational approach to the provision of disability services in this country. Rather than attempt to patch and mend the existing system through further incremental change, we will build a new system from the ground up. The current funding model based on historical budget allocations will be replaced by an insurance approach, based on actuarial analysis of need and future costs. The scheme will respond to each individual's goals and aspirations for their lifetime, affording certainty and peace of mind for people with disability and their carers alike.

The agency will work with people to plan, and to take account of their individual circumstances and needs. The scheme will give people the care and support that is objectively assessed as being reasonable and necessary over the course of their lifetime. It will give people real choice and control over these supports, including the ability to manage their own funding, if they wish. It will offer early intervention therapies and supports, where it will improve a person's functioning, or slow or prevent the progression of their disability over their lifetime. The scheme will move away from the crisis model, where families only receive support if they are unable to continue in their caring role and there are no other options. Instead, it will work with families before they reach crisis to make sure that the valuable informal care they provide is sustainable. The scheme will also aim to foster innovative services that are delivered and coordinated by local people. This bill also clearly states the rights of people with disability within the scheme, and will give effect in part to our obligations under the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability.

I turn now to the detail of the bill. Chapter 1 of the bill outlines the objects and general principles underpinning the legislation. The legislation aims to support the independence and social and economic participation of people with disability. It clearly recognises the right of people with disability to exercise
choice and control over the planning and delivery of their supports. The legislation is designed to ensure that people with disability can access reasonable and necessary supports, that there is an assurance of support over a person's lifetime, and that the scheme remains sustainable over the long term. It will facilitate the development of a national approach in access to, and planning and funding of, supports to people with disability, and will promote innovation and quality in the provision of those supports. The legislation also provides a foundation for all governments to work together to implement the launch of the NDIS.

Chapter 2 of the bill sets out a broad role for the National Disability Insurance Scheme Launch Transition Agency to provide general supports to people with disability and their families. As part of this role, the agency may provide funding to individuals and organisations to help people with disability participate in economic and social life. Chapter 3 of the bill then sets out the process for how to become a participant in the scheme, and how to develop a personal, goal-based plan with the agency and receive individualised supports. A person may make an access request to the agency to become a participant, and the CEO of the agency must determine whether they meet the access criteria. To meet the access criteria, individuals must meet age and residence requirements relating to the five announced launch sites. Each prospective participant will also need to meet either the disability requirements or the early intervention requirements for assistance.

The disability requirements assess whether a prospective participant has a current need for support under the scheme, based on one or more permanent impairments affecting their ongoing daily living and social and economic participation. The legislation also sets out early intervention requirements, which allow support to be provided to help minimise the impact of a disability from its earliest appearance or prevent a deterioration in function over a person's lifetime. Additional matters may be specified through a legislative instrument as we learn more about the real-world situations of the people who need this support. A participant's plan will include a statement of participant supports, prepared with the participant and approved by the CEO of the agency. This will specify, among other matters, the reasonable and necessary supports that will be funded by the scheme. The concept of reasonable and necessary supports will determine the scope of what the scheme provides. It means the scheme will provide a participant with what is necessary to achieve their goals and aspirations and take part in the community, in keeping with what it is reasonable to expect a scheme to provide. The legislation reflects community consultation on the factors to be considered in determining what are reasonable and necessary supports, including:

- whether the support will assist the participant to pursue their goals, objectives and aspirations,
- whether the support represents value for money, and
- whether the provision of the supports takes account of what it is reasonable to expect families, carers, informal networks and the community to provide.

The legislation is designed to allow participants and their families to choose how their funding for supports under a plan is managed. It also sets out how a participant's plan may be reviewed over time to take into account of the participant's changing circumstances. Chapter 4 of the bill sets out the structure for the NDIS, including comprehensive rules to protect personal
information and rights to review of
decisions. It also sets out the process by
which a nominee can be appointed to make
decisions on behalf of a participant, while
ensuring that the rights of participants are
maintained and that nominees must consider
the participant's wishes.

Chapter 5 of the bill addresses the interaction
between the scheme and other compensatory
schemes and common law actions for people
with disability, such as those arising from
motor vehicle or workplace accidents.

The provision of support and assistance
under the scheme is not intended to replace
existing entitlements to compensation.
Accordingly, the legislation enables the CEO
of the agency to require a person to take
reasonable action to claim or obtain
compensation in circumstances where the
CEO is satisfied that the participant has
reasonable prospects of success and where
taking that action would not cause an
unreasonable burden to the person with
disability. The costs of supports paid under
the scheme before a compensation claim is
settled or before a court judgement may also
be recovered. Chapter 6 of the bill
establishes the National Disability Insurance
Scheme Launch Transition Agency. In
addition to delivering the scheme, the agency
will perform a range of other functions.

These include managing the financial
sustainability of the scheme, building
community awareness about disability and
undertaking research about disability. In
accordance with the Productivity
Commission recommendation, the legislation
establishes the agency as a body under the
Commonwealth Authorities and Companies
Act 1997. This was recommended in order to
give the agency a high degree of autonomy
and legitimacy, placing it beyond the
vagaries of politics, electoral and budget
cycles. The agency will be overseen by a
board made up of people with extensive
experience in the provision or use of
disability services, and in financial
management, governance and the operation
of insurance schemes. There will also be an
advisory council comprising people with
lived experience of disability and caring and
other relevant experience. This will ensure
that the board maintains ongoing connection
with the interests and lived experience of
people with disability, their families and
carers. To ensure the agency is accountable
to government, a ministerial council will be
established through the Council of Australian
Governments.

All governments—state, territory and
Commonwealth—will be represented on the
ministerial council. Finally, there is specific
provision for an independent review of the
new act after two years of operation. The
purpose of this review will be to consider
how the act has operated during launch, and
to inform all governments on whether
changes to the legislation are needed as we
move to a national scheme. These are the
main provisions of this bill which, when
translated from dry legal words into action,
will change the lives of thousands of
Australians—lastinglly and for the better.

In bringing this bill before the parliament,
I acknowledge a deep debt of gratitude to
some remarkable individuals and
organisations whose persistence and belief
have made this scheme possible. I take this
opportunity, publicly, to thank the
Productivity Commission, Commissioner
Patricia Scott and Associate Commissioner
John Walsh, for their thorough and
compelling analysis that has been critical to
the shape of the NDIS. I also pay tribute to a
remarkable story of advocacy, led by Bruce
Bonyhady and Rhonda Galbally, the
National Disability and Carer Alliance, the
National People with Disabilities and Carer
Council, and friends, activists and advocates in communities right across the country.

Lastly I thank my ministerial colleagues: Jenny Macklin for her public policy genius in realising our vision for change, Bill Shorten for his passion for this cause as parliamentary secretary and his ongoing support and Jan McLucas for her patient, caring and accessible approach in dealing with all who need to be heard. I thank all our colleagues in the ministry, the parliament and the public sector who are working so hard to make the NDIS a reality. From our different sectors and backgrounds, we have united around a single idea, a compelling idea, an idea whose time has come. For four years, this idea has grown from seed. Over the past year, we have built the foundations. Now this legislation will make the scheme real. The National Disability Insurance Scheme is the greatest change to Australian social policy in a generation and a mark of how deeply the conscience of our nation has been touched.

The NDIS will stand alongside the minimum wage, the age pension, Medicare and universal superannuation as one of the great Labor pillars of social justice and opportunity for all Australians. It will change our society in profound and lasting ways, enabling those who live with disability to fulfil their potential as valued and valuable members of our society. I count it as a privilege to introduce this legislation today. I commend the bill to the House and to all those who have waited so long and worked so hard for this moment.

Debate adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Migration Amendment (Reinstatement of Temporary Protection Visas) Bill 2012

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (09:21): I seek leave to move:

That private Members' business notice No. 22 standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Cook be called on immediately and be given precedence over all other business until all stages of the bill have been concluded to enable this Parliament to take action to deny people smugglers a product to sell before the Parliament rises and the onset of the monsoon season, which is the most dangerous period for people to travel on boats to Australia, by:

(1) reversing Labor’s decision in 2008 to abolish temporary protection visas, as part of their abolition of the Howard Government’s border protection regime, that has led to more than 30,000 illegal arrivals of people by boat, more than 1,000 deaths at sea, more than 8,100 permanent protection visas being denied to people who applied for a humanitarian visa offshore because they did not come on a boat and a budget blowout for taxpayers of $6.6 billion; and

(2) re-establishing two forms of temporary protection visa that can be issued to people found to engage Australia’s protection obligations who have arrived illegally by boat for a period of no greater than three years, subject to the following conditions, namely:

(a) family reunion is not permitted;
(b) if the holder of the visa departs Australia, he or she may not re-enter Australia;
(c) if the holder of the visa is no longer a refugee when the term of the visa expires they will return home;
(d) where the holder is unable to find work, access to welfare will be subject to strict mutual obligation requirements, such as work for the dole;
(e) the holder is legally barred from applying for a permanent protection visa; and
(f) where a person has transited in a country beyond their country of first asylum to Australia,
in which they could have sought protection either from that country or the UNHCR in that country, they will be defined as a secondary mover and legally barred from being able to be granted a permanent protection visa.

Leave not granted.

Mr Morrison (Cook) (09:23): I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent private Members’ business notice No. 22 standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Cook being called on immediately and being given precedence over all other business until all stages of the bill have been concluded to enable this Parliament to take action to deny people smugglers a product to sell before the Parliament rises and the onset of the monsoon season, which is the most dangerous period for people to travel on boats to Australia, by:

(1) reversing Labor’s decision in 2008 to abolish temporary protection visas, as part of their abolition of the Howard Government’s border protection regime, that has led to more than 30,000 illegal arrivals of people by boat, more than 1,000 deaths at sea, more than 8,100 permanent protection visas being denied to people who applied for a humanitarian visa offshore because they did not come on a boat and a budget blowout for taxpayers of $6.6 billion; and

(2) re-establishing two forms of temporary protection visa that can be issued to people found to engage Australia’s protection obligations who have arrived illegally by boat for a period of no greater than three years, subject to the following conditions, namely:

(a) family reunion is not permitted;

(b) if the holder of the visa departs Australia, he or she may not re-enter Australia;

(c) if the holder of the visa is no longer a refugee when the term of the visa expires they will return home;

(d) where the holder is unable to find work, access to welfare will be subject to strict mutual obligation requirements, such as work for the dole;

(e) the holder is legally barred from applying for a permanent protection visa; and

(f) where a person has transited in a country beyond their country of first asylum to Australia, in which they could have sought protection either from that country or the UNHCR in that country, they will be defined as a secondary mover and legally barred from being able to be granted a permanent protection visa.

Under this government’s border protection failures more people have been drawn to Australia on illegal boats than the government has connected to the NBN. The monsoon season is upon us and this government must act today to support the restoration of temporary protection visas.

Mr Stephen Smith (Perth—Minister for Defence and Deputy Leader of the House) (09:25): I move:

That the member be no longer heard.

The Speaker: The question is that the member be no longer heard.

The House divided. [09:30]

(The Speaker—Ms Anna Burke)

Ayes ......................65
Noes ......................70

Majority .....................5

AYES

Adams, DGH
Bird, SL
Bradbury, DJ
Burke, AS
Byrne, AM
Cheeseman, DL
Collins, JM
Crean, SF
D’Ath, YM
Elliot, MJ
Emerson, CA
Garrett, PR
Gibbons, SW
Griffin, AP
Hayes, CP
Jenkins, HA
Kelly, MJ
Leigh, AK
Lyons, GR
McClelland, RB

Albanese, AN
Bowen, CE
Brodman, G
Butler, MC
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Combet, GI
Danby, M
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Ferguson, MJ
Georganas, S
Gierson, SJ
Hall, JG
Husic, EN (teller)
Jones, SP
King, CF
Livermore, KF
Marles, RD
Melham, D
The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded? The member for Berowra.

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra) (09:37): The motion is certainly seconded by me. I believe that it is of fundamental importance to ensure at this time that all steps are taken to minimise the potential loss of life at sea for people travelling unlawfully to Australia. This motion is about implementing the measures that we know work and that the government continues to ignore.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Berowra will resume his seat. The individuals over there should have some respect for an individual who is on his feet. The Leader of the House.

Mr Albanese: I rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Father of the House should know that this is a motion to suspend standing orders. He has to put the case for why a bill that was notified on the front page of the Australian was going to be introduced on Monday by the opposition. It is now Thursday and it cannot possibly be urgent. He should address his remarks to the motion that is before the chair.

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

Mr RUDDOCK: I hope the member for Grayndler will listen very carefully. I believe the standing orders should be suspended to enable precedence to be given to the motion that will address this urgent and very pressing issue. When you have had something of the order of 30,000 people...
arrive unlawfully, when the steps that the government has taken have not been able to deal with it, this matter is pressing.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Berowra will resume his seat. The Minister for Defence has the call.

**Mr STEPHEN SMITH** (Perth—Minister for Defence and Deputy Leader of the House) (09:39): I move:

That the member be no longer heard.

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

The House divided. [09:44]

(The Speaker—Ms Anna Burke)

Ayes.....................65
Noes.........................71
Majority..................6

AYES

Adams, DGH
Bird, SL
Bradbury, DJ
Burke, AS
Byrne, AM
Cheeseman, DL
Collins, JM
Crean, SF
D’Ath, YM
Elliot, MJ
Emerson, CA
Garrett, PR
Gibbons, SW
Griffin, AP
Hayes, CP
Jenkins, HA
Kelly, MJ
Leigh, AK
Lyons, GR
McClelland, RB
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
O’Neill, DM
Parke, M
Philib接听, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Roxon, NL
Saffin, JA (teller)
Sidebottom, PS
Smyth, L
Swan, WM

Aldanese, AN
Bowen, CE
Brodtmann, G
Butler, MC
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Conmet, GI
Danby, M
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Ferguson, MJ
Georganas, S
Grierson, SJ
Hall, JG
Husic, EN (teller)
Jones, SP
King, CF
Livermore, KB
Marles, RD
Melham, D
Murphy, JP
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Perrett, GD
Ripoll, BF
Rowland, MA
Rudd, KM
Shorten, WR
Smith, SF
Snowdon, WE
Symon, MS

AYES

Thomson, KJ
Zappia, A

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Bandt, AP
Bishop, BK
Briggs, JE
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Dutton, PC
Forrest, JA
Gambino, T
Griggs, NL
Hawke, AG
Hunt, GA
Jensen, DG
Katter, RC
Kelly, C
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
Mirabella, S
Neville, PC
O’Dowd, KD
Prentice, J
Ramsey, RE
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Somlyay, AM
Stone, SN
Thomson, CR
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Wilkie, AD
Wyatt, KG

Vamvakinou, M

NOES

Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Billson, BF
Bishop, JI
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coulton, M (teller)
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gash, J
Hartsuyker, L
Hockey, JB
Irons, SJ
Jones, ET
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Macfarlane, IE
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
Oakeshott, RJM
O’Dwyer, KM
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Roy, WB
Schultz, AJ
Secker, PD (teller)
Smith, ADH
Southcott, AJ
Tehan, DT
Truss, WE
Turnbull, MB
Washer, MJ
Windsor, AHC

PAIRS

Ferguson, LDT
Fitzgibbon, JA
Gillard, JE
Gray, G
Macklin, JL

Haase, BW
Crook, AJ
Abbott, AJ
Robb, AJ
Van Manen, AJ

Question negatived.
BILLS

Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Improving Electoral Administration) Bill 2012

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Stephen Smith, for Mr Gray.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr STEPHEN SMITH (Perth—Minister for Defence and Deputy Leader of the House) (09:49): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

On behalf of the Special Minister of State, I present a bill to amend the Commonwealth Electoral Act and the Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act which will substantially improve the interactions that Australians have with elections and referendums.

The bill implements the government response to several of the recommendations made by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters in its report into the 2010 federal election, specifically recommendations 3, 9, 10, 11, 15, 29, 30 and 37, and also makes some small technical amendments.

This bill continues the government's commitment to ensuring that the Commonwealth electoral roll best represents those Australians who are eligible to vote.

In the 2010 joint standing committee report, the committee made three recommendations related to maintaining the electoral roll. This bill includes the last of those three measures: a recommendation to allow the Australian Taxation Office to provide enrolment relevant personal information to the Australian Electoral Commission.

It is achieved by a small amendment to the Taxation Administration Act 1953 which appears in schedule 1 of this bill.

Although it is a small amendment on the face of this bill, it is another important step in assisting the Australian Electoral Commission to deliver the most inclusive electoral roll and the government is proud to be able to deliver this change.

The joint standing committee's report makes it clear that there were an estimated 15.7 million Australians eligible to be enrolled but only 14.2 million on the roll. Consequently, the majority of the committee agreed with the recommendation that the Australian Electoral Commission should have access to information from credible government sources, such as the ATO, to update and maintain the electoral roll.

There are also other small administrative amendments made in the bill. These amendments deal with when prepoll voting can commence, when postal vote applications can be received and removing the requirement that a person who is seeking to use prepoll voting for an ordinary vote should complete a certificate before they do so.

One of the methods of voting is to vote prepoll. There are currently two times set out in the electoral act when applications for a prepoll vote can be made. These amendments clarify and establish one time at which prepoll voting will be available: the fourth day after nominations are declared. For a minimum election timetable nominations are declared on a Friday, making the fourth day afterwards the succeeding Tuesday.

Depending on the type of election, whether it is for the House of Representatives or the Senate or both, the act currently provides different days for the commencement of prepoll voting and very
minimal times are provided for the Australian Electoral Commission to print and distribute ballot materials to early voting centres across Australia in time for polling to commence. This is a sensible small amendment which provides a consistent time frame for when prepoll voting can commence.

There is also currently a requirement that a voter complete a written declaration in order to vote by prepoll as an ordinary voter. This requirement is not consistent with other forms of ordinary voting which only require a verbal declaration, does not serve a useful purpose and will be omitted by this bill.

One of the matters considered by the joint standing committee concerned incidents that occurred in connection with the 2010 election, where some ballot boxes were opened before they were lawfully authorised to be opened. Since that incident, extra training and support materials will be applied and it is less likely to happen again.

However, although this may be an excess of caution, the bill contains provisions which expressly clarify the action to be taken with respect to ballots that are contained in prematurely opened boxes. The ballots will be packaged, sent to the divisional returning officer and retained, but not included in the scrutiny.

Postal voting is increasingly popular. At the 2010 election the Electoral Commission processed over a million postal vote applications, which was a 17.8 per cent increase in the number processed at the 2007 election.

Under the existing provisions postal vote applications can be received up to 6 pm on the Thursday that is two days before polling day. Voters are required to cast their vote before the close of polling on Saturday. The limited time between the closing time for applications and election day make it highly unlikely that applicants will receive their postal ballot papers in time to cast their vote before the polls close.

This amendment brings the cut-off forward by one day to 6 pm on the Wednesday three days before polling day. This change is to improve the chance that the Australian Electoral Commission can deliver postal voting papers to an elector before the close of the poll.

There are, of course, equivalent amendments made to the Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984.

The bill also provides for further fixed periods of time to be provided for the augmented Electoral Commission, to allow it to complete its inquiries into objections against proposed Redistributions of electoral boundaries.

All of the measures in the bill are designed to assist in ensuring that Australia can continue to have a robust and up-to-date electoral system and administration. The recommendations made by the joint standing committee in the majority report are both sensible and politically neutral. The government is committed to ensuring their implementation.

However, in the interests of accountability, the Special Minister of State will write to the joint standing committee asking that it inquire into and report on the bill.

I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP (Mackellar) (09:55): on indulgence—May I point out to the House that the second reading speech just given by the minister is different from the second reading speech published. I do not know why this has happened, but it means that this will have to be reprinted. As you know, it is a document of record to which a court may have access in considering the
meaning of the bill. Perhaps the minister would like to respond, or perhaps we can note—

Mr Perrett interjecting—

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: Yes, but this will need reprinting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs D'Ath): Minister, did you want to respond at this stage?

Mr STEPHEN SMITH (Perth—Minister for Defence and Deputy Leader of the House) (09:56): on indulgence—I have read the second reading speech on behalf of the Special Minister of State. The second reading speech is a document of record. If there is anything which has been circulated which is inconsistent with that, it will be recirculated.

Debate adjourned.

Financial Framework Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 4) 2012

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Bradbury.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay—Assistant Treasurer and Minister Assisting for Deregulation) (09:56): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Financial Framework Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 4) 2012 amends five acts across three portfolios.

It is the 12th financial framework legislation amendment bill since 2004. It forms part of an ongoing program to address financial framework issues as they are identified and helps ensure that specific provisions in existing legislation remain clear and up to date.

Keeping the existing financial framework legislation up to date is also consistent with the reforms foreshadowed in the government's proposed Commonwealth financial accountability review.

First, the bill amends the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997 to substitute references to 'Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines' with 'guidelines in relation to procurement', given the recent change in the name of the guidelines to the Commonwealth Procurement Rules.

Second, the bill amends the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 to provide the director of national parks with greater autonomy to enter into contracts with an increased threshold of $1 million from the current $250,000.

Third, the bill amends the Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Act 1989 to establish a special appropriation for the purpose of making remissions or refunds of import levies and manufacture levies, including those related to synthetic greenhouse gas management equipment.

Fourth, the bill establishes a framework for dealing with overpayments, within the Papua New Guinea (Staffing Assistance) Act 1973. This will address instances where payments are made from an annual appropriation to recipients, that are not, in practice, consistent with the requirements or preconditions imposed by this act and risk breaching section 83 of the Constitution. This amendment flows from the amendments delivered by the Financial Framework Legislation Amendment Act (No. 2) 2012.

Finally, the bill amends the Public Accounts and Audit Committee Act 1951 to update labels of defined terms 'the Chairman' and 'the Vice-Chairman' with the gender neutral terms 'Chair' and 'Deputy Chair'.

CHAMBER
This bill represents another step to help ensure that specific areas of the Commonwealth's financial framework remain effective and up to date.

Debate adjourned.

**International Tax Agreements Amendment Bill 2012**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Bradbury.

Bill read a first time.

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay—Assistant Treasurer and Minister Assisting for Deregulation) (10:00): Today I introduce this bill, which will amend the International Tax Agreements Act 1953 and give the force of law in Australia to new bilateral taxation agreements with India, the Marshall Islands and Mauritius.

The agreement with India is a protocol that will amend the current Australia-India tax treaty signed in 1991. The protocol will promote closer economic cooperation between Australia and India by aligning the taxation of business profits and cross-border services with international taxation norms and by including rules to prevent tax discrimination.

The protocol will also improve the integrity of the Australian tax system through enhanced exchange of information provisions and new provisions providing for mutual assistance in the collection of tax debts.

The bilateral agreements with the Marshall Islands and Mauritius eliminate double taxation on certain income derived by individuals, in particular government workers, students and business apprentices, and pensioners and retirees.

The Marshall Islands and Mauritius are required to provide reciprocal taxation treatment in relation to Australian government employees, students and business apprentices, retirees and pensioners.

These two agreements will also provide a mutual agreement procedure for the resolution of taxpayer disputes involving transfer pricing adjustments.

These agreements follow Australia concluding tax information exchange agreements with the Marshall Islands and Mauritius, which establish a legal basis for the exchange of taxpayer information between two countries and are an important tool in Australia's efforts to combat tax avoidance and evasion.

The agreements with India, the Marshall Islands and Mauritius will enter into force after Australia exchanges diplomatic notes with each of the other countries advising of the completion of their respective domestic law requirements.

Debate adjourned.

**Tax Laws Amendment (2012 Measures No. 6) Bill 2012**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Bradbury.

Bill read a first time.

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay—Assistant Treasurer and Minister Assisting for Deregulation) (10:02): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill implements a range of improvements to Australia's taxation laws.

Schedule 1 confirms that income tax is not payable on certain native title benefits or on certain capital gains tax (CGT) events involving native title rights.

At present, when applying the ordinary rules of the income tax system based on traditional common-law concepts, it is unclear what the tax implications are for
Indigenous communities when a native title benefit is received and with respect to certain CGT events involving native title rights, due to the unique nature of a native title right.

By confirming that there are no tax implications for these acts, this amendment provides Indigenous communities with much needed certainty and clarity which is important when they are negotiating native title agreements.

Schedule 2 amends the list of deductible gift recipients (DGRs) identified by name in division 30 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997. Donations made to organisations with DGR status are income tax deductible to the donor and therefore DGR status will assist the listed organisations in attracting public support for their activities.

The schedule adds two new organisations to the act, namely, AE1 Incorporated and Teach for Australia, and extends the time period for listing of Australia for UNHCR, One Laptop per Child Australia, and the Yachad Accelerated Learning Project.

Schedule 3 amends the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 to extend the immediate deductibility of 'exploration and prospecting expenditure' to geothermal energy explorers.

Geothermal energy is an emerging clean and renewable energy source with the potential to be used for the generation of electrical power in a largely emissions-free manner. These amendments will assist the government’s objective of encouraging exploration for geothermal energy.

Geothermal energy explorers will be entitled to equivalent treatment for their exploration or prospecting expenditure incurred on or after 1 July 2012 as that afforded to mining and petroleum explorers. This includes an immediate tax deduction for the cost of depreciable assets first used for exploration or prospecting on or after 1 July 2012, provided certain criteria are met.

The amendments in this schedule will include geothermal exploration rights and geothermal exploration information in the list of intangible assets included in the definition of 'depreciable assets'.

The changes will also extend the definition of 'exploration or prospecting' to include exploration or prospecting for geothermal energy resources. This will allow geothermal energy explorers to immediately deduct the cost of the tangible and intangible depreciable assets they acquire if they first use the assets for exploration or prospecting, provided certain criteria are met.

In addition, these amendments will allow geothermal energy explorers to deduct expenditure incurred on exploration or prospecting for geothermal energy resources in an equivalent manner to mining and petroleum explorers.

Finally, the changes will prevent geothermal energy explorers from incurring an unintended liability in circumstances where they stop holding an exploration right because they merely acquire an energy extraction right relating to the same area or an area that is not significantly different. This will provide for an outcome equivalent to that for mining and petroleum explorers.

These amendments will encourage exploration for geothermal energy resources, and ensure that geothermal energy is an important part of the renewable energy mix.

Schedule 4 to this bill amends schedule 2 of the Tax Laws Amendment (2011 Measures No. 5) Act 2011 to extend the exemption for managed investment trusts (MITs) from the interim streaming rules introduced by that schedule until the 2013-14 income year.
The government provided an optional exemption from the application of the interim streaming rules for MITs and certain trusts treated like MITs. This was in recognition that these trusts generally do not 'stream' income; instead, they distribute all of their trust income proportionally. Extending this exemption ensures that MITs can continue to use the current arrangements until the commencement of the new tax system for MITs on 1 July 2014.

Schedule 5 to this bill implements the government's 2012-13 budget measure to better target the net medical expenses tax offset by means-testing the threshold above which a taxpayer may claim the offset and the rate of reimbursement from 1 July 2012.

Australian government annual health expenditure is expected to reach around $100 billion by 2022. Means-testing ensures this tax offset is appropriately targeted and is one of a number of measures the government has identified to ensure a strong and sustainable healthcare system.

For taxpayers with adjusted taxable income above the Medicare levy surcharge thresholds ($84,000 for singles or $168,000 for couples or families in 2012-13), the threshold above which they may claim the net medical expenses tax offset will increase to $5,000 and the rate of reimbursement will be reduced to 10 per cent. The claim threshold will be indexed annually to the CPI.

People with adjusted taxable income below the surcharge thresholds will not be affected by this means test.

These changes will provide an ongoing gain to revenue which is estimated to be $370 million over the forward estimates period.

Introducing a means test will protect low- and middle-income earners, while helping to reduce the long-term cost to the budget and ensure the ongoing sustainability of the net medical expenses tax offset.

The government continues to provide substantial support for health expenses, including around $27 billion in 2012-13 through the Medicare Benefits Schedule, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and related safety nets.

Schedule 6 amends the definition of limited recourse debt. The amendment is necessary to ensure that the limited recourse debt tax provisions achieve their policy objective.

The objective of these provisions is to reverse a taxpayer's deductions for unpaid capital expenditure, where the taxpayer has not been fully at risk in relation to the expenditure.

The amendments will achieve this objective by looking at the substance or effect of a loan arrangement to determine whether or not a debt is a limited recourse debt, not just the legal form. This will ensure that taxpayers cannot structure their arrangements to avoid the limited recourse debt provisions.

The amendments will apply to debt arrangements that are terminated at or after the announcement of this measure, which was at 7.30 pm (AEST) on 8 May 2012.

Schedule 7 amends the Fringe Benefits Tax Assessment Act 1986 to implement the 2012-13 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook measure to remove the concessional treatment of 'in-house' fringe benefits that are purchased through salary sacrificing.

The current fringe benefits arrangements allow employees to receive concessional treatment for goods and services that an employer or an associate produces or sells in the ordinary course of its business.

The government recognises that it is not appropriate for the tax system to subsidise...
'in-house benefits' for employees accessing them though salary-sacrificing arrangements. This is why the government is amending the Fringe Benefits Assessment Act 1986 to restore the concessional treatment of fringe benefits to its original policy intent.

Employers will still be able to provide staff discounts that will continue to receive the concessional treatments as long as the employee purchases the goods and services out of after-tax income.

The amendments in schedule 7 mean that the concessional tax treatment is available for employers to reflect the true cost of providing the benefits and minimise the compliance costs, rather than as a means of employees reducing their income tax.

The amendments in schedule 7 apply from 22 October 2012 (the date of announcement) for all new arrangements and from 1 April 2014 for all existing arrangements.

And finally, schedule 8 includes several miscellaneous amendments to the taxation laws.

These include making sure that the promoter penalty provisions in the tax laws are effective against conduct that takes place outside Australia.

Such amendments are regularly made to correct minor technical or drafting defects in the taxation laws, and to address unintended outcomes. The government has a longstanding commitment to uphold the integrity of the taxation system, and advancing such amendments gives effect to this very important commitment.

Full details of the measure are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

Debate adjourned.

Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support Bonus) Bill 2012

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Shorten.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation and Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations) (10:13): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Australian government recognises that households reliant on income support benefits as their main source of income can find it hard to manage unexpected costs such as urgent repairs on the family car or appliances, bills that are higher than expected, or unforeseeable medical or dental costs.

The Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support Bonus) Bill 2012 will give effect to this government's 2012-13 budget commitment to introduce a new supplementary allowance for eligible income support recipients.


This supplementary allowance, the income support bonus, will help over one million Australians to manage unanticipated expenses by providing an additional $210 a year to single recipients and $350 to most couples where both partners are eligible.

The income support bonus will be tax free and indexed twice yearly in line with the consumer price index, making sure the
payment keeps pace with the real costs recipients might face.

The bill underlines the government's $1.1 billion commitment over the next four years to support eligible recipients of Newstart allowance, youth allowance, parenting payment, Austudy, ABSTUDY living allowance, sickness allowance, exceptional circumstances relief payment, transitional farm family payment and special benefit.

Eligible Australians, those receiving a qualifying income support payment on 20 March 2013, can look forward to receiving their initial payment with their first income support payment after this date. They will not have to apply to receive the income support bonus and payment will be automatically made to those eligible people.

Income support bonus payments will then be made in March and September every year provided the recipient is on a qualifying income support payment on 20 March or 20 September for the respective payment.

For single recipients, the initial payment will be $105, or $210 a year. The payment to most persons who are a member of couple will be $87.50, or $175 a year. As is the case with other supplements, each entitled member of a couple separated by illness, or with a partner in respite care, or with a partner in gaol will be paid at the single rate of $105.

The bonus is not separately means tested because income and assets tests already apply to the person's qualifying income support payment, but will be subject to the existing income management provisions.

The government also welcomes today the Senate committee's report on the adequacy of the allowance payment system and will be carefully and seriously considering the report recommendations. I am indebted to the work of the senators and also to those who have made contributions to this report.

The government has acknowledged on a number of occasions that it is not easy for a person to live on the current rate of Newstart allowance and that many people in our community are doing it tough.

Combined with related measures such as the doubling of the liquid assets waiting period thresholds, the income support bonus will assist vulnerable members of our society, including those on Newstart allowance, to manage unforseen expenses and increasing costs.

The income support bonus offers assistance to disadvantaged Australians while being framed against a background of fiscal prudence, given the current tough budgetary considerations of the government. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Reducing Illegal Early Release and Other Measures) Bill 2012

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Shorten.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation and Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations) (10:18): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Schedule 1 to the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Reducing Illegal Early Release and Other Measures) Bill 2012 amends the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 to introduce civil and criminal sanctions for a person who promotes a scheme that has resulted, or is likely to result, in the illegal early release of superannuation benefits.
I would initially like to put some context around this bill.

Australia's superannuation savings pool stands at $1.46 trillion and grew, I am pleased to report to the House, 13 per cent over the year to September 2012.

We hear a lot of doom and gloom about superannuation from some conservative commentators, but the fact our retirement savings grew at a double-digit rate should give Australians and the financial services industry some cause for confidence.

In fact, last week ANZ launched its new Smart Choice superannuation product, which has been designed with the government's MySuper reforms in mind.

The ANZ press release said this about the government's MySuper reforms:

We support recent Government initiatives such as MySuper, which make superannuation more transparent, less complex and easier to track and ANZ Smart Choice Super has been developed with these objectives in mind.

The Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia had this to say about MySuper in August of this year:

MySuper offers Australian workers a super account with defined fees, no commissions and a highly transparent investment approach. This is like the "Heart Tick" on food: To be called MySuper, all ingredients must be disclosed and products must meet certain standards and be authorised by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority.

Together with the ING Living Super launch in September, it is a clear signal that the retail industry is embracing the MySuper reforms and launching new, simple and affordable products.

Far from creating red tape, what the lived experience is showing is the government's MySuper reforms are driving innovation and are having an early 'hip pocket' impact by forcing downward pressure on fees and charges.

Turning to other aspects of the government's reforms, the Super System Review found that stronger sanctions must exist to deter promoters of illegal early release funds from undermining the government's retirement policy and harming members in the process.

Promoters of illegal early release schemes have in the past exploited vulnerable people within our community who may not be fully aware of the rules regarding accessing superannuation benefits. These new penalties will deter promoters from taking advantage of these people and help protect the superannuation savings of all Australians.

Some schemes have facilitated up to $8 million in illegal release of superannuation benefits with an average amount accessed of around $20,000. Promoters have been found to take fees of up to 50 per cent of the member's superannuation balance. In some cases, promoters have gone further and actually stolen the entire balance or exploited members' identity data for other criminal purposes.

Currently, there are no specific penalties for promoters of illegal early release schemes who are not themselves trustees of a regulated superannuation fund. Often a promoter will not be a trustee of a purported superannuation fund used in a scheme, but instead recruit parties for this role.

This measure delivers on the government's announcement that it would introduce penalties to deter promoters of illegal early release superannuation schemes. It will allow the commissioner to seek civil and criminal penalties for those who promote illegal early release schemes.

The promoters of illegal early release schemes will face civil and criminal penalties including a fine of up to $340,000
(2,000 penalty units) and/or imprisonment of up to five years.

The review also found that those individuals who gain illegal early access to their superannuation benefits should not enjoy the same tax treatment as those who legally gain early access to their superannuation benefits. The review recommended that amounts released by illegal means should be subject to the superannuation fund non-complying tax rate of 45 per cent. The Income Tax Rates Amendment (Unlawful Payments from Regulated Superannuation Funds) Bill 2012 imposes the superannuation non-complying fund rate of 45 per cent on those amounts that are released early by illegal means.

The commissioner may however determine that it is unreasonable to subject amounts released by illegal means to superannuation fund non-complying tax rate of 45 per cent, having regard to the nature of the fund and the circumstances of release.

These measures will ensure strong sanctions are in place to deter the illegal early release of superannuation.

Schedule 2 to this bill amends the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006 to require that superannuation benefits that are rolled over into self-managed super funds are captured as a designated service.

The Super System Review noted that since trustees and members of SMSFs are generally the same, there is greater scope for assets, once received in the self-managed superannuation fund, to be diverted for illicit purposes.

By capturing rollovers into self-managed superannuation funds as a designated service under the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006, the transferring superannuation fund will have to comply with a range of obligations, including customer identification requirements and reporting obligations.

This measure will ensure that consideration is given to the money laundering and terrorism financing risks associated with the rollover of assets to a self-managed superannuation fund and that appropriate customer identification and reporting obligations exist when assets exit the prudentially regulated superannuation sector.

Schedule 3 to this bill amends the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 to introduce administrative consequences for contraventions relating to self-managed superannuation funds.

The government's Super System Review found that the Commissioner of Taxation, as regulator of self-managed superannuation funds, needs to have effective flexible and proportionate powers to address non-compliance with superannuation laws.

Currently, the commissioner has a limited number of tools available to address instances of non-compliance. The review acknowledged the benefits that the current penalty regime provides in dealing with and deterring non-compliance; however, it did highlight some areas of the current regime which limit the commissioner's ability to achieve optimal regulation.

Applying the current penalties can be costly and time consuming and the potential consequences can be disproportionately high. The absence of graduated penalties results in a number of self-managed superannuation fund trustees avoiding sanction for contravening conduct by simply rectifying the conduct when it is detected. This may be appropriate in certain circumstances, but it is not appropriate that trustees can continue to contravene the law and for their actions to have no consequences.
The review recommended that the commissioner be given additional tools, both educational and punitive, in conjunction with his existing powers. These tools will support the ongoing integrity of the superannuation system.

The measure delivers another Stronger Super reform for self-managed superannuation funds.

The government is delivering reforms that improve our superannuation. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

**Income Tax Rates Amendment (Unlawful Payments from Regulated Superannuation Funds) Bill 2012**

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Shorten.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation and Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations) (10:25): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Income Tax Rates Amendment (Unlawful Payments from Regulated Superannuation Funds) Bill 2012 imposes the superannuation fund non-complying tax rate of 45 per cent on those amounts that are released early from superannuation by illegal means.

The government's Super System Review found individuals who gain illegal early access to their superannuation benefits should not enjoy the same tax treatment as those who legally gain early access to their superannuation benefits. The review recommended that amounts released by illegal means should be subject to the superannuation fund non-complying tax rate of 45 per cent.

For example, if a person illegally accesses $10,000 of their accumulated superannuation savings via an illegal early release scheme, their tax liability will be $4,500 plus the Medicare levy (1.5 per cent). So the total tax payable on the amount accessed would be $4,650.

The review also found that stronger sanctions must exist to deter promoters of illegal early release schemes from undermining the government's retirement policy and harming members in the process. Schedule 1 of the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Reducing Illegal Early Release and Other Measures) Bill 2012 amends the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 to ensure there are stronger sanctions.

This measure delivers on the government's announcement that it would impose the superannuation non-complying fund rate of 45 per cent on those amounts that are released early from superannuation by illegal means. This, combined with stronger sanctions, will provide an effective deterrent to the illegal early release of superannuation. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Service Providers and Other Governance Measures) Bill 2012

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Shorten.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation
and Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations) (10:28): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Service Providers and Other Governance Measures) Bill 2012 represents the final, the last tranche of legislation implementing the MySuper and governance elements of the government's Stronger Super reforms.

Stronger Super is the government's response to the Review into the Governance, Efficiency, Structure and Operation of Australia's Superannuation System—also known as the Cooper review.

Together with other tranches of the legislation already introduced, this bill continues the Gillard government's commitment to enhancing the governance and integrity of Australia's superannuation system.


This bill implements a key recommendation of the Cooper review, to which I referred earlier, to override any provisions in a fund's governing rules that stipulate that the trustee must use specified service providers or only invest in or through specified entities.

Where provisions like this are in a fund's governing rules, superannuation fund trustees are prevented from selecting other service providers, other insurance companies or other investment vehicles, even where it would be in the best interests of fund members to do so.

A recent report by APRA found that situations where a trust deed required trustees to use a related insurance provider resulted in higher-cost insurance products provided to members—higher-cost products.

The bill will ensure that a trustee is obliged to enter into arrangements which are in the best interests of the members.

The bill also implements the Cooper review recommendation to give APRA the power to impose infringement notices as an alternative to criminal prosecution. This will allow APRA to impose a more appropriate and flexible range of penalties for minor breaches of the SIS Act.

The bill will improve individuals' rights in relation to access to reasons for decisions from trustees. Currently, when members and beneficiaries make complaints to trustees, trustees are not required to provide reasons for their decisions. This bill remedies this and ensures that people have a right to obtain information from trustees in relation to decisions that affect them.

Requiring trustees to provide reasons for decisions in relation to death benefit complaints is particularly important given the statistics from the Superannuation Complaints Tribunal annual report for 2011-12, which showed that death benefit complaints account for almost one-third of all written complaints received by the tribunal each year.

The bill also provides more time for members and beneficiaries to lodge complaints with the tribunal in respect of total and permanent disability claims. The increased time to lodge complaints aligns the treatment as closely as possible with the courts and the Financial Ombudsman Service.

Another Cooper review recommendation being implemented by this bill is enhanced requirements for entities that are responsible for both superannuation funds and managed schemes—so-called dual-regulated entities.
Currently, these entities only have to meet resource and risk management requirements, administered by APRA, that are focused on the entity's superannuation business. This left a regulatory gap in respect of the entity's non-superannuation business.

This bill will close this gap and these entities will need to also meet resource and risk management requirements administered by ASIC. These requirements seek to protect the interests of investors in non-superannuation schemes they manage.

Following feedback from industry, these new requirements will commence a year later, from 1 July 2015. APRA and ASIC will work together and with industry on how the respective resource requirements will apply in practice.

The bill also addresses concerns that have been raised about the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Trustee Obligations and Prudential Standards) Act 2012 in relation to director liability.

This bill inserts a requirement for persons seeking to take legal action against a director for a breach of their duties to first seek leave from court.

The bill also extends the availability of a defence for directors and trustees if their breach was due to reasonable mistake. The defence will now cover breaches of MySuper duties.

In response to concerns raised in consultation, a further change is being made to the defences in relation to investment and management of reserves. The changes will clarify that each defence is available where a trustee or a director can establish compliance with all of the covenants and MySuper obligations that are relevant to the particular loss or damage suffered.

These changes have been developed in consultation with industry and will better balance the rights of superannuation fund members and the protection of directors and trustees against frivolous or vexatious litigation.

The bill also makes consequential amendments to ensure the effective operation of the first three tranches of MySuper and governance legislation. In particular, the amendments recognise that various provisions in the existing legislation will in future be dealt with in APRA's prudential standards.

Full details of the amendments are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (10:34): I move:

That notice No. 6, government business, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

National Gambling Reform Bill 2012

National Gambling Reform (Related Matters) Bill (No. 1) 2012

National Gambling Reform (Related Matters) Bill (No. 2) 2012

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (10:35): I rise to speak in the debate on the National Gambling Reform Bill 2012 and cognate bills. As in most bills brought before this place by the Labor government, there are two sets of consequences in this legislation.
There are the intended consequences—and perhaps it is merely a pipe dream to reduce problem gambling—and there are the unintended consequences: the collateral damage to the innocent bystanders who will get hurt by this reckless, dysfunctional government. The government’s track record to date is abysmal, and there is nothing in this legislation to suggest that its consequences will be any different to the consequences of other legislation introduced by this government.

Let us look at what will happen when a problem gambler walks into a club after this legislation is implemented. To play the pokies, they will have to register—many of them will go to the effort to do so—and then they will have to set their limit. They can set their limit at whatever amount of money they like: it can be hundreds, thousands or even tens of thousands of dollars. If by chance they set a lower limit and gamble up to it, will they then go home and cook dinner? Or will they go down the road to the TAB, the racetrack or the local casino? Will they go home and play the pokies online? They do not even have to go home to play the pokies online these days; they can do it on their iPad, unrestricted and with all their losses going overseas. Problem gamblers have a problem, and they are not going to have difficulty finding somewhere to exercise their problem if they cannot do so at the local club.

The people who will not go looking for another gambling option are the people who do not have a gambling problem. This pokies legislation is just one link in the nanny-state chain. What right do people in this place have to tell people outside how to live their lives and how to spend their money? If someone has a gambling problem, we should help them rather than hinder the entire country.

This legislation seeks to limit to the tune of $250 the amount of money that people can withdraw from an ATM in a club. A problem gambler will soon work around this limit. They will bring great wads of cash in with them, stopping at ATMs outside the club. But how far will $250 go for a family that actually goes to the club; maybe dad has a little flutter, spends $20 to $40 on the pokies and shouts the family tea and a few drinks? The major clubs in my electorate have all written to me outlining the problems and concerns they have with this bill. I would like to cover off on a few of the issues they raised. One concern is the time frames in this bill. The Productivity Commission recommended voluntary precommitment be implemented over a six-year period whereas the government is giving them just three years.

Any club with more than 25 poker machines will have the same time frame to comply as one of the big casinos such as Jupiters. Then we have the $250 daily limit, an unnecessary restriction on people's ability to access their money. I am told by the clubs that many of the patrons use those ATMs because it is considered safer and more convenient than using one in the middle of the street. Elderly people particularly go into the club, withdraw the money, go out to the secure car park and drive home. They do not like going into dark streets to withdraw their money. That is one consideration that needs to be taken into account.

What is also not considered is that many clubs, including a number in my electorate, have already installed voluntary precommitment systems in their poker machines. A lot of them are not activated yet but they have that capability. The problem with the legislation is it says we need a nationalised system, a new system. So this technology will need to be ripped out of the
machines and new technology put in. The clubs estimate—and it is a conservative estimate—that it will cost $2,000 per machine to put this new nationalised system in. On top of that they have to spend more money for a nation-wide monitoring system. These are all problems with this legislation.

What is going to happen here? It is going to mean more costs for clubs and less money for the community. I will go through that because the clubs in my community generate a lot of money for a lot of other people in the community. Magpies Sporting Club, for instance, belongs to a collective group of organisations that has a primary goal of supporting the community. That is their mission and that is why they exist. Last year Magpies fostered sport in the region by way of providing $750,000 in community benefits, something it is committed to growing in the future. It provided for the upkeep of seven fields used by the sporting codes of cricket, rugby league and soccer and by a dog obedience club. It provided uniforms for these different clubs. It sponsors play equipment. It pays for coaching, and health and wellbeing clinics for players. It donates to reputable charities including CQ Rescue, a vital service that we have in our region, and the Cancer Council.

If you strip away that club’s means of providing those services, not by reducing problem gambling but by discouraging the occasional flutter and introducing a whole new range of costs, who is going to provide those services to the community?

North Mackay Bowls club provides $300,000 in funding to various community groups in the Mackay region. It has already had hits to its bottom line and still does that. Northern Suburbs Leagues club provides $20,000 annually in funding to junior and senior football teams. It said that these reforms will place a financial difficulty on the club that will probably see that funding reduced.

The Harrup Park Country Club provides $30,000 to affiliated clubs: $10,000 to the North Queensland Cricket Alliance, $9,000 to AFL Mackay. It donates to CQ Rescue and provides free of charge its venue for numerous clubs and affiliates to use to raise funds through bingo—maybe bingo will be the next thing we will see restrictions on from this government. It provides a whole range of different things in the region, not the least of which is the upgrade of the sporting grounds at Harrup Park. The grounds are used for cricket, AFL and for a variety of different sports.

If you strip away these clubs means of income, what is going to happen to this money that they give to the community? It is going to dry up, and someone is going to have to pay that. It is probably going to fall back on the local council, which means ratepayers are going to have to pay more. Really, if this government is doing something which is going to have such a consequence on these clubs and on the sporting clubs then really it should be coughing up the compensation. Will the government step in to the carnage it has created and pick up the slack for all the clubs affiliated with Magpies, Harrup Park and the rest of them? We know the answer is that it will not because it has already maxed out its credit card and cannot spend any more or it will never find Swanie's surplus.

The Magpies Sporting Club provides employment for 90 staff. There are hundreds of staff throughout all of the clubs in the Mackay region. The only way a business can remain in business and employing people is by balancing revenue and expenses. This bill very cleverly manages to drag the business down on both ends: reducing revenue and increasing expenses. The most likely way to
restore balance, unfortunately, will be to reduce wages and that means that staff may go. In fact, that is the most likely outcome. It is very sad because there was a time when the Labor Party actually wanted people to have a job. Now Australian workers are just pawns in this political game and just as expendable as the promises of this government. If jobs are under threat in the big clubs you can imagine what is going to happen in the smaller clubs. It will not be the case of losing some jobs; it will be a case of everyone losing their job because the entire club will close down.

I have already spoken with the manager of a large club in Mackay which took ownership of a smaller club as a result of the smaller club finding it difficult to make ends meet. This club has been in the Mackay community for as long as people can remember.

Another smaller club, the Alligator Creek Bowls and Recreation Club, which is in the northern part of my electorate, has written to me about the devastating effect this reform will have on them. It is a small club with only 10 machines. To meet the upgrade requirements in this legislation, they face a cost of $2,000 per machine—a total of 20 grand. Yes, they have a bit of time to do that, but the fact is that they will not be able to find that money.

I will go through their budget. They have income of just under $400,000 each year. Included in that is the income from those 10 poker machines, which totals about $115,000 a year—over a quarter of their income. Their net profit, before they take out what they need to set aside for depreciation and disposals, is just over $13,000. After depreciation and disposals, they are set back to the tune of $34,000. They do not even have enough money, from their current income, to replace their assets, yet the government is now talking about doing something which will cost them more. This legislation would require them to upgrade each machine—to the tune of $2,000 and an overall hit of at least 20 grand—and in addition they would face the costs of ongoing monitoring.

Their other option is to just get rid of the machines and lose over a quarter of their income. This club will shut its doors for sure and that will be a direct consequence of this bill. It is the only club in the Alligator Creek community, the only place where people can go to socialise with others, have a meal or have a drink with mates—and it is being shut down.

As I said, the secretary of the club has written to me. He told me that they actually make cash donations to many local clubs and groups—usually small donations of about $100 at a time. The letter said:

… our greatest benefit to our local community is providing and meeting all the costs involved in providing the only facility where the large variety of small groups in our area can get together for meetings or hold club/group activities. There is no council community hall, nor any other community facility provided. And, we already struggle to meet this important shortfall left by governments of all levels!

If our club did not exist many groups would fold, as repeatedly happens when groups must meet at someone's home. Pokies machine revenue pays for our many licenses to operate, the bar, super, any major repairs and electricity. If anything is left, we use that to improve our facilities. And while we've been in business since 1994, we still have a dirt car park. This isn't because we like it that way, especially in the wet season—it's because we haven't had enough spare money to seal it. So, we just keep grading it in the dry season, and living with the pot holes in the wet. Dirt car parks are something our more affluent, city counterparts do not have to live with!
The letter goes on to say:

From memory, local groups who have availed themselves of club facilities are: The Alligator Creek Times, Polocrosse, Pony Club, Trail Riders, Horse Club, Playgroup, Neighbourhood Watch, Mah-jong, Fruit & Veg Growers, Craft Group, Tree Growers, Fishing Club, Super Quarry Action Group, Grumpy Old Men, Darts, Bowling Club, Belly Dancing, Rock & Roll. The list of user groups continually changes and reforms as various groups start up and close down. Townsville City Council and both State and Federal Government Departments all avail themselves of our facilities for their own purposes (usually for no cost) on a regular basis. The Club is also where local businesses, lost & found notices, birthday, anniversary greetings etc can advertised on our free on-site and off-site noticeboards. We try to encourage everyone to participate in something, as isolation is a noted cause of depression and a killer in rural areas.

Along with that, it is the only place in the region, other than the local roadhouse, for meals and drinks. The letter continues:

But for socializing, entertainment, weddings, birthdays, wakes and other functions, getting government agency information out, small group and larger community meetings—there are no other local facilities residents could use. We're it. If we have to close our doors, no other local club will be able to pay the bills to keep the doors open …

The club has 10 employees—all of them local. The funds they inject back into the community are not limited to wages, as they support local businesses and groups wherever they can. The club supports a number of charitable organisations. Camp Quality and Legacy are their ongoing, yearlong projects. They donate to the Red Shield Appeal and the Cancer Fund and to organisations such as Clubs Smile for a Child, Lions and the PCYC.

This is a club which faces closure as a result of this bill. They know it. The secretary has written to me, saying that they will not be able to afford to upgrade the machines but that they cannot afford not to have the machines. They will close down and Alligator Creek will go without the only community facility they have. (Time expired)

Debate adjourned.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (10:51):

I move:

That business intervening before notice No. 8, government business, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Public Works Committee

Approval of Work

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (10:51): On behalf of the Special Minister of State, I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: Upgrade of on base housing for Defence at Larrakeyah Barracks, Darwin, NT.

The estimated overall cost of the proposed upgrade of on-base housing for Defence at Larrakeyah Barracks Darwin, Northern Territory, is approximately $25 million, including GST, contingency and escalation costs but excluding the cost of the land.

In its report the Public Works Committee has recommended that these works proceed. Subject to parliamentary approval, construction will commence in February 2013 and be completed by April 2015.
On behalf of the government and the minister I thank the committee for its support and commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Approval of Work

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (10:53): On behalf of the Special Minister of State, I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: Defence Logistics Transformation Program.

The total capped budget for the program is $899.6 million and includes $752.7 million plus GST for construction costs, management and design fees, furniture, fittings and equipment, contingencies and escalation allowance.

In its report the Public Works Committee has recommended that these works proceed. Subject to parliamentary approval, construction is expected to commence in early 2013 and is planned to be completed on all sites by late 2015.

On behalf of the government and the minister I thank the committee for its support and commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Approval of Work

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (10:54): On behalf of the Special Minister of State, I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: Upgrade of housing for Defence at RAAF Base Tindal, NT.

The estimated overall cost of the proposed upgrade of on-base housing for Defence at RAAF Base Tindal, Northern Territory, is approximately $57 million, including GST, contingency and escalation costs but excluding land costs.

In its report the Public Works Committee has recommended that these works proceed. Subject to parliamentary approval, construction will commence in April 2013 and be completed by December 2015.

On behalf of the government and the minister I thank the committee for its support and commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Reference

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (10:56): On behalf of the Special Minister of State, I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: New forensic facility at Majura, Australian Capital Territory.

The forensic science and technical intelligence capability of the Australian Federal Police is integral to the successful investigation and prosecution of all crime types and contributes to national security and regional capability development outcomes.

The estimated outturn cost of the proposal is $106 million plus GST. Subject to parliamentary approval, construction will commence in late 2013 and be completed by mid-2015.

I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.
Reference

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (10:57): On behalf of the Special Minister of State, I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation nuclear medicine project.

This new Australian nuclear medicine facility will guarantee the future supply of medicines used to diagnose heart disease and cancers in millions of patients across Australia and the world. A co-located synroc waste treatment plant will use Australian technology to deliver a safe and economic way of treating the by-product of nuclear medicine manufacture.

The estimated outturn cost of the proposed works is $168 million plus GST. Subject to parliamentary approval, the proposed works are scheduled to start in June 2013 and be completed by June 2016.

I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Reference

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (10:59): On behalf of the Special Minister of State, I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: The Australian War Memorial redevelopment of the First World War galleries.

The redevelopment of the First World War galleries at the Australian War Memorial, estimated to cost $32.52 million plus GST, is part of the package of commemorative events and initiatives that comprise the ANZAC Centenary Program 2014-2018. It is unlikely that any other agency, public or private, has the depth of experience and collection of artefacts to facilitate the development of a world-class exhibition on the First World War.

Subject to parliamentary approval, the proposed works are scheduled to start in April 2013 and be completed by November 2014.

I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Approval of Work

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (11:00): On behalf of the Special Minister of State, I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, and by reason of the urgent nature of the works, it is expedient that the following work be carried out without having been referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works: Infrastructure and upgrade works to establish Regional Processing Centres on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea and Nauru.

The report of the Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers was released on 13 August 2012 and was tabled in the Senate on 12 September 2012. The Australian government has announced in-principle agreement to implement the panel’s recommendations, including recommendations 8 and 9 that propose the establishment of capacity to process irregular maritime arrivals in Nauru and on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea.

On 1 November 2012, an expediency motion was agreed for preliminary works at two sites on Nauru: the Topside facility and staff accommodation. There is now an urgent need to continue construction work at these sites, and to commence works on the second facility on Nauru and preliminary works for
un a permanent facility on Manus Island as soon as sites are agreed by host governments.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship has consulted with the Chair of the Public Works Committee, who has supported continuation of the works, given their urgent nature. During the exemption period, DIAC will report fortnightly to the Public Works Committee on progress and will arrange for the remainder of the works to be referred to the Public Works Committee for scrutiny. I commend this motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Publications Committee

Report

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (11:04): I present the report of the Publications Committee sitting in conference with the Publications Committee of the Senate. Copies of the report have been placed on the table.

Report—by leave—agreed to.

Privileges and Members' Interests Committee

Document

Mrs D'ATH (Petrie) (11:05): As required by resolutions of the House, I table copies of notifications of alterations of interest received during the period 28 June 2012 and 28 November 2012.

Public Accounts and Audit Committee

Report


Leave granted.

Mr OAKESHOTT: The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, as prescribed by its act, examines all reports of the Auditor-General, and reports the results of the committee's deliberations to the parliament. This report details the findings of the committee's examination of five performance audits selected for further
scrutiny from 24 audit reports presented to parliament by the Auditor-General between May and August 2012.

The findings of the selected audit reports from the independent Auditor-General were largely positive, but a number of areas for improvement were also identified.

**Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership**

The first audit report we reviewed—probably the most outstanding one and the priority work for further consideration by this chamber—was on the National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy. This agreement between the Commonwealth and the states funds efforts to improve student literacy and numeracy outcomes, focusing on students who are falling behind.

This audit linked closely with the committee's previous work looking at national funding agreements.

While overall that partnership seems to have had a positive impact on schools and students, the evidence presented to us showed that there was still some more work to be done.

In particular, future programs would benefit from:

- implementation plans and reform targets being negotiated at the same time as the initial high level agreements are made;
- performance data assurance mechanisms being built into agreements; and
- more time being allowed in agreements for facilitation payments to take effect before reward payments are made.

During the committee's review, we did hear in a worrying way that $64 million of Commonwealth funding had been withheld from the various states and territories due to reform targets not being met as part of the original agreement.

This shows that governments at all levels, including through the Council of Australian Governments, need to work harder if we are to lift Australia's literacy and numeracy standards. This is urgent work that does matter!

I want to pause here to reflect on what the COAG Reform Council also said last week about the mixed target results and entrenched inequity in education. This is an area of urgent priority. I may say something a little controversial here, in that whilst there are members in this chamber who have great literary members of their family, and I note a speech made by the shadow minister of his uncle, Robert Hughes, earlier this year in this chamber as one of the finer moments in this chamber this year. But really, if we are serious about music, literature and the arts having meaning, then this area of literacy and numeracy is one that needs great focus.

If we are to be sure that our future is not fatal, if we are to be more than the sunburnt country or the lucky country, if we are to be the resilient country, this is something that all parliaments in this country need to give much greater attention to, and the work that was done by the Auditor-General, the follow-up work that was done by the Public Accounts Committee has identified that we continue to fail in the lives of many to deliver programs that lift the literacy and numeracy standards in this country.

**Fast-tracked programs**

Two of the other audits the committee reviewed involved programs that were being fast-tracked. Together, the findings suggest that when making decisions on program timing the government does need to pay more attention to the capacity of agencies to manage large and complex projects in compressed timeframes, while still complying with administrative requirements. These were issues rolled out with intent
through the 2008 to 2011 period known as the global financial crisis and the stimulus package response, but there were still issues from an accounting and auditing position that are worthy of reflection.

**Renewable Energy Demonstration Program**

One was the Renewable Energy Demonstration Program which was significantly impacted by the decision to fast-track funding, as the Auditor-General’s report detailed. Compressed timeframes contributed to lower quality grant applications and poor documentation of decisions around project selection and probity.

The committee concluded that the accelerated demands placed on the department of resources and tourism were the major cause of its administrative shortcomings—particularly because this was the first major program to be taken on by the then new department. I would hope that across agencies there were many lessons learnt.

**Health and Hospitals Fund**

Another that we looked at was the Health and Hospitals Fund, the first two rounds. In our review we learned that the fast-tracking of these rounds of funding meant there was not enough time for the health department to produce a clear strategy to inform its funding priorities. This led to a reliance on states to identify their own infrastructure gaps and needs.

Another concern was the finding that the department did not advise the health minister on the relative merits of the projects submitted to her for potential funding, an issue the committee previously has raised in regard to other programs run through other agencies and their relationships with other ministers. I do note the $1.8 billion regional round of the Health and Hospitals Fund now is delivering over 100 projects throughout regional Australia, delivering great equity and including, from a parochial point of view, two great projects on the Mid North Coast at both Port Macquarie and Kempsey hospitals.

**Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy**

The Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy was also reviewed by the committee and dealt with the important issue of quarantine in Northern Australia. The report contained mostly positive findings, but highlighted a need for better data management systems and better use of existing data to inform management decisions. We were given the feedback that there is ongoing work to make that happen which we will continue to follow.

**Incoming international air passengers**

Finally, following up earlier work, the committee looked at Customs' processing of incoming international passengers at Australia's airports.

Our review focused on the SmartGate automated clearance system, which has been rolled out at airports around Australia.

While the audit indicated a need to improve SmartGate clearance rates, recent efforts by Customs show some encouraging signs of progress and a greater use and understanding of the SmartGate procedures.

**Conclusion**

In closing, I would like to sincerely thank the other committee members and agency representatives who were involved in this inquiry for their cooperative approach in support of this committee's role of scrutinising the spending of money on behalf of the public. I would like to thank those same people for their ongoing work in a very busy committee that takes its oversight role very seriously, and I also would like to, as it is the Christmas season, pass on the wishes...
of the committee to the secretariat who are here today and thank you for your ongoing work on a very busy workload.

I commend the report to the House.

Treaties Committee

Report

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (11:14): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties I present the committee's report entitled Report 131: treaties tabled on 21 August, and 11 and 18 September 2012 and I ask leave of the House to make a short statement in connection with the report.

Leave granted.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON: In presenting this report, probably the most significant of the treaties examined by the committee is the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia known as ReCAAP.

ReCAAP represents a regional response to the incidents of piracy in the Malacca and Singapore straits. The treaty became binding on the initial signatories back in 2006 and currently has 18 signatories.

Piracy in these waters is a significant concern for Australian businesses that export and import by ship. The Minister for Defence, the Hon. Stephen Smith, recently estimated that approximately $130 billion worth of Australian trade passes through these straits each year.

There are a number of ways in which ReCAAP assists authorities local to the Malacca and Singapore straits to combat piracy and armed robbery.

ReCAAP provides the legal basis for the previously mentioned ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre, which:

- ensures the expeditious transfer of information on incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships to ReCAAP signatories;
- collects, collates and analyses information transmitted by the signatories concerning piracy and armed robbery against ships;
- provides alerts, wherever possible, of imminent threats of piracy or armed robbery against ships; and
- prepares statistics and reports on the basis of information received.

ReCAAP also compels signatories to share whatever information they have about piracy and armed robbery at sea, and compels signatories to assist in preventing or detecting, arresting or seizing persons, vessels or aircraft involved in piracy or armed robbery at sea.

Australia will benefit from the increased access to information on emerging regional threats related to piracy and armed robbery at sea. Australia will also become a more visible participant in the task of combating piracy and armed robbery.

Australia will also benefit from access to a regional maritime security network comprising national authorities that are responsible for managing the threat of piracy and armed robbery in our immediate region.

Report 131 also contains the committee's views on three other significant treaty actions:

- the Treaty between Australia and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on Extradition;
- the Partial Revision of the 2008 Radio Regulations; and
- the Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Kingdom of Spain for the Mutual Protection of Classified Information of defence interest.
The first of these treaties provides for bilateral extradition arrangements between Australia and Vietnam.

Australia does not currently have bilateral arrangements with Vietnam to facilitate extradition, which means that we can only consider extradition requests from Vietnam under multilateral conventions to which we are both parties, such as the UN Convention Against Corruption or the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.

The treaty will make it significantly easier for Australia to cooperate with Vietnam to request or grant extradition for offences punishable under the laws of both countries.

Importantly, the obligation to extradite is qualified by a number of internationally accepted grounds for refusal. A person may not be extradited in relation to a crime punishable by the death penalty, unless a guarantee is given that such penalty will not be applied. The parties to the agreement must refuse an extradition request where there are grounds for believing that the extradited person would be subject to torture, or that the request has been made for the purpose of punishing a person on the basis of their race, ethnic origin, gender, language, religion, nationality, political opinion or other status.

The treaty is consistent with other Australian bilateral extradition treaties and adds to Australia's existing network of 38 other bilateral extradition treaties.

On this basis, the committee supports the treaty between Australia and Vietnam on extradition.

In addition, and in line with the views expressed by the committee on previously examined extradition treaties, the committee has recommended that new and revised extradition agreements should explicitly provide a requirement that the requesting country provide annual information concerning the trial status and health of extradited persons and the conditions of the detention facilities in which they are held.

The Partial Revision of the 2008 Radio Regulations updates the international arrangements for the management of the radiofrequency spectrum to ensure sufficient spectrum is allocated for, amongst other things:

- digital maritime communications technologies;
- unmanned aircraft systems;
- oceanographic radar to measure coastal sea surface conditions; and
- Earth observation systems that provide critical data relating to weather and climate forecasts.

The treaty also improves the international coordination of satellite networks.

The committee supports this treaty.

The Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Kingdom of Spain for the Mutual Protection of Classified Information of Defence Interest sets out security procedures and practices for the exchange and protection of classified information between Australia and Spain, and for visits to either party that require access to such information or restricted areas or facilities where classified information is held.

The committee also supports this treaty.

In closing, I wish to also thank the treaties committee secretariat staff for their hard work; the treaties committee has a very substantial workload. I wish them all the best for Christmas.

I commend the report to the House.
Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee
Report

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (11:20): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, I present the report entitled FASD: The hidden harm— inquiry into the prevention, diagnosis and management of foetal alcohol spectrum disorders, together with the minutes of proceedings and evidence received by the committee.

In accordance with standing order 39(f) the report was made a parliamentary paper.

Mr PERRETT: by leave—I rise today to present the report of the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs into the incidence and prevention of foetal alcohol spectrum disorders, or FASD. I am honoured to do so so soon after the Prime Minister this morning introduced the National Disability Insurance Scheme legislation.

FASD is the umbrella term for the range of conditions that can occur in an individual who endured prenatal exposure to alcohol. These conditions may include physical, mental, behavioural, cognitive and learning disabilities.

The risk of FASD increases with the quantity of alcohol a pregnant woman may consume. I will repeat that: the risk of FASD increases with the quantity of alcohol a pregnant woman may consume. However, what is not widely understood is that even small amounts of alcohol at critical developmental times can result in irrevocable damage to the developing foetus. This damage may not be physically apparent but can manifest in cognitive and learning impairment.

In a poignant DVD about children affected by FASD, a young boy called Tristan says, 'I wish I can be a policeman just when I grow up.' Then he adds, 'Nah, I just want to be normal first. I just want to be normal.' This Australian movie, for me, was more tragic than Gallipoli and Breaker Morant combined. As a parliament, we owe it to Tristan and to every child, every woman and every family to bring to light the risk of FASD and the hidden harms of prenatal alcohol exposure. Prevention is the key—and FASD is entirely preventable with proper public awareness. For those impacted by FASD, we need appropriate diagnosis and support.

The series of recommendations in this report are a pathway for a national action plan for FASD. This national action plan can spearhead progress in all sectors—health, education, criminal justice, social support—towards understanding, treating and eliminating preventable but lifelong birth defects and brain damage caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol. A nationally consistent approach is the most effective, and the committee has recommended that a specialised FASD reference group be established to provide guidance and advice to the Commonwealth government on the most effective policies and strategies. The FASD reference group will oversee the national action plan for FASD, which will address three critical issues: (1) prevention, (2) identification and (3) management.

The prevention of FASD is unequivocally the most cost-effective strategy. The advice must always be that the safest option for a pregnant woman is not to drink alcohol. The cost of a comprehensive and effective public awareness campaign that educates people about the risk of FASD is a fraction of the cost of supporting individuals with FASD. There needs to be a concerted campaign by health professionals to screen and identify women at risk of alcohol consumption in pregnancy. It is unacceptable for our health professionals to be unfamiliar with this
preventable condition and to not be giving women and their partners all the information they need to have the healthiest possible pregnancy.

Addressing the culture and easy accessibility of alcohol is a key strategy in preventing FASD—particularly in the context that we are leading up to Christmas—as well as minimising the many other serious social and economic harms. To this end, the committee recommends mandatory health warning labels on all alcoholic beverages and further investigation into the control around sales and promotion of alcohol.

While recognising that FASD can be completely eliminated in theory, the committee accepts that it may not be prevented in 100 per cent of pregnancies. In such cases, it is essential that the potential for FASD is identified and diagnosed in a timely manner. A nationally consistent definition of FASD, greater awareness amongst health professionals and a national screening and diagnostic tool are all urgently required. Support and education must be available to carers and educators so that the best management strategies can be put in place at home and at school. Effective intervention in childhood will improve considerably the life trajectory of a person with FASD.

I thank the secretariat, especially Dr Anna Dacre, Pauline Cullen and Natalya Wells, and the rest of their team. I particularly thank them for the great brochure that they have put together. I know not everyone will necessarily read the report, but the brochure is a great summary. We cannot keep hidden the harms being caused by alcohol in our society and, in particular, the devastating harms of prenatal alcohol exposure. As other speakers have said, season's greetings to all. I hope everyone has a great Christmas but that they also drink responsibly. I commend this report to the House and thank the member for Murray. Whilst she is not the deputy chair, she was the driver behind the social policy and legal affairs committee undertaking this inquiry.

Dr STONE (Murray) (11:26): by leave—Pregnant women drinking alcohol is the biggest cause of permanent, irreversible, non-genetic brain damage in newborns in Australia. I think this is a shocking statistic and it is a tragedy, because so many of the women who give birth to these disabled babies had not been aware of the danger of drinking during pregnancy. Other women have had an alcohol addiction but they were not helped or supported during their pregnancy to try to reduce their alcohol consumption or to eliminate their alcohol use altogether. This is a shocking indictment of our society, I believe.

We can no longer simply pretend that there are no serious consequences when it comes to keeping this problem hidden. That is why the title of our report refers to the hidden business of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder—where there is the exposure of the unborn to alcohol in the womb and the irreversible brain and other damage that can occur. I know we were deeply moved during the time that we took evidence in this inquiry. We were moved by the pleading of birth mothers and foster mothers and fathers who care for these children, despite their often not being able to get any government support or assistance, despite a lot of medical professionals sending them away and saying, 'Look, we don't really think you need a diagnosis for your child, because do you really want your child to live with the stigma of it being known that they have been damaged by their mother drinking?'

We are aware from other reports undertaken in this place, particularly by the
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, that so many of our people in prisons, particularly Indigenous people in prisons, are in fact suffering from foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. The effect of this condition means that people who are locked up for crimes often have very limited capacity to stay on the straight and narrow, to remain law abiding. It is a condition that affects their cognitive skills and their capacity to learn and memorise and creates poor understanding of cultural concepts, ideals and norms and this leads them to being locked up.

I think we are now at a stage in Australia where we do acknowledge that, yes, we have a strong drinking culture. We acknowledge that a lot of our alcohol companies, whether they produce beer, spirits or wine, are the major sponsors of sport in Australia. A lot of our sporting clubs could not buy their bats and balls if they did not have the local pub sponsoring their activities. But the time has come when we need to make sure that every man and woman knows about the impacts of alcohol on the unborn. We are asking women who are planning to become pregnant or who are pregnant to simply not drink for the nine months of their pregnancy. I repeat that the problem of foetal alcohol syndrome as it affects the unborn baby is totally avoidable. If you do not drink, there is no possibility of your child being born with any of the characteristics of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

I am concerned that, even though we have the National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines quite categorically stating that the safest option for women is not to drink alcohol when pregnant or planning a pregnancy—those guidelines are in black and white—we have medical professionals who fail to even ask about the drinking habits or intentions of women who come to them who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant. So many women are offered alcohol in their hospital bed when they have just delivered a baby, particularly if they are in private medical wards. We have a lot of pressure on young women to drink and to drink as hard and as often as men. We have a binge drinking epidemic at the moment, with young girls binge drinking. Those same young girls may then have unsafe sex and can then become pregnant and may continue to drink for a long time before they even realise that they are pregnant. This is a very sad and serious situation in Australia and it can lead to some shocking consequences for the unborn.

This report is well overdue. It is timely, though, that it is released when the government has already started to invest in a diagnostic tool and when the government has also acknowledged that there needs to be a federal, state and local government and community-wide campaign for understanding what the dangers of drinking are when you are pregnant or hoping to become pregnant. We have to have a communication campaign. It has to be broad as well as targeted. We have to have proper labelling of alcohol so it carries a warning for pregnant women. It is amazing that we are so proud about the labelling restrictions for tobacco and yet we have no mandated labelling for alcohol.

We also have to recognise FASD as a disability so that people who care for the victims can have some resources, through the new disability insurance policy moves or through the current disability support pension and carer schemes. We have to make sure that teachers, those in the judiciary, social workers, counsellors—anyone working in the community—understand what this condition is about so they can recognise those who are victims and then
take better action when trying to help those people reach their full potential.

Of course, this inquiry was important for those who suffer from foetal alcohol spectrum disorder themselves, the victims of this condition. Our very able chair, Mr Graham Perrett, mentioned the tragic story of little Tristan. He happens to be an Aboriginal boy, but this condition of FASD is not exclusive to, or most commonly found in, Indigenous communities. Tristan is a young boy. He has brothers and sisters with the same FASD condition. He just wants to be normal, he says. He knows he is not. He knows he cannot learn like others. He knows he cannot take responsibility like others. But he just wants to be normal. It is not fair that any young Australian should want to be normal but cannot be because of the damage that they suffered in the womb because their mother did not know not to drink or could not help drinking during her nine months of pregnancy.

This is a detailed report. It includes a lot of time-specific actions. Obviously there are resource implications. We need to thank the health professionals, particularly the people from the George institute and the Telethon institute. We have to acknowledge the brilliant work done by the Fitzroy Crossing community to tackle the FASD problems in their community. We were overwhelmed by the support and concern of those who know about this problem and know it must be tackled. I too commend this report to the House.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (11:34): I repeat my thanks on behalf of the committee to the member for Murray for her great contribution. I move:

That the House take note of the report.

Debate adjourned.

Report and Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (11:34): by leave—I move:

That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Bill 2012

Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with amendments.

Ordered that the amendments be considered immediately.

Senate’s amendments—

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (table item 2, column 2), omit "9 months", substitute "15 months".
(2) Clause 2, pages 2 to 3 (table items 3 to 9), omit the table items, substitute:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule 5, items 1 to 155</th>
<th>The day after the end of the period of 15 months beginning on the day this Act receives the Royal Assent.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
(3) Clause 2, page 3 (table item 11, column 2), omit "9 months", substitute "15 months".
(4) Clause 2, pages 3 to 4 (table items 13 to 15), omit the table items, substitute:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule 5, items 163 to 180</th>
<th>The day after the end of the period of 15 months beginning on the day this Act receives the Royal Assent.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
(5) Clause 2, page 4 (table item 17, column 2), omit "9 months", substitute "15 months".
(6) Clause 2, page 4 (table item 19, column 2), omit "9 months", substitute "15 months".
(7) Schedule 1, item 88, page 23 (lines 4 and 5), omit the item, substitute:

88 Subsection 95(1)

After "privacy", insert "by agencies".
(8) Schedule 1, item 104, page 29 (line 6), at the end of paragraph 2.2(b) of Australian Privacy
Principle 2, add "or who have used a pseudonym".

(9) Schedule 1, item 104, page 30 (after line 24), at the end of Australian Privacy Principle 3.4, add:

   Note: For permitted general situation, see section 16A. For permitted health situation, see section 16B.

(10) Schedule 1, item 104, page 34 (after line 4), at the end of Australian Privacy Principle 6.2, add:

   Note: For permitted general situation, see section 16A. For permitted health situation, see section 16B.

(11) Schedule 1, item 104, page 35 (line 7), omit the heading to Australian Privacy Principle 7.1, substitute:

   Direct marketing

(12) Schedule 1, item 104, page 39 (after line 3), at the end of Australian Privacy Principle 8.2, add:

   Note: For permitted general situation, see section 16A.

(13) Schedule 1, item 104, page 39 (line 34), omit "Note", substitute "Note 1".

(14) Schedule 1, item 104, page 39 (after line 35), at the end of Australian Privacy Principle 9.2, add:

   Note 2: For permitted general situation, see section 16A.

(15) Schedule 2, item 39, page 52 (lines 24 and 25), omit "an act relating to the collection of", substitute "the act of collecting".

(16) Schedule 2, item 69, page 63 (line 12), at the end of subsection 6L(3), add "or a person prescribed by the regulations".

(17) AG (2) [Sheet 7326]

   Schedule 2, item 69, page 65 (line 31), omit "$100", substitute "$150".

(18) Schedule 2, item 72, page 77 (lines 7 and 8), omit all the words from and including "recipient" to and including "licensee", substitute:

   recipient of the information is:
   (a) a credit provider who is a licensee or is prescribed by the regulations; or
   (b) a mortgage insurer.

(19) Schedule 2, item 72, page 84 (lines 2 and 3), omit "the assessment of the credit worthiness of individuals", substitute "credit".

(20) Schedule 2, item 72, page 84 (line 10), omit "the assessment of the credit worthiness of individuals", substitute "credit".

(21) Schedule 2, item 72, page 84 (lines 15 and 16), omit "the assessment of the credit worthiness of individuals", substitute "credit".

(22) Schedule 2, item 72, page 100 (line 11), omit "complaint.", substitute "complaint:".

(23) Schedule 2, item 72, page 100 (after line 11), at the end of subsection 21B(4), add:

   (i) whether the provider is likely to disclose credit information or credit eligibility information to entities that do not have an Australian link;
   (j) if the provider is likely to disclose credit information or credit eligibility information to such entities—the countries in which those entities are likely to be located if it is practicable to specify those countries in the policy.

(24) Schedule 2, item 72, page 101 (line 25), omit "complaint.", substitute "complaint:".

(25) Schedule 2, item 72, page 101 (after line 25), at the end of subsection 21C(3), add:

   (e) whether the provider is likely to disclose credit information or credit eligibility information to entities that do not have an Australian link;
   (f) if the provider is likely to disclose credit information or credit eligibility information to such entities—the countries in which those entities are likely to be located if it is practicable to specify those countries in the credit reporting policy.

(26) Schedule 2, item 72, page 102 (line 3), after "scheme", insert "or is prescribed by the regulations".

(27) Schedule 2, item 72, page 102 (line 22), after "licensee", insert "or is prescribed by the regulations".

(28) Schedule 2, item 72, page 102 (line 35), omit "a reasonable period has", substitute "at least 14 days have".

(29) Schedule 2, item 72, page 105 (line 12), omit "and the body corporate has an Australian link".

CHAMBER
(30) Schedule 2, item 72, page 105 (lines 13 to 17), omit paragraph 21G(3)(c), substitute:

(c) the disclosure is to:

(i) a person for the purpose of processing an application for credit made to the credit provider; or

(ii) a person who manages credit provided by the credit provider for use in managing that credit; or

(31) Schedule 2, item 72, page 105 (after line 32), at the end of subsection 21G(3), add:

Note: See section 21NA for additional rules about the disclosure of credit eligibility information under paragraph (3)(b) or (c).

(32) Schedule 2, item 72, page 106 (lines 7 to 10), omit paragraphs 21G(5)(c) and (d), substitute:

(c) the credit provider discloses the credit eligibility information under paragraph (3)(b), (c), (e) or (f); or

(d) the credit provider discloses the credit eligibility information under paragraph (3)(d) to an enforcement body.

(33) Schedule 2, item 72, page 111 (line 18), omit paragraph 21M(1)(b).

(34) Schedule 2, item 72, page 111 (lines 19 and 20), omit "for the purpose of the collection of payments", substitute "to the person or body for the primary purpose of the person or body collecting payments".

(35) Schedule 2, item 72, page 111 (after line 26), at the end of subsection 21M(1), add:

Note: See section 21NA for additional rules about the disclosure of credit eligibility information under this subsection.

(36) Schedule 2, item 72, page 113 (after line 9), after section 21N, insert:

21NA Disclosures to certain persons and bodies that do not have an Australian link

Related bodies corporate and credit managers etc.

(1) Before a credit provider discloses credit eligibility information under paragraph 21G(3)(b) or (c) to a related body corporate, or person, that does not have an Australian link, the provider must take such steps as are reasonable in the circumstances to ensure that the body or person does not breach the following provisions (the relevant provisions) in relation to the information:

(a) for a disclosure under paragraph 21G(3)(b)—section 22D;

(b) for a disclosure under paragraph 21G(3)(c)—section 22E;

(c) in both cases—the Australian Privacy Principles (other than Australian Privacy Principles 1, 6, 7, 8 and 9.2).

(2) If:

(a) a credit provider discloses credit eligibility information under paragraph 21G(3)(b) or (c) to a related body corporate, or person, that does not have an Australian link; and

(b) the relevant provisions do not apply, under this Act, to an act done, or a practice engaged in, by the body or person in relation to the information; and

(c) the body or person does an act, or engages in a practice, in relation to the information that would be a breach of the relevant provisions if those provisions applied to the act or practice;

the act done, or the practice engaged in, by the body or person is taken, for the purposes of this Act, to have been done, or engaged in, by the provider and to be a breach of those provisions by the provider.

Debt collectors

(3) Before a credit provider discloses credit eligibility information under subsection 21M(1) to a person or body that does not have an Australian link, the provider must take such steps as are reasonable in the circumstances to ensure that the person or body does not breach the Australian Privacy Principles (other than Australian Privacy Principle 1) in relation to the information.

(4) If:

(a) a credit provider discloses credit eligibility information under subsection 21M(1) to a person or body that does not have an Australian link; and

(b) the Australian Privacy Principles do not apply, under this Act, to an act done, or a practice
engaged in, by the person or body in relation to the information; and

(c) the person or body does an act, or engages in a practice, in relation to the information that would be a breach of the Australian Privacy Principles (other than Australian Privacy Principle 1) if those Australian Privacy Principles applied to the act or practice;

the act done, or the practice engaged in, by the person or body is taken, for the purposes of this Act, to have been done, or engaged in, by the provider and to be a breach of those Australian Privacy Principles by the provider.

(37) Schedule 2, item 72, page 125 (line 20), at the end of the heading to section 22E, add "etc."

(38) Schedule 2, item 72, page 125 (lines 26 and 27), omit "for use in managing credit provided by the provider"

(39) Schedule 2, item 72, page 126 (lines 3 and 4), omit "in managing credit provided by the credit provider", substitute "for the purpose for which it was disclosed to the person under paragraph 21G(3)(c)"

(40) Schedule 2, item 72, page 126 (lines 8 to 10), omit all the words from and including "information" to the end of subsection 22E(3), substitute:

information if:

(a) the disclosure is to the credit provider; or

(b) the disclosure is required or authorised by or under an Australian law or a court/tribunal order.

(41) Schedule 4, item 189, page 193 (after line 18), at the end of section 80Z, add:

Note: In determining the pecuniary penalty, the court must take into account all relevant matters including the matters mentioned in subsection 80W(6).

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Management) (11:35): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

The Senate amendments to the Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Bill 2012 will change certain items in schedules 1, 2 and 4 of the bill. Many of these amendments adopt recommendations of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee and respond to particular practical implementation issues raised by stakeholders.

The amendments to schedule 1 of the bill respond to a number of the Senate committee's recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness and operation of the proposed Australian Privacy Principles. Specifically, Senate amendments have clarified Australian Privacy Principle 2, the right to use a pseudonym; removed the word 'prohibition' from the direct marketing Privacy Principle heading; and made minor amendments to provisions relating to medical research and permitted health situations.

In relation to schedule 2, on credit reporting, senators from the Liberal Party and the National Party, the Greens and Senator Xenophon were all very supportive of allowing APRA regulated mortgage insurers to have direct access to repayment history information. We believe this will result in a fairer and more balanced credit market and mean mortgage insurers can be a second set of eyes on the risks and rates of credit, particularly for first home buyers.

The government and the Liberal Party agreed in the Senate that 14 days is the appropriate amount of time for a written notice to be given to a consumer before a default is recorded on an individual's credit report. This notice can only be issued after 60 days, and this time frame will be sufficient for a majority of debts.

The government, opposition and Greens also agreed in the Senate that $150 was a more accurate reflection of the threshold for listing a default. The government will keep a watching brief over how this change affects the credit market, and a new regulation-
making power will allow the government to adjust the rate as required.

The Senate also agreed to allow research about credit rather than a narrow concept of creditworthiness of an individual. More accurate research with appropriate consumer protections and new guidelines can only assist the Australian credit market to operate more smoothly.

A number of stakeholders raised practical concerns about the so-called Australia link requirement. The government consulted extensively across industry to find a solution which raises the bar on privacy protections of personal information sent offshore whilst also being practical to implement. Importantly, entities which send information offshore will still remain legally accountable in Australia.

I am pleased to report to the House that a number of industry peak bodies have expressed their satisfaction with this solution and thanked the Attorney-General's Department for their detailed and thorough approach to consultation. I would like to echo those thanks to the department for the work that they have done.

Furthermore, the bill will commence 15 months after royal assent rather than nine months. This will provide an adequate amount of time for community education about the changes and for the development of a credit-reporting code by the Commonwealth Privacy Commissioner and the industry, and it will give industry more time to implement considerable IT changes in their credit-reporting systems.

A number of regulation-making powers were also added into the privacy bill—importantly, allowing relay services that might be developed in the future to assist an individual with a hearing or vision impairment to access their credit-reporting information.

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues in the other place for their detailed consideration and support of this bill. It has been a very complex piece of work, and members of all parties have contributed constructively. Whilst this is also a little unusual, I would like to thank Lorna Clarke, from my office, who had to navigate a very complex set of changes that have now been agreed to by all parties and mean that this legislation can be implemented as soon as possible.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES
Constitutional Recognition of Local Government Committee
Membership
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Leigh) (11:39): Madam Speaker has received a message from the Senate acquainting the House that Senators Bushby and Fawcett have been appointed members of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Local Government.

Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Committee
Appointment
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Leigh) (11:39): Madam Speaker has received a message from the Senate informing the House that the Senate concurs with the resolution of appointment of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Membership
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Leigh): Madam Speaker has received advice from the Chief Opposition Whip nominating a member to be a member of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, Minister for Indigenous Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Centenary of ANZAC) (11:40): by leave—I move:

That Mr Wyatt be appointed a member of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

National Gambling Reform Bill 2012
National Gambling Reform (Related Matters) Bill (No. 1) 2012
National Gambling Reform (Related Matters) Bill (No. 2) 2012
Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr McCLELLAND (Barton) (11:40): At the outset, I should place on the record that my wife has recently been appointed as a director of the St George Leagues Club Ltd, which is a well-known club in my electorate and one arm of the famous St George Illawarra Dragons. Indeed, the club is a major supporter of that famous football team. I would also like to place on the record my appreciation for the work of registered clubs in my electorate and indeed throughout Australia. Also, I should place on the record that I myself have worked in registered clubs, and I am very grateful for the support that Ramsgate RSL Club provided to me by employing me as casual labour for most of my period of studying at university. I should also place on the record that both my son and my daughter are employed at a local RSL club while they are studying.

I think that account would give an indication of what valuable institutions clubs are. In fact, registered clubs are the second largest employer in my electorate, and it goes without saying that jobs and employment opportunities are foundational to the economic and social wellbeing of individuals and families. This parliament should therefore be very cautious about—indeed, those preparing this legislation have been very mindful of, and the discussion that has taken place in the course of proceeding with this legislation has been very mindful of—introducing a regulatory framework that has the potential to adversely impact on employment and, specifically, to result in people losing their jobs.

The objects of the National Gambling Reform Bill 2012 are admirable—that is, to reduce the extent of problem gambling in our community and the adverse impact that has on families. But, equally, it must be appreciated that regulatory reform should be introduced in a manner that avoids families suffering from the adverse impacts of loss of employment, and I know that the minister has been attuned to that issue.

Like most members of this House, I am a great supporter of the registered club movement. I have mentioned the issue of employment, but clubs are more than simply employers and entertainment venues. They are literally part of the fabric of our civil society. Speaking from the perspective of a representative from the state of New South Wales, I think it is fair to say that there would be very few local sporting organisations that are not the beneficiaries in some way, shape or form of local clubs. In my younger days, when I was playing rugby union, we were supported by the Kyle Bay Bowling Club. When I played rugby league,
we were supported by the Kingsgrove RSL Club. Indeed, the sporting teams that my children have played in have all, in some way, shape or form, been supported by one of our local clubs. Again, I think that story would be common to very many families with children in my electorate.

I have a particular knowledge of the St George Leagues Club, which I have referred to. I can indicate, for instance, that that club distributes some $250,000 per year to junior sport at a local club and school level.

From my experience in a multicultural electorate, where 48 per cent of the population were either born overseas or whose parents were born overseas, you cannot overestimate or overstate the importance of sport as a community builder. Lifelong friendships are made and, irrespective of a person's social, economic or cultural background, people come together in a spirit of teamwork. Sport plays a significant unifying role in drawing together the multicultures in our community. As a number of members have said, sporting organisations have been supported so tremendously well by the club industry.

In addition, in terms of those doing it tough—and there was landmark legislation introduced this morning with the National Disability Insurance Scheme—the St George's Leagues Club Ltd contributes some $250,000 per year towards supporting children with disabilities. A number of other charities are also supported, including through direct assistance such as the donation of motor vehicles.

I have mentioned St George as a result of my particular knowledge and association, but other clubs in my electorate also make valuable contributions to our local community. Indeed, when I served as Minister for Emergency Management, I saw the contributions that clubs make to their local communities in times of crises. In some cases, the sturdy construction of the club premises itself provided a safe venue, a safe harbour to literally weather the storm. The club premises was safe accommodation that protected people while the storm, indeed cyclone, passed through. In other instances the clubs have been the focal point of the post-disaster relief effort, providing food and sustenance to volunteers and providing food, sustenance and support—indeed, emotional support—to residents who have been affected by natural disasters. In some cases the clubs provided ongoing accommodation for those who had been displaced from their residences. This is an indication of how registered clubs have become part and parcel of not only our society but our natural environment. It goes without saying that clubs can be a focal point for many citizens, including senior citizens, who have the opportunity of obtaining cheap meals and the value of companionship, particularly for instance if one of their partners unfortunately has passed away. The ongoing support that comes from their association with club members can be a vital contributor to their wellbeing.

To address some criticism, I constantly make the point that, in my experience, registered clubs have always been concerned about problem gambling. When I was employed at the Ramsgate RSL Club some 30 years ago I was instructed to keep an eye on certain patrons and advise the duty manager if I thought they were overdoing it on the poker machines. Invariably the duty manager would sidle up to them, perhaps with drink in hand, and sit down and chat with them to advise of some options to address their issues.

I appreciate that such a personal approach is particularly difficult in large venues; nonetheless, it would be completely wrong and unfair to suggest that registered clubs are
not currently taking steps to address problem gambling. I have literally not walked into the foyer of any club in recent years without seeing referral details for counselling services to address problem gambling. Indeed, the club industry itself is one of the major supporters of these programs and supports a number of research programs developing best practices around the world.

Poker machines, it obviously has to be conceded, in this day and age are a common and convenient form of gambling, but they are not the only form of gambling. Other forms of gambling include casino games such as roulette or blackjack and wagering on a horse race, trotting race, dog race or indeed virtually any event. Gambling on literally any form of sporting event and electronic gaming machines can now be readily accessed over the internet.

In the atmosphere of this hung parliament there can be and obviously has been an intense focus on a few lightning rod issues, and addressing problem gambling is legitimately one issue that has drawn the focus and attention of the parliament. But of course—and as the minister recognises in the steps that have been taken in the checks and balances in this bill—we do need to be cautious that, in making the political point and highlighting concern about an issue and demonstrating action to address an issue, we are actually addressing the issue and not simply displacing the problem. The foot on the balloon analogy is appropriate, where pressure on one side may constrain the balloon on that side but see a bulge in the other.

Poker machines are but one mechanism through which problem gamblers exercise their addiction. We need to be very careful that, in focusing attention on poker machines, we are not naive to the prospect of seeing a bulge or expansion of gambling taking place in other areas. For instance, my son is an avid watcher of rugby league, and I have real concern with the amount of advertising encouraging gambling that is aired during the telecast of those games. I know that the minister and indeed the minister for communications have also expressed concern about that issue. It is important to realise while we are addressing this issue that other areas obviously require attention.

I have also noted that the research suggests that between 80,000 and 160,000 Australians suffer significant gambling problems. That is obviously a lot of people, particularly when you think of the broader family members who may be affected by that addiction. But those numbers are not insurmountable in developing targeted programs that address the addiction of the individual as opposed to addressing the mechanism through which they may exercise that addiction—the focus, in this case, being on poker machines. I am pleased to see that an important part of this legislation is the proposal by the government, through the provisions in this legislation, to focus on enhanced research. Indeed, that enhanced research into the issue of problem gambling, which will be funded by the government, will present a real opportunity to focus in on the causes of the gambling addiction of those individuals, as opposed to constraining a particular outlet or mechanism through which they exercise that addiction.

In short, there are many aspects of this legislation that have merit—for instance, requiring the progressive implementation of precommitment technology, which I believe could be in the interests of patrons, and also of clubs in terms of discharging their obligation to show that they have exercised a duty of care for those who identify themselves as potentially being problem gamblers or at least wanting to limit the
amount that they spend on gambling. But we need to bear in mind that it is still work in progress, and that research in other countries—for instance, in Nova Scotia and Norway—suggests that this sort of technology can be effective but that, on the other hand, there is also an indication, going back to that point that I previously made, that it may have displaced gambling activity, for instance to the internet. That may well have been because there has generally been an increase in internet usage, but the point is that more research is required before we can definitively say what is effective. I note that, as part of this regime, there will be a trial of this technology in the ACT, and I think that that trial should inform the development of the implementation of these programs.

It is very important that we appreciate in this House—and here the real-world experience of members of parliament is very important to draw on—that, when we introduce regulatory reform, it is going to have an impact on businesses and on venues, whether they be hotels or clubs. So we need to make sure that that regulatory impost is moderated but, firstly, that it is justified, and that has been the aim of the government. We need to make sure that the regulatory impost does not create a situation where it has an impact on employment which itself causes hardship.

I note that the timing of implementation is going to be a crucial part of the debate in the committee stage of this legislation. Obviously, if we can give some time for these programs to be implemented then it is going to reduce that regulatory impost, and that is going to be a significant part of the debate during the committee stage that I personally will be paying particular attention to.

Mr BRIGGS (Mayo) (11:56): I rise to support the shadow minister and his approach on the National Gambling Reform Bill 2012. It is a bill which really does contrast the way in which we, as members in this place, think about our fellow Australians. It shows what splits many of us in this parliament, into those who believe in personal responsibility and do not assume that not all Australians are bad and need to be protected by government legislation or regulation and others.

Serious governments address problems where they exist, and undoubtedly many families and many people face challenges related to addiction to gambling. But the absurdity of this legislation is that it focuses purely on one form of gambling, as if to presume that there are no other ways for Australians to lose their homes, their incomes and their families and no other things which cause as much pain as addiction does. It somehow presumes that a piece of legislation focusing on one aspect of gambling will reduce or stop the impact on so many thousands of Australians, as if there is no other way that you could possibly find to feed the addiction that so many undoubtedly face.

We have seen this bill being pulled and pushed around. It started on Monday or Tuesday; it is now Thursday, the last sitting day. It has been on and off today a couple of times. We have seen a lot of walking around. We know there is a big brawl going on between the Greens and the member for Denison, and lots of leaking about polling and so forth. We are in the middle of all this.

But there is apparently an intent here. It is not all about politics; it is not all about someone getting one up on the other, so that one party gets to run around Denison and say that they have done something that the other person did not; it is not about GetUp! having all this support from online gambling but focusing on poker machines—not at all! This
is all good public policy on the last sitting day of the year, there is no doubt in the world! I am sure the minister has really enjoyed the last 48 hours, dealing with all these issues as she has wandered from one office to another trying to get a deal to satisfy all the egos involved.

But never will you satisfy some of the egos involved, particularly that of the member for Melbourne; there is no guarantee about that. If you want to see sanctimony in this place, look no further than the Australian Greens and look no further than the Murray-Darling Basin. But I digress.

I would urge many members to read the speech of the member for Moncrieff on this bill. In that speech he made some very important points in relation to this issue. There is a very serious issue here, which is that many Australians face a problem with addiction. There is no doubt a problem, and there need to be programs which assist. There should be regulation of gambling—indeed there should be. But to presume that somehow this industry will be able to take an extra burden, an extra whack, when it is screaming and saying, 'We can't,' puts at risk the thousands of people who are employed in this industry—for instance, in and around the thousands of clubs that so many Australians enjoy spending so many of their hours, enjoying their lives.

It is true that some people enjoy playing poker machines. It is true that some people enjoy following racehorses. It is true that some people enjoy playing poker online. It is also true that most people are able to do these things in a manner which is within their limits. They take responsibility for themselves; they know how much they can spend; they know when enough is enough. Of course there are some in society who go too far, but the problem with this bill is it seeks to legislate against one—and only one—form of gambling on the presumption that there is no other way for people to restrain themselves.

Gambling in Australia is changing very rapidly. The online accessibility of gambling is increasing as the internet's role increases in so many facets of our lives. I tend to agree with the member for Barton when he expresses concern about the pushing of gambling on televised sporting events. I enjoy a punt occasionally, but I do find it frustrating that, when I am watching a great test match or a great AFL game, gambling is being pushed through betting odds constantly being displayed on the TV screen. I think that we in this place could look at and address this practice.

This bill assumes that problem gambling on poker machines can be stopped by regulating them to death. This is no doubt the intention of the Greens and the member for Denison. But in doing they will send people with a gambling addiction back in their home, and the sort of gambling they do there is completely unregulated. It will always be difficult to regulate offshore gambling sites, which GetUp!, interestingly, does not seem to have a problem with for some reason. It is not possible to identify problem gambling which occurs at home, and—unlike in pubs and clubs across Australia—there is no-one watching out for home gamblers and saying, 'I think that person's spent too much,' or 'I can see a problem developing.' The addiction to online gambling will be played out silently in our suburbs, but the member for Denison and the Greens will feel good about themselves that they got legislation through to show that they have cracked down on pokies and the pokie barons and stopped the pokie palaces and so on. Of course, to do so would be to play pure politics in the interests of meeting political promises rather than to address the very serious issues of problem gambling which some people face. It would
not address the aggressive advertising of some of the new forms of gambling. Young people have access to online gambling through their TV screens, the internet and their smart phones—

Mr Bandt interjecting—

Mr BRIGGS: The member for Melbourne thinks it is funny that on the last sitting day he gets a bit of politics up with the member for Denison. He gets to run around and say: ‘Look! we got it!’

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Leigh): Order! The member for Mayo will confine his comments to the bill.

Mr BRIGGS: That is disorderly, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I would appreciate if you would pull him up.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Mayo will confine his comments to the bill and do his best to ignore the interjections.

Mr BRIGGS: It is ironic coming from the member for Melbourne. But this is a very serious issue, and he thinks it is hilarious.

Honourable members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Mayo will resume his seat. Honourable members will cease interjecting, and the member for Mayo will confine his comments to the bill rather than to those who are interjecting.

Mr BRIGGS: I am confining my comments to this very serious bill. I take very seriously that the minister has worked day and night for the last few weeks to try to get an outcome which she believes is in the best interests of Australian government policy. I do not think it is hilarious; I think problem gambling is a serious issue in our society. Many Australian families have had their lives torn apart by problem gambling. I think it is a disgrace that we are playing political puffery in this place under the cover that this bill is going to address problem gambling; I do not think it is a laughing matter at all. I say very strongly that the member for Melbourne should be ashamed of coming into this place and laughing during this debate. That he does so highlights the absolute sanctimony of these people.

Many thousands of Australians rely for their income on jobs they hold in places that have poker machines, and any legislation should be considered in the light of its impact on the families of these Australians. The shadow minister has rightly identified that the bill goes too far and puts jobs in the gaming industry at risk. That is why there is so much outrage over this bill. I believe very strongly—and I have said this quite often in South Australia—that AFL footy, which I love very much, has some problems with the way it finances itself at the lower levels, and particularly in SA. Some clubs at the SANFL level benefit greatly from poker machine revenue, and they have a great advantage because of it; other clubs at the same level have not benefitted as greatly from poker machine revenue. There needs to be a rethink about the revenue base of the South Australian National Football League if we want community football to continue to go from strength to strength. One of the challenges for the SANFL is to work out how to deal with the diminishing revenue they receive from poker machines due to increased online gambling. Any hotel owner in South Australia will tell you that the returns from poker machines are diminishing because people are able to access at home through their computers and their smart phones the gambling needs they seek to service.

Those people with addictions, as I said before, will not be seen by people in hotels. Their community will not see the impact on them if there is an impact. While people who have abused poker machines in the past have
sometimes not been picked up—quite often with terrible consequences—there would be no way in the world that other people would know whether they are abusing online gambling, particularly with offshore sites. We can regulate Australian gambling quite easily—indeed we are debating that now—but we cannot regulate offshore sites. We cannot regulate people's access to offshore sites. We cannot regulate the internet, as the government found when it tried to apply a so-called filter. You cannot regulate the internet; indeed, we should not seek to.

This bill focuses on one type of gambling and impacts on a huge industry that employs many thousands of Australians. Hotels and clubs do many good things in communities and provide a place where elderly people in particularly, like my wife's 91-year-old grandmother, can go to have a cheap—subsidised in effect by poker machine revenue—lunch. My wife's grandmother does not play poker machines but gets a cheap lunch and some companionship with friends every week. These sorts of places will find it more difficult as they continue to be regulated. That is quite clear. That is the intention of the bill. I think it is a great shame that we do not take into account the collateral damage done under the claim of good intentions.

There is an addiction problem not just with gambling but in so many different ways in our society. But addressing it through one lever alone will not help those families that are affected so badly by it. That is why we on this side have a comprehensive approach. We have put out a discussion paper to engage with the community and to work through the issues of addiction, not just to poker machines but more broadly. We will try and find ways to better see those in the community who are being troubled, who are putting their own lives and their families at risk. No one in this parliament wants to see people adversely affected by gambling; I genuinely believe that. We are looking for the best way to deal with it. This bill is not the best way. I support the coalition position of opposing this bill. It is a bad piece of legislation. Its intention is bad. It comes from a wrong premise in its beginning and will not have the outcome it seeks in the end.

Mr WINDSOR (New England) (12:10): I rise to speak fairly briefly. I hope, on the National Gambling Reform Bill 2012 and to foreshadow some amendments that I will be moving in the third reading stage. I will make a few general comments before getting more specific. Problem gambling has been a concern for the community for a long time. I think in some ways it has displayed the value of the crossbench both within the Senate and in the House as the parliament tries to wrestle with a real issue in the community and develop a process that is not only acceptable to the community but that has general consensus throughout the community.

I would particularly like to thank the member for Denison, to whom the issue of problem gambling is of great importance. Senator Xenophon in the Senate as well has raised this issue over many years. I know there will be people that will not be happy with certain aspects of the final outcome of this legislation. But we would not be dealing with it at all if it had not been for the member for Denison. It has come at some considerable cost to him in pressure and angst as he has stuck to his guns. The other thing that needs to be said is the member for Dobell will be seconding my amendments, which I believe may well have the numbers to get up.

Some would say, as the previous speaker said, that there have been some games played in the last few days. I have been in politics for a while now and what I have
always found is that the things that actually work long term have the widespread endorsement of various groups. I think we have just seen another classic example of that with the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, where the great majority of the parliament is going to endorse reform. In the great majority of communities there is acceptance of that reform and hopefully some degree of trust in that particular legislation. This bill has similar aspects in my view. Particularly in some of the country areas, it will be very difficult to work if people do not accept it.

The amendments I will be moving relate to the timing of the application of the bill. I will work through them briefly because we are still getting phone calls in my office from people who are obviously either being fed the incorrect information or do not have a full comprehension of what the legislation is about. The minister will correct me if I am wrong or out of kilter here, but those businesses that have fewer than 10 machines will have unlimited time in which to convert their machines to be precommitment and warning ready. Businesses with 11 to 20 machines—there are quite a few of those in my electorate—and those with fewer than 10 machines account for about 83 per cent of the poker machines within the electorate. Currently in the bill those with 11 to 20 machines have until 2020 to be precommitment ready. The amendments I will be moving, which will be seconded by the member for Dobell and endorsed by at least some of the other crossbenchers, will move that precommitment-ready deadline out another two years. Moving the deadline out will have significant meaning within the industry. It would mean that those medium-size clubs that do have some financial issues would be able to get to the stage that the bill wants them to get to. So there is an extension of two years. The clubs with more than 21 machines, the bigger clubs, will also—and I think this is very significant—if the amendment is passed, have an extension from 2016 through to 2018.

I have had my issues with the club movement—not so much with the hotel movement, but the club movement. My photo was left in a lot of clubs for quite some time when I agreed very early—and the member for Denison will remember this—not to support his original proposal. I did support the need for a trial, which is going to take place in the ACT. But my standing with the club movement now, or at least with some within the club movement, is not that brilliant.

But there are some additional measures which the clubs are willing to take, irrespective, as I understand it, of whether the legislation goes through or not. I think that is to their credit. If the additional two years are accepted—there are other amendments relating to manufacture and import and to the levy, but I will not go into the technicalities of all that—the clubs are prepared to put in place a range of additional measures. The member for Dobell might elaborate on that. I think, Minister, that when you see those measures, assuming the amendments do go through, you will see that they complement the legislation.

I think we are getting closer to acceptance on both sides of this debate. The trial is still very important in all of this. But I think there is movement at the station—I think we are getting closer to widespread acceptance. As we all know, and as I said at the start, if you can get widespread acceptance, you are probably more likely to get a real outcome at the end of it and to diffuse some of the political divisions which tend to plague us.

In closing, I recognise the work of the member for Denison and of Senator Xenophon. There have also been many others out there—Tim Costello, for
example—who have been very proactive in raising this issue. If I were God—and I am not—I would ban poker machines. But that is not going to happen in the real world. I think we have to find real world solutions to the very real issues of problem gambling. I congratulate the minister, too, for wrestling with this monster. It is not an easy one. But it looks as if we may be getting somewhere near a conclusion where the great majority of people—not everybody of course—will be in agreement with the process.

Mr OAKESHOTT (Lyne) (12:18): As a former shadow minister for gaming in a state parliament, I am the first to recognise this area of policy as arguably the most difficult to achieve reform in. It is an area of policy which is shrouded in the influence and power of vested interests. So the very fact we have the National Gambling Reform Bill 2012 and related bills in this chamber, let alone that this legislation is likely to be passed, is an enormous credit to the ability of many people to negotiate and compromise in the public interest.

When I was in the state parliament of New South Wales, it was well known that the pubs and clubs ran the politics. That is not just true of recent years; that has been true throughout the long history of New South Wales. It is not just that they can tap into the mythology of the Australian character—everyone loves a punt—and play to the audience when reform is being attempted; there are some very real issues with state budgets. Roughly 10 per cent of the revenue base comes from poker machines. In that context, reform is incredibly difficult—you have to get government itself off the teat of these machines and you have to do so at a time when state governments are incredibly challenged with respect to their revenue base.

All this year—and I have somewhat failed in doing it—I have been trying to make this one of the issues in the conversation. The great failure of this moment in time is Commonwealth-state relations, in particular the area of negotiating a tax base which would enable both the states and the Commonwealth to deliver services to the standard that Australians expect. We cannot, in my view, blindly reform in this area without considering those issues of the revenue base at a state level. I hope that, at some point soon, the COAG process will recognise the need for sensible negotiation on taxation issues, including how we reduce the reliance of state governments on the revenue flows from poker machines. That, for me, is the issue at the heart of this topic.

Whilst we have ended up where we have ended up—arguably a long way from the recommendations of the two Productivity Commission reports and arguably a long way from the noble agreements reached, at the time of the formation of this government, between the government and the member for Denison on mandatory precommitment by 2014—we are still doing something pretty historic today. For the first time the Commonwealth is recognising the processes that were started by the Productivity Commission reports and is trying to start a process where this country recognises problem gambling is real and we do need to do more work in a public policy sense to help those in need and reduce the impact of gambling on the broader community.

Of all institutions, the Productivity Commission is probably the last one to recommend regulation, so this is hardly some socialist leftie agenda that we are going through in this parliament. It is the Productivity Commission that is saying from a productivity perspective that we need to undertake reform that is in the interests of the nation. Anyone, therefore, taking a
position on the issue of productivity in this nation is hard pressed to vote against the legislation before the House today when these are basically pieces of legislation that will assist the productivity agenda of Australia.

I can only find one sound reason for voting against this legislation, and that is fear—fear of the power and influence of vested interests. Fear does not determine how I vote in this chamber; nor should it determine how any member of parliament should vote. This is exactly why over the weekend before this debate began I made a public call—not to be some smarty cross-bencher causing trouble but to make a very important point, before we even begin, about power and influence—that everyone in this room reveal their latest donation figures from the various vested interests involved in this debate. By all means participate in the debate, by all means vote, but, like anyone at any level, whether in a volunteer club or on the board of directors of the biggest company in the nation, declare your interests—put them on the table so we know exactly where you are coming from and why you are coming from that position.

The Electoral Commission funding returns for the two major parties are the best figures publicly available in 2011, and the Liberal-National Party got $110 million in that year and the Labor Party got $90 million—who knows how much of that was directly from the various interests associated with gambling. In my view, that is an important part of the story of how we have ended up such a long way from the recommendations of the Productivity Commission and the agreements reached at the formation of this government. I fully recognise how difficult this is, how power and influence has its place in all public policy-making, and this area more than most, but I urge this House to stay true to the safe port in all of this, and that safe port is evidence-based policy-making. The evidence trail is one that says that we have a problem and that it is having an impact on productivity. The states and the various industry bodies know there is an issue that needs to be resolved and they themselves have been doing their very best to resolve it, but there is still a failure and therefore the point of today's exercise is to lift the standard another notch and that is why I strongly endorsed the work being done particularly by colleagues from the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs through to my Independent colleagues sitting next to me who have stayed true to the cause of trying to lift the standard and reduce by another notch problem gambling in Australia that is having a productivity impact.

If we can get a majority on all the various amendments that are coming before the House, it will be a historic day—even though we are a long way from where arguably we should be and even though in my view the greatest failure of all is nothing to do with this legislation; it is all about that failure at a COAG process and a Commonwealth-state process where there has not been the work done to really address putting in place caps across the nation on the number of machines, doing a reduction strategy underneath, working with the states on the revenue base and the loss occurring through that, exploring and minimising any links to various money-laundering or criminal activities, not exploring the links to health prevention strategies and not being uniform and comprehensive in the approach so that it is not just about poker machines—we have issues with online gaming and sports betting; we have issues between states as their revenue bases are tapped by private betting agencies over the ownership of pictures of horseracing and greyhound racing. So a range of issues need to be addressed in a
comprehensive approach, and I hope we are not forgetting that as we enjoy this historic moment and pass sensible, negotiated legislation that will make a lot of difference in the lives of many.

**Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP** (Mackellar) (12:29): I want to begin by placing on the record that I find the remarks of the member for Lyne highly offensive. He was attempting to take some moral high ground, and was insulting members of this House who stand very strongly on moral issues and refute what he says about vested interests trying to influence people's decision-making when they are speaking against this national gambling reform legislation. I find that sort of indulgence, and people trying to say, 'I'm superior to everybody else, so everybody listen to me', highly offensive, as I said.

I will also put on the record that our position on this side of the parliament is that we acknowledge that gambling is a problem for some Australians and we support measures that will tackle the problem effectively and help prevent gambling addiction. Most Australians who enjoy gambling do so responsibly; but for those who do not, and cannot, we of course have an obligation to find ways to assist them and their families. You can say that the same applies to drugs, about which this government are silent. In fact, I remember that, when they first won office, a series of advertisements which had been made and were to go to air about not just the danger but the poisonousness of illicit drugs was cancelled by this government because, for some reason, they did not want to take on the issue, which affects so many people and families.

Going back to the question of where we stand on this: we support voluntary precommitment programs but we do not support mandatory programs. This bill is taking us back the original debate that we had when it was about mandatory precommitment and the inefficient, unproven nature of this requirement. All sorts of studies have been undertaken that bear this out.

If we are going to look at the moral issue, which is what Mr Oakeshott and the government would like us to do, we are being asked to make a judgement that somehow the moral position of somebody who works in the club industry and whose job depends on gambling being a part of the club industry—perhaps a single mother with small children, as it very often is—and who loses that job because of cutbacks, is improved because somebody who is a gambler and cannot control their gambling instincts is to be so-called protected by an unproven mechanism. If we are looking at moral issues, the moral position of those who would otherwise be unemployed is one that needs to be addressed.

If we go back to the original work that was done by KPMG, we see that as a result of mandatory precommitment in New South Wales alone we would lose 11,500 jobs, $820 million from the broader New South Wales economy, and force the closure of clubs.

**Mr Bradbury interjecting—**

**Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP:** I heard an interjection from the member for Lindsay, an electorate which has a very strong club industry and where many people's jobs depend on that club industry, that this bill does not mandate precommitment. Well, technically you may say that but, by requiring this all to be put in place, it is one step away from being mandatory—and, as I am saying, we are opposed to a mandatory scheme but not to a voluntary one.

I noticed when we had this debate previously that the Minister for Defence
Materiel, Mr Jason Clare, put out a press release where he said that from 8 to 17 April 2011 he, the member for Cook, the member for Lyne, and a group of students and community leaders went on the Sandakan Mateship Trek, which honoured those who died on the Sandakan death march in Borneo. The trek was sponsored by business, local clubs and individuals, with no cost burden to the Commonwealth—and the major sponsors were Clubs Australia, Bankstown RSL, Bankstown Sports Club, Master Builders Association and so on. In other words, the club industry has a very strong and powerful record, particularly in New South Wales, of supporting activities right across the spectrum of sporting clubs and of young people. And of course there is the example of this trek that took place in 2011.

So, as we listen to people like the member for Lyne and others, we hear rhetoric that says they have a higher moral purpose, when in reality they do not. And they do not take into consideration all the benefits that flow to the community from a club industry which is highly valued—particularly in rural and regional areas, where it is the centre of much social interaction for those communities.

But the really interesting point about morality in this debate is this: the passage of this bill, or its failure to pass, will depend on one vote—and that is the vote of the member for Banks, because the member for Banks is the Chairman of the Revesby Workers Club. As such, the member for Banks, who shows this in his pecuniary interest statement, could have a conflict of interest. He shows that he is now President of Revesby Workers Club Pty Ltd and a director of Revesby Workers’ Retail Investments Pty Ltd. He also shows the nature of his positions there, under section 13: 'Membership of any organisation where a conflict of interest with a member's public duties could foreseeably arise or be seen to arise.' And he lists 'Revesby Workers Club Pty Ltd: President' with a number of others. And he shows, indeed, if you read the report of the Revesby Workers Club, that directors do receive pecuniary benefits from that club. And, if you look at the standing orders, you are precluded from voting in the event that you have a pecuniary interest that is affected. Let us go to what his obligations are under the Corporations Act. One is 'Good faith—civil obligations'. Section 181 states in part:

A director or other officer of a corporation must exercise their powers and discharge their duties:

(a) in good faith in the best interests of the corporation; and

(b) for a proper purpose.

By voting in favour of this legislation he is voting against the interests of the corporation of which he is the President and which he has obligations under the Corporations Act to exercise.

So the member for Banks, Mr Melham, is in fact faced with a judgement that he has to make: to either resign his position as the President of the Revesby Workers Club, a position he has long sought and only recently gained, although he has been on the board for many, many years; or to abstain from the vote.

The member for Banks did say on this issue previously that he could not lobby for his club because of his conflict of interest and would also abstain from voting on the matter in caucus, stepping down from his position as caucus chair during the debate. But he said he would support the bill in parliament, where the minority ALP government needs his vote. But, as I said, under parliamentary rules his vote could be challenged and declared void. Standing orders say:
A Member may not vote in a division on a question about a matter, other than public policy, in which he or she has a particular direct pecuniary interest.

So you ask yourself: is there a direct pecuniary interest? The answer is yes. If you go to the report of the Revesby Workers Club, you see that directors’ remuneration is capped at the amounts approved each year by the members of the annual general meeting, in 2010 to $37,000 and in 2009 to $37,000. During 2010 the club paid a total of $26,000, and in 2009 $27,000, to directors for their role as directors of the club. It also says that, in the course of attending the club or representing the club in official capacity, directors were provided with meals and beverages on a complementary basis, totalling $41,965 in 2010 and in 2009 $57,425. As I said, it is shown in their own reports that the President of the Revesby Workers Club has a pecuniary interest.

So I would say to the minister who is bringing in this bill that she needs to speak with the member for Banks, because he has a moral obligation, and we heard much about morality in this debate from the member for Lyne. The moral dilemma for the member for Banks is that if he votes for this legislation he will be in breach of his duty as a director of the Revesby Workers Club. If he wishes to vote for it and not breach that duty, he must resign from the board. He made his position clear that he would not lobby in the caucus, but I am afraid that does not relieve him of the moral obligation in this place, nor his obligation under the standing orders.

We have in this debate an enormous amount of politicking going on for all the wrong reasons. The clubs are taking responsibility for the real interests of people who need assistance, by way of counselling and by way of the actions that the club movement is taking to assist those who are identified as problem gamblers. But where is the responsibility for those people who are gambling away online? You can actually access poker machines online and lose your house before you get out of bed. Where is the moral obligation to those people? There is none. To attack the club industry, as the member for Lyne did by saying that they are vested interests and are manipulating political parties, is an insult to the intelligence of the people in this parliament, the thousands of men and women who enjoy their membership of their clubs and the directors who put in enormous amounts of time into the community interests that benefit from all of that work. It is a cheap shot, Mr Oakeshott. The moral obligation lies here with this government and one of its own members, who must either resign his position as head of the Revesby Workers Club or not vote on this legislation, in which case you will lose your bill. If there is any moral basis to this government—and more and more we see there is not—then the minister and the government must act to get a response from the member for Banks as to which action he is to take. Is he to resign from Revesby Workers Club and support the legislation, or is he to honour his obligations under the Corporations Act and act in the interests of his organisation and his members and abstain from voting on the bill? The moral dilemma rests with the Labor Party, as usual.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina) (12:42): I rise to speak on the National Gambling Reform Bill 2012, the National Gambling Reform (Related Matters) Bill (No. 1) 2012 and the National Gambling Reform (Related Matters) Bill (No. 2) 2012. We just heard the member for Mackellar prosecute the case very well regarding the pecuniary interests and conflict of interest that the member for Banks, who is also on the Revesby Workers Club board, may or may not have. Certainly
it is a problem for the member for Banks, who needs to clear his conscience as to which side he is going to support—whether he abstains from voting, as he should, or supports this bill and, therefore, enables its passage through the lower house.

A lot of different issues surround this proposed legislation. We heard the member for Lyne talking about the morality of the issue. We heard from other speakers about problem gamblers. There have been a lot of different points of argument and points of view about this bill. But one of the best points of view, I believe, in this debate was given by my Nationals colleague the member for Parkes last night, when he spoke of how this bill will affect regional areas. The member for Parkes pointed out the provisions of this bill for a $250-per-day automatic teller machine withdrawal limit, as well as the use of self-exclusion ATMs, but let us go first to that $250-a-day withdrawal limit.

In regional areas, as the member for Parkes correctly pointed out, sometimes the ATM at the local club is the only means that people in that town or locality have to withdraw their money. In many country towns and villages, financial services have largely departed. More often than not the only access point for cash is the ATM at the local bowling club or hotel. A $250 withdrawal limit would have a huge impact on these people go about their lives. There is nothing worse than being caught short of cash, because in some country areas not every place actually has EFTPOS facilities; some places, particularly food outlets, rely on cash only. If people cannot access their money from the local bowl or the pub, that is a problem.

This goes way beyond just being a reform on poker machines. I, like the member for Parkes, do not believe this is just about poker machines. We know that gambling is a major problem for some Australians. We in the coalition support measures that will effectively tackle problem gambling and help address and prevent gambling addiction. Certainly in the Riverina we have our share of problem gamblers, unfortunately—as does every community. But this bill is not about protecting people from themselves, and it is not about protecting communities from problem gambling. It is more about what the member for Denison wants and about Labor securing his vote. Unfortunately, the member for Denison knows all too well how he was blindsided. His negotiations and his signed deal were effectively cut by the Prime Minister on that dreadful day of betrayal, Saturday 21 January, when he had that support withdrawn.

I know problem gambling can lead to theft, certainly from business institutions that have a large cash turnover or people who are in a position to breach the trust of their employers. It happens, and it is an unfortunate thing. But this bill, as I said, is not about problem gambling. The gambling industry is a major employer. We heard that from the member for Mackellar. We heard her say that clubs employ so many people, and they do such a power of good. I know they do a power of good in her community, and they certainly do a power of good in my community and in all regional communities—indeed, all communities in Australia, whether they be metropolitan or in the bush. Clubs support football teams. They support sporting sides. They support kids going on excursions. They do all that. More than that, they employ people. There are so many people whom the club industry employs. They have had a hard enough hit with, dare I say, the carbon tax, and now another impost is going to be put upon them
by this particular piece of legislation if indeed it passes through. It will be interesting to see whether the member for Banks supports this or abstains from this vote.

The gambling industry employs around 67,000 staff directly in gambling activities. A further 105,000 non-gambling-activity staff are employed in casinos, hotels and clubs that offer gaming, whilst almost 50,000 are employed in the racing industry. The horseracing industry is one of the biggest industries in Australia. In fact, there were statistics, back when I was on the Murrumbidgee Turf Club board at Wagga Wagga, saying that it was Australia's fifth-biggest industry. That is an amazing statistic. About four per cent of Australians gamble weekly, and about 15 per cent of this group are problem gamblers. The Productivity Commission estimates that less than one per cent of the population are problem gamblers. So, are we going to bring in legislation that is going to affect all of those people? Are we going to bring in legislation that is certainly going to, once again, hit hard in regional areas? I hope not.

On 6 May 2011, the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform handed down a report entitled *First report: the design and implementation of a mandatory pre-commitment system for electronic gaming machines*. We do not believe that the key recommendations made by the member for Denison will effectively address or prevent the underlying problem of gambling addiction. Since the 2010 election the government has constantly rejected calls from the industry for a trial—calls that were supported by the coalition. According to manufacturers, the government's time line for these particular devices is unrealistic and unachievable. The coalition has grave concerns about proposed trials, including a concern that public money being provided as compensation to clubs involved in the trial may end up in the coffers of Labor clubs and eventually be returned to the Labor Party. Given the limited consultation, the coalition is monitoring developments relating to the Australian Capital Territory trial but remains extremely concerned about it.

The bill in general requires that new machines manufactured or imported from the end of 2013 be capable of supporting precommitment; that all gaming machines be part of a statewide precommitment system and display electronic warnings by 2016, with longer implementation time lines for small venues; and, as I said at the outset, that there be a $250-a-day ATM withdrawal limit for gaming venues other than casinos. The bills establish the requirements for precommitment systems in order for gaming machines to be compliant.

Gambling has traditionally fallen within the responsibility of state governments. Every state government supports voluntary precommitment. There has been considerable criticism from the states about the Commonwealth's proposed move to enter this legislative nightmare, particularly from New South Wales and Queensland but also from Western Australia, which does not have any pokie machines within its jurisdiction. There has been very little consultation with the states and with industry. And haven't we heard that so often in the past, so often in the days of this Gillard government and indeed so often since the Labor government took power in 2007? I will repeat it: there has been very little consultation with the states or with industry. And we have heard that in so many areas: we have heard it in health, we have certainly heard it in water reform, and now we are hearing about it in terms of this legislation dealing supposedly with poker machines but, to a wider extent, with gambling reform.
Labor has indicated that it intends to rush the legislation through in the final sitting week of the year—indeed, today, the final sitting day of the year. That has compounded the industry concerns about the lack of consultation and the unforeseen consequences of the legislation.

Here again, Labor is rushing policy. It is policy on the run. We saw it with the electronic health records system. That was implemented long before the doctors or the industry were ready. The coalition is deeply concerned about the lack of time the government has permitted for proper consultation and review of this legislation.

Above all else, the coalition added its voice to the calls of many others that legislation of such alleged significance in addressing problem gambling in our community deserves far greater scrutiny and community consultation. Surely this is something that Labor can consult with the states about, to a much greater degree. Surely this is a piece of legislation that Labor can consult on with industry.

This is an industry that employs so many people. It employs—dare I say it?—many people who hold union tickets. Surely, that is important. Those people who are paid-up members of a union deserve better than this from a government and a party which has long championed the cause of union membership and union members. And these union members are yet again being hung out to dry by the Labor government, which should be supporting them.

I was a union member for 21 years. Would you believe a Nationals member was a union member for 21 years? I paid my dues. I paid my union affiliation to the Australian Journalists Association and later the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, and I expected that I would get value for money from that union membership. I expected that that union would use its money well to help me to do my job as a journalist. Unionists—people who are in unions—expect their unions to do the same. Haven't we heard so often in recent days in this place how unions have been hung out to dry by this government? There have been slush funds and all the rest.

But this is about gambling reform—or is it? I doubt that it is. The government has not allowed sufficient time to examine the provisions of this legislation and has roundly ignored warnings from experienced bodies about potential pitfalls in the bill. Likewise, those who have expressed concern about other potential negative consequences of this legislation—and there are many, including the impact on employment, particularly on the employment of paid-up union members in the hospitality sector—have not had their voices and their objections adequately heard. That is why the member for Mackellar and other members on this side are now giving those people a voice. We are voicing our concerns, the concerns of industry and the concerns of states about this piece of legislation.

The legislation was introduced into the House of Representatives on 1 November, with the subsequent Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform given a mere week to take submissions, and a further week to hold hearings. So this was, again, policy on the run. We had the same in the water debate. I know I am getting a little off topic—I fear the minister at the table may jump up and say, 'Get back on track!'—but in the water debate we had meeting after meeting hastily organised. Then when the legislation was being debated and even voted upon, members on both sides of parliament—Labor members and coalition members—did not have the advantage of hearing what was in the submissions to the House of Representatives standing committee. People
took time to prepare those submissions. They took the trouble to travel to Sydney and to Canberra to give evidence but none of that was even taken into account by the Labor government, which wanted to rush policy through. It was policy on the run, policy on the fly—and not good policy, at that.

A lot of the legislation that Labor has put forward—despite thoughts to the contrary—has actually been agreed to. In fact, the majority of legislation has been agreed to. Members of the Labor Party often stand up and say, 'You're all negative.' We are not negative; we just want good, sound, common-sense policy, which is no
t not going to have an impact on people who pay taxes, people who pay their union dues, people who expect better from a Labor government which says that it is there for the workers but, as with so many pieces of legislation, including this one, is not.

I call on Labor to look in their heart of hearts to think about what this is going to do to the person who is working at the club—at the local bowlo—who pays their union dues and who does a great job in an industry which also does a great job in providing sponsorship, employment opportunities, and investment in local communities. This piece of legislation is not good. It needs to be thought out far better. It needs to be rejected, and that is why I cannot support the bill, and neither does the coalition.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (12:57): I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak on the National Gambling Reform Bill and cognate bills. I question why this bill is currently before the House. Why, on the last day of sitting, with issues pressing, are we now debating a bill that has been floating around the House for some time?

I applaud the commitment to the bill by the member for Denison. His position has been steadfast. His position has been unique the whole way through this process. I felt for the member, for whom I have a degree of support in this. The Prime Minister gave him a deal—there was an agreement in place that this issue would be dealt with. I felt for him when the government reneged on that bill. They chose to step away from that because the dynamics of the crossbenchers had become somewhat different and, as a result, the strength of the arm of the member for Denison was drastically weakened. So I sympathise with the member about that. However, in listening to comments today I associate myself with the member for New England, who earlier said that if he was God or if he had a magic wand there would be no poker machines. I tend to support that. I am not a big lover of poker machines. I think that since poker machines were introduced into Queensland I would have put a total of about $20 through poker machines. That is my personal perspective.

However, poker machines are not illegal, and the operators, like clubs, hotels, bowls clubs and football clubs, help the community. I speak from a regional perspective; I do not have big sports clubs in my electorate. If you wanted to play the poker machines in my electorate you would go to a pub, which would probably have 20 machines, tops. A small bowls club in my electorate would have five or 10 poker machines. The revenue from those machines helps the community. In fact, some of those clubs survive not because of the poker machine revenue but because of the volunteer hours that are put in to keep those community interest groups afloat.

Earlier in the year I had the opportunity to sit with the member for Denison and speak about this issue at length. I raised concerns with him that if poker machine access was wound back an addict may then punt through other gambling outlets, whether it be on
racing or online gambling. I think the response was that they stay siloed. I tend not to support that concept, because of the other options that are available for people who are addicted to gambling and practise that addiction through putting money down the throats of poker machines. I do not believe that this legislation addresses the whole problem. I do not believe that, if you take away the capacity to gamble in one location, an addicted gambler will not migrate to another location to gamble—that is, unregulated international gambling outlets, which are accessible as simply as through a phone. This bill is farcical. In the last 12 months we have seen greater access to sports bets through betting on live action football games. It is hypocritical that the bill before the House is trying to deal with a particular member's interest in gambling machines when gambling is becoming so widespread through our community.

In the evidence from the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform the comment was made that there will be mass noncompliance with reference to the regulation of this bill. Comments along those lines concern me. There are also allegations that the industry was concerned about the time frame for the rollout of this bill.

Being from a regional centre I often get approached by people in the streets saying that political correctness has gone mad. It is like they form a parallel with gambling addicts and alcoholics. This bill to me represents trying to stop alcoholism by limiting the ability of alcoholics, when they go through the drive-through, to buy a carton and only allowing them to buy a six-pack. When I was first elected I stood on the principle that I would stand up for the silent majority of my electorate. In my presentation on this bill today that is exactly what I am endeavouring to do.

The coalition acknowledges that gambling is a major problem for some Australians. We support measures that would effectively tackle problem gambling, helping to address and prevent gambling addiction. Any response to gambling must recognise that many Australians gamble responsibly. Many Australians also rely on the sector for jobs. This legislation specifically impedes those gamblers who go out on a Friday afternoon, have a couple of beers and drop a few bucks through a poker machine. This is an impediment to those guys. Tackling problem gambling requires a measured response that does not just look at poker machines but tackles the underlying problem of gambling addiction, right across the gamut. Fundamental problem gambling can only be tackled by providing problem gamblers with counselling and support services. Suggesting that addiction is siloed is fundamentally flawed and I do not accept that.

The coalition will look at approaches that provide additional, better equipped and more efficient counselling support services for problem gamblers. So, whilst we are saying that we cannot support this bill, we do appreciate that there is work to be done in the industry sector on addressing problem gambling. We support voluntary commitment programs and would like to see these extended to all gaming venues. Decisions should be implemented as a result of detailed and careful consideration, not a handshake deal between a candidate from the Prime Minister and a single Independent member of parliament.

Earlier on today the member for Lyne suggested that the coalition's position on this bill was primarily based on fear of the loss of revenue from gambling outlets. I, like the previous speaker on our side, take offence at that. I think it is hypocritical for the member for Lyne to take that moralistic high ground.
in this debate. I am trying to put forward a logical and self-determining position.

Since 2010, the government has constantly rejected calls for a trial from industry. Those calls were supported by the coalition. The member on the other side of the House shakes her head, but I encourage her to—

Ms Macklin: Because we're having a trial.

Mr BUCHHOLZ: I am going to get to that, with reference to the trial. According to manufacturers the government time line is unrealistic and unachievable. I have already mentioned those points. The coalition has grave concerns about the proposed trial in the ACT. These concerns include that public moneys being provided as compensation to clubs involved in the trial may be siphoned back to Labor clubs and returned to the Labor Party coffers. You do not have to be Dick Tracy to go back and work out the audit trail and find out that some of the funds end up at that Labor Club here in Canberra where the trial is proposed. So it is on those points that I say to the member for Lyne that our opposition to this is not because of where the money comes from. It is purely because of our succinct and clearly outlined opposition to the bill.

The bill also provides for monitoring and investigation of compliance with new requirements. The regulatory reforms these functions and this legislation set out have enforcement measures including civil penalty orders; infringement notices; injunctions; enforceable undertakings; and compliance notices. This will mean that Labor will have established yet another new bureaucracy, a federal gaming regulator. There are not too many bills coming before this House that have a pattern or trend to them, which is that they either set up new bureaucracies, look after Labor mates, or somehow create a siphon trail for funds from this government back to a union movement, and this one just about ticks all three of those boxes.

The bill provides for the Commonwealth to delegate the regulatory function to the states and territories, with the approval of the relevant state and territory ministers, but there is no assurance that the Commonwealth would in fact delegate this power. These bills provide for the Productivity Commission to undertake two independent inquiries. One is in relation to any trial or mandatory precommitment system. The second is to inquire into the progress that is being made by gambling machine premises towards complying with the precommitment systems, the dynamic warning requirements, the limits on ATM withdrawals and the progress being made by manufacturers and importers in meeting the manufacturing and reporting requirements. The bill also establishes an Australian gambling research centre within the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

The legislation was introduced into the House on 1 November, with the subsequent Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform given a mere week to take submissions, and a further one week for hearings. Given the scope of the legislation and the dimension of the challenge it seeks to address, this was far from adequate. The debate has been in the public arena for a considerable amount of time, but we do see a pattern emerging with reference to legislation. Where the legislation is somewhat sensitive you can virtually say that if the government has something to hide, or if they want to suppress transparency, one week is normally the guideline for this type of bill, and this is not an isolated incident.

The coalition supports voluntary precommitment as one of a variety of tools for addressing the complex issue of problem
gambling in Australia. However, we disagree with the approach proposed by the government as contained in its ill-conceived legislative proposal. The coalition does not believe the legislation should be supported in its current form. The Productivity Commission itself stated that the issue of addressing problem gambling:

… is a complex task for public policy. The coverage and design of regulation require particular care to ensure that the benefits exceed the costs, and that account is taken of what is often imperfect evidence.

Closer examination of the evidence suggests that a number of initiatives that significantly improve the effectiveness of the legislation should be supported.

The coalition has identified six areas of concern with reference to this legislation. In brief, it is the influence of the Commonwealth; the lack of time given to industry; the cost of implementation; the negative impact on industry; the financial hardship; the risk of widespread noncompliance, which was another issue that came out of the report; and the matters associated with ATMs. This point is best demonstrated by the evidence. A respected professor of constitutional law at the University of Sydney, Dr Anne Twomey, stated:

… gambling is fundamentally a State matter that should be dealt with by State laws.

… it would be more consistent with the federal system and with the principle of subsidiarity for such laws to be applied at the State level.

I conclude where I started: I am not a great lover of gambling through poker machines—full stop. I do not spend a lot of money at the track and in fact I only very rarely buy a lotto ticket. I make that choice because it is my personal choice. I would suggest that trying to direct the Australian public as to what should influence their personal choices is not something that is best dealt with through legislation.

There is no way I can support the bill in its current form, because I do not believe it goes to the intent of what its authors intended. However, I would like to see reform in this industry.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (13:12): I would like to thank the member for Denison not only for his commitment to addressing the concerns of people who have serious problems with gambling, and the devastation that means for them and their families, but also for the way in which he has been prepared to work through these issues. I thank him on behalf of the government, but I also want to thank him personally. I also would like to personally thank the other Independents and the Greens, and I once again personally thank Senator Richard Di Natale for the professional way in which he has worked through the issues with us.

The introduction of these bills does represent the first time that our national government has legislated to help tackle the harm caused by poker machines. As a result of extensive work that has been done, first by the Productivity Commission and then through considerable discussions with the community and with the industry, we have arrived at the bills that are currently before the House.

The bills provide for voluntary precommitment technology on poker machines, dynamic warnings on poker machines and limits on withdrawals from ATMs in gaming venues. Most importantly, I want to remind the House that these bills build on the May 2011 agreement of the Council of Australian Governments Select Council on Gambling Reform to support the
infrastructure for precommitment in every gambling venue in the country. That was agreed by all states and territories with the Commonwealth back in May 2011. These matters have been discussed and debated for a long time. Exposure drafts of these important pieces of legislation were released on 17 February this year. So we have had almost a year of discussion and consultation about the legislation that is now before the House. The bills have been informed by ongoing consultation with the key industry groups, the manufacturers, state and territory governments and many, many community groups that have been working so hard in the interests of problem gamblers for so long. All of that has happened since February this year, when we released the exposure drafts of the legislation.

I want to thank all of those stakeholders who have worked with the government on the legislation. I would also like to thank the members of the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform, especially the chair, the member for Denison; but I would also like to single out the government members who worked cooperatively with the member for Denison on these very important matters.

The National Gambling Reform Bill 2012 requires that all poker machines be part of a state-wide voluntary precommitment system and display electronic warnings. A precommitment system allows a pokie player to set a loss limit—that is, a limit on the amount that he or she is prepared to lose during a limit period, using poker machines located in that state or territory. Once that person reaches that loss limit, they are prevented from using gaming machines in that state or territory for the rest of their limit period. Precommitment allows pokie players to set a limit before they play and stick to it. These bills mean that people can take back control of their addiction. A registered user of a gaming machine will be able to choose to set no loss limit and will still be able to access transaction statements and other player information to help them to track and review their play. The legislation also requires that all new poker machines manufactured in Australia or imported must be capable of supporting precommitment.

We do understand that for small venues, particularly those in our regional areas, having time to get ready is very important; therefore, the legislation provides for longer time frames for small venues to introduce the changes so that they can reduce costs. And the government will be supporting the amendments foreshadowed by the member for New England that will extend these time frames a little further.

The legislation also introduces a $250-a-day ATM withdrawal limit for gaming machine premises other than casinos. Patrons will still be able to use EFTPOS facilities. We have considered the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform, which inquired into the legislation, and the government are proposing an amendment to give venues until 1 February 2014 to implement the change. I might just mention, for the benefit of those members of the opposition who plainly have not read the bill, that there is an exemption for small communities where there is only the one ATM in the small town or community. They will in fact be able to seek an exemption. It is unfortunate that the opposition did not even bother to look at the bill.

The package introduces two levies: the supervisory levy and the gaming machine regulation levy. These two levies are imposed by, respectively, the National Gambling Reform (Related Matters) Bill (No. 1) 2012 and the National Gambling Reform (Related Matters) Bill (No. 2) 2012.
The bills provide for two inquiries by the Productivity Commission. The first is into the results of the proposed trial of mandatory precommitment in the Australian Capital Territory. The second is to assess the progress towards the key reforms that are contained in the bills.

The legislation contains real action to support problem gamblers, to help them and their families. It provides a clear path for the future, where action to tackle problem gambling is based on sound evidence. I thank the members who are supporting the legislation.

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

The House divided. [13:24]

(The Speaker—Ms Anna Burke)

Ayes....................72
Noes.....................69
Majority.................3

AYES

Adams, DGH
Bandt, AP
B Bowen, CE
Brodtmann, G
Butler, MC
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Combet, GI
Danby, M
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Ferguson, MJ
Garrett, PR
Gibbons, SW
Griffin, AP
Hayes, CP
Jenkins, HA
Kelly, MJ
Leigh, AK
Lyons, GR
Marles, RD
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
O'Connell, BPJ
Owens, J
Perrett, GD
Ripoll, BF

Albanese, AN
Bradbury, DJ
Burke, AS
Cheeseman, DL
Collins, JM
Cream, SF
D'Ath, YM
Elliot, MJ
Emerson, CA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gillard, JE
Hall, JG
Husic, EN (teller)
Jones, SP
King, CF
Livermore, KR
Macklin, JL
Melham, D
Murphy, JP
Oakeshott, RJM
O'Connell, DM
Parke, M
Plibersek, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Rowland, MA
Rudd, KM
Shorten, WR
Slipper, PN
Smyth, L
Swan, WM
Thomson, CR
Vamvakis, M
Windsor, AHC

NOES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KL
Baldwin, RC
Bishop, BK
Briggs, JE
Bucholz, S
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gash, J
Hartley, L
Hockey, JB
Irons, SJ
Jones, ET
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Macfarlane, IE
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
Neville, PC
O'Dwyer, KM
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Roy, WB
Schultz, AJ
Secker, PD (teller)
Smith, ADH
Southcott, AJ
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Wyatt, KG

AYES

Roxon, NL
Saffin, JA (teller)
Sidebottom, PS
Smith, SF
Snowdon, WE
Symon, MS
Thomson, KJ
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Bishop, JI
Broadent, RE
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Forrest, JA
Gamboro, T
Griggs, NL
Hawke, AG
Hunt, GA
Jensen, DG
Katter, RC
Kelly, C
Ley, SP
Marano, NB
Matheson, RG
Mirabella, S
Moylan, JE
O'Dowd, KD
Prentice, J
Ramsey, RE
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Somlyay, AM
Stone, SN
Truss, WE
Turnbull, MB
Wash, MJ

PAIRS

Ferguson, LDT
Gray, G

Haase, BW
Robb, AJ
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PAIRS
Grierson, SJ  Van Manen, AJ
McClelland, RB  Crook, AJ

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (13:29): I present a supplementary explanatory memorandum to the bill. I ask leave of the House to move government amendments (1) to (20) as circulated together.

Leave granted.

Ms MACKLIN: I move government amendments (1) to (20) as circulated:

(1) Clause 14, page 17 (line 16), omit "1 May 2013", substitute "1 February 2014".
(2) Clause 16, page 17 (line 30), before "The", insert "(1)".
(3) Clause 16, page 17 (lines 30 and 31), omit "the day this Act commences", substitute "the day or days prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this subsection".
(4) Clause 16, page 18 (after line 6), at the end of the clause, add:

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), the regulations may prescribe different days in relation to gaming machines that are made available for use on specified classes of gaming machine premises.

(5) Clause 34, page 34 (after line 7), after subclause (3), insert:

Electronic transaction statements

(3A) A transaction statement may be provided electronically if the person who requests the transaction statement also requests that it be provided electronically.

(6) Clause 51, page 42 (line 14), at the end of subclause (1), add:

; and (d) if the law of the State or Territory requires the precommitment system to be approved or authorised under that law—the precommitment system is approved or authorised for the State or Territory under that law.

(7) Clause 54, page 44 (line 2), omit "may", substitute "must".

(8) Clause 54, page 44 (line 11), at the end of subclause (1), add:

; or (d) if the law of the State or Territory requires the precommitment system to be approved or authorised under that law—the precommitment system is not approved or authorised for the State or Territory under that law.

(9) Clause 82, page 64 (after line 7), at the end of the clause, add:

Note: However, the total amount of supervisory levy that is payable in relation to the levy periods in a calendar year must not be more than an amount determined by the Minister for that year under section 84A.

(10) Clause 83, page 64 (line 9), before "An", insert "(1)".

(11) Clause 83, page 64 (after line 18), at the end of the clause, add:

(2) Despite subsection (1), an amount of supervisory levy is not payable for any gaming machine that is made available for use on gaming machine premises that are prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this subsection.

(12) Page 65 (after line 5), at the end of Part 2, add:

84A Cap on total amount of supervisory levy payable in a calendar year

(1) The total amount of supervisory levy that is payable in relation to the levy periods in a calendar year must not exceed the amount determined by the Minister under subsection (2) for that calendar year.

Determining total amount of supervisory levy that is payable

(2) The Minister must, in a calendar year, determine by legislative instrument the total amount of supervisory levy that is payable in
relation to the levy periods in the next calendar year (the levy year).

(3) In making a determination, the Minister must consult (whether directly or indirectly) with the persons who are liable to pay the supervisory levy under section 84.

(4) The amount determined must not be more than the lesser of the following amounts:

(a) either:
   (i) $10 million; or
   (ii) if a lower amount has been prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of section 84B—that amount;

(b) the total cost to the Commonwealth, during the last financial year ending before the levy year, in relation to the administration of this Act as referred to in paragraph 111(4)(ca).

Indexation

(5) The regulations may specify:

(a) an index for the purposes of this section; and

(b) the manner of working out an increase in the amount that applies under paragraph (4)(a) of this section by reference to the movement of that index over the year ending each 31 December.

(6) The amount that applies under paragraph (4)(a), for a year in which there is an increase in the specified index, is increased in the manner prescribed by the regulations.

Regulations may prescribe method for dealing with excess

(7) The regulations may prescribe a method for distributing, to any persons who paid supervisory levy in relation to a calendar year, any excess supervisory levy that was paid in relation to the year in contravention of subsection (1).

Validity of regulations

(8) To avoid doubt, the validity of regulations made under section 6 of the National Gambling Reform (Related Matters) Act (No. 1) 2012 is not affected by a failure to comply with subsection (1) of this section.

84B Setting an upper limit for cap on total amount of supervisory levy

(1) Within 12 months of the day this Act commences, the Regulator must estimate in writing the total cost to the Commonwealth, during a calendar year, in relation to the administration of this Act (assuming that all provisions of this Act are applying in relation to gaming machines that are made available for use on gaming machines premises with at least 11 gaming machines).

(2) The regulations may prescribe an amount for the purposes of this section if the amount of the total cost determined under subsection (1) is less than $10 million.

Note: The total amount of supervisory levy that is payable for the levy periods in a calendar year must not exceed the amount prescribed for the purposes of this section (see paragraph 84A(4)(a)).

(3) An amount prescribed under subsection (2) of this section must be no more than the amount determined by the Regulator under subsection (1).

84C Review by Minister of upper limit for cap on total amount of supervisory levy

(1) Within 5 years of the day this Act commences, the Minister must review the amount that applies under paragraph 84A(4)(a).

(2) In conducting that review, the Minister must consult (whether directly or indirectly) with the persons who are liable to pay the supervisory levy under section 84.

(13) Clause 111, page 80 (after line 12), after paragraph (4)(c), insert:

(ca) the total cost to the Commonwealth during the year in relation to the administration of this Act;

(14) Clause 111, page 80 (after line 13), at the end of the clause, add:

Note: The total amount of supervisory levy that is payable for the levy periods in a calendar year must not exceed the costs to the Commonwealth in relation to the administration of this Act for the previous financial year (see section 84A).
(15) Clause 192, page 149 (line 16), after "as well as", insert "other matters, such as".

(16) Heading to clause 194, page 151 (line 19), omit the heading, substitute:

**194 Productivity Commission review of other matters**

(17) Clause 194, page 151 (lines 29 and 30), omit paragraph (1)(b), substitute:

(b) whether to retain the prohibition on the use of biometric processes in subsection 29(3);

c) the use of loyalty schemes in relation to gaming machine premises as part of providing precommitment systems;

d) whether a limit should be imposed in relation to cash withdrawn on gaming machine premises using a system of electronic funds transfer at the point of sale;

e) whether there are grounds for smaller gaming machine premises in regional and remote areas being exempt from the requirements for precommitment systems and dynamic warnings;

(f) any other matter that the Minister who administers this Act considers relevant.

(18) Clause 194, page 151 (line 31), omit "Note", substitute "Note 1".

(19) Clause 194, page 151 (after line 32), at the end of the clause, add:

Note 2: For the Australian Gambling Research Centre, see subsection 196(3).

(20) Clause 196, page 153 (lines 15 and 16), omit subclause (2), substitute:

(2) The supervisory levy must not be used to cover any costs that relate to the functions of the Director referred to in subsection (1).

The government are proposing a number of amendments to address issues raised in the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform's inquiry into the legislation. Firstly, the government are proposing an amendment to the start of the ATM withdrawal provisions. The amended start date will be 1 February 2014, which provides around a year for implementation, as requested by the industry. Secondly, a further amendment is proposed to clarify that registered players of precommitment can request an electronic transaction statement. This matter was raised during the joint select committee inquiry into the legislation. Further, the government are proposing amendments to the provisions on approving and revoking approvals for precommitment. These amendments were requested by the Victorian government to make sure that the Commonwealth and state precommitment laws work together where all requirements are met.

In relation to the supervisory levy, we are also proposing a number of amendments to the operation of the supervisory levy to give more certainty to industry. These changes are an amendment that will set a $10 million a year indexed cap on the supervisory levy. The cap will be reviewed after 12 months, following negotiations with the states and territories, and can be revised downwards but not up. At this time, the levy cap will also be reviewed after five years. Every year the amount of the levy will be set by ministerial determination based on the actual cost of the regulator in the previous year, but it can be no higher than the cap. The method of calculating the levy will be set in regulations.

Amendments the government are proposing will allow different classes of venues—for example, small venues—to be treated differently in the calculation of the levy.

An amendment is also proposed confirming that the supervisory levy will not be used to recover the costs of the Australian Gambling Research Centre. In relation to the Productivity Commission inquiry, amendments are proposed to require further matters to be referred to the Productivity Commission for inquiry. These amendments also address recommendations from the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform. The government proposes to amend the scope of the Productivity Commission's review and assessment of progress to include the following: whether to retain the prohibition...
on the use of biometric processes; the application of loyalty schemes for gaming machines; premises in relation to the delivery of precommitment systems; whether a limit should be imposed in relation to cash withdrawn, using a system of electronic funds transfer at point of sale on gaming machine premises; whether there are grounds for further exemptions for precommitment; dynamic warning requirements for smaller venues in regional and remote areas; and in any other matter the minister who administers this act considers relevant.

I thank all stakeholders who have worked with the government on this very important legislation and I commend the amendments to the House.

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (13:33): by leave—I move:

That standing order 43 be suspended for this sitting and government business have priority.

Question agreed to.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (13:34): by leave—I move:

That standing order 31 (automatic adjournment of the House) and standing order 33 (limit on business after normal time of adjournment) be suspended for the sitting on 29 November 2012.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

National Gambling Reform Bill 2012

Consideration in Detail

Debate resumed.

Mr WINDSOR (New England) (13:33): by leave—I move amendments (1) to (13) as circulated in my name:

(1) Clause 13, page 16 (line 7), omit "2016", substitute "2018".
(2) Clause 13, page 16 (line 14), omit "2020", substitute "2022".
(3) Clause 13, page 16 (line 24), omit "2020", substitute "2022".
(4) Clause 13, page 16 (line 26), omit "2020", substitute "2022".
(5) Clause 13, page 16 (line 29), omit "2013", substitute "2014".
(6) Clause 15, page 17 (line 25), omit "2013", substitute "2014".
(7) Clause 15, page 17 (line 28), omit "2013", substitute "2014".
(8) Clause 17, page 18 (line 15), omit "2017", substitute "2019".
(9) Clause 17, page 18 (line 20), omit "2021", substitute "2023".
(10) Clause 17, page 18 (line 29), omit "2021", substitute "2023".
(11) Clause 17, page 18 (line 31), omit "2021", substitute "2023".
(12) Clause 17, page 19 (line 2), omit "2013", substitute "2014".
(13) Clause 51, page 42 (lines 12 to 14), omit paragraph (c), substitute:

(c) the terms and conditions on which the precommitment system would be provided are reasonable including low cost, taking into account the matters prescribed by the regulations.

I spoke to these amendments earlier on, Deputy Speaker Georganas, so I will not take the time of the House now. I congratulate the member for Denison once again for bringing this issue once again to the House. He has been very passionate in relation to this particular issue. Even though it is probably not totally to his liking in terms of an outcome, there is no doubt in my mind that this issue would not have been addressed in the way it has been and that these amendments and this legislation will be accepted by the community generally. I pay regard to the member for Denison. I would also like to thank the member for Dobell for
his assistance with the amendments and working with the various players in terms of trying to get some degree of consensus in relation to the legislation.

Mr CRAIG THOMSON (Dobell) (13:36): I second those amendments from the member for New England. When I made my contribution earlier, I said that this was always a balancing act between making sure that the club industry was healthy, which I think everyone in this chamber supports, and making sure something happens to assist those people who have a gambling problem. In supporting those amendments from the member for New England, those amendments give additional time to make sure that that balance is right so that clubs and hotels can cope with the introduction of this legislation.

I would like to make one other observation. Everyone who has made a contribution in this debate has said that there is a problem with gambling. Everyone has said that there are difficulties with the way in which gambling operates in this country. Yet if that is the case then these steps, albeit that they are perhaps not as strong as the member wanted originally, are certainly important steps. If people truly believe that there are problems with gambling, then everyone in this chamber should be supporting this bill and the amendments.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (13:38): The Greens will reluctantly be supporting these amendments because it is apparent that that is necessary for the passage of this bill. We started this week with a bill that certainly had some good features and some features that the Greens had been able to negotiate. It is a bill that nonetheless is far less than what is needed to tackle the misery that is caused by the pokies industry in this country.

During the course of this week the vultures of the pokie industry have circled this place and have made every effort they could to kill this bill and, if not, to try and weaken it. It is unfortunate that there has been some success, but I am very pleased that they have not been able to stand in the way of or kill the bill. We ought to remember that this is an industry that makes machines that we find here on a scale that we do not find in other countries, machines where someone can lose up to $1,200 an hour.

Many people over many years have put forward some sensible proposals as to how to limit that. We can have $1 bets. That would still allow recreational punters to have a go but limit the problems. That is a bridge too far. We could have mandatory precommitment. Apparently that is a bridge too far. As a result, we will still be left with machines that are able to and in fact are designed to suck as much money as possible out of people who cannot afford it to put into the pockets of the pokies industry. If you look at a map of the areas where pokies are found at their highest concentration, it is almost exactly the same map as areas of social disadvantage in Australia.

It is disappointing that after this bill leaves this place we will be in a process of trials and then potential future action. We hope that we can keep this on the agenda and see some reform. But as we head towards Christmas it is unfortunate that there will still be families affected because people in their families, who may in fact be the breadwinners, have a gambling problem and we have not taken as strong action as we could have on the day that this parliament rises.

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies) (13:40): I rise to indicate the coalition will not support these amendments. This has been a chaotic process from day 1. These amendments would not even be necessary if the Labor
government had properly consulted with the states and territories in the first place, and we would not be discussing this bill if this government respected the primacy of the states and territories in an area which is constitutionally theirs. But instead of doing that, because of some sordid deal entered into with the member for Denison, we are here at the end of a chaotic process that this government has engaged in.

I say to the honourable members for New England and Dobell that I understand the purport of what they are putting to the House, but the reality is that this is not good legislation, for the reasons that I have outlined at length on other occasions. If they believed what they have said, then they would simply vote against this legislation.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (13:41): The government will be supporting the amendments moved by the member for New England and supported by the member for Dobell. I thank all of the members who are indicating their support for these amendments. We do understand that the legislation has taken some time to get to this point. We support the amendments both to give venues more time and to give manufacturers more time. I thank the member for New England for his contribution.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the amendments moved by the member for New England be agreed to.

The House divided. [13:46]

(The Speaker—Ms Anna Burke)

Ayes........................72
Noes.........................69
Majority...................3

AYES

Bowen, CE
Brodtmann, G
Butler, MC
Champion, ND
Clare, ID
Combet, GI
Danby, M
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Ferguson, MJ
Garrett, PR
Gibbons, SW
Griffin, AP
Hayes, CP
Jenkins, HA
Kelly, MJ
Leigh, AK
Lyons, GR
Marles, RD
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Perrett, GD
Ripoll, BF
Rowland, MA
Rudd, KM
Shorten, WR
Slipper, PN
Smyth, L
Swan, WM
Thomson, CR
Vamvakinou, M
Windsor, AHC

NOES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Bishop, BK
Briggs, JE
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gash, J
Hartsuyker, L
Hockey, JB
Irons, SJ
Jones, ET

AYES

Bradbury, DJ
Burke, AS
Byrne, AM
Cheeseeman, DL
Collins, JM
Crean, SF
D'Ath, YM
Elliot, MJ
Emerson, CA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gillard, JE
Hall, JG
Husic, EN (teller)
Jones, SP
King, CF
Liverpool, KF
Macklin, JL
Melham, D
Murphy, JP
Oakeshott, RJM
O'Neill, DM
Parke, M
Plibersek, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Roxon, NL
Saffin, JA (teller)
Sidebottom, PS
Smith, SF
Snowdon, WE
Symon, MS
Thomson, KJ
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Bishop, JI
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Forrest, JA
Gambian, T
Griggs, NL
Hawke, AG
Hunt, GA
Jensen, DG
Katter, RC
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CHAMBER

NOES

PAIRS
Ferguson, LDT  Haase, BW  Gray, G  Robb, AJ  Grierson, SJ  Van Manen, AJ  McClelland, RB  Crook, AJ

Question agreed to.

In division—

Mr Schultz: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. A number of government members entered the chamber after you issued the order for the doors to be closed. I bring that to your attention. One of them was the—

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Hume.

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP (Mackellar) (13:52): Madam Speaker, on a point of order: in my speech on this gambling legislation, I made the point that the member for Banks is not entitled to vote because of a conflict of interest which could give rise to having the legislation declared invalid. I would like to make that point.

Mr Melham: Madam Speaker, on that point of order: the member for Mackellar, if she wants to, can pursue the point under standing order 134, which says:

A Member may not vote in a division on a question about a matter, other than public policy, in which he or she has a particular direct pecuniary interest.

(b) The vote of a Member may be challenged on the grounds of the pecuniary interest by means of a substantive motion moved immediately after a division is completed. If the motion is carried, the Member’s vote shall be disallowed.

If the member chooses to follow the standing orders, I will respond to the garbage she went on with in the substantive debate.

The SPEAKER: The member for Banks will resume his seat. The member for Mackellar will resume her seat. There are other forms of the House where this can be pursued. The question is that this bill, as amended, be agreed to.

The House divided. [13:55]

(The Speaker—Ms Anna Burke)

Ayes ...................... 71
Noes ...................... 70
Majority ............... 1

AYES
AYES

Neumann, SK  Oakeshott, RJM
O’Connor, BPJ  O’Neill, DM
Owens, J  Parke, M
Perrett, GD  Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA  Roxon, NL
Rudd, KM  Saffin, JA (teller)
Shorten, WR  Sidebottom, PS
Smith, SF  Smyth, L
Snowdon, WE  Swan, WM
Symon, MS  Thomson, CR
Thomson, KJ  Vamvakou, M
Wilkie, AD  Windsor, AHC
Zappia, A

NOES

Abbott, AJ  Alexander, JG
Andrews, AJ  Andrews, KL
Baldwin, RC  Billson, BF
Bishop, BK  Bishop, JI
Briggs, JE  Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S  Chester, D
Christensen, GR  Ciobo, SM
Cobb, JK  Coulton, M (teller)
Dutton, PC  Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW  Forrest, JA
Frydenberg, JA  Gambaro, T
Gash, J  Griggs, NL
Hartsuyker, L  Hawke, AG
Hockey, JB  Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ  Jensen, DG
Jones, ET  Katter, RC
Keenan, M  Kelly, C
Laming, A  Ley, SP
Macfarlane, IE  Marino, NB
Markus, LE  Matheson, RG
McCormack, MF  Mirabella, S
Morrison, SJ  Moylan, JE
Neville, PC  O’Dowd, KD
O’Dwyer, KM  Prentice, J
Pyne, CM  Ramsey, RE
Randall, DJ  Robert, SR
Roy, WB  Ruddock, PM
Schultz, AJ  Scott, BC
Secker, PD (teller)  Simpkins, LXL
Slipper, PN  Smith, ADH
Somlyay, AM  Southcott, AJ
Stone, SN  Tehan, DT
Truss, WE  Tudge, AE
Turnbull, MB  Vasta, RX
Washer, MJ  Wyatt, KG

PAIRS

Ferguson, LDT  Haase, BW
Gray, G  Robb, AJ
Grierson, SJ  Van Manen, AJ
McClelland, RB  Crook, AJ

Question agreed to.
Bill, as amended, agreed to.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (13:57): I welcome to the gallery this afternoon members of the International IDEA Democracy Forum who are visiting the Australian parliament today. I welcome them to the House.

As also in the gallery this afternoon we have Dr Helmut Bock, who is the Austrian ambassador, who has decided to visit question time for the first time today. I hope he finds it interesting.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Standing Orders

The SPEAKER (13:58): A member has raised with me standing order 62. Members moving in the chamber must promptly take their seats and they must not be standing during a division—except to notify tellers of a change of vote, obviously—and, when the Speaker is on her feet or a Deputy Speaker is on their feet, nobody is to be standing.

BILLS

National Gambling Reform Bill 2012

Third Reading

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (14:01): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.
National Gambling Reform (Related Matters) Bill (No. 1) 2012
Second Reading
Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail
Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (14:02): I earlier presented, as part of the precious supplementary explanatory memorandum to the bill, the explanatory memorandum to these amendments. I move—by leave—government amendments (1) and (2) as circulated together.

Question agreed to.
Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading
Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (14:02): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

National Gambling Reform (Related Matters) Bill (No. 2) 2012
Second Reading
Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading
Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (14:03): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

MOTIONS
Prime Minister
Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:04): by leave—I move:
That the Leader of the Opposition address the House for a period of 15 minutes to substantiate his claim that the Prime Minister has breached the laws of Western Australia, or if he cannot do so, to unreservedly apologise, and that following the Leader of the Opposition’s address the Prime Minister be given 15 minutes in reply.

Australians are rightly sick of sleaze and smear and rightly sick of the opposition's tactics of negativity and taking up the time of this parliament by not addressing issues of national interest.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (14:06): I have been saying for weeks now that I was prepared to give the Prime Minister the benefit of the doubt when it came to the AWU corruption scandal but that I needed—the nation needed—to hear the Prime Minister's side of the story. Well, this week we have heard more of the Prime Minister's side of the story, but I have to say that the more we hear from the Prime Minister the more obvious it is that she has been involved in unethical conduct and possibly unlawful behaviour.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr ABBOTT: Let us look at the facts, and these are the facts.
Mr Combet: Back it up!

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, the Leader of the Opposition was asked to make this address; he should have the right to be heard in silence.

Mr ABBOTT: As a partner at Slater and Gordon, the Prime Minister had three clients: Mr Blewitt, Mr Wilson and the Australian Workers Union—her boyfriend, his self-confessed bagman and their union. The Prime Minister advised two of those clients in setting up an association that turned out to be a vehicle for defrauding the third client. She unceremoniously left the firm, and the AWU—one of the firm's most prestigious clients—dumped the firm. The Prime Minister says—she has consistently said—that she has done nothing wrong. If there was nothing wrong here, if there was nothing to hide here, why did the Prime Minister never open a file? Why did she never disclose any of these activities to her partners?

Mr Dreyfus: Put up or shut up!

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: But it goes further than that. When queried by the Corporate Affairs Commission, the Prime Minister wrote to the Corporate Affairs Commission stating that the purpose of this association was workplace safety. But it was not workplace safety. We know that it was not workplace safety, because the Prime Minister subsequently told her own partners that it was a slush fund—a slush fund, pure and simple; a slush fund for the re-election of officers to the union which subsequently turned out also to be a vehicle for defrauding the union.

The Prime Minister, we know from the unredacted transcript released today, argued to the West Australian Corporate Affairs Commission that this organisation, this association, should be registered. Presumably, she said that it wholly complied with the law—only it did not, because the law requires it to have at least five members and the Prime Minister knew full well that the association had but two members.

Let me make these fundamental points. First, it is highly unethical for a senior lawyer, a partner at a law firm, to provide misleading information to an official body such as the Corporate Affairs Commission of Western Australia. Second, it is actually illegal to provide false information to the Corporate Affairs Commission. Third, it is wrong for a prime minister to fail to give full and candid answers to this parliament. It is wrong in ethics for any person in authority to cover up wrongdoing.

In this parliament this week, on five separate occasions the Prime Minister was asked about the representations that she had made to the West Australian Corporate Affairs Commission about the body which she knew was a slush fund. Did the Prime Minister come clean? Was the Prime Minister candid and honest? No. On every single occasion, the Prime Minister stonewalled or she engaged in unbecoming abuse of the questioner. And we now know why, because we have the unredacted transcript of her termination interview, her exit interview, with Slater and Gordon. She had written to the Corporate Affairs Commission. She had argued for the incorporation of this association. She had argued for the incorporation of this association. She had represented that this was an association that could validly be registered under Western Australian law when she knew that it could not be, because she knew all along that this was a slush fund—a slush fund for the re-election of union officials. She was party to the creation of a slush fund, on her own admission in her exit interview with Slater and Gordon.
This whole exercise was a sham to facilitate a fraud. And the Prime Minister's involvement in it was this: she gave the advice and she made the representations that enabled the association to be incorporated; that facilitated the fraud.

But the Prime Minister's wrongdoing did not end there. She must have known after the exit interview that there was an abundance of problems here. She must have known, because she terminated the relationship with Mr Wilson. She must have known that serious wrongdoing had taken place—that union money had been stolen. But, instead of making a clean breast of this, instead of reporting this to the relevant authorities, she said nothing about it. She said nothing at all about it for years and years and years, and her silence meant that the fraud could continue. Her silence meant that more money that belonged legitimately to the Australian Workers Union was siphoned off for the benefit of her, by then former, boyfriend and his bagman, Mr Blewitt.

At the very least, this is conduct unbecoming—it is unbecoming of a legal partner; it is unbecoming of a future prime minister of this country. The Prime Minister says she did not know anything about the actual fraud at the time the fraud was being committed. She says that she did not know anything at all about whether she was receiving any benefit from the fraud—indeed, she categorically denies receiving any benefit from the fraud. Again I say that I am prepared to extend to the Prime Minister the benefit of the doubt. The problem is that where we have had the opportunity to test the Prime Minister's assertions against the documents—against the record—her assertions have turned out to be gravely lacking in truth and in substance. So the charge is that the Prime Minister has been, at the very least, a dodgy and unethical lawyer and that she has been an incompetent and untrustworthy Prime Minister, as has been demonstrated abundantly by the evasions and the obfuscations that we have so consistently seen from this Prime Minister in the parliament this week.

But this is not just about an old scandal: corruption that dogged one union a long time ago. It is also about the ability of this government and this Prime Minister to stamp out union corruption wherever it occurs. We know that there is a very long echo of the AWU corruption scandal in the Health Services Union scandal, which is taking place to this very day. We know that one of the Prime Minister's own MPs has been involved in gravely unethical conduct—conduct in breach of the law—because the Fair Work Australia report into the Health Services Union states exactly that. These are not allegations and these are not claims. These are findings from the government's own organisation: the quasi-judicial body Fair Work Australia. We know that a former National President of the Australian Labor Party, Michael Williamson—who is also the former boss of the Health Services Union—has been guilty of grave misconduct because, again, Fair Work Australia has found it to be so. The gentleman in question is now subject to serious charges.

How can a Prime Minister and a government be expected to stamp out union corruption when senior members of the party and the government have been associated with union corruption themselves? As I said, let us return to the nub of this. The Prime Minister gave the advice and she provided the representations which enabled the incorporation of the body that facilitated the fraud. She made representations to the Western Australian Corporate Affairs Commission that she knew were not justified. She made representations to the Western Australian Corporate Affairs Commission that this was a body that had the
requisite number of members and that had been established fundamentally for workplace safety, and she knew that this was purely and simply a slush fund.

I say to the Prime Minister and members opposite: let us get to the bottom of this. Let us have the judicial inquiry that Mr Ian Cambridge, the then National Secretary of the Australian Workers Union, was calling for at the time and has been calling for ever since. Let us have the judicial inquiry that quite a number of the Prime Minister's own backbenchers thought was warranted then and think is warranted now. Let us have the judicial inquiry that will finally get to the bottom of this whole squalid affair. I have for the benefit of the Prime Minister some terms of reference which I will seek to table at the end of this time.

There is another issue. It is an issue for those opposite; it is an issue for the Australian Labor Party.

Mr Combet interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: What kind of person do members opposite wish to have leading their party? What kind of character and judgment and integrity do they expect of the person leading their party? Plainly there has been an abundance of unethical, illegal conduct here. Much of it has been facilitated, at the very least, by the Prime Minister and the advice that she has given. Since this time, in the parliament and elsewhere, she has consistently given evasive, misleading and obfuscating answers—and that, frankly, is conduct unbecoming of a Prime Minister of this country. So the question for members sitting behind the Prime Minister today is: is she a fit and proper person to hold the prime ministership of our country? That is the question they need to ask themselves.

Government members interjecting—

Mr ABBOTT: They can shout all they like today, but that is a question that will play on their consciences over the next couple of months until this parliament comes back.

The Prime Minister has clearly been preparing for this moment. I think we know what we can expect from the Prime Minister. We can expect more of the bluff and the verbal intimidation that she has practised throughout her career. I have this piece of advice of the Prime Minister: this is not about gender; this is about character—and, Prime Minister, you have failed the character test.

I seek leave to table the terms of reference I referred to in my speech.

Leave not granted.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:22): Believe it or not, the Leader of the Opposition is such a negative human being that that was his version of an unreserved apology. Let us be very clear about what this motion is about and what the Leader of the Opposition just spectacularly failed to do in a halting, nervous and ultimately content-less performance. Let us be very clear about what he failed to do. This morning the Leader of the Opposition went on to national television and accused me of committing a crime. That is what he did this morning.

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms GILLARD: No amount of screaming from the opposition changes the transcript. The Leader of the Opposition was on the Today show and said I misled the WA Corporate Affairs Commission and that is obviously a very serious matter that would certainly appear to be a breach of the law. He then went on at the end of the transcript to accuse me by saying: this is a Prime Minister who made false representations, who gave
false information to the Corporate Affairs Commission, which allowed a vehicle to be established which was then used for fraud. The Leader of the Opposition this morning was out accusing me of a crime; let us be very clear.

And then, at the behest of the Leader of the Opposition, the Manager of Opposition Business was calling for my resignation on the basis that I had committed a crime. Now there is a problem with all of this for the Leader of the Opposition. When leaders of the opposition overreach and go out and falsely accuse the Prime Minister of committing a crime, we have seen this movie before. If he wants to see how the movie ends, turn around and look at the member for Wentworth because we saw in the Godwin Grech affair what happens to a leader of the opposition who accuses the Prime Minister of a crime and cannot back it up. We see what happens to them in public esteem and we see ultimately what happens to them in the eyes of their own political party.

Earlier this week, on Tuesday, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition knew how bad it was to make an error and accuse me of a crime when the opposition had no material to back it up. In the morning she did that, in the afternoon she was denying she had done it and then she backflipped and said no she did not mean that at all. So the Deputy Leader of the Opposition engaged in a humiliating backdown. But there was no such backdown for the Leader of the Opposition today. He just went out and said that I had committed a crime. We have given the Leader of the Opposition 15 minutes to make this allegation good. Where the Leader of the Opposition got to out of his 15 minutes was 'conduct unbecoming'. That is where he has backed off to. Let me just explain to people exactly what has happened this morning. What has happened this morning is that—

Ms GILLARD: No amount of screaming changes the opposition leader's conduct. No amount of screaming does that. What the opposition leader has done this morning is as follows: he has woken up, he has read a report in Fairfax newspapers, he has gone on television relying on that report with no other evidence or information at his disposal and, during the course of the morning, Fairfax corrected that report twice because it was wrong. The material the opposition sought to rely on this morning was an assertion about a transcript of interview between me and two partners of Slater and Gordon in 1995.

Let me actually take people to the transcript of the interview. Let us see what it says as opposed to the claims made by the Leader of the Opposition. The transcript of interview goes to a letter to a Western Australian government authority suggesting to the authority concerned that the association, which I provided legal advice on and the incorporation of, was a trade union and therefore ineligible for incorporation under that legislation and that we had prepared a response—that is, Slater and Gordon—submitted on Bruce Wilson's instructions to that authority suggesting that in fact it was not a trade union and arguing the case for its incorporation. Whatever view people take of the facts of this matter, I have never heard anybody contend that the association is a trade union. Saying it is not a trade union is a simple matter of fact. This was misreported in Fairfax this morning as me saying or writing that the association had no trade union links. This was backed down by Fairfax once on its website and then backed down by Fairfax again on its website.

If this was just a debate between me as Prime Minister and Fairfax that is something we would resolve outside of this
parliamentary chamber. That is not the point of having a parliamentary debate. The point of having a parliamentary debate is that the Leader of the Opposition, who is a rash man, who has never worried about the facts of this or any other matter and who is a man who clutches for negativity and sleaze whenever he can, read the newspapers this morning and, without any further inquiry, without any skerrick of evidence, then went out and accused me of a crime. Based on a false report, the Leader of the Opposition accused me of a crime. Based on a false report, the member for Sturt called on me to resign. Based on a false report, the opposition has been involved in this blitzkrieg this morning.

The problem for the Leader of the Opposition is this: 15 minutes he has just had to outline the facts and allegations on which he relies and all of them are either spin or they are untruthful. Let us go through the things that the Leader of the Opposition has claimed in this place today, which are untruthful. The Leader of the Opposition today said in his parliamentary address that I told the commissioner the association was dedicated to workplace safety. There is no evidence of this in the Slater and Gordon transcript and he has not produced any letter to that effect. He says I was not honest in response to parliamentary questions about the letter to the commissioner. That is not true and I refer him to the Hansard.

Opposition members: What Hansard?

Ms GILLARD: Yesterday's Hansard. He says I knew the association could not be properly registered. That is false and unsubstantiated. He says I must have known there was wrongdoing but said nothing and that the fraud continued. He has not provided any evidence of that because no evidence could possibly exist—because I did not know of any wrongdoing.

The Leader of the Opposition, after all of these weeks, after all of these months of smear, has had an opportunity today to put up and he has not been able to do so. The Leader of the Opposition is now handcuffed to an allegation that I committed a crime and he is handcuffed to the fact that he does not have any evidence of that. A decent man would apologise for this course of conduct. A decent man would recognise that he has gone too far, that he has made an error, that he has relied on a false report and that he cannot prove what he has been saying. If the Leader of the Opposition were a decent man, he would have used his 15 minutes to say that he was wrong this morning. But the Leader of the Opposition is not a decent man and he is not a man who can be relied on to go to the facts of a matter.

Mr Pyne interjecting—

Government members interjecting—

Ms GILLARD: Yes, that interjection from the member for Sturt was very funny, given the campaign the opposition has been involved in. The Leader of the Opposition does not look to facts; he just looks to sleaze and smear.

Let us go right through this from the start. The Leader of the Opposition has accused me of a crime. He cannot evidence that. There is no evidence of it and the accusation ought to be retracted.

Mr Pyne interjecting—

Ms GILLARD: The member for Sturt is yelling about a letter he has not produced.

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms GILLARD: I know the opposition does not like dealing with the facts; they like sleaze and smear. The opposition is trying to make up allegations it does not have any evidence for. The Leader of the Opposition contended I committed a crime. He does not have evidence of that. He based it on a false
report. He should have apologised for that today. The Leader of the Opposition has then gone on to make up material about my state of knowledge about the association, when I have been accurate and truthful about my state of knowledge of the association. The Leader of the Opposition has then gone on to make up allegations about the circumstances of the incorporation of the association and who was responsible for what. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that the application to incorporate the association was signed by Ralph Blewitt—he took responsibility for it with that signature—the person the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is now in regular contact with. So any questions about authority for the incorporation of the association is resolved by Ralph Blewitt's signature on that document.

After all of these months of smear, the opposition, after all of these questions, now stand today in the circumstance where they cannot say to me anything stronger than they think my conduct was 'unbecoming'—after all of these months of sleaze and smear. Any allegation beyond that they cannot substantiate, have not substantiated and have got wrong—and they have made things up. They have gone out into the court of public opinion and said that I am guilty of a crime and they cannot provide the evidence for it. Where does this take Australians to? In my view, Australians need to think very carefully about what this course of conduct says about the opposition leader's ability to show judgement and to deal with facts. He races out the door this morning with the most serious allegation you can make about a Prime Minister—with no facts at his disposal. He comes into the parliament and, given an opportunity to back it up, cannot back it up. If this is the way the Leader of the Opposition would deal with an allegation as serious as this, what does it say about his ability to deal with all the public policy matters people look to their political leadership to deal with? Can anybody imagine the Leader of the Opposition, with his track record of negativity, with his conduct today, being the sort of person who could carefully produce a health policy, an education policy or a jobs policy based on the facts? Can anybody imagine him being the sort of person who would use his brain rather than his political brawn in the interests of the nation, the sort of person who would show policy strength instead of policy weakness?

The Leader of the Opposition, throughout his time as leader, day after day, has demonstrated to the Australian people that he is someone good at insults. But there is never a moment when he produces a positive policy in the nation's interest, never a time when he produces a file on health or education or jobs. All he ever has under his arm—or under the arm of one of his staff members—is a dirt file. That is who the Leader of the Opposition is.

The Leader of the Opposition is someone who is using sleaze and smear because his political business model of fear has been going out of business. The Leader of the Opposition had hoped that, after the 2010 election, if he caused enough chaos, he would be rewarded with the prime ministership. Then he had hoped that, if he caused enough fear about carbon pricing, he would be rewarded with the prime ministership. Now, because those things are, transparently, not working for the Leader of the Opposition the way he had hoped, here he is inserting sleaze and smear in this place even though he does not have the facts available to him to back up his claims.

The Leader of the Opposition has had his opportunity to put up. Having so frankly failed to put up, now he should be shutting up. The only thing which should be coming
out of his mouth is an apology for the false and defamatory allegation he made against me this morning. The only thing I can imagine coming out of the mouths of Australians is dismay that this Leader of the Opposition is so entrenched in negativity and smear that he can never lift his eyes to say anything positive about the nation's future.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:37): On behalf of honourable members, I welcome the kids in the House from the Juvenile Diabetes Research Fund. I congratulate you on another outing. Hopefully, we will one day find a cure. Thank you for coming along.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Prime Minister

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (14:37): My question is to the Prime Minister. How can the Prime Minister claim that she never made false representations about the AWU Workplace Reform Association when the application for incorporation states it is for 'the development of change to work to achieve safe workplaces'? This is in her own handwriting. How can she claim that she made no false representations to the corporate affairs commission of Western Australia?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:37): Here we are, the Leader of the Opposition has had 15 minutes to put up or shut up and where is he back to? Old allegations. Fifteen minutes to put up or shut up and he is back to old allegations. The Leader of the Opposition had his opportunity to clearly state to the Australian people what I had done wrong, and he manifestly failed to do so. I wait for the apology that should come following his performance on the Today show this morning.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will return to the question.

Ms GILLARD: The Leader of the Opposition well knows that in 1995, in an interview with Slater & Gordon, I answered questions about the incorporation of this association and its objects and purposes.

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms GILLARD: Whoever shouted that shouted an untruth to the parliament.

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition put a very straightforward and factual question to the Prime Minister and she should be required to answer it, given that the document is in her own handwriting—she wrote the name into the document.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has the call.

Ms GILLARD: The Leader of the Opposition well knows that in a press conference in August I explained the objects and purposes of the association. I did that again at a press conference this week. The Leader of the Opposition should know that it is Ralph Blewitt who sought the incorporation of this association, signed the form and took responsibility for then incorporating it. The Leader of the Opposition should well know that the commissioner then incorporated the association, obviously having been satisfied about the nature of the association and that it acquitted WA law. Any other statement by the Leader of the Opposition is sleaze and smear and untruth. This is a man who this morning alleged a crime and today has backed that down to conduct unbecoming, and who now is just scrabbling around grasping at straws to try to extricate himself from the fact that he has put himself in exactly the same position the member for Wentworth did with the Grech and Utegate affair—he has gone out and made an
allegation he cannot possibly substantiate because it is untrue.

As I have said on numerous occasions, I did nothing wrong in this matter and no amount of sleaze and smear from the opposition will ever change those facts and that truth. Here we are today with no clear allegation even being put by the opposition. I anticipate that the opposition will keep dipping into this bucket of mud because the truth is they do not know how to do anything else. They do not know how to talk about jobs, how to talk about education, how to talk about health; they cannot be bothered coming to the chamber when we are introducing school funding legislation, they cannot be bothered sitting in the chamber when we are introducing the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This happens day after day after day after day. This is a Leader of the Opposition who is sure full of political brawn. If you want someone to lift heavy weights, he is your man. What he will never be able to do is lead this nation. (Time expired)

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (14:41): Madam Speaker, I ask a supplementary question. How can the Prime Minister claim that she had absolutely nothing to do with the incorporation of the association when the transcript of her exit interview clearly shows that the incorporation only happened after specific additional representations by the Prime Minister?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:41): The Leader of the Opposition has just misled the parliament about the nature of the material in the transcript that has been provided and is reported in newspapers today, in some newspapers entirely inaccurately.

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms GILLARD: No amount of screaming changes words on a page. The transcript goes to dealing with a query as to whether or not this was a trade union. It was not a trade union. Even in his wildest and darkest moments while he has been out alleging crimes, the Leader of the Opposition has never said this body was a trade union. So, frankly, what is the Leader of the Opposition's point? That the commissioner asked whether or not a body was a trade union? A body which was not a trade union was said not to be a trade union. What is his point? That the commissioner for incorporated associations in Western Australia satisfied himself or herself that this association acquitted WA law and then incorporated it? If he thinks the WA commissioner has acted improperly, he can take it up with the WA commissioner. If he thinks Ralph Blewitt signed a form he should not have, then get the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to get him on the phone or go and meet him in a coffee shop again and take up those matters. But do not come into this parliament and misread and misuse a transcript from 1995. (Time expired)

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (14:43): Madam Speaker, I wish to ask a further supplementary question. How can the Prime Minister persist in claiming that she had nothing to do with the incorporation when the transcript of her exit interview shows clearly that the incorporation only happened after specific additional representations by the Prime Minister?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:43): Once again the Leader of the Opposition has misled the parliament about the corporate affairs commission for its incorporation? Her argument was what caused this association to be incorporated. (Time expired)

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:43): Once again the Leader of the Opposition has misled the parliament. What caused the association to be incorporated was that the commissioner for incorporated associations decided that it met the requirements of WA law and incorporated it.
The Leader of the Opposition has also just misrepresented to the parliament the nature of the transcript of the Slater & Gordon interview. I would ask him to not keep misrepresenting words on a page. The transcript goes to dealing with an inquiry about whether this body was a trade union. Even after all these years, the best part of 20 years, neither the Leader of the Opposition nor the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, nobody, says that this body was a trade union. The Leader of the Opposition is misrepresenting the facts. The Leader of the Opposition needs to get to the central issue. Here he is, trying to fudge one way and then fudge the other. This morning he went out and accused me of a crime. Back it up or shut up.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh—Second Deputy Speaker) (14:45): My question is to the Prime Minister. How is the government working to transform the lives of people with disability, their families and carers? What difference will this make to people in my electorate of Hindmarsh so that they can live with choice and dignity?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:45): I thank the member for Hindmarsh for his question, and thank him for raising a real issue of concern to Australians. What Australians in this parliament know is that real issues of concern to them will never be raised by the Liberal or the National parties. All we will ever hear from them is sleaze and smear. All we will ever hear from them is fear-campaigning and negativity. Whilst they get on living in a mud bucket full of sleaze and smear, we are getting on with building the strong nation that Australians deserve, and making sure that the benefits of a strong and resilient economy are shared, particularly with those Australians in the most need.

I was appalled this morning when I introduced the National Disability Insurance Scheme legislation into this parliament that the Leader of the Opposition and the senior leadership of the opposition were too busy with their mud bucket to even come in and support the introduction of that legislation; too busy with the mud to come in and deal with the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Despite their disregard for people with disabilities, despite the fact that they so manifestly do not care, we, on this side of the parliament, are working hard to ensure a transformation in the way in which people with disabilities are supported in our community.

We are bringing to the Australian community the next great Labor reform, just like Medicare ended for all time the spectre that if you had a major illness in your family, that it could break family budgets, that you would not get the treatment that you and your loved one needed. Just like Medicare ended that spectre for Australians in terms of illness, the National Disability Insurance Scheme will end that spectre for Australians in terms of disability. Now if someone gets a profound disability, there would be precious few families in the nation who could fund the cost of providing care and support from private means. That means people are reliant on what is currently a fragmented and underfunded and patchwork system of support available to people in communities.

That is not good enough to give people with disabilities the options and choices that Australians should have. We want to make sure that Australians who are struck by disability—whether they are born with it, whether they acquire it, whether they get one of the most debilitating illnesses that progresses over a lifetime—they get the kind of care and support they need. The legislation this morning is the legal foundation stone of bringing this change for
Australians. Of course, we will launch the National Disability Insurance Scheme in sites around the country from 1 July. A great Labor reform, and we are proud of it.

**Prime Minister**

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:48): My question is to the Prime Minister. I remind the Prime Minister of her confession to Slater & Gordon in her exit interview of conduct which appears to be in breach of the WA—

Mr Dreyfus: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order. That is simply argument and is out of order. It should not form part of the question.

The SPEAKER: I was going to, at the end of the question, ask the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to rephrase the question.

Ms JULIE BISHOP: I remind the Prime Minister of her statement to Slater & Gordon in her exit interview of conduct which appears to be in breach of WA Criminal Code sections 170, 409 and 558, and Associations Incorporation Act section 43. Does the Prime Ministers expect to enjoy the confidence of this House now that the record of her exit interview shows that she misled the WA Corporate Affairs Commissioner into registering a sham association, and has failed to reveal the truth about this matter in her statement to the House.

Mr Dreyfus: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order, which is that this whole question is simply argument. It is not substantiated. It cannot be substantiated. It is an assertion without basis by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and cannot be properly put. It does not conform with the standing orders.

The SPEAKER: The question was full of argument, but so many of them have been this week that it is a bit difficult to rule which ones have been in or out of order.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:50): Is it not interesting that the Leader of the Opposition had 15 minutes to make an allegation out, and did not go to these matters that the deputy leader raises. There she is with her sections of the legislation, waving them around, pretending again to be Miss Marple while needing to make sure that she does not run into a television camera in Parliament House because she does not want to front up to the media for her lack of honesty about her dealings with Ralph Blewitt. Let me just answer the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's question full of argument. She referred to an interview as an exit interview. To what is she possibly referring? If she is referring to the interview of Slater & Gordon in 1995, why would she refer to it as an exit interview, other than to mislead people? Why would she refer to me misleading the commissioner when that did not occur, and she cannot make that out, and the transcript of the interview that I had in Slater & Gordon does not bear out that allegation? Why would she be in this parliament misleading about my state of knowledge about the association when I have answered that clearly in here and on the public record? Why is it that the opposition—having gone out there this morning and accused me of a crime, having not been able to back that allegation in here in parliament today in a 15 minute address—is now using the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to make things up and put them in the most colourful and prejudicial terminology?

What this is about is an opposition being absolutely at the bottom of the mud bucket—absolutely at the bottom of it. They have nothing to raise that is substantive in any way. They are trapped into continuing to question on this matter this week because
they are worried how it will look if they drop off these questions. It will look like their strategy is out of huff. I have news for the opposition. Even with them asking these questions today, even with the Leader of the Opposition's 15-minute address—or perhaps because of it—it is clear that their political strategy is out of huff. It is clear that their political strategy is no longer working for them. Negativity got them a long way. They are hoping that sleaze and smear will get them the rest of the way, but the problem is Australians now have an accurate assessment of the character of this man and they do not like what they see. Australians know that he will never have his chief of staff wandering around with a file that says 'jobs' or 'health' or 'education' under her arm, because he will never have a positive policy for the nation's future. We will get on with building that future—you live in the mud. (Time expired)

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (14:53): My question is to the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and for Disability Reform. Will the minister update the House on progress to transform disability care and support in Australia with the National Disability Insurance Scheme? What is the significance of the introduction of the legislation to implement this scheme today?

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (14:54): I thank the member for Shortland very much for her question and, most importantly, for adding her voice to the call for change, to support the calls of so many people with disability, to support the calls from carers and to support the calls from family members that have finally been heard.

I say a very big thank you to the Prime Minister and to the Treasurer of this country for their support for the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. For the first time this country is going to right a wrong that has needed righting for so long. People with disability and their carers have waited such a long time for this change. Finally, the Prime Minister introduced the legislation to establish the National Disability Insurance Scheme today. Here on the floor of this parliament today, the voices of people with disability, and of their carers, were heard. They were heard loud and clear. It is because of those voices, because of the campaign that has been run by people with disability and their carers for years. For years they have been calling for reform and finally this government will make sure that it is delivered.

The legislation, when enacted, will put choice and control in the hands of people with disability, and that is what is so significant about this legislation. Yes, it will make sure that we deal with the terrible lottery that the Prime Minister has referred to, but it will also make sure that people with disability themselves will be able to control the care and support that they need to live independent and dignified lives. The legislation will establish a national scheme, it will establish the national agency to deliver it, and it will make sure that we launch the scheme in a number of parts of Australia, including the Hunter, and I thank the member for Shortland and the other members in the Hunter region for their very strong support of this initiative.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (14:52): Speaker, I ask a supplementary question. How will the NDIS better support people with disability in my electorate?
Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (14:57): Once again, I thank the member for Shortland for her question, and for the way in which both she and the other members in the Hunter region have advocated to see the start of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in their region. Around 10,000 people with disability in the Hunter region will benefit as a result of the start of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in that part of New South Wales.

I also take this opportunity to thank the New South Wales government for the way in which they have been working with the Commonwealth to make sure that the National Disability Insurance Scheme starts in the Hunter in a timely way. We need to work cooperatively with the state government and that will occur. Of course, the legislation will mean that those 10,000 people in the Hunter will finally get the choice and control that they deserve over the services that they need, to live the lives that, for so many years, have been denied them.

I say to the Speaker, and to every member of this parliament, this is landmark legislation. We introduced Medicare and now we will introduce the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Prime Minister

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:58): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to her statement this week that she always witnessed documents properly when a partner at Slater & Gordon. As required under law, was the Prime Minister personally present when Ralph Blewitt signed this power of attorney that she drafted in favour of Bruce Wilson, did that occur on the date specified in the document, and why has she not said that in her statement to the House?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:59): Thank you very much to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I have said to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that I did nothing wrong. I said I witnessed thousands of documents for clients as a lawyer and I witnessed them properly. If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition wants to believe her new-found mate, Ralph Blewitt, after he has confessed to being guilty of fraud—

Ms Julie Bishop: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. My question asked whether the Prime Minister was present—

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Opposition Leader will resume her seat. The Leader of the House will resume his seat. The Prime Minister was being relevant to the question. She has the call.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:59): Let me reiterate to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that when I was a lawyer I witnessed documents properly for clients. To the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and to the Leader of the Opposition can I also say this: here we have the yelling and the desperation, here we have the opposition very, very clearly showing that it has not learned anything from the past. Can I remind the opposition about where it got itself to with the case of Godwin Grech. Let us remember. Point No. 1, that started with secret meetings between senior Liberals and dodgy characters. Point No. 2, then there were unsubstantiated claims from a desperate leader, from an opposition leader, trying to save his own skin. Then they went out and used the terminology 'documentary evidence', something that the Leader of the Opposition did today and the
member for Wentworth did before him—'documentary evidence'.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will return to the question.

Ms GILLARD: Then when they are called on to actually make good on this evidence, they failed to do so. Here we are, a Godwin Grech moment for the Leader of the Opposition, and there is the Deputy Leader of the Opposition with her smear—

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. You asked the Prime Minister to return to the question and she completely ignored you, and kept talking about something that has nothing to do with the question. Was she there or wasn't she?

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The difficulty with the word 'relevance' does not mean you will get the answer you want. Often you have in mind an answer you think is out there. It does not mean that someone is not being relevant to the entire question asked. The Prime Minister has the call and will refer to the question before the chair.

Ms GILLARD: In terms of the question before the chair, I have answered about how I witnessed documents as a lawyer. The nature of sleaze and smear is that you come in and try to engage in these broadbrush statements. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition well knows, working as a lawyer you witness hundreds and hundreds, indeed thousands of documents, across a legal career. Anybody can engage in this sleaze and smear campaign. I could stand here and say the Deputy Leader of the Opposition never properly witnessed a document during her legal career, not once, not ever. Presumably on current standards, she would need then to the disprove that for every document that she has ever engaged in as a lawyer. It is ridiculous. I properly witnessed documents. If she wants to believe a fraudster then that says something about the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to wander around in the public domain on the one hand and say, 'We'll give the Prime Minister the member of the doubt,' and then on the other hand go out with unsubstantiated allegations about me being engaged in major wrongdoing then that says something about the opposition leader and his need for sleaze and smear to fill a political vacuum.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will resume her seat. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is seeking to table a document?

Ms Julie Bishop: In order to jog the Prime Minister's memory, I seek leave to table—

The SPEAKER: The opposition leader will not use any more argument.

Ms Julie Bishop: this power of attorney drafted by the Prime Minister in favour of—

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will resume her seat. The Leader of the House has the call.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (15:03): I table a more recent document from the Australian Abbott slush fund in inquiry sites.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will resume his seat. The member for North Sydney.

Mr Hockey: Madam Speaker, I was listening carefully to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. You did not provide her with an opportunity to even explain what the document was that she was seeking to table in contrast with the Leader of the House. Therefore, how could you rule it out when
you did not even hear what the document was?

The SPEAKER: The member for North Sydney will resume his seat. It was the document the Deputy Leader of the Opposition described in her question, because there would not be any other opportunity to present any other document. I think she had waved around sufficiently for me and everybody else to know which document it was. The member for Melbourne has the call.

Newstart Allowance

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (15:04): My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, as the rest of us looked forward to a break over Christmas, on 1 January up to 150,000 single parents are due to be pushed onto the dole, the majority of whom are women. Given the findings of the Senate report tabled today that Newstart is inadequate, will the government now reconsider dumping single parents and their families onto Newstart, which is more than $130 below the poverty line, or will Labor allow inequality to continue to grow?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (15:05): I thank the member for Melbourne for his question. Whilst I understand he and I do not agree on the policy here, at least he is prepared to ask a question about policy and about something that has an implication for members of the Australian community. The reason, I think, the member for Melbourne and I do not agree about this policy is (1) I have a view that people who are in comparable circumstances in relation to parenting payment should be treated the same.

I remind the member for Melbourne that the reform we have engaged in is for a class of people who were being treated differently under earlier rules, to be brought into compliance with the way in which others are being treated by the parenting payment system. The focus of our reforms and the reason for that is that we actually believe it is very, very important for kids in single parent families to see that their parent, who is very often a woman, the mother, as the member for Melbourne indicated in his question, is a person who has a job and goes to work. Now, of course, when children are very small, there are all of the stresses and strains that people usually find with trying to balance having very young children and maintaining an attachment to a job—and usually with very young children, this is a part-time job. We certainly know from all of the analysis that there is about disadvantage, that if a child grows up in a family where no-one works, and that is their experience year after year as they go through primary school and then secondary school, that will be an indicator that that child has been marked for a lifetime of disadvantage. We do not want to see that.

So our aim here is to get more single parents off income support and into work once their children are at school. Many of these parents will be eligible for additional support, including the childcare benefit, childcare rebate and the jobs, education and training childcare fee assistance subsidy. The number of people accessing jobs, education and training childcare fee assistance has increased by more than 10,000 people to almost 31,500 people as a result of our continuing reforms, and this year the figure is expected to rise again to around 35,000. What is more, spending on this program has doubled because parents are accessing child care for longer hours, meaning that they are in training, studying or working longer hours. Then, of course, we are investing in skills development and training and new career advice—an investment of $100 million to support people on their journey to work.
The member for Melbourne and I will continue to have a different view, but I thank him for a policy question.

**Economy**

*Mr STEPHEN JONES* (Throsby) (15:08): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline for the House the importance of investing in our economy and our society? Will he update the House on how the government is doing exactly that?

*Mr SWAN* (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (15:08): I thank the member for Throsby for that very important question, because I think all members have seen a very clear contrast today. The government is focused on the future—making the essential investments to build a resilient economy but also making sure that we take everybody with us to make sure that everybody has a stake in our prosperity. That is why everybody on this side of the House is so proud of what we are doing with the National Disability Insurance Scheme. But it is not just that. We understand the importance of building a more resilient economy. We understand the importance of investing in education. We understand the importance of paid parental leave. We understand the importance of health reform.

We understand all those things, but here today is a really stark contrast with the opposition, which just stands for fear and smear. We have seen it on display right through this week. We have not had a single question from the opposition on the economy this week—not one. We understand the very big challenges for the future, so when we go to the people later next year there will be a very clear contrast. There will be those on that side of the House, who are led by a thug who knows nothing else but smear, and the people on this side of the House—

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer will withdraw.

*Mr SWAN:* I do withdraw. They will be led by an opposition leader who, when it comes to policy, is simply a weakling. There are no plans for the future. The reason we can put in place important social reforms for the future is that we have a resilient economy. You can see that in terms of the capital expenditure figures that are out today. Total capital expenditure is expected to be a staggering $173 billion this financial year, up from $155 billion in 2011-12.

You would never know that if you listened to the opposition. They are constantly at war with the facts. Whether you are talking about the issues that were raised in this House earlier today, whether you are talking about investment figures, whether you are talking about the level of the dollar or whether you are talking about a surplus, they are constantly at war with the facts. That is why the Leader of the Opposition is simply unfit to run a $1.5 trillion economy, and that has been on display not only to members of this parliament today but to all of the Australian people.

**Prime Minister**

*Mr ABBOTT* (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (15:11): My question is to the Prime Minister. Given that the Prime Minister made the representations that established the AWU Workplace Reform Association that then enabled a fraud to occur, will she agree to establish a judicial inquiry that finally gets to the bottom of this union corruption scandal, as requested by Mr Ian Cambridge, now a commissioner of Fair Work Australia?

*Ms GILLARD* (Lalor—Prime Minister) (15:11): We had 15 minutes for the Leader of the Opposition to outline one clear allegation against me and he failed to do so—15 minutes for the Leader of the Opposition to actually back in his spurious claims against me this morning, 15 minutes
for the Leader of the Opposition to justify why he and his team have been in a mud bucket of sleaze and smear week after week, month after month. He had 15 minutes to justify—

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. She was asked whether she would support a judicial inquiry into this very grubby deal.

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Prime Minister has the call.

Ms GILLARD: And there we have it, even in the interjection—more sleaze, more smear, more unsubstantiated allegations. He had 15 minutes to explain why his deputy did not tell the truth publicly about her dealings with Ralph Blewitt, 15 minutes to deal with these issues, and spectacularly failed to do so. No amount of carry-on, no amount of grasping at straws is going to change the fact that the Leader of the Opposition is drowning in a sea of sleaze and smear, and there is a reason for that.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will return to the question.

Ms GILLARD: There is a reason why this man is drowning in a sea of sleaze and smear, and it is that he does not have one idea for the nation's future. Instead of wasting our time, as we are invited to do by the Leader of the Opposition, we will get on with building great Labor reforms like the National Disability Insurance Scheme, using our time to improve the lives of the Australian people—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will return to the question.

Ms GILLARD: something the Leader of the Opposition will never understand.

Nation Building

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (15:13): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on how the government is getting on with its policies and plans to help build Australia's future?

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (15:13): I thank the member for Fraser for his question, which is the last question of 2012. As we move from 2012 into 2013, I want to say to my Labor colleagues and I want say to members of the public listening to these parliamentary proceedings: we are proud of what our nation has achieved during 2012. We are proud of our nation and its achievements during the course of this year. As a government, we are proud that we have played our part, working alongside the Australian people. We are proud that our economic stewardship has meant that people have the benefit of jobs, unlike those in so many advanced economies around the world. We are proud that through the Asian century white paper we have delivered a plan for our nation's future.

We are proud that our budget discipline has meant that there is room for the Reserve Bank to move on monetary policy and that Australians are paying lower interest rates. We are proud that Australian families with a typical mortgage of $300,000 are now paying $4,500 less a year on their mortgage than they did when we came to government. We are proud that we have worked with Australian families on their cost-of-living challenges through benefits like the Schoolkids Bonus. We are proud we have changed our tax system so you do not pay a cent of tax on the first $18,200 that you earn. We are proud that we are reaading our economy so we will be winners in this century of growth and change—with the NBN, with skills, with traditional infrastructure. We are proud that we are getting ready to seize the future.

We are proud of what we have done in health too—making sure that people get
benefits in dental care and rolling out GP superclinics and integrated cancer care. We are proud of our mental health reform agenda to help Australians who need mental health support at some time during their lives. We are proud of those changes, which are Labor changes. And we are proud that we have set a program of work for 2013 which will be about making sure that every child gets a great education and a genuine opportunity in life and making sure that we develop and deliver the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We are proud of these great Labor reforms and we are proud that we have stared down, on carbon pricing, the most reckless, negative campaign ever run in Australia's history. We are proud we are a government of change and building. We are ashamed to sit in a parliament with a man of negativity and sleaze and smear. We are ashamed that the opposition has not one plan for the nation's future. In 2013 we will come back ready to win the contest of ideas. You will not even be in the contest.

With those words, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper. (Time expired)

STATMENTS ON INDULGENCE

Ponting, Mr Ricky Thomas, AO

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (15:17): On indulgence, I note in the parliament that Ricky Ponting has announced his retirement in Perth. I have not had the opportunity to watch any of the coverage about that, but the Perth test will be his last test.

An opposition member: Good example; why don't you follow it!

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms GILLARD: I am sure that, even in a parliament ruled with the sort of lack of civility of the opposition, we could spend one moment celebrating what has been a great cricketing career.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Order! I think the nation would be rather disappointed that, when we are talking about one of our cricket greats, you cannot even allow it to be heard. That is just ridiculous. The Prime Minister has the call and should be heard in silence.

Ms GILLARD: Thank you very much, Speaker. They get judged by that kind of conduct.

Ricky Ponting has announced that he will retire, that Perth will be his last test. This will be his 168th test. That will mean that he is equaling the record of Steve Waugh, which is a very important record. It means he is going to go into the next phase of his life with a lot of gratitude and a lot of thanks from the Australian community, full as it is of cricket tragics. It means that people are going to miss watching his performances, but we do wish him well for whatever the future brings.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (15:18): On indulgence, Madam Speaker, I rise to join the Prime Minister in congratulating Ricky Ponting on a superb innings as an Australian cricketer, as an Australian cricket captain, as someone who has given tremendous pleasure to cricket lovers around the world and tremendous pride to Australians who have followed the team's success under his leadership. He is undoubtedly one of the all-time greats of one of the very great games. I might invite, if I may, Madam Speaker, Ricky's local member, Mr Morrison, to say a few words.

Mr Lyons: I thought he came from Bass!

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (15:19): I acknowledge that Ricky Ponting may have come from Tasmania, and he is a proud Tasmanian, but he is also now a proud
resident of the shire. I am sure my community would like me to pass on our congratulations and commendations to Ricky Ponting as a great cricketer, a great leader and a great inspiration to young men and women all around the country, including in my electorate of Cook. He is someone that all young Australians can look up to and all sports men and women across the country can look up to. His contribution will continue past his time in cricket and in sport. On behalf of the shire community, I say thank you, Ricky.

Mr Lyons (Bass) (15:20): I too would like to pay tribute to the fabulous Ricky Ponting from Bass. He not only played cricket in Tasmania and learnt his skills there but he also played football. He was a great Australian Rules player before he concentrated on cricket, having been best and fairest in North Launceston's junior footy for a number of years. He has been a great contributor not only to Australian cricket but to his local community. The Mowbray Cricket Club in Launceston have really benefited from his continued support of that great club. He has also been a great supporter of the North Launceston Football Club. I thank Ricky Ponting. In the days when North Launceston Footy Club were really struggling, he continued to contribute cricket gear to allow that club to keep going. I really honour him and thank him for his support over many, many years.

DOCUmENTS
Presentation

Mr Albanese (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (15:21): 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 documents:

- Department of Defence—Special purpose flights—Schedules for the period January to June 2012.
- Consolidated financial statements in respect of the year ended 30 June 2012.

Debate adjourned.

BUSINESS

Leave of Absence

Mr Albanese (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (15:21): I move:

That leave of absence be given to every Member of the House of Representatives from the determination of this sitting of the House to the date of its next sitting.

Question agreed to.
Days and Hours of Meeting

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (15:22): On indulgence, for the information of members about procedures this afternoon, we will have a restricted debate, by agreement, on the matter of public importance. Then the disallowance motions on the Murray-Darling Basin need to be dealt with, as well as private members' business motions that are on the Notice Paper, plus valedictories. It is not clear yet whether there are any items that have to come back from the Senate, but I will inform the House within the next couple of hours of an expected finishing time. I would be hopeful that it will not be a late evening.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

Division Process

Mr SCHULTZ (Hume) (15:23): Madam Speaker, earlier today, prior to question time, I raised with you the issue of a member or members entering this chamber after the order was given to shut the doors during a division process. Can I respectfully ask you, Madam Speaker, under standing order 129(b), to check the footage of that part of the division to see whether in fact a member or a number of members entered the chamber when they should not have been in the chamber to vote?

The SPEAKER (15:23): I thank the member for Hume.

Mr Albanese: Just to help the member: I think I know what he refers to. There was a member who was in the chamber who was paired, so they walked from their seat towards the side, then realised that the doors were actually locked, and then sat in the advisers box. That is what occurred. No one extra went in.

Mr Schultz: Madam Speaker, I can understand the reason for the Leader of the House trying to justify the situation, but he was talking about one of the other members, not the member who came through that door, who happened to be a minister on the front bench.

Mr Stephen Smith: If the member is referring to me, I was in the House. I walked into the room, spoke to the attendants and, when the Speaker called, 'Close the doors,' I walked out. I had already been in the chamber.

Mr Schultz interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The debate is over.

PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE HOLDERS

Speaker's Panel

The SPEAKER (15:24): Pursuant to standing order 17, I lay on the table my warrant nominating the honourable member for Corangamite to be a member of the Speaker's panel to assist the chair when requested to do so by the Speaker or Deputy Speaker.

COMMITTEES

Government Response

The SPEAKER (15:24): For the information of honourable members, I present a schedule of outstanding government responses to reports of House of Representatives and joint committees, incorporating reports tabled and details of government responses made in the period between 28 June 2012, the day of the last schedule, and 28 November 2012. Copies of the schedule are being made available to honourable members, and it will be incorporated into Hansard.

The schedule read as follows—

ABORIGINAL TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS (House, Standing)

Everybody’s Business: Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Stores
The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY (House, Standing)

Seeing the forest through the trees: inquiry into the future of the Australian Forestry Industry

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

AUSTRALIA’S IMMIGRATION DETENTION NETWORK (Joint, Select)

Final Report

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS (House, Standing)

Community Television: Options for digital broadcasting

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

Report: Tuning in to community broadcasting

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

CORPORATIONS AND FINANCIAL SERVICES (Joint, Statutory)

Better shareholders - better company - Shareholder engagement and participation in Australia

The government response is being considered.

Aspects of agribusiness managed investment schemes

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

Access for small and medium business to finance

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

Report on the 2010-11 annual reports of bodies established under the ASIC Act

The government response is being considered.

Collapse of Trio Capital – Final Report

The government response is being considered.

ECONOMICS (House, Standing)

Inquiry into raising the productivity growth rate in the Australian economy

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

Inquiry into Indigenous economic development in Queensland and review of the Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING (House, Standing)

Adolescent Overload? Report of the inquiry into combining school and work: supporting successful youth transitions

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

ELECTORAL MATTERS (Joint Standing)

Inquiry into the implications of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment (Automatic Enrolment) Act 2009 (NSW) for the conduct of Commonwealth elections

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

Report on the conduct of the 2010 Federal Election and matters related thereto

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

Report on funding of political parties and election campaigns

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS AND WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION (House, Standing)

Making it work: Inquiry into independent contracting and labour hire arrangements

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.
EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS (House, Standing)

Making it Fair: pay equity and associated issues related to increasing female participation in the workforce

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE (Joint, Standing)

Inquiry into Australia’s trade and investment relations with Asia, the Pacific and Latin America

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

HEALTH AND AGEING (HOUSE, STANDING)

Weighing it up: Obesity in Australia

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

Regional health issues jointly affecting Australia and the South Pacific: Delegation Report

The government response is being considered.

Before it’s too late: Report on early intervention programs aimed at preventing youth suicide

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

Lost in the labyrinth: Report on the inquiry into registration processes and support for overseas trained doctors

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION (House, Standing)

Seasonal forecasting in Australia

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS (House, Standing)

Find the right balance: Cabin crew ratios on Australian aircraft

The government response is being considered.

INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORT, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT (House, Standing)

Rebuilding Australia’s coastal shipping industry: Inquiry into coastal shipping policy and regulation

The government response is being considered.

LAW ENFORCEMENT (JOINT)

Inquiry into Commonwealth unexplained wealth legislation and arrangements – Report March 2012

The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

Examination of the 2010-11 annual reports of the Australian Crime Commission and the Australian Federal Police

The government response was tabled in both Houses on 1 November 2012.

LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS (House, Standing)

A Time for Change: Yes/No? Inquiry into the Machinery of Referendums

The government response was tabled on 1 November 2012.

MIGRATION (Joint, Standing)

Immigration detention in Australia: A new beginning – Criteria for release from detention

The government response is being considered.

Immigration detention in Australia – Community-based alternatives to detention

The government response is being considered.

Immigration detention in Australia: Facilities, services and transparency

The government response is being considered.

Enabling Australia: Inquiry into Migration Treatment of Disability

The government response was tabled in both Houses on the 1 November 2012.
NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK (Joint, Standing)
Review of the rollout of the National Broadband Network – Third Report
The government response was tabled in both Houses on 9 October 2012.

NATIONAL CAPITAL AND EXTERNAL TERRITORIES (Joint, Standing)
Etched in stone? Inquiry into the administration of the National Memorials Ordinance 1928
The government response is being considered and will be tabled in due course.

PETITIONS (House, Standing)
Electronic Petitioning to the House of Representatives
The government response is being considered.
The work of the First Petitions Committee 2008-2010
The government response was tabled on the 1 November 2012.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND RESOURCES (House, Standing)
Farming the future: The role of Government in assisting Australian farmers to adapt to the impact of climate change
The government response was tabled on 30 October 2012.

PROCEDURE (House, Standing)
Motion to suspend standing orders and condemn a Member: Report on events of 10 October 2006
The government response is being considered.
Building a modern committee system: An inquiry into the effectiveness of the House Committee system
The government response is being considered.
Interim report No. 1: Monitoring and review of procedural changes implemented in the 43rd Parliament
The government response was tabled on the 1 November 2012.
Interim Report No. 2: Monitoring and review of procedural changes implemented in the 43rd Parliament – Referral of bills to committees by the House Selection Committee
The government response was tabled on the 1 November 2012.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT (Joint, Statutory)
The government response is being considered.
The government response is being considered.
The government response is being considered.
Report 424: Eighth biannual hearing with the Commissioner of Taxation
The government response was given by Executive Minute.
Report 426: Ninth biannual hearing with the Commissioner of Taxation
The government response was given by Executive Minute and by a formal response. The formal response was presented out of sitting on 27 July 2012 and tabled in both Houses on 14 August 2012.
Report 427: Inquiry into national funding agreements
The government response was tabled in the House of Representatives on the 15 August 2012 and on the 16 August 2012 in the Senate.
Report 428: Review of Auditor-General’s reports Nos 16 to 46 (2010-11)
The government response was given by Executive Minute.
The government response was given by Executive Minute.

Report 430: Review of Auditor-General’s reports Nos 47 (2010-11) to 9 (2011-12) and reports Nos 10 to 23 (2011-12)

The government response is being considered.

PUBLIC WORKS (Joint Standing)

Public works on Christmas Island

The government response is being considered.

SOCIAL POLICY AND LEGAL AFFAIRS (House, Standing)

Reclaiming public space: Inquiry into the regulation of billboard and outdoor advertising

The government response was tabled on the 16 August 2012.

In the wake of disaster: The operation of the insurance industry during disaster events (volume 1)

The government response was tabled on the 28 June 2012.

In the wake of disaster: The affordability of residential strata title insurance (volume 2)

The government response was tabled on the 28 June 2012.

TREATIES (Joint Standing)

Report 100 – Treaties tabled on 25 June 2008 (2)

The government response was presented out of sitting in the Senate on 9 August 2012 and tabled in both Houses on 14 August 2012.


The government response was tabled in both Houses on 27 November 2012.

Selection Committee
Report

The SPEAKER (15:25): I present report No. 73 of the Selection Committee relating to private members’ business and referrals of bills to committees. The report will be printed in the Hansard for today, and the committee's determination will appear on the Notice Paper. Copies of the report have been placed on the table.

The report read as follows—

Report relating to private Members’ business and the consideration of bills introduced 26 to 29 November 2012

1. The committee met in private session on 28 and 29 November 2012.

2. The committee determined that the following referrals of bills to committees be made—

Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

- Native Title Amendment Bill 2012

REASONS FOR REFERRAL/PRINCIPAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:

To specifically examine and report on the benefits or otherwise of an amendment to the Bill that would reverse the onus of proof for claimants on on-going connection to land. This has a long list of public commentary that would be available, and organisations like the Law Council of Australia have previously held strong and positive views for such a change.

Standing Committee on Agriculture, Resources, Fisheries and Forestry

- Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment Bill 2012

REASONS FOR REFERRAL/PRINCIPAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:

The new legislation for the chemical regulator has ignored stakeholder concerns and will massively increase regulation, increase the cost of chemical registration by one third or around $8 m, and add another layer of red tape. This is despite the Minister for Finance and Deregulation listing Agvet chemical reform in the 2012 update on the Australian Government deregulation agenda as a key example that will reduce regulatory compliance costs for business and improve their competitiveness.

The reform process was supposed to address two key areas; the cumbersome assessment and registration process to make it more cost efficient for business and to provide industry with timely access to the best and safest crop and animal protectants; and slowness of review of chemicals
identified with potential environmental and safety hazards.

However the new legislation instead focuses on adding another layer of red tape with an automatic 7-15 year review process. Despite the RIS for the Agvet reform stating that it is envisaged that the numbers of chemicals referred for review broadly equate to the existing numbers of review nominations.

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services
- Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Service Providers and Other Governance Measures) Bill 2012
  REASONS FOR REFERRAL/PRINCIPAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:
  Significant reform of superannuation; controversial and complex subject matter; stakeholders have expressed concerns over a number of the provisions; and the potential unintended consequences.

Standing Committee on Economics
- Tax Laws Amendment (2012 Measures No. 6) Bill 2012
  REASONS FOR REFERRAL/PRINCIPAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:
  Implication of policy decisions, in particular: interim streaming rules for managed investment trusts until the commencement of the new tax system for managed investment trusts; income test to the rebate for medical expenses from 1 July 2012; definition of ‘limited recourse debt’ includes arrangements where, in substance or effect, the debtor is not fully at risk in relation to the debt; removal of the concessional fringe benefits tax treatment for in-house fringe benefits accessed by way of salary packaging arrangements.

Standing Committee on Education and Employment
- Australian Education Bill 2012
  REASONS FOR REFERRAL/PRINCIPAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:
  To enable the committee to consult with school communities regarding the development and implementation of the National Plan for School Improvement.
- Fair Work Amendment (Tackling Job Insecurity) Bill 2012
  REASONS FOR REFERRAL/PRINCIPAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:
  To determine whether the bill adequately addresses the nature and effects of insecure work in Australia.

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
- Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Improving Electoral Administration) Bill 2012
  REASONS FOR REFERRAL/PRINCIPAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:
  To further scrutinise the bill to ensure consideration is given to any unintended consequences.

3. The committee recommends that the following items of private Members’ business listed on the notice paper be voted on:

Orders of the Day—
Government investment in research (Mr Bandt)
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Making Marine Parks Accountable) Bill 2012 [No. 2] (Mr Christensen)
Health in the Torres Strait Protected Zone (Mr Entsch)
National Critical Care and Trauma Centre (Mrs Griggs)
World Hepatitis Day (Ms Gambaro)
Viability of rural producers (Ms Marino)
Code of conduct for Members of Parliament (Mr Oakeshott)

Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Committee
Education and Employment Committee
Membership

The SPEAKER (15:25): I have received advice from the Chief Government Whip,
from Mr Oakeshott and from Mr Bandt that they are nominating members to be members of certain committees.

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond—Parliamentary Secretary for Trade) (15:25): by leave—I move:

(1) Ms Saffin and Mr Oakeshott be appointed members of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples; and

(2) Mr Bandt be appointed a supplementary member of the Standing Committee on Education and Employment for the purpose of the committee’s inquiry into the Fair Work Amendment (Tackling Job Insecurity) Bill 2012.

Question agreed to.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Australia's Future

The SPEAKER (15:26): I have received a letter from the honourable Leader of the Opposition proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The failure of the Government to provide a plan for a stronger Australia.

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

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

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (15:26): Madam Speaker, may I say that part of my plan for a stronger Australia is to restore respect to this parliament. I would very much hope—after what has been, I fear, an unedifying and dispiriting period in this parliament since two o’clock—that, should there be a change of government next year, the members of the Australian public who are interested will be able to watch question time in this parliament without embarrassment. And they will be able to look at the conduct of government ministers and, indeed, the Prime Minister and say, ‘Yes, we now have a Prime Minister who is more interested in being the leader of a nation than the mere chieftain of a tribe.’ That would be my aspiration, and that would be an important part of building a stronger Australia.

We all know that our country can be better than it is now. Most of us think that our country deserves better than it currently has. We know that our country can be better in the future than it has been in the recent past, because, if you go back, we have been more of what we should have been. We have been closer to our best selves.

I want to pay tribute for a moment to previous governments of this country and to the economic reforms that they put in place, which have been substantially responsible for what economic strength we now have. The Hawke government, to its credit, floated the dollar and deregulated financial markets. It began the process of privatisation. It cut tariffs and, yes, it even hesitantly began a process of workplace relations reform.

Then the Howard government came into office. The Howard government largely completed the economic reform agenda which is responsible for this country’s current economic strength, such as it is. The Howard government reformed the tax system. The Howard government significantly reformed the welfare system. The Howard government substantially reformed the workplace system, albeit going too far in an important respect, and it continued and strengthened financial reform which had been begun by its predecessor.

Yes, compared to many other countries, this country of ours has a strong economy, but we should not constantly compare ourselves with countries that are mired in
euro sclerosis. We should not constantly compare ourselves with countries that have been taxing and spending and borrowing for far too long, because for 25 years we had governments that built up our economic strength.

We should be comparing ourselves with what we were. We should be comparing ourselves with the standards of which we know we are capable, not comparing ourselves with the standards of others who are clearly failing at this time.

If you look at the statistics and if you look behind the headline figures that members opposite are so keen to quote, this country is not at that strength which it once was. Our GDP per head, which grew by well over two per cent a year between 1996 and 2007, has grown by scarcely half a per cent a year since then. Our overall productivity has declined. It actually declined by four per cent in the four years to the middle of last year. While our headline unemployment numbers have not risen much, hours worked—which are probably a more accurate indicator of the real state of the labour market—fell by 1.2 per cent in the last year.

Those of us who get out in the main streets and the suburban shopping centres of our country know that there is a serious lack of confidence in our economy. Why is the savings rate so high? The last time the savings rate was what it is now was at the time of the last big recession. The people of Australia do not trust the government to save enough—that is why they are out there saving more and more themselves.

What we need is a new era of change for the better. What we need in this country is a government with positive plans for a strong and prosperous economy for a safe and secure Australia. What we have is an alternative government—the coalition that I lead—which has already put in place a whole series of specific policy commitments that I am confident will give us the strong and prosperous economy that we need in order to have the safe and secure Australia that all of us want.

First of all, there will be no carbon tax under the government I lead. When I make that statement to the Australia people I am telling the truth, because I understand that you do not improve the environment by damaging the economy. I understand that you do not impose on the Australian economy an unnecessary new tax that will act as a reverse tariff, damaging businesses and jobs in this country while inevitably helping the businesses and jobs of our competitors, which are not subject to this unnecessary new impost.

There will be no mining tax under the government I lead. Let's face it. What sane and rational government would impose a tax that actually raises no revenue but which does seriously damage confidence and investment in a vital sector? What sane and rational government would think that you can tax your way to prosperity, that you can somehow speed up the slow lane by slowing down the fast lane and that you can somehow strengthen the economy by clobbering its most successful sector?

One of the most important policy commitments that the coalition has made is that we will reduce the red-tape costs faced by business, particularly small business, by at least $1 billion a year. We will do this by following the constructive reforms in Victoria, which I have to say are to the credit of the former government where they were introduced. Every department and every agency will be required to put a cost on their compliance and regulatory burdens and they will be required to deliver specified savings, and Public Service bonuses will depend on those savings being delivered.
There will be a one-stop shop for environmental approvals. We all know how difficult it is right now to get new projects approved. One of the major coal seam gas projects in Queensland took $25 million, four years, 4,000 meetings and a 12,000-page environmental impact assessment statement to be approved. After all of that process, there were 1,200 state conditions, 300 Commonwealth conditions and no fewer than 8,000 subconditions. Is it any wonder that people are choosing to invest in places other than in Australia? One lot of environmental regulators is enough and that is what there will be under our one-stop-shop process.

We will have a wholly restored Australian Building and Construction Commission, because that tough industry deserves a tough cop on the beat. We know that that cop on the beat did deliver some $5 billion a year in productivity improvements in that industry. That is exactly the kind of productivity improvement that we need now if the Australian people are to enjoy the hope, reward and opportunity that they deserve.

Under an incoming coalition government, there will be a fairer Fair Work Act. We understand that the working people of Australia are doing it tough. The last thing that we want to do is damage their pay. We will never do that. The changes we make will be careful, cautious, responsible and within the framework of the existing act. But we will not shrink from the changes needed to address the flexibility, militancy and productivity problems which not just are holding our country back but are now making it harder for the workers of Australia to enjoy the wage increases that, quite frankly, we all should want them to have.

And there will be tougher laws—much tougher laws—to ensure that union officials, no less than company officials, are subject to appropriate penalties when they break the law, because an incoming coalition government will not be conflicted. It will not be compromised. It will not suffer from guilt by association in the way in which the current government does.

There will be a once-in-a-generation commission of audit which will go through all the apparatus of federal government, department by department, agency by agency, division by division, branch by branch, section by section, to try to ensure that we are delivering only the services that government needs to deliver in the best and most efficient way. That is what the Australian people expect of an incoming government, and that is what they will get from the government I lead, should we win the next election.

There will be, at last, a fair dinkum paid parental leave scheme. I acknowledge that the government has introduced a form of paid parental leave. Unfortunately, it is simply a rebadged baby bonus. I support the baby bonus; I was proud to be a part of a government that introduced the baby bonus. But we can do better than that. Paid parental leave is a workplace entitlement not a welfare one; that is why it should be paid at a parent's real wage, not at the minimum wage.

It is important that we give every Australian maximum opportunity to be an economic contributor, not merely a social and cultural one. That is why we will revitalise Work for the Dole, because every working-age Australian should be working—preferably for a wage but, if not, for the dole.

There will be a root and branch review of competition law. That is another important policy commitment from this coalition. There should be a level playing field for all businesses, large and small.

There will be modern infrastructure. Within 18 months of a change of government
here in Canberra, I expect to see more cranes over our cities. I expect to see the bulldozers at work on projects that, frankly, have been neglected for far too long. The WestConnex project in Sydney will begin. The East West Link in Melbourne will begin. The Gateway Extension in Brisbane will begin. The Pacific Highway between Newcastle and the Queensland border will be completed, well within a decade, under the next coalition government. This is important, because if we have a more productive economy we will have more prosperity for the forgotten families and for the decent, honest workers of this country.

Let me give you just one or two illustrations of the benefits that will flow to the Australian people from fair dinkum economic reform—practical, achievable economic reform. We could increase gross national income per head by almost $5,000 a year with a single one of the reforms I have mentioned. Abolishing the carbon tax will make every single Australian almost $5,000 a year better off by 2050, and it is the government's own figures that show that. A single reform will make our cumulative gross domestic product $1 trillion higher by 2050. If we abolish the carbon tax then on the government's own figures we will increase our GDP by $1 trillion.

If we can do all that, then we can have the worthy reforms that this government talks about but will never be able to deliver, such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme. A strong economy is what makes the NDIS possible. A strong economy is what makes possible further spending on education such as that recommended by Mr Gonski. That is what makes everything else possible. If we have a strong economy we can have a healthy society. That is why it is so important that we have a strong economy. We can have a million more jobs within five years. We can have two million more jobs within a decade. But only a strong economy will deliver them.

So that is our positive plan. That is our positive plan for a better country with a brighter future. All it needs is a change of government to bring it about.

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Cabinet Secretary, Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency and Parliamentary Secretary for Industry and Innovation) (15:41): I rise today on what must be a very sad day for this Liberal Party, and a sad day for standards of decency and integrity in this country. We have had, for weeks now, a bizarre attack on the record of the government, and completely fabricated claims made against the Prime Minister—unsubstantiated, unjustifiable claims against the Prime Minister.

The Leader of the Opposition is scurrying away from his pathetic attempts today to justify the wild claims that he made this morning that the Prime Minister has committed a crime. He could not justify it. He failed to justify it and he should be apologising to this House and to the people of Australia now for the unsubstantiated and appalling attack that he has made on the reputation of the Prime Minister. But, of course, no; having been given 15 minutes to justify his wild claims, his false claims, against the Prime Minister and having failed to do so, he does not apologise; he scurries away. What we have just had from the Leader of the Opposition is a pathetic pretence, to suggest that the opposition has some kind of positive agenda.

I want to talk about the record of our government—and I will, at length. But first I want to talk about the political context that this comes in. You can say one thing about this Leader of the Opposition: he is brazen, because you would have to be brazen to come in and make the claims that he makes,
day in, day out. But I do not think anyone in this place really trusts him and, indeed, I do not think anyone in Australia could really trust him. It is nearly three years to the day since Tony Abbott became Leader of the Opposition, and what an unhappy anniversary it turns out to be.

It has been three long years characterised by negativity and by failure. There has been the bitter failure of the Leader of the Opposition to accept the outcome of the previous election. There has been the bitter campaign to trash the government in an attempt to bring it down, regardless of whether the opposition were trashing the traditions of this chamber in doing so. There has been the bitterness caused by the slowly dawning realisation that this Leader of the Opposition's failure might just cost this opposition the next election.

Now we hear talk from this Leader of the Opposition about building a stronger Australia. He is not a builder; he is wrecker. That is all he is. He has not a single meaningful policy to offer, let alone a costed policy. We keep getting told that such policies will be produced 'at some point'. The Leader of the Opposition is an empty vessel.

This Leader of the Opposition set out with one brutal, simple, negative objective: to do whatever it took to become Prime Minister, and we know this from the member for New England. He sought to tear down the Prime Minister by hook or by crook, by fear and now by smear. First he set out to do it by fear; but he failed. Now that they have failed there, what have the opposition done? They have turned to smear. But the crude, relentless aggression has not succeeded. All that this Leader of the Opposition has managed to do is to lead his party deeper and deeper into a wilderness—a policy vacuum.

This Liberal Party is now modelling itself on America's far-Right Tea Party. It has turned itself into a party of tinfoil-hat wearing, right-wing nuts. The Liberal Party has travelled a long, long way from its founding fathers—from the legacy of Menzies and the legacy, indeed, of John Howard. I have here a quote from Sir Robert Menzies's book _The Measure of the Years_, and the opposition leader would do well to read it. It says:

My first proposition is that the duty of an Opposition, if it has no ambition to be permanently on the left-hand side of the Speaker, is not just to oppose for opposition’s sake, but to oppose selectively. No Government is always wrong on everything, whatever the critics may say.

Menzies went on to say:

My second proposition is that an Opposition must always remember that it is the alternative Government; that it is unwise, when in Opposition, to promise what you cannot perform …

He could have been remarking on the Leader of the Opposition's crazy comments about the carbon price or the Leader of the Opposition's empty pledge to turn back the boats when he knew that it would be rejected by the Republic of Indonesia.

In the same work, Menzies said:

When you find yourself in Opposition and have recovered from the natural shock which accompanies the process, the first task is a positive one: to reconstruct; to find out what went wrong; to work out a programme of action; to initiate a new phase in political history.

Menzies could have been talking about the current opposition and the current Leader of the Opposition. The sad thing is that this Leader of the Opposition has never recovered from his election loss. He is still living in the past, fighting old battles and wilfully ignoring reality. Three years has been long enough for the Australian public to know that this Leader of the Opposition has nothing whatsoever of substance to offer. He
devotes his time to crafting 10-second sound bites. He is unwilling to do the serious and hard work of crafting serious policies for this nation: to build a national disability insurance scheme; to build a national broadband network; and to build a cleaner, stronger, smarter economy while cutting carbon pollution.

This week the book of 10-second sound bites has been released. Three-word slogans repeated thousands and thousands of times might manage to make you up a slim volume, but it would still be made up of three-word slogans. Anyone who looked at this slim volume would see that it was just a compilation of this year’s three-word slogans and 10-second sound bites. Such things pass for speeches from this Leader of the Opposition; his speeches seem to consist of three word slogans and 10-second sound bites.

It takes hard work, consistency and determination to make policy. Our Prime Minister has these attributes in spades. Just look at the achievements that as promised she has contributed to while we have been in government: abolishing Work Choices; investing in education; reforming schools funding; supporting jobs through stimulus; bringing in a carbon price. I could also mention mental health reform and dental care reform—there is a long list. It takes guts to do the hard yards and make tough changes while others run all around the country whipping up hysteria.

After all these months of running round the country whipping up fear and loathing about the carbon price, the Leader of the Opposition and his followers have finished at a dead end. The member for Flinders is in the chamber. He can vouch for the dead end that the opposition has reached. Like the Wizard of Oz, the Leader of the Opposition has conjured up a series of illusions and tricks. He has pretended that pricing carbon would smash the economy to pieces and that it would crush towns and villages in its path. He spoke about the cobra, the python and the tentacles of the octopus. He spoke about every animal that you can imagine other than the bunyip, and still the Leader of the Opposition is engaging in the biggest pretence of all: that he will repeal the pricing of carbon. He will not repeal the pricing of carbon; that too is a pretence. We can see the reality, and Australians can see the reality. The hard economic evidence is that after 150 days the carbon price is doing its job—

Mr Truss: Yes—breaking the country; closing down factories.

Mr Dreyfus: of cutting pollution, transforming businesses and providing assistance to households while we build a cleaner economy. We have from the Leader of the National Party the proposition by interjection that it is 'breaking the country'. What a nonsense. They are still going on with their fear campaign even though it has failed.

The facts and figures have arrived, and, like the Wizard of Oz, the Leader of the Opposition is now revealed as a humbug. He is just a man behind the curtain still furiously pulling the levers and pressing the buttons when his time has well and truly run out. This Leader of the Opposition has no policies and no positive contribution to make to this country, so, true to form, all he can resort to is throwing mud, raking muck and spreading untruths, misrepresentations, falsehoods and fabrications. To put it bluntly: he is just plain making things up. He makes things up about the government's policies, and he is making things up in his attack on the Prime Minister.

But the Australian people are onto him. Australians are over the aggressive and negative charade we have had to endure in
this place for the last three years. The Liberal Party, in fact, has had to send out the Deputy Leader of the Opposition day after day this week to do the dirty work while they worked out to do with the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition has mostly been too gutless to front his own smear campaign, but, when the Deputy Leader of the Opposition opens her mouth and extracts her foot from it, her leader's relentless negativity comes flying out. We know it all too well: straight from the chief of staff's dirt file comes a thick folder which is full of the Leader of the Opposition's words and instructions.

What issues has the Deputy Leader of the Opposition raised anyway? Her mate Ralph Blewitt has admitted that he does not have any real allegations. He was asked this question by Michael Smith: 'is it fair to say that you, Mr Blewitt, and Wilson certainly knew the association was a sham but is it fair to say that Ms Gillard knew it was a sham?' Ralph Blewitt said: 'I do not know if she knew.' So Blewitt blew it. He has blown the lid right off this complete fabrication of a smear campaign against the Prime Minister. We can see it for the pathetic muckraking campaign it has been. It has come to its end today. The only person who did actually know was Bruce Wilson and he has made it clear that the Prime Minister knew absolutely categorically nothing.

The so-called smoking gun today—on which this last pathetic attack that we saw in question time and before question time from the opposition was based—about the Prime Minister having written a letter to the Western Australian registrar, has been shown to be a total non-event as well. All we have had is an updated interview that actually confirms the Prime Minister's account of events. It backs up everything she has said. This same transcript—and you can read it in the Australian today; not that it would form part of the Australian headlines—records her answering a question from Peter Gordon in this interview, where Gordon asked: 'And so the last you had to do with this association was when you attended to its incorporation?' The Prime Minister said in 1995, 'Yes, that is right.' She has said nothing different in the 17 years since. The work that she did in 1992—more than 20 years ago—stopped at the incorporation of this association. So much for this smear campaign. So much for the Leader of the Opposition saying to the people of Australia this morning that the Prime Minister had committed a crime when she was in legal practice.

The Leader of the Opposition was given his opportunity; he was given his 15 minutes to substantiate that allegation and he came up with nothing. He rambled on with smear and innuendo. After nine minutes he could not even go past that. He had to resort to a more generalised attack to do with unions generally on the government. That is how pathetic this Leader of the Opposition has shown himself to be. Making totally unsubstantiated allegations, handcuffed as he is to the smear and the filth. That is all he knows. It is not befitting an alternative Prime Minister. Let us talk about what is 'becoming'—that was the Leader of the Opposition's word. He could not substantiate his allegation this morning that the Prime Minister had committed a crime. He squibbed it. He went only to that there had been, he alleged, 'conduct unbecoming' a Prime Minister. What we have seen has been conduct disgraceful and unbecoming of someone who is holding himself up as an alternative Prime Minister in this country. It is an example of rash overreach, disgraceful behaviour which demonstrates loudly and clearly the complete unsuitability of this man to lead our country. The only dignified thing for this opposition is to drop the charade.
Mr Hunt: On a point of order, there are certain provisions about relevance within the matter of public importance, which I do not believe are being adhered to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): The member for Flinders makes a valid point. I think we will find it has been a wide-ranging contribution from the member for Isaacs but I would bring him back to the question before the chamber, which is: the failure of the government to provide a plan for a stronger Australia.

Mr DREYFUS: The Prime Minister has been crystal clear that if there are any credible allegations she will answer them. There are not any, and we should move on. That is what Australians want. For a stronger Australia, we could get away from the politics of smear. We could get back to talking about policy. We are proud of the policies we have introduced because, unlike those opposite, we know what we stand for: we stand for fairness; we stand for opportunity; we stand for dignity at work; we stand for providing support to those who need it most; we stand for pricing carbon, doing our part in tackling the problem of climate change; we stand for investing in schools, in universities and in TAFEs; and we stand for supporting the economy in the interests of working people. We have done a lot the nation can be proud of over the last five years. We will continue to work in the best interests of our nation.

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of The Nationals) (15:57): This week marks five years since Labor was elected to office. It was just five years ago that Australians were so confident in the strength of our national economy, so confident about the sustainability of the improvement in their lifestyle, so convinced about the resilience of our nation that they thought they could take the risk on a Labor government. What has this five years delivered to Australians? What has this five years done to our country?

Labor has presided over massive increases in people's living costs, including electricity price rises of 89 per cent. They misled the Australian people by introducing the world's biggest carbon tax. They did not tell the truth. They introduced the world's biggest carbon tax after saying it would not happen. They turned $70 billion in net assets into $150 billion in net debt. They have run up the four biggest deficits in the Australia's history following on from the Howard government's four biggest surpluses. They have overseen unprecedented waste with overpriced school halls, dangerous roof insulation and an overpriced and undelivered NBN. They have weakened our borders, with 500 boats arriving carrying a total of 30,000 illegal arrivals. They allowed faceless men to remove a Prime Minister elected by the people and in doing so ensure ongoing division and dysfunction. They have overseen a marked fall in Australian productivity and they have crippled small business with their excessive regulations and cost increases. They stood by the member for Dobell and the member for Fisher when they were mired in scandal. Now they stand by a Prime Minister whose murky past is casting a shadow over the high office of prime ministership.

They identify as a government with the reality that they are a wholly owned subsidiary of the union movement. So they are caught up with the scandals of the union movement. They are caught up with the deceit and the dishonesty, with the slush funds and with the misuse of workers' money. They are caught up with it—the sleaze. They grew up with it—they are mostly members of the trade union movement. They are a part of this. They cannot separate themselves from their past. They cannot look to the future with
cleanliness and honesty while this stain remains over their past record and their past performance. Yet they are not prepared to clean it up. They are not prepared to do the things which are necessary to have a trade union movement which genuinely looks after the interests of workers, which is out there defending the interests of their members and is not run by people just seeking to feather their own lifestyles through corrupt use of union members' money.

This is the Labor Party which is governing Australia this day. It is a government which has taken our once proud economy into a state of near despair, a government which has wasted the hard-earned money of the Australian people—the taxes which have been spent on frivolous and often ill-thought-out proposals. They have overseen unprecedented waste. Their deficits contrast starkly with the surpluses they inherited.

Labor has shown that it is completely unable to manage an economy. It is completely unable to balance the budget—and it is not going to get any better. Labor has not yet even acknowledged that they have been ineffective in managing the economy. They think debt is okay. They think it is all right to keep borrowing to cover their past mistakes. And they are not prepared to clean up their own den. They are not prepared to clean up dishonesty in the trade union movement.

The coalition's message to the people of Australia is that there is a better way. We can end the spin, the lies and broken promises; we can cut the waste; and we can stop the boats. Now, more than ever, Australia needs a steady hand at the wheel. Our economy, our businesses and our families alike crave certainty—so they can make decisions which will not be trumped by a government which lurches from crisis to disaster. They need a government they can rely on, who they can trust, whose word is their bond. Instability at the top and a crisis of confidence in the Prime Minister's decision-making come at a precarious time for all businesses—big and small and across all sectors.

There is simply no excuse for five successive deficits, four of them the biggest deficits in Australian history. There is no excuse for turning $70 billion in net assets into nearly $150 billion in net debt. Labor say that it does not matter, but it has to be paid back. Australians are already feeling the impact of paying the interest on Labor's debt. It will continue to get worse—$12 billion in this budget. Australian people this year will pay at least five times more in interest than will be spent on roads and rail. If we did not have this interest bill, we could afford a national disability insurance scheme.

We have seen the hypocrisy today of Labor introducing NDIS legislation, giving hope to people with disabilities, but not owning up to the fact that they have no money to pay for it. The money that could have been spent on a national disability insurance scheme is being spent on paying the interest on their past debt, on their past waste. We could have had the money for education reform, but it is not there because it is being spent on interest on Labor's debt. They have no idea about managing the economy.

There is no excuse for Labor's carbon tax deceit, its mining tax farce and the way it shamelessly tried to cook the books for this year's surplus. In a real alarm bell to the Australian people, three-quarters of this miserable surplus is going to be swept out of the bank accounts of ordinary Australians and superannuation funds. Any money in accounts which have been dormant for a short period of time will be swept up and counted as Labor's surplus in this year's budget—swept out of the private bank.
accounts of ordinary Australians. This is dishonest budgeting.

In the just released MYEFO statement, the government are not owning up to the education cuts and the health cuts. They are keen to criticise the states for what they have had to do to try and balance the budgets left to them by previous Labor state governments. But they are not owning up to the fact that one of the real problems the states now have with their health expenditure is that the federal Labor government has cut its own expenditure on health. Any cuts in spending on hospitals are directly attributable to this government’s cuts.

This is a government which is out of control and unable to control its own expenditure. The government has been playing a game of economic dodgem cars, creating carnage and happily crashing the hopes and dreams of working Australians. Every dollar that Australia is in deficit and borrowing will have to be paid back by future generations.

We have to do better. We have to start playing to our strengths. This government has never found a problem it could not make worse. We have dropped 10 places on international competitiveness, from fifth to 15th, in just two years. Is it any coincidence that that is the amount of time the current Prime Minister has been in the Lodge? There are no excuses and it is time we had a better government.

There is a better way. Yesterday, I had the great privilege of introducing the Leader of the Opposition at the launch of a document which sets a new tone for Australia. There are many people in the opposition who have had experience in government. We know how to do it better. Those days of growth and prosperity did not come about by luck. We can, with persistence and determination, get back to that era. We want to chart a new course for Australia.

The Leader of the Opposition has been focused and effective in opposition. But, behind the scenes, we have been working through the development of substantial policies, substantial policies which, in many instances, have already been foreshadowed to the Australian people—although they have received little media attention. The reality is that there is a cohesive plan and the Leader of the Opposition has spoken about that today. Our plan is ambitious but it is also achievable. We will play to Australia’s strengths and help again build a prosperous future. Roll on, 2013; roll on, next election. (Time expired)

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:07): When I saw today that the matter of public importance was ‘the failure of the government to provide a plan for a stronger Australia’ I laughed out loud. It implies that those opposite have a plan for Australia. That would mean that they had policy, because if you have a plan you have to have a policy. We have seen all this year, and particularly in the last week, just one big policy vacuum. If those opposite are not terrifying the bejesus out of Australians, particularly those in Whyalla, they are trawling for dirt. They are completely devoid of policy and I find this MPI completely laughable.

Contrast that vacuum with what this government has done for the country so far and its strong record in strengthening the Australian economy, strengthening education, strengthening health, strengthening the environment, strengthening infrastructure and strengthening social housing, and making Australia a better and fairer society as a result. The OECD has just released its economic outlook and yet again it highlights the resilience of the Australian
economy. While the rest of the world is beset with high unemployment and low growth, our economic plan has seen this country thrive in the face of a very challenging global environment. First we had the IMF saying, and now the OECD agreeing, that our economy will outperform every single major advanced economy and the OECD as a whole over the next two years. As the world watches our economic plans with envy, the forecasts are for growth of 3.7 per cent this year, three per cent in 2013 and 3.2 per cent in 2014. These forecasts are completely consistent with our mid-year economic and fiscal outlook.

That is just one element of our achievement. There are also our plans for productivity, for the nation's education system and for the nation's growth, and that growth is best represented in the Asian century white paper that we recently released. It outlines our vision for what we see as our role in Asia and maximising opportunities for all Australians to benefit from the opportunities that exist in an Asian century. Those opportunities mean that we need to become more Asia literate, that students need to gain not just an Asian language but also an understanding of what Asia is all about. I know from my time in India that understanding Hindi was just one part of understanding what India was all about. It was being immersed in the culture and completely understanding it, and living and breathing it every day, that gave me the chance to gain a greater appreciation of India.

So, we have that strong economic record. In addition, we have an incredibly strong track record on education. We have doubled the investment in education since we have been in government and the historic education bill that was released this week, the first of its kind to look at schools funding in 40 years, will take us that next step. We will do that through national plans and a range of other measures, and I am very much looking forward to hearing about the negotiations on that with the states and territories and Catholic and independent schools over the course of 2013. As I said, to date we have made record investment in education, and record investment in apprenticeships. We have record numbers of apprentices coming on line. The trades and vocational area has been an area of neglect for many years and it is only Labor that has taken this on to address the significant skills shortage we have in many trade sectors in this country.

We have a well-recognised and world-class record on the environment. We have introduced the carbon price, and we had a very difficult first six months of this year doing that but we did it. That was a major achievement for the environment. In addition, we have the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, and the states have been grappling with this issue for the last 110 years, since Federation. Now, finally, a historic plan has been achieved.

We have a strong track record on health. We have funding for more doctors and nurses, more beds, and particularly important for my own electorate are the GP superclinics. We have made historic investment in infrastructure to build productivity, historic investment in social housing and a strong record on fairness, particularly with the introduction of the NDIS legislation this morning and the Indigenous bills this week.

I want to turn to Canberra because the government has a strong track record not only in terms of the nation but also in terms of investing in Canberra. One of my great loves is education, and I will highlight a few of the investments we have made since Labor has been in power. Under the Building
the Education Revolution program, Richardson Primary School has received $2.1 million; St Francis of Assisi, $3.1 million; St Thomas the Apostle, $2.4 million; Galilee School, which looks after high risk kids—I am going to their graduation in the next week or so—$346,00; the Woden School, $1.1 million; Malkara School, $945,000; Canberra Montessori School, $942,000; Canberra Girls Grammar School, $3.2 million; the Islamic School of Canberra, $55,000; and Yarralumla Primary School, $2.2 million. They are just some of the investments we have made right across Canberra in education. We have also made an investment of $5.7 million for a trade training centre for a number of the Catholic schools around Canberra, and also $8.1 million for a trade training centre in the college system in Tuggeranong.

In addition to that we have made significant investment in infrastructure—$18.5 million to upgrade and duplicate the Monaro Highway—finally, after 40 years, patient Canberrans and New South Welshmen now have a completely duplicated Monaro Highway. We are providing $144 million for the Majura Parkway, again a historic project, finally linking the north and south of Canberra. There is $409,000 for black spots, with $3.6 million having gone towards fixing black spots across Canberra since 2007, and $20 million to help the ACT government maintain and upgrade local roads. That is in addition to our significant investment in funding for our cultural institutions—for the War Memorial, for the National Portrait Gallery, for Parliament House walk, and for our fantastic centenary next year; which I am very much looking forward to. We also have the National Arboretum and the lights at Manuka oval. The list is endless.

Before I close, I want to acknowledge some of the people that have helped me during the year to implement Labor's agenda to make both Australia and Canberra a stronger and a better place. I particularly want to thank my staff. I would like to thank my electorate office staff: Eva Cawthorne, Julie Burns and Jim Mallett—thank you for managing what is about the largest electorate in Australia by population. I would particularly like to thank Tom and Jack, Eva's children, who are incredibly patient with their mum, who often has to work long hours. I would also like to thank those who work for me during the year—that is, Celia Mallett, Marc Emerson and Claire Johnston. I would also like to thank John Hannoush, who works in my Parliament House office on all of my committee work, and also my wonderful media adviser, Simon Tatz.

There are a number of volunteers I would like to thank too, and also people who have worked in a part-time capacity: Caitlin Delbridge, Jeeven Nadanakumar, Edward Burns, Alice Wade, Anna Langdon, Sandy Thomas, Katie Gilette, Brendan Morrison, Stephanie Jones and her carer Karen, Rob Travellion, Natalie Shephard and Sue Robinson. I would also like to thank the sub-branches: Canberra South, Telopea, North Woden, South Woden, Curtin, Tuggeranong, Lanyon, Western Creek and also the new Brindabella daytime branch, which has provided me tremendous support throughout the year. A number of the members have also volunteered on my mobile offices throughout the year. Also I would like to thank my past FEC team committee and the new FEC team. This is a complete nonsense of a motion. As I said, I laughed out loud when I read it. If you have a plan then you need policy, and that is completely devoid in the opposition.
PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

Valedictory

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (16:17): By indulgence—We are now commencing that section of business at the end of the parliamentary sitting which is Christmas valedictories. I know, to many people who are listening, this will seem quite a strange custom because we are here still in November and talking about Christmas valedictories. I do want to assure those who are listening that does not mean that their members of parliament, or their government, is ceasing to work on this day. What is happening on this day is that it is our last parliamentary day. For myself, I have a lot to do before the end of the year and I am raring to get into doing it, particularly some very big work that we have to do at the forthcoming Council of Australian Governments meeting.

For members of parliament and senators who are returning to their home communities, they have big work programs too. This is the time of year, particular, that people attend a lot of end-of-year events at local schools and enjoy the opportunity to do that very much. But this is also the time where we do say thank you to those who make parliament possible for us, and reflect on the year that has been—the year 2012. In so doing, I do want to mark that the final day of House sitting is actually on a significant Australian anniversary. It was 60 years ago today that Gough Whitlam won the by-election which bought him to this House. Our thoughts are with him this year and on this anniversary. I recall particularly the example he has given us in the House of a parliamentary career dedicated to the highest of purposes: the public good. We will, as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations with China in the weeks to come, have an opportunity to reflect on his remarkable legacy to the nation in opening us up to our world, and particularly to China.

As we reflect on the year that was, this was a year of some happy days. Every Australian who takes even the smallest interest in diplomacy felt pride in our international status when we were elected to the United Nations Security Council. It was a good day to be an Australian. But good days in Australia often revolve around sport more than they do around diplomacy, if the truth is told. It was a year of Australian achievements in sport, too. Sydney won the Australian Rules Grand Final and Melbourne won the Rugby League Grand Final, and the world has changed. Unfortunately, the Bulldogs were not there in the AFL Grand Final.

Dr Emerson: Or in the league grand final.

Ms GILLARD: Right, we are now getting commentary on everybody's Bulldogs. Queensland won the Sheffield Shield and the A-League—with Brisbane—and the State of Origin series, again—so not everything has changed. The achievements of our athletes were simply olympic. We cheered for seven superb Olympic gold medals for our athletes at the track, the velodrome, in kayaking and sailing and, of course, in the pool. We were delighted by the world-beating performances of our Paralympians. We were proud of all who represented us in two sets of great games: the Olympics and the Paralympics.

This has been a year of some historic events: the Diamond Jubilee of the Queen of Australia. I was able to pass on the nation's congratulations through her Majesty's son, Prince Charles, who visited us so recently. We saw the re-election of an American President, and I was able to pass on the nation's congratulations to him in person this
month. We welcomed the Chinese leadership transition, which saw General Secretary Xi Jinping rise to lead our largest trading partner.

It was a year with some sad days too. Some remarkable Australians died this year. Murray Rose, who swam like a fish; and Jimmy Little, who sang like a bird. Sir Zelman Cowen, who spoke of a touch of healing. Robert Hughes, who showed us the shock of the new. Bryce Courtenay, who taught us the power of one. We farewelled the indomitable Jim Stynes and the incomparable Margaret Whitlam. We have not forgotten Pete Veness, just as it is hard to believe that it has been five years without Matt Price. Also, my family and I were so moved by the kindness of so many members of the House and the Australian people on our own loss.

We remembered friends and members of the House who died—Joe Riordan, Frank Walker, Lionel Bowen, Gordon Bilney and Senator Douglas Barr Scott. The loss of Senator Judith Adams is still keenly felt by her many friends in this place.

Seven Australians died for us in Afghanistan this year. The parliament has honoured each of them as we should. As the year ends, we will remember them. We will think of their families facing the toughest Christmas of their lives. We will care for their 32 mates wounded in service in Afghanistan this year.

We had the opportunity, too, to acknowledge the amazing courage of Corporal Daniel Keighran that saw him awarded the Victoria Cross. Then, of course, Dan amazed us again with his grace and humility having seen that huge honour awarded. We have a good thought for their mates still serving us overseas in Afghanistan and around the world.

Coming closer to this parliamentary chamber, there are many people that I acknowledge and to thank. To the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition generally: I hope that you enjoy some rest and respite over Christmas with their families. To you, Speaker Anna: my sincere congratulations, and on some days I feel like I should be offering words of apology. To your predecessor, Mr Slipper: thank you for your service as Speaker as well during the course of the year. Thanks to the Deputy Speaker and the panel and everybody who works so hard, sitting in that chair to keep the business of parliament turning through.

To Henry Thomson, my department's parliamentary liaison officer, and his team: thank you very much, and thank you very much for making sure that I listed everybody in these remarks, including them—that was very clever—but they do a great job. To the Clerk and Deputy Clerk: thank you very much for everything you do for both sides of parliament and for the parliament generally to keep the business of the parliament on track here in the House of Representatives. To the Serjeant-at-Arms, to the attendants, to the guides and to all those who reach out to people in the parliament and help make it work: thank you very much for your special efforts.

To the Parliamentary Library, Hansard staff, the Table Office, the Parliamentary Relations Office, to those who look after our magnificent lawns and gardens, to those who do the cooking, to those who operate the switchboard, the computers, security and everyone else who makes sure that parliament works: we thank you. We thank, too, our parliamentary cleaners—and if I could sneak in just a little reference to my own cleaners, to Anna and Louisa who come and clean my office, they lift my spirits on a lot of mornings. To Aussies, thank you for the coffee—I am still very reliant on it—it is.
an institution. Don Watson called it the only place of communion in the building, and he might be right about that.

To the child carers, they are doing some of the most important work that gets done under this roof: thank you for your efforts. To the staff of HRG who diligently got people where they needed to be, sometimes under extraordinary pressure: thank you for your efforts. To COMCAR drivers who assist us in getting us where we need to get to: thank you very much for your ongoing courtesy and support. To broadcasting staff, I do not know that Australians are always grateful for the work you do, seeing some of the images of parliament on your TV screens, but you do your best to faithfully record parliamentary proceedings out in the wider world, and we thank you for that. To the press gallery, I will host a function for them tonight, and I think what I have to say is probably best reserved for off the record.

To my Deputy Prime Minister, the Treasurer, thank you for being the guardian of our budget, making sure that all of our budget works for us. Thank you for being acknowledged around the world as a great Treasurer, for your stewardship of our national economy, and also for being a guardian of Labor values and Labor purpose. Thank you very much.

To the Leader of the House—Albo—our minister for fighting Tories and for doing so much more: thank you very much for everything you have done to contribute to the successful work of the parliament this year. I think many members are aware—certainly on our side of the parliament—of the extraordinary lengths that you go to.

To the Senate leadership team, to Senators Evans and Conroy—possibly a study in contrasts—they are a great Senate leadership team—and Senator Evans has been on a tremendous health kick, as people would have seen, so he has not only done well as a Senate leader this year but he is also a far more svelte human being and a healthier human being for it. I thank them for their efforts and for their occasional reminders about how long they have been dealing with difficulties arising from not having the numbers in that chamber—they have reminded us of some of those things from time to time—my thanks.

To my cabinet, my ministry and parliamentary secretaries, time does not permit me to name them individually but they are a remarkable team. I thank them for their extraordinary efforts. They are always full of enthusiasm and full of ideas. I always go out of my way to listen to my colleagues and to treat their ideas with respect. I thank them for being so supportive and for their enthusiasm and Labor faith.

I thank the team of whips here and in the Senate. They do remarkably hard work. I thank them for their efforts. I say generally to my parliamentary colleagues, to all of them, whatever office they serve, to the backbench here and the backbench in the Senate: we have emerged from 2012 strong and as a political party of purpose. No-one can leave 2012 doubting the courage of the Labor Party to come to this parliament and get the big things done. I am tremendously proud of you and the way that you have worked under some extraordinary pressures.

To the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Dr Watt: in the tradition of frank and fearless advice, Ian is amongst the best. Thank you to him and to all at PM&C for their support of me. I am very well served by my department and very grateful for it.

To the entire Australian Public Service, I pass onto you the thanks of your ministers. Thank you for what you do to support the
agenda of government and to serve your fellow Australians. Too often, public service is denigrated in our society; this is a moment to applaud it. Thank you for what you do.

To George Wright, the ALP organisation, staff and volunteers and our true believers in their many thousands, and the number is growing—thank you for our new true believers as well—I know how hard you work and I know you will be out there for us in 2013 as we move finally to an election phase.

To the staff who work with Labor MPs and senators, whether as staff in electorate offices or as staff in ministerial offices, thank you very much for your efforts. There has been some public commentary on political staff this year, but I want our staff to understand my view about them and my view about what they do. To a person, they are people who could ply a more profitable trade in the private sector. They choose instead to dedicate their lives to the future of our nation, and that is to be applauded. Thanks to you for what you do for Labor and for our country.

I particularly want to acknowledge Jim Chalmers—Dr James Chalmers, to use the full name and official terminology—who departs the government after years of service. He has been a remarkable contributor to his party and to the work of this government, and I expect that in the years to come he will continue to be a remarkable contributor to our nation.

To my chief of staff, Ben Hubbard, all of my staff in the Prime Minister's office, my electorate staff—some of whom have been with me since the very start of this journey when I was first elected in 1998—thank you very much for everything you do.

To my branch members and volunteers, I wish that I could be with you for more time than I am able to be, but thank you for keeping the faith locally and doing all your hard work.

To my speech writers—they have deliberately inserted a little reference to themselves in these notes!—I think it is probably worth saying they have got one of the less enviable jobs in Australian public life; people are always very, very keen to give them a character assessment along the way. I thank them for their hard work too.

To my friends from the Australian Federal Police, we have survived another year together, sometimes in more difficult circumstances than prime ministers and AFP details have faced in the past. I thank them very much for their efforts.

Finally, to my own family—to my partner, Tim, to my family in Adelaide—I am looking forward to spending some time together. We will make sure that we spend some time in Adelaide over the Christmas break and make sure that we are there together for what will be a different Christmas for us and our family.

Speaker, in a few weeks when the working year ends, I wish everybody a time of rest and recovery. I will be doing that. I know those around the parliament will be doing that. And then we will be back, ready to go, full of energy in 2013, and I am really looking forward to the contest to come. Thank you.

**Government members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr Abbott** (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (16:33): Yes, 2012 has been an interesting year. Every year is an interesting year, but 2012 has had its moments. We had a change of government in Queensland. We had a change of leadership in China. We had the 10th anniversary of the Bali bombings. That was a
terrible stain, but so many people are trying to bring healing even from that. We had tragedy but progress in Afghanistan. Of course, just in the last few days we had the completion of the Howard-Anderson-Turnbull Murray-Darling plan, which reflects well on many people in this parliament, although I do acknowledge the deep concerns over the implementation of the plan which are held by many people in the basin communities.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for the difficult task that you perform well. I thank the clerks for their guardianship of the standards of the parliament; the PLO for the work they do with all members; the Library for making us seem more knowledgeable and wise than we often really are; the attendants, who keep the place running smoothly; the guides, who introduce this building to the public; the drivers, who get us to places on time; and the cleaners, who have had a lot of work to do this week, in particular. My own cleaners, Olga and Maria, deserve a special mention.

And, of course, I thank my colleagues. I am incredibly well served by my senior colleagues: Warren Truss, the Leader of the National Party; Julie Bishop, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition; Christopher Pyne, the Manager of Opposition Business; and Joe Hockey, the shadow Treasurer. All of them have shown tremendous team spirit; all of them have had excellent years. I acknowledge my staff, led by Peta Credlin, my strong right hand.

I acknowledge and honour my family. All of us acknowledge our families; we could not be here but for their patience, forbearance and tolerance. They are the people who suffer through our public lives and we must remember them at this time and perhaps resolve to be better to them next year—although I doubt that we will be, given the burdens and demands that will fall upon us in an election year.

We do not know when an election will be, but this may well be the last opportunity to provide a valedictory before then, so I should note now that some distinguished members of my team will not be recontesting the next election: Alby Schultz, Jo Gash, Judi Moylan, Mal Washer, Sue Boyce and Ron Boswell. I see Russell Broadbent is on the list—I didn't know Russell was retiring. I don't think he is—I think I have been misinformed! What gremlin is in our system? And he should not retire—we need a strong and conscience-driven voice in the parliament and inside the coalition.

Mr Schultz: I rescind my resignation!

Mr ABBOTT: Well said, Alby!

Finally, this has been a year of ups and downs. It has been a year of ups and downs for most Australians. I am sure it has been a year of ups and downs for both sides of this parliament; 2012 has had its exhilarations and its frustrations. We must hope that 2013 will be a better year, because we always hope that every year will be better than its predecessor. I am sure that in one respect at least 2013 will be a better year than 2012—it will be an election year. None of us are in any way trying to avoid that. For all of us on this side, it could not come quick enough. We look forward to it very much.

COMMITTEES
Membership

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (16:38): by leave—I move:

That:

(1) Mr Wyatt be appointed a supplementary member of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs for
the purposes of the committee’s inquiry into the Native Title Amendment Bill 2012;

(2) Mr Ramsey be appointed a supplementary member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Resources, Fisheries and Forestry for the purpose of the committee’s inquiry into the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment Bill 2012;

(3) Mr Hawke be appointed a supplementary member of the Standing Committee on Education and Employment for the purpose of the committee’s inquiry into the Australian Education Bill 2012; and

(4) Mr Tehan be appointed a supplementary member of the Standing Committee on Education and Employment for the purpose of the committee’s inquiry into the Fair Work Amendment (Tackling Job Insecurity) Bill 2012.

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (16:39): I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the private Members’ business notices, by the Member for Riverina and the Member for Kennedy, relating to the disallowance of the Basin Plan made under the Water Act 2007 and presented to the House on 26 November 2012, being called on immediately and dealt with together, with separate questions being put on each.

Question agreed to.

MOTIONS

Murray-Darling Basin Plan Disallowance

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina) (16:40): I move:

That the Basin Plan made under the Water Act 2007 and presented to the House on 26 November 2012, be disallowed.

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan has generated a wealth of fear and uncertainty for regional communities and cost good, hardworking country people a wealth of money. An attack on the nation's farmers is, in fact, an attack on the nation itself. This is an assault on regional Australia.

The Water Act was legislated in 2007 by the coalition government. The fact the Commonwealth was able to gain carriage of the water issue, overriding the states in spite of the Constitution, was made possible only via international treaties. Because management of water is constitutionally the responsibility of the states, the Commonwealth government invoked several international environmental treaties, particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, done at Ramsar, Iran, on 2 February 1971.

The Water Act therefore became an environmental act. The Solicitor-General of Australia gave advice, upon request, to the government that:

Neither the Convention on Biological Diversity nor the Ramsar Convention require that the Parties disregard economic and social considerations in giving effect to the environmental obligations. Both Conventions establish a framework in which environmental objectives have primacy but the implementation of environmental objectives allows consideration of social and economic factors.

As the New South Wales Irrigators’ Council chief executive officer Andrew Gregson said only last week, 'Green idealism will neither feed nor clothe people.' To wrest power from the states, the Commonwealth resorted to an obscure international environmental convention.

To avoid a constitutional crisis, the Commonwealth had to build the Water Act around this fig-leaf.
That was the view of leading Harvard University water expert John Briscoe, who addressed a Senate inquiry last year. He said this process 'would not work and could not work'.

Professor Briscoe, who was senior water adviser at the World Bank, absolutely nailed it when he said that the Water Act placed extraordinary faith in the views of scientists. The act stipulated that 'science will determine what the environment needs' and that the task for government, including the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, is then just to 'do what science tells it to do', Professor Briscoe said. This decision-making process effectively excludes asking the thousands of people living and working in the basin—those to be most affected by the new Basin Plan—to use their knowledge and expertise to review and evaluate the science, he asserted. Never a truer word was said. He said that it was the job of science to map out options, indicating clearly the enormous uncertainties which underlie any scenario linking water and environmental outcomes. But it was up to government to decide the necessary trade-offs and value judgments and then to take responsibility for its decisions and to make those decisions transparent to the public.

In his advisory role on the Basin Plan, Professor Briscoe said:

In all of my years of public service, often in very sensitive environments, I had never been subject to such an elaborate “confidentiality” process as that embodied in the preparation of the Guide to the Basin Plan.

He said that time and again he was told by many professionals, community leaders, farmers and state politicians who had made Australia the widely acknowledged world leader in arid zone water management that they were excluded from the process of developing the Basin Plan.

On 14 October 2010, just six days after the original guide to the draft to the Basin Plan was made public, more than 7,000 people descended on the Yoogali Club at Griffith to voice their objection. I say 'objection', singular, because they spoke as one. They were united, and people power won that day. The Labor government took notice—it had to; it was forced to—and tasked the new House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia with conducting an exhaustive inquiry into the impact of the guide.

Another 1,000 people from Griffith and district fronted to the committee's hearing on 25 January 2011. Among them was Coleambally Irrigation Cooperative Chief Executive Officer John Culleton, who poignantly quoted a local farmer who said: 'I'm not here to survive; I came here 30 years ago to thrive.'

Then, on 15 December last year, the Leader of the Opposition and the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities—a title which is, I might add, a bit incongruous with this bad Basin Plan—were there when as many as 12,000 converged on Yoogali in another defiant show of solidarity against the ill-conceived draft plan.

Nearly a year on, and the MDBA still has not explained how it intends to act to get the water to the 2,442 icon sites it listed. We are still yet to see an environmental watering plan for the 'key environmental assets', what the precise socioeconomic impact on towns will be, where the water will come from and the actualcostings about where this money will come from.

Labor's record on saving water through infrastructure is atrocious and it cannot be trusted. As at the end of May 2012, the government had spent just 15 per cent of the $4.6 billion allocated towards projects to
deliver water into the basin. This included funding just 12 per cent of projects in New South Wales—$159 million of $1.35 billion; just 16 per cent of projects in Victoria—$171 million of $1.059 billion; just 26 per cent of projects in Queensland—$21 million of $81 million; and 40 per cent of projects in South Australia—$162 million of $420 million. For every one litre this government has saved through infrastructure, it has bought back five litres. This is a dreadful indictment. The government has spent just $500 million on infrastructure projects, yet it has spent almost $2 billion on buybacks.

If the government were serious, it would genuinely look at building more dams. That would actually increase the amount of food we produce and generate the wealth we need to pay back the debt Labor has accumulated. But, just like the 26 October 2012 'I saved the ailing Murray' pledge by the Prime Minister at Goolwa, making a $1.77 billion unfunded announcement of an extra 450 billion litres for South Australia, Labor makes a grand announcement and then does nothing on delivery.

In the 2007 election, Labor promised to 're-engineer' the Menindee Lakes, with a $400 million promise. Indeed, it was top of its list of Murray-Darling projects. Five years later, and Labor has spent just $21 million on Menindee and not a single drop of water has been saved. Why doesn't Labor actually deliver on the promises it has made before it goes about making new ones? There remains almost $4 billion yet to be spent on infrastructure works, and now another $1.77 billion has been ratified in this House, after considerable debate just last night.

The Goolwa announcement was just another example of Labor making promises with money it does not have and for which it will not be accountable. It is just piling up the liabilities for future governments. The 2.1 million people in the basin, which supplies around 40 per cent of Australia's food, deserve better. They deserve a future, just like all Australians. My motion to disallow the Basin Plan will be seconded by the member for Murray, who, like me, has an electorate which stands to significantly lose through poor water policy. And this is happening in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area's centenary and the Australian Year of the Farmer.

Just last week Elizabeth Minehan complained to me that the value of her Grimison Avenue, Griffith, home had decreased by $75,000 and now she could not sell. She blamed the Basin Plan. Let us never forget, farmers are paid for their water but businesses in the regional cities and towns which rely on agricultural and irrigation production to keep their economies turning do not receive compensation and they suffer considerable downturn when productive water goes out of a district.

Since our disallowance motion was lodged, at 10.28 on Monday night, the opposition leader has made his strongest statement yet on water, saying a future coalition government would cap buyback at 1,500 gigalitres, meaning, with water already recovered, there would be only 249 gigalitres left to purchase basin wide. The Nationals' New South Wales Minister for Primary Industries yesterday announced a limit on buybacks at three per cent per valley, per decade, from 15 January 2013. Tony Abbott's and Katrina Hodgkinson's announcements this week are welcomed. So too is the assurance given to me yesterday by the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government that the taxation hindrance holding up a funding offer to Murrumbidgee Irrigation Ltd of nearly $150 million to implement grant activities in return for 1,534 megalitres of general security, 8,352 megalitres of high
security and 23,110 megalitres of conveyance water entitlements to the Commonwealth, a commitment made in February 2011, would be fixed.

Each and every member of this House was entrusted by their community to represent their interests. Above and beyond all else, the people of our electorates expect us to be their voice in this place. Like all members on all sides in this House, I believe this is a very grave responsibility which I cannot—and do not—take lightly. Every member will appreciate the difficulty which I face today in moving this motion. It is not something that I relish nor something I take joy in doing. I move this motion because I cannot, in good faith, cast a vote in favour of a move which will bring about severe social and economic consequences for my community.

When severe social and economic consequences are threatened through significant change in the automotive industry in South Australia, the people of Wakefield expect their member to represent their interests. When job losses hit Canberra as a result of the federal budget, the voters here expect their members, for Canberra and Fraser, to voice their concerns. In exactly the same manner, my constituents expect me—above and beyond all else—to represent their interests on this national stage.

The Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area—the heart of my electorate—is one of the most productive regions of Australia. The annual value of our farm-gate productions is in excess of half a billion dollars each and every year. This is greatly multiplied with a range of value-add processing. The winemakers' association estimates more than $2 billion of regional investment has been injected into our region in wine processing alone. We are home to the SunRice processing facilities, which enable millions around the globe to be fed. We produce chicken meat, cattle, wine, citrus, rice, cotton, nuts, vegetables, cereals—the list goes on and on. And we are highly dependent on water.

My electorate is an electorate built on irrigation. My community is a community built on irrigation. The people who entrusted me to represent them are reliant on irrigation. It is simply not possible for me to support, encourage or allow to pass without comment a Basin Plan which will so materially affect the people who placed their trust in me. This plan says that my electorate must have hundreds of billions of litres of its lifeblood taken away from it. I cannot tell you how many hundreds of billions of litres, because this plan does not specify that. It merely says that my electorate must suffer an indeterminate amount of pain. This plan says that 320 billion litres of water must come directly from my electorate, plus some share of a further 971 billion litres that is to be 'shared' amongst the southern basin. Around 50 per cent of that shared volume is to come from New South Wales, so I can only assume that around half of that will come from my electorate. That is another 243 billion litres of water.

That is 563 billion litres of social and economic productivity. A billion litres is one gigalitre. According to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, each gigalitre of water produces around $770,000 in gross value of production. That same gigalitre provides around seven jobs. We are talking about 563 of those gigalitres. Let me put that into a context that every member of this House will understand. We are talking about just under 4,000 jobs. How many members in this chamber would stay silent when that sort of direct impact was being thrust upon the people who trust them to speak up? I would like to think not one of us—and certainly not me.
I recognise quite clearly that I have overstated the impact here, because not all of those gigalitres will be simply stripped from production. Some of them will be obtained via infrastructure, but not enough. Too many will come from buybacks, which are nothing short of economic vandalism, a simple ripping out of the economic capacity of communities.

This plan should have been sensible about how it obtained water. It should have focused on maintaining the productivity of our regions. It should have been about the balance between production of food and fibre and ensuring the sustainability of the environment. But it is not. It needed to have a cap on buybacks. It does not.

The failure of the minister to pay heed to social and economic devastation leaves me with no choice but to disapprove of this plan. The minister may believe that the impacts are far from his inner-Sydney electorate. They are not distant to me. They are not distant to my electorate.

Today I do what any member of this chamber should do: I stand up for the people of Riverina, who put their trust in me. I speak not with my voice but with theirs. Their voice is clear. It is loud and it is proud. It says to the Australian parliament and the people of this land that they will not suffer this indignity, this great affront to their resourcefulness and their productivity. They say no to this Basin Plan. This is why I move this disallowance motion, and I urge others to join me for the sake of their electorates, their communities and the people they represent.

Finally, I commend Riverina people for their resilience during this difficult time. The Area News editor, Daniel Johns, has led a spirited campaign, Our Water Our Future. Among many who have been strident advocates for common sense are included Griffith Business Chamber president, Paul Pierotti; Murrumbidgee Valley Food and Fibre Association president, Debbie Buller; the state member for Murrumbidgee, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli; Murrumbidgee Irrigation policy and public relations officer and proud Gogeldrie cotton grower, Elizabeth Stott, and her husband, Dallas; and the various mayors of affected towns. There are many, many more. They turned up in their thousands at the many meetings at Griffith.

The minister at the table, the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, knows that. He went to some of those meetings, and I do appreciate the fact that he went there. I do appreciate the fact that he took copious notes. I do not appreciate the Basin Plan he has put before this parliament.

This is one of the last debates of this parliament this year. It is, I would argue, the most important, because water grows food, and food availability and security are the most important economic and moral challenge of our time.

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

Dr STONE (Murray) (16:56): I am very pleased and proud to second the motion to disallow the law that is the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. I rise to speak on behalf of the people of the electorate of Murray, which I represent. As the name implies, this is a region in northern Victoria bordered by the great Murray River. It is not in our nature in Murray to simply look the other way when governments deliberately or knowingly do us wrong or are so incompetent that their actions have the power to literally destroy our environment and our food-growing capacity, which in turn can destroy us as economically independent Australians.
This is not the first time in Murray that we have had to say no to bad government policy. Ironically, it is typically Labor government policy. We have had to say no before to policy that had the potential to destroy us. In 2007, the Bracks Labor government announced that the drought was seriously hurting Melbourne. They had been forced to put restrictions on people watering their lawns and their concrete and washing their cars. Since that government had failed to build an extra dam or put in decent water-recycling works or stormwater harvesting, there was a problem, but they had a great idea: they would push a very big pipeline over the Great Dividing Range and into the Goulburn River at Yea, and then the mighty pumps would be turned on and they would suck up 74 gigalitres a year out of the irrigators' resource. Bear in mind that this was in the middle of the worst drought on record, and the irrigators at the time were on less than 30 per cent allocation and many of them on zero allocation. But we were told that that was not really a problem, since a total of 220 gigalitres a year would be saved in the Goulburn-Murray irrigation area, in particular by changing how the irrigation water was measured and by plastic lining some of the channels.

Of course, this figure of savings was fictitious. It was a nonsense. It was immediately challenged and discredited, but the pipeline was built. There was no business case. There was no public consultation. It was a done deal inflicted on the Goulburn Valley and the people of the electorate of Murray as simply the right thing to do for the people of Melbourne. No-one thought about the food production capacity that was to be lost. No-one thought about the devalued irrigation properties. And certainly no-one from the government seemed particularly concerned that there was no business case to support the project that they intended to build.

A brand new bureaucracy was set up to manage the business of finding these mythical water savings, and it had a billion-dollar budget to do it. The Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project, as it was called, was subsequently abolished by the incoming coalition Baillieu government, and the tasks of the NVIRP were rolled into the Goulburn-Murray Water authority. The Baillieu government was responding to the damning ombudsman's report that identified NVIRP's corrupted behaviour, its unprofessional behaviour, its inefficiencies, its probity issues, its failure to consult properly, failures to properly tender, failures to protect farmers' private interests, insider trading and so on. I recommend that the minister reads the ombudsman's report.

So, yes, we know all about what bad governments can do and how bad plans can damage communities. After an incredible community fight-back we did silence the pumps in the Goulburn River at Yea—in fact, in the middle of the flood. The community fought back on that occasion and we won. So you can imagine why my community is saying to me: 'We can't lie down now. We can't wave this Murray-Darling Basin Plan through and simply hold our breath and hope that the coalition win at the next election so they can put it all right.' Like the member for Riverina, I have to say right now: no, this plan is not sufficient to secure the future of the basin. It does not address the social, economic and environmental outcomes that are needed—and that was not so hard to do.

The communities were insulted by the lack of proper consultation. The communities were insulted when it was implied that no farmers had ever tried before to save water or to improve and innovate on
their own irrigation properties, that somehow they had always been profligate in their water use. They 'wasted' it, we were told. This plan is about politics. It is about South Australia and it is about the Greens. It is about the Greens saying to this Labor government, when they had to find a partner to move from their minority status: 'We want two things out of you. We want a carbon tax and we want a Murray-Darling Basin environmental bucket of water as big as we can possibly get.' Don't worry about the fact that there are no detailed studies and no research about what different icon sites or ecosystems actually need. Don't worry about the fact that we have been putting environmental water down the Murray River, for example, in Barmah-Millewa Forest since 1979—I repeat: 1979. In 1997 the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council allocated an annual 100 gigalitres to the Barmah-Millewa Forest and its magnificent Ramsar listed wetlands, which are mostly in the electorate of Murray.

The Greens would have it that all of the Ramsar listed wetlands and the places of iconic significance are at the bottom of the system, just as you exit to the sea. In fact, there are significant and invaluable environmental resources and assets throughout the basin. But a new water bill that we unfortunately could not stop was introduced last night—probably the last of the collection of mismanaged, rushed in, ad hoc and poorly drafted water bills. It said to us: 'Look, we've got to take another 450 gigalitres to keep the mouth of the Murray open 95 per cent of the time.' Yet the mouth of the Murray was a natural sand-dune landscape and under pre-white-settlement circumstances the river regularly ran dry and those sand dunes were often a barrier between the river and the sea; it was and is a natural occurrence. But the Greens have convinced Labor that it will be a very good thing if they can have another 450 gigalitres on top of the 1,270 gigalitres additionally committed so they can flood the upper reaches of the Murray and Goulburn and other major Murray tributary systems. They know there is a problem, so they have said: 'It's all right. We'll commit $1.77 billion extra of the next government's money into that effort so we can remove the barriers which at the moment inhibit more water going down, without flooding people out, and we'll push that water through to keep the mouth of the Murray open without any actual machinery 95 per cent of the time. And we'll also improve the salt levels of the Lower Lakes.'

A very funny thing happened during the floods just recently, when the biggest flush of fresh Murray water ever surged down the system towards the mouth and the sea. Do you know what happened? Because of the existence of the barrages and all of the other infrastructure—all the works and measures which inhibit the natural and free flowing of water in and out of the lakes and into the Coorong—that huge Murray River freshwater surge actually flowed right on past. So, as I said, the Lower Lakes, down at the bottom of South Australia, did not get much of a freshening or a reduction in their salinity at all—because, you see, it is a sacred cow. We are not allowed to talk about it: 'Don't mention the barrages.' But the realities are that you also have to look at the barrages and the engineering, much of it very, very old now, that have constricted and constrained natural freshwater flows into those Lower Lakes and into the Coorong. The Coorong was drained. Let us face it. There were drainage works in there in the 1930s.

So let us get sensible and real about this plan. This plan is not about rescuing environmental flows to match the circumstances of the entire Murray-Darling
Basin. This plan is about taking water from the food producers and fibre producers in the biggest fertile crescent in Australia—after all, let us face it: they are all coalition seats—and putting it into this very big Environmental Water Holder bucket and then boasting about it in metropolitan Australia. Don't worry about the fact that you do not have any environmental watering plans, you do not know exactly when and how the water will be used and there is no actual statement in the plan which acknowledges that this is not just about adding water and standing back. You actually have to have natural resource management plans which cover the whole of the basin.

In Victoria and in the member for Riverina's area, we do have those plans. We know that to have the rivers flow well you also have to have plans which look at biodiversity beyond the river and the riparian zones.

Mr Katter interjecting—

Mr Briggs: Crazy as a coconut!

Dr Stone: You have to look at feral animals and weeds. You have to look at things like the potential for revegetation and fencing to protect biodiversity. All those other elements of work need to be done besides just pumping down as much water as you can buy from so-called willing sellers, in the teeth of the worst drought on record, and then standing back and saying: 'Hey, how good are we? We're the first ones in 100 years'—that is what the minister said—'to address these problems.' No, you are not. In my electorate and the electorate of Riverina, our communities have been addressing the environmental needs of the basin for nearly 200 years, and we know that if we do not get the environment right then we cannot continue to be productive. We cannot grow efficiently and make a living producing food and fibre. We know that the growing of food and fibre in turn generates the jobs—the transport sector jobs and the commercial jobs. It gives the small towns their populations, who in turn can create a rich and wonderful community life. Volunteering in our electorates is second to none, because we know that all that tree planting, feral animal destruction and protection of endangered species requires community voluntary work. We do it in our electorates.

But what has this government done? It has simply dipped into our irrigators' markets at times when they were most vulnerable, when the lenders had their feet on the necks of our farmers. Penny Wong, when she was minister, said: 'Here's a tender. You can sell your water to the Commonwealth. We'll pay a bit extra. You know, we won't force you, so you're willing sellers.' Do you know who those 'willing sellers' really were? They were drought-stressed, debt-stressed primary producers who had pushed out their borrowings to buy extra feed to keep their herds and flocks alive, to buy extra expensive water to keep their fruit trees alive, and to finish off their crops. That is who the so-called willing sellers were, and the banks were gleeful. They said: 'Fantastic! A lot of our borrowers have really eroded their assets. A lot of our borrowers are in deep, deep strife. But here's Penny Wong with her tenders. You go put in a bid.'

We have already seen over 400 gigalitres sold to the Environmental Water Holder out of the electorate of Murray. This means that water has gone for all time out of production. This government could have invested not much more money than there was in the buyback bin and had on-farm water use efficiency gains, or they could have invested in infrastructure. But, as the member for Riverina pointed out, much more money was thrown at the water markets because it was easier and cheaper and it served their
purpose to say: 'Those rotten irrigators! The water was overallocated to them. In fact, they have been stealing water during the drought. Look at poor old South Australia's dried-up lakes. Obviously the water was stolen upstream.' So that is what we have had to put up with, with this plan—that false information, that false emphasis on buyback rather than on investment in productivity, water saving and real enhancement for the environment.

This plan is cynical, it is crude, it is unscientific, it is just a political instrument and I am not going to simply wave it past. I am not going to just stay silent and say, 'Well, I really hope the coalition wins the next election because then we can do something about it,' because my electorate is suffering right now. We actually have stranded assets right now. We have people with dried-off farms who cannot sell their dried-off farms who are in despair. We have those who are paying more for their water because they are the only ones who are left. We have lost factories. We have lost jobs. We have 200 empty shops in Shepparton.

So I am sorry—I am not going to be silent. With the member for Riverina, I am going to speak up for my electorate. I know this vote will be lost, but I am going to take a stand, a principled stand, because I am the member for Murray and—in the tradition of my predecessor the great Sir John McEwen, who would have said the same things at similar times; he was a great country man—I am going to stand up and say no, and I am going to try, having said no, when we are in government, to start again.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (17:11): I move the motion on the Notice Paper standing in my name:

That the Basin Plan, made under the Water Act 2007 and presented to the House on 26 November 2012, be disallowed.

The story of the Murray-Darling started with the South Australians who, quite rightly, were very, very worried. And the naughty boys—and I want to name the member for Mayo, who said I am mad as a coconut, and I want to put that on record—

Mr Briggs: Crazy as a coconut, actually.

Mr KATTER: Sorry, he said, 'Crazy as a coconut.' But, at the end of my career, I can say that we won the science prize for Australia. I have two books, still on the reading lists at university, about me, and I have one by Germaine Greer which is highly flattering as well. He may have some books about him; I do not know. I have published a history book which has sold over 17,000 copies in Australia. And I kept within CPI when I had budgetary responsibilities; I had enough money to build 400 houses and we built over 2,000. So I hope that, if I am 'mad as a coconut', as the member for Mayo says—

Mr Briggs: Crazy as a coconut! Come on!

Mr KATTER: He said, 'Crazy as a coconut!'—the man is very long on invective and very low on intellectual content. But I would say that, at the end of his career, he can look back and reflect upon his achievements and maybe they will be comparable to mine. I hope that they are.

The South Australian government was very, very worried and South Australians were very, very worried because more and more water was being taken. I was in a government that handed out some 200,000 megalitres to Cubbie Station—one single user. Quite frankly, on reflection, that was not good. The South Australians quite rightly said, 'How much more are these people going to take out of the Murray-Darling?' So they started a massive campaign of fear, and they were quite right in being fearful—very right in being fearful. This metastasised into
a salinisation issue, where the *Australian* newspaper ran article after article about trees dying from salinisation.

It is true that the water in the Murray-Darling, by the time it reaches the river mouth, has been used some eight times for agriculture—arguably, nine times. What happens is: you put the irrigation water on, it goes through the ground, it hits an impervious layer and then it moves sideways. When it moves sideways, invariably it will end up somewhere back in the basin. That is different, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott, from your and my area, where it goes down forever, down to the top of the artesian aquifer at 1,400 feet and then eventually drifts out into the Gulf of Carpentaria. But this aquifer is used again and again, and hence there is greater salinity at the bottom of the basin now than there was before we started irrigation.

So the second issue that arose was salinity. Then what happened was that we had a drought. People say this drought was of monumental proportions, but those of us who are familiar with our country's history know that it was nowhere near as big as the Federation drought; it rained very, very little in Australia between 1884 and 1914. That terrible calamity spawned, amongst other things, the labour movement in Australia, though I will not go sideways into that.

I do not wish to reflect at all upon the member for Murray but she was in this House when her government removed 20 per cent of the whole economy of the Murray-Darling Basin. With all due respect—and I am very pleased to see her taking the position she is taking now—I have to be a little bit cynical and sceptical. When we rang up the Liberal Party on Monday, as we did, and asked what they were intending to do about the regulations, we were informed that there was nothing in the pipeline. In good faith, I rang the member for Riverina and asked the member whether he could join with me in moving some action on this. I make the point that nothing had happened until I made the telephone call out of desperation, because we have only 13 days left in which to act on this matter. I rushed into the House that night—I could not do anything the next morning—and acted in good faith. But you have to ask: why are these people suddenly talking about this? They were the government that removed the 20 per cent. If the orchards are dead and the vineyards are dead, who is responsible for this? The ALP government have not been responsible in the sense that all they have done is continue to implement the program which was legislated by the LNP in this place.

I went to Mildura and, at a public meeting there of about 100 people, I said: 'I thought it was one in 10 vines and orchards that were closed,' and they said, 'No, it was closer to one in five.' The honourable member for Murray has said that there are 200 empty shops in Shepparton. I am told there are 85 shops empty in Mildura and almost as many in Griffith. In Deniliquin, the real estate agent there told me that normally they have 60 or 70 houses for sale and now they have over 155 for sale. I presume there are not a lot of buyers. Who is responsible for this? Are the penguins in Antarctica responsible for this? Why are those vineyards dead? And why are the citrus orchards dead? The honourable member over there, the member for Mayo, will call me crazy as a coconut, so I will help him out because obviously he would not know why they are dead.

**Mr Briggs:** I grew up there, you dope!

**Mr KATTER:** Why are they dead? Why are they dead? Why are they dead?

**Mr Briggs:** If you're so smart, you should know all this.
Mr KATTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have asked him three times why the orchards are dead. Mr Deputy Speaker, I will tell you why he does not know why they are dead.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kennedy will not ask a question across the chamber to a member. The member for Mayo will allow the member for Kennedy to be heard in a silence.

Mr KATTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will tell you why the member for Mayo will not answer the simple question that I asked him three times—why are the citrus orchards dead; why are the vineyards dead?—it is because his government, the LNP, took the dollar from 52c up to 90c, with ridiculously high interest rates, which this government has continued, I might add. And, fairly typically, we have had a five per cent interest rate versus 0.3 per cent. So I point out to the House that the reason he would not answer the question of why the vineyards and orchards are dead when I asked him three times is that he knows it was his government that allowed the citrus in from Brazil. His government, the LNP, allowed citrus from Brazil into Australia, and it destroyed his industry and closed down those orchards. I suspect, though I do not know, that he also knows the vineyards were closed because the deputy leader of his LNP, Mr Truss, allowed the grapes in from California, which had Pierce's disease, I might add. So he knows—or maybe he does not: he is either ignorant or a coward, one of the two—that his government closed those orchards and those vineyards.

This government had an inquiry, and it was quite clear from the inquiry that Woolworths and Coles had moved from 50.5 per cent up to close to 70 per cent in a period of seven or eight years. The government opted to do absolutely nothing about it. So we were left with only two people to sell our grapes and citrus to. Needless to say, the price they paid us was not very much.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kennedy might come back to his motion, which is that the Basin Plan made under the Water Act, presented to the House on 26 November, be disallowed. He should address his motion before the House. I am giving plenty of latitude. I am asking the member for Kennedy to address his remarks to his motion before the House to do with the Basin Plan.

Mr KATTER: If I were to say those vineyards are dead because the LNP removed 20 per cent of the water, that would not be entirely true. Please God, when I come into this House I try to be as honest as I can. I think a lot of people here try to be as honest as they can. But when I come here I do not want to say that all of those vineyards and orchards are dead simply because of the removal of 20 per cent of the water. The reason they are dead is also that these products are being allowed in from other countries. Apples have just been allowed in by this government, but they are $9. So not all of the reasons for the collapse of agriculture throughout the Murray-Darling area are attributable to the cutbacks in the basin.

On top of the dollar being doubled by government action, the fact that other countries have 41 per cent support levels when we have only 4½ per cent, Woolworths and Coles, and allowing risky product into this country, the LNP government took 20 per cent of our entire economic base out from underneath us.

Dr Stone interjecting—

Mr McCormack interjecting—

Mr KATTER: Those are not my figures; they are your figures. They are, in fact, the
figures of the LNP government of the day. They said, 'We are taking three million megalitres away; that is our target'—that is what Mr Turnbull said—'and we should be able to do two million megalitres within the next three, four or five years.' This government came in and continued to implement that policy.

I thank the members for Riverina and Murray, belated as it is. It would appear nothing was done—that is what I was told—until I rang up the member for Riverina and they found out that they were under serious competitive pressure with an election coming up. But I will give them the benefit of the doubt and say they have seen the light. I thank them for seeing the light.

But the new government that came in have said that they are going to take an extra 15 per cent away. As I have said on many occasions before, this is the greatest accomplishment of the Australian people. The Murray-Darling Basin feeds and clothes the Australian people. These are two dusty, old rivers—the Murrumbidgee and the Murray—whose riverbeds have often been dry throughout their history. These two lazy, sleepy, dusty old rivers were suddenly turned into two giant irrigation canals by a great scheme called the Snowy Mountains project.

I come into this place with passion. I have said before, even though I do not want to promote my book too much, that people should attend to my book, which is about the history of Australia. Quite rightly, any history of Australia should contain—indeed, a 10th of the book should be about it—the greatest accomplishment of the Australian people. That accomplishment was turning those two sleepy, dusty, dry old river beds into two great irrigation canals which drought-proofed nearly a 10th of the surface area of Australia. Not only did they drought-proof nearly a 10th of the surface area of Australia but they also feed and clothe some 20 million people.

The scheme provides nearly 10 per cent of the peak load base power in Australia. When I handed over the electricity industry in Queensland I was very proud to hand over to the ALP the cheapest electricity industry in the world; our electricity charges were the cheapest in the world. That is how Queensland got the aluminium industry. We have been able to restrain the growth of electricity charges to some small degree because 10 per cent of the peak load power in Australia is still controlled at this point in time by the government. But that is not thanks to this parliament. The two mainstream parties in this place decided to sell the Murray-Darling. I am sorry that the member for Riverina and the member for Murray are attached to a party that decided to sell the Murray-Darling. Someone would own it and they could charge you whatever they liked for water—after all, they would own it. They would have owned the peak load power generator for Australia and they would have been able to charge what they liked. We know that there has been a consistent and absolutely unconscionable increase of 10 per cent in our electricity charges each year since corporatisation took place under the free market policies of the ALP and the LNP.

This place attempted to sell the Murray-Darling. I will tell you why the sale was stopped. The sale was stopped because the ordinary people—the people referred to by the member for Riverina—rose up in righteous anger. But they only had three members who they could count on to reverse that decision: the member for New England, the member for Kennedy and the member for Calare. And two of us are not even from the Murray-Darling Basin. The people representing it were quite happy to see it sold off to the highest bidder.
Mr Windsor: Not the current member for Calare.

Mr KATTER: Not the current member for Calare, no; the late Peter Andren. We moved in this parliament to force the issue. This week I rang the member for Riverina in an attempt to not force the issue, embarrass him or embarrass the Liberal Party. I rang him up to find out whether he was intending to do anything or whether he was going happily see another 15 per cent taken away. Jack McEwen led a party and he told you Liberals, 'You bring down the dollar, I'll bring down the government.' And they did. Menzies sat out in the cold for eight years. And he learnt his lesson. From then on, when Jack cracked the whip Robert Menzies jumped. That is a matter of historical public record. Would to heaven we could recreate that power system in this place—that is what we are trying to do. When you are under serious threat you will suddenly to decide to oppose this.

I want to ask the member for Murray something. She has been a good member insofar as she has had the courage to speak up on dairy deregulation, which her government and the ALP were the architects of, so I do not want to be disrespectful to her. But what use was her speaking up to us? The price of milk went from 59c down to 42c. We want arbitration the same as the workers in Australia enjoy. That is a quote from the great Jack McEwen.

I speak here with sincerity. I passionately wrote in my book not only about the great Snowy Mountain project, the greatest accomplishment of the Australian people, but also about Les Thiess, who built that great asset of the Australian people. As a political force in this country—and a rising political force, as you can see from what is coming out of Queensland—we are determined to ensure that the two million megalitres that have been taken off us is returned. Yes, the member for Murray said that there are a number of things that can be done. Of course there are; there are two dozen things that could be done. But the two things that should never, ever have been done is for the Liberal Party and the National Party to have taken that 20 per cent of our economic base off us and for the ALP to have now taken another 15 per cent off us. They are things that should never have been available to this place.

To those who come in here now and start fighting, I suppose I could say, 'Better late than never.' But I tell you what: if I and a whole stack of us dropped dead tomorrow, she'll be back to square one again—you can count upon that. But we are not dropping dead. We will be out there. Please God, we will be able to keep the pressure on to restore the economics of those areas. They are not totally accountable to the 20 per cent, but you cannot take 20 per cent of the economy out from under a town and still that town stand upright. And it was the LNP that did that, not the ALP. But the ALP is taking another 15 per cent. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (17:31): It is my great honour to second the motion moved by the member for Kennedy. I reserve my right to speak.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (17:31): I thank the House for allowing us to debate these two disallowance motions, given that each of them have the legal impact of abolishing Australia's first Murray-Darling Basin Plan. If carried, the plan will have been in place for seven days and will then expire. That is the significance of what is in front of us now. So that the House is
aware, the outcome of there being no Murray-Darling Basin Plan is that the legal processes would have to kick in. The processes under the Water Act that kicked off shortly after the last election—the guide document was not one of them but everything that followed since then has been—would effectively have to recommence. In my judgement, the outcome of that would probably be that we would never get a Murray-Darling Basin plan. We need to be fairly upfront that that is what is in front of us as the option being put.

I do not want to deal one by one, speaker by speaker with the different speeches that were made before I stood up. But I want to work through the issues. Essentially, there is a theme—a significant question that has been put and a claim made—that there is not a problem to fix. At its core, that is the argument behind these disallowance motions: that there is not a problem to fix. That is a position—

Dr Stone interjecting—

Mr BURKE: I did not interject once on you, member for Murray—not once. I have been listening intently the entire time and we are capable of conducting this debate with a level of respect.

Dr Stone interjecting—

Mr BURKE: Okay, maybe we are not. I will try to. The problem that we are addressing is one that is not the personal fault of anyone alive today and is certainly not the personal fault of anyone in any irrigation community. It is an error that was made generations before us to pretend that rivers would stop at state boundaries. It was a mistake that the Premier of South Australia in 1897 tried to have fixed when the Australian Constitution was being drafted. He wanted to make sure that when licences were put out they were done so with respect to the national demands on the Murray-Darling Basin. Back then, it was not an argument about sustainability; it was an argument about navigation at the southern end of the basin. But, notwithstanding that, the fundamental mistake has been—and this is the way that it was described by Prime Minister Howard as well—that the rivers do not respect state boundaries but we have managed the system as though they do. The only way to stop that is to have a national plan.

You then need to ask the next question, which is: what does that national plan need to achieve? The challenge which brought the Water Act into place—the challenge which a decade before had caused COAG under the Keating government to set down three particular principles—was the challenge that overextraction has a diabolical effect on the environmental and productive assets downstream. That was the challenge. It should have been a challenge that Australia dealt with in 1981 when we had the mouth of the Murray close. A decade later, when the blue-green algae outbreak covered 1,000 kilometres of river much further upstream, people realised that if we manage the rivers poorly the water is of no use to anyone. It was not simply an environmental issue. The water would be of no use to anyone. It was a challenge that we finally saw the underpinnings of dealt with with water market reform. I pay tribute to those involved in the National Water Initiative in 2004. That set up the water market and allowed the 2007 legislation, the Water Act, to go through this parliament.

I have been concerned by the number of people who sat on the government benches and voted for the Water Act then who now want to completely disown it. The Water Act was used in the way that the member for Riverina described: it used international treaties. That was quite a factual explanation of the constitutional underpinnings of the act.
In fairness to the minister at the time, the government of the day tried to not have to use treaty powers. It was the government of Victoria—a Labor government—that in my view quite wrongly failed to cede its powers. That led us to the situation in which the legislation was drafted in the way that it was.

Notwithstanding that, there was enough flexibility within it to make sure that we could optimise the environmental, economic and social outcomes. And I believe that we have. But we need to start with that question of what it is we are trying to fix. You cannot optimise environmental, social and economic outcomes if at the end of it you do not actually fix the overallocation problem. That problem needs to be addressed in order for us to deal with the health of the system. Where I believe this plan has landed is that we have a plan, a volume and methods that allow smarter management of water that mean that the fundamental problem that needs to be addressed and fixed will be. We have put all the incentives in place to make sure that it can be done in way such that the impact on communities is absolutely minimised.

How do you minimise the impact on communities? In two ways. Firstly, you say to the states, ‘If you can reach the same environmental outcomes through methods other than water being held by the Commonwealth environmental water holder,’ which means avoiding the need for buybacks, ‘then you are allowed to do so.’ It is believed by the states—and this is referred to in the plan—that up to 650 gigalitres can be achieved in that way. But I have to say that I do not believe that you can get the states to run the projects unless the states have their eyes wide open and know that if they do not do that then buybacks are the alternative. That is the reason I do not support the cap. I believe that, by having buybacks as the alternative to the projects within that 650 gigalitres, you actually guarantee that the states will put them forward. If the cap that New South Wales seeks were ever to be put in place and the incentive for them to put forward the projects for smarter management were to be removed, I question whether or not we would have a mechanism that would allow us to effectively achieve the outcomes described in the plan. The states say that they can come forward with projects. I believe that they will come forward with projects. Those projects will involve smarter management of what is a managed system.

There is an argument that has been put many times to me throughout the basin and many times in my office—and it was put during the previous speeches—that I must deal with directly. It is the argument that you can justify every possible intervention upstream—every dam and every weir—but that somehow it is outrageous for there to be a managed system at the Lower Lakes. If people want to run an argument that we need to remove the barrages; how is that a sensible argument but it is not a sensible argument to say we also need to remove the weirs? I support that we have a working basin. I support that we have a basin that is both healthy, environmentally significant but also extraordinarily important for production. That means, to make the system work, you need to have management interventions that occur up and down the system. I would have more respect for the argument about removing the barrages if it was being made by extreme environmentalists who were saying: remove everything. But for people to say, ‘Remove the interventions downstream but the ones in my electorate are just fantastic,’ I really believe it is an outrageous argument, and part of the source of the problem.

There is an argument that was made by the member for Murray which I believe
deserves an extra level of attention because it is one where I believe we can do more, and where we are currently doing more. The basin plan itself will not do enough to address the salinity impacts on the south lagoon of the Coorong. The way you would have to get water near the mouth at the right point, and then the wind blowing in two or three different directions to solve problems in the south lagoon, really does point to the fact that drainage work going into the south lagoon is critical to dealing with the environmental outcomes there. I do not pretend, and never have pretended, that the basin plan itself is able to fix the environmental challenges in the south lagoon. While I disagree with the barrages argument that was offered, I believe the south lagoon argument that was put has merit. That is why we are funding significant drainage work. There is an argument as to whether or not drainage work could go further than what is currently being constructed there, but it is a legitimate environmental argument with respect to the south lagoon, and I concur with that part of it.

A lot has been said about infrastructure money, and I want to be able to deal with this quite directly. I do not believe it is reasonable at all to refer only to infrastructure money that has been spent, because when you are dealing with projects that involve multiyear contracts, the infrastructure money that has been contracted has only not been spent because the project cannot spend it yet. It is true that we do not have the full amount of infrastructure money contracted yet, but $3.8 billion worth of it is. To the claim that not that much has gone out the door yet: that is the nature of a multiyear project. That is how complex hydrological engineering works have to take place. They take a number of years. People only want to look at cash out the door, but if we tried to rush expenditure figures through, we would have ended up with second-rate projects, which would have meant either we ended up with an increased reliance on buyback or we did not solve the problem that we are trying to solve. I respect the concerns that have been made of ‘Is the money out the door yet, or not?’ but, realistically, when you are dealing with multiyear contracts I do not believe that it is appropriate test.

Of all the projects to be referred to, I am really challenged by there being any criticism of me as water minister on the fact that the Menindee Lakes project has not yet taken place. Shortly after coming to government, the Premier of New South Wales wrote to the Prime Minister of Australia and unilaterally terminated the entire Menindee Lakes agreement—just terminated it. We then wrote back to the New South Wales government—and it is unusual for any state government to say we do not want the money, it is not something the Commonwealth has a lot of experience of hearing—and we are now very productively working with officials there in getting a significant project agreed on Menindee. I expect the water recovery that comes out of the Menindee Lakes project—this will be a decision the New South Wales—will go a long way to fixing some of the challenges that were referred to by the member for Riverina. I believe that it is in the interests of the electorate of Riverina that the Menindee Lakes project goes ahead. I believe it will. But given that it was a Liberal National government that unilaterally said, ‘We don't want your money; we don't want to do it,’ the fact that it is going ahead—and the incentives within the plan help make sure of that—is an example of exactly what is being asked.

There is an issue of motivation of the government that has been raised. Can I say to
the member for Murray, who claimed that this is all because of some agreement with the Greens: when the bells ring, the Greens are voting with you. If this is some grand conspiracy with the Greens, it has really failed. As I understand it, there are about five members of the House who are going to vote to blow the whole thing up, and the member for Melbourne, as I understand it, is one of them. For anyone to say that there is this really terrible deal that is going on with the Greens, it has failed dismally. What we have done is what I said to every one of those community meetings we would do, and that was that we would deal with the problem and we would act to fix the problem, which is exactly what I believe this plan does. But we would do so in a way that minimises the impact on communities.

There is always an excuse, and for many members in this House this debate is really hard and really difficult, particularly with conflicting views within their electorates. The truth is that if we do not fix this it will not be fixed. If this parliament blows it up, let's face fact; there will never be a Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

I want to express appreciation to all those members—including those in basins seats—for the work that they have done, particularly those who have been members of the Windsor committee. They produced unanimous reports. Unfortunately, some people who participated in that, after we have responded positively to those recommendations, have then shifted the goalposts. I should not complain too much: for a century that is what Australians have done. We have an opportunity now to do something really different. We have an opportunity to reach across the parliament in the same way that we need to reach across states and to reach across the basin. We have an opportunity now for this parliament to be different to our predecessors. We have an opportunity now to go over the final hurdle in making sure that we have a national approach to the Murray-Darling Basin, and I implore the parliament to not miss the opportunity that is in front of us today.

Mr WINDSOR (New England) (17:46): I rise to speak against the disallowance motions; the two of them. I thank the members of the Standing Committee on Regional Australia that looked at this issue and spent a vast amount of time examining this issue in the chamber. At the moment we have the member for Bendigo, the member for Murray, the member for Riverina and the member for Barker. I thank the member for Barker for his contributions, particularly in relation to some of the potential options in the Lower Lakes in the time that he spent with us when the committee was down that way. The member for Makin is here as well. I thank all of those members for their participation through that process.

We have to look at the history of this, and many members have done that. I listened to the member for Wentworth last night talking about what he saw as the history. But the genesis of what will go through the parliament—the Murray-Darling Basin Plan—came out of the Howard government years, and I have a little bit of sympathy with the members who have moved the disallowance motions, because I was the only member of parliament—I think in five parliaments—that voted against the original 2007 act. The reason for doing that was that it was rushed together for political purposes rather than for the real purpose of trying to establish a breakthrough in terms of working across state boundaries and to gain same sanity in the management of the systems. It was done back then, because Kevin Rudd was gaining some ascendency in the climate change debate, and the coalition at the time felt that they needed to reclaim some of that space, and the good old Murray-Darling,
which had been a pretty good drag horse for some years—about a century—was dragged out of the bag again and put together—it was quite openly called the $10 billion cigarette paper plan. That was developed by the bureaucracy and the member for Wentworth, who was the minister at the time.

For those who are dissenting from the plan itself, particularly in the coalition, the plan is the genesis of the act that both sides of parliament voted for, except me. It was a coalition act of parliament that was worked up. So a lot of the processes that came out of that particular act of parliament are the ones that the authority has had to deal with.

I will fast forward to the authority making its announcement and this absolute focus on the number. The whole debate became about: 'What is the number? What is the government going to take away from us?'

There have been two years of fear dredged out of the Murray-Darling system by the political process. There were two years of fear that the government—'the filthy Labor government'—was going to come and take their water. There has never been any intention to do that by anybody. The Howard government set up the act not to do that but to have a series of processes and timelines for it to be constructed. That is exactly what this parliament has done.

I will fast forward again to the nature of this parliament, which I think has had some bearing on the outcome. It is a hung parliament, so we have not had one side or the other in total control of the agenda. I think that has been able to assist the government of the day and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to look more closely at how you can obtain the efficiencies within the system to reinvigorate the environment.

If there had been a majority government—I do not think a coalition government would have made much difference to a majority Labor government—the focus would have been on a more city based agenda in terms of, 'What is the easiest way to solve the problem and return some water back into the system?'

There was general acceptance that there were some sustainability issues within parts of the system. What was the easiest way? The easiest way—and it was encouraged by the environmentalists—was to just buy the water. The farming community had agreed some years earlier that you could break water from land in terms of ownership. I personally had some issues with that but, nonetheless, the NFF, the farming bodies and the irrigators wanted to break the grip between land and water. What that effectively did was allow water to be sold out of catchments, and it was sold out of catchments.

We have had this odd sort of scenario where those in the farming community who consistently argued that they had the right to sell their water out of their community did not believe that the government or just water purchasers had the right to take water out of their community. So they had this degree of hypocrisy built in. I saw it happen in Moree when 'the filthy Labor government' was in New South Wales—and there were water adjustments taking place in New South Wales; I was part of the committee that looked at that over 10 years ago when I was in the New South Wales parliament—and there were sustainability adjustments made and water entitlements removed without any compensation. Some people around Moree argued quite strongly and said, 'This is going to destroy our community.' But when Penny Wong came along with a cheque book and put a price on it, some of those very same people—some quite large water holders, with up to 10,000 megalitres—decided that the coast was for them and said, 'Who cares about Moree?'
The water market creates that form of mechanism in itself. So I think what all of that—the hung parliament, the committee process, the engagement, Craig Knowles, to his credit, and you, Minister—was able to do was help engage the community with a number of things. One was that no-one was going to come and take their water. Barnaby Joyce and a few of those people are probably still out there shouting that from a hill in some place the telephone line hasn't got through to yet: 'They're going to take your water. They are coming to Griffith and they are going to take your water.' People quite genuinely thought that was the case.

You could see that confusion even in the latest debate we had, the one about the 450 gigalitres—which has nothing to do with this motion; it is not part of the disallowance. It has been quite clearly said—and a senior member of the bureaucracy, David Parker, who is in the gallery today, made it very plain in Hansard—that this is about on-farm efficiencies, which is exactly what the members for Murray, Riverina, Bendigo and Makin have been arguing for. The argument has been: 'If you are going to try to get water back into the system, do it without impacting on our productivity. Try and do it through on-farm efficiencies. Give us the money to make ourselves more efficient so that the productivity of our areas does not drop.' That is exactly what the recommendations were and exactly what the minister accepted in the plan. The minister has accepted those recommendations for the 450 gigalitres—the upwater, as they call it.

The committee was able to help with one other major issue. If the farmers were being asked to make all these efficiency gains, what about the environment? Why couldn't it make some efficiency gains? The Treasury and others—and even people within SEWPaC—may well have been saying: 'The cheapest way, Minister, to get water is to just buy it. Have a general tender.' But the committee, with two dissenting members, found that the Swiss cheese effect within the southern-connected system, the irrigation districts, was having a real impact on the fixed costs of those districts. So that was removed, exactly as the committee recommended. There was a gate left open for strategic buyback in certain areas, noting that there have been examples where parts of a district were agreeable to at least looking at the option of selling. Some farmers gauged themselves to be in an area that was not terribly efficient in water use. It is possible, in some cases, to remove an arm from the irrigation district and for those farmers to re-establish themselves in other areas or move on. Requests from some areas for that to be looked at were being made.

When we recommended that the Swiss cheese buyback arrangement not take place—and the minister agreed—the deputy chair and I got abusive calls saying, 'You have taken away my right to sell my water to the government.' I made the point that the water market would still allow them to do that—that they could create their own Swiss cheese if they wanted to. 'But no-one wants to buy my particular bit,' they said, 'and you have taken my potential way out of trouble away.' So there are two sides to that coin. My personal view was that the side the committee was on was probably the more appropriate. It recognised the operational costs of the irrigation districts as well as the value of irrigation to the particular communities.

This debate is about the plan, but I did start off by talking about the number. The number now is 2,750. There are still people running around out there saying it is 3,200. But the plan is 2,750. Because of the way the arrangement works, the basin states are saying to the government and the authority that they can find 650 gigalitres of
efficiencies through works and measures in environmental areas. So the actual number—if you remove what I call the virtual water—is 2,100 gigalitres. That is what is left to find. If you analyse the water which has, since this process started, already been found through general buybacks, strategic buybacks, on-farm efficiencies, environmental works and measures, and real changes in the way the rivers work—and there are a range of efficiencies still available to be made—you end up with a number at the end of that.

The real number that we are talking about—up to a week ago people were out there saying it was 3,200—is somewhere between 600 and 800 gigalitres of water to be obtained. That water can be obtained in many ways. The minister made the point on a couple of occasions in the last few days that if the basin states come up with projects—Menindee Lakes, the Lowbidgee in the member for Riverina's area; and I presume he would be opposed to that now—they are the sorts of things where you can have quite significant amounts of water obtained without anybody losing anything. Water for Rivers and the Computer Aided River Management program, CARM, are the sorts of things we should be looking at, because they have an impact on the way in which the river pulses and the way in which you can use environmental flows to great advantage to achieve the same outcome—the number—actually dictated at the start of the process. The process got off to a very rocky start because of the politics of the number.

I do congratulate all members who were on the committee, but the parliament has actually been able to work through a process that has been a challenge to parliaments for a hundred years and I am very proud to be part of that process. I am a little bit sad that people want to return to the past, because, if they analyse the way in which this has been done and will be done into the future—and there has to be real trust, Minister—and if that trust is established, our communities will maintain their productivity, they will maintain the right to sell their water down and upstream if in fact it can be delivered and the environment will be better off for the work that has been done. If it costs a little bit more to go down the efficiency road rather than the buyback road, that is the price the taxpayer I think is quite willing to pay.

Mr GIBBONS (Bendigo) (18:01): I will be very brief; I realise people are waiting to get home. I rise to oppose this disallowance motion moved by the member for Riverina. After more than 100 years of disputes, uncertainty and confusion the federal Labor government, through the efforts of the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Minister Tony Burke, has finally achieved the reforms necessary to produce a final Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The Labor government had committed to delivering a plan that restores our rivers to health and supports strong regional communities and sustainable food production. I want to congratulate Minister Tony Burke for what can only be described as an outstanding effort in presiding over and delivering what has been one of the most difficult projects ever undertaken by any Australian government in our history. I want to refer briefly to the recent history that led us to the motion we are debating today, then deal, again briefly, with the politics that have plagued this issue and then deal with the plan in some detail.

In 1994 the Keating government brokered a COAG agreement that established the framework for Murray-Darling Basin reform that survives today—and is being modelled in other parts of the world, including the Yellow River in China. The three principles that were established in that agreement...
remain in place today; they are to price water, to trade water and to reserve volumes of water for the environment. The next stage was a decade later, with the National Water Initiative under the Howard government, resulting in the Living Murray program being introduced. The National Water Initiative put down the next pieces of the framework to make sure that we had an operating water market and to lay those foundations for the plan outlined by the minister this week.

The establishment of the independent Murray-Darling Basin Authority created the opportunity for widespread community consultation through a series of meetings throughout the basin by the authority after it released a first draft of a guide to a future plan for the MDB. I want to emphasize that this was a draft of a guide towards establishing a future plan for the MDB. Those public consultations turned into a farce because the coalition MPs who represent Murray-Darling Basin electorates deliberately went about attempting to sabotage the consultation process. In most instances they tried to incite riots at the public meetings to create anger directed at the federal Labor government, when it was the independent Murray-Darling Basin Authority that was responsible for developing the guide. And of course they neglected to mention the Howard government's role in considerably boosting the prospects of the Murray-Darling Basin reform by introducing the National Water Initiative and the Living Murray program. They also neglected to mention that most of the Murray-Darling Basin coalition MPs, being relatively long-serving MPs, voted for the Howard government's program that was an important part of the much-needed Murray-Darling Basin reforms we have today.

The hypocrisy on display by the coalition leaves me breathless. They deliberately set about causing considerable distress among the basin communities by distorting the facts and hiding from the fact that most of them voted for the Howard government's reforms. Those MPs now find themselves in a real quandary. You see, they hate Labor's Murray-Darling Basin reforms so much, they are actually going to vote for them. After almost causing riots during the consultation period by doing their level best to create a frenzy of fear and hatred against the federal Labor government, they will now vote for these important reforms. It is going to be very interesting to see how they explain this hypocrisy to their individual Murray-Darling Basin communities.

The Gillard government supported the establishment of three inquiries by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, which the previous speaker referred to. The original terms of reference sought to provide an opportunity for Murray-Darling Basin communities and industry to provide their input direct to parliamentarians from all sides of the chamber. The three inquiries were very capably chaired by the member for New England, Mr Tony Windsor, who played an important role in facilitating engagement by all stakeholders, offering practical solutions, providing feedback to government on the views of the community and industry, and informing the public debate on the plan.

My electorate of Bendigo—and the City of Greater Bendigo—is the largest regional population centre in the Murray-Darling Basin, and I was pleased to participate in three Murray-Darling Basin inquiries, first as a volunteer co-opted member, then for the next two inquiries as the deputy chair of the committee. While most MPs and senators were enjoying a well-earned break in January 2011, the committee was touring
most of the Murray-Darling Basin communities, participating in inspections and conducting public hearings.

The key matters that were identified by the work of the regional Australia committee, now known as the Windsor committee, included the development of the sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism; prioritising infrastructure investment ahead of water buyback; moving to a more strategic approach to water purchase; and the establishment of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office, with its focus on the water needs of environmental assets, scientific and engineering expertise, transparency and accountability, and community engagement in watering decisions. Other significant matters raised by the committee included the taxation treatment of government grants for irrigation infrastructure; the opportunity of engineering solutions to enable more efficient use of environmental water; and the value of investing in further efficiencies to be gained in irrigation infrastructure both on and off the farm.

I do not think I need to go too much further. I know people are waiting to get away—I know I am. I thank the House for the opportunity of opposing this motion. I understand why the two movers are doing it. I know the member for Riverina was not around in the days when the—

Mr Katter: Three, thank you.

Mr GIBBONS: There is no doubt about the member for Kennedy. Always a very entertaining speaker and I really enjoy his performances. Unfortunately, I am not going to try and emulate him. I was pleased to be able to make a small role in helping the government deliver these important reforms, these historic reforms. I know future generations will look back on this and say: thank goodness that parliament, that party, that government had the guts to do it.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (18:08): I have great respect for my honourable colleague from New England, but I interpreted his remarks to say that there will be no further purchases. I am holding the discussion paper and brief in draft from the minister. It says that there will be a purchase of another 280 gigalitres, or 280,000 megalitres in my nomenclature. There are further purchases. There was three million to be taken of us and there is another 300,000. It is another 10 per cent. It is a buyback. It is the purchase of no more than 40 gigalitres per year. I greatly respect the work he has done and I hope it will be a contribution, but I just simply will not, and cannot, agree to any further cutbacks, and that is the reason I am opposing the proposals before the House, because they involve another 300,000 megalitres that are going to be taken off the irrigators in the basin, and out of the economies of the towns in the basin.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Symon): In accordance with the resolution agreed to earlier, I will now put separate questions on each motion. The question is that the motion moved by the member for Riverina be agreed to.

The House divided. [18:14]

(The Speaker—Ms Anna Burke)

Ayes ...................... 5
Noes ..................... 95
Majority................. 90

AYES
Bandt, AP
McCormack, MF (teller)
Stone, SN (teller)

Katter, RC
Schultz, AJ

NOES
Albanese, AN
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF

Alexander, JG
Baldwin, RC
Bird, SL
Mr Katter: I don't think I'll convince enough of them, Madam Speaker, so I'll accept the verdict of the voices.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member.

DELEGATION REPORTS

Parliamentary Delegation to Pakistan

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (18:21): I present the report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to Pakistan from 29 August to 2 September 2012.

BUSINESS

Orders of the Day

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (18:22): I move:

That the following Federation Chamber orders of the day, private Members' business, be returned to the House for further consideration:

Indigenous servicemen and servicewomen;
Meals on Wheels;
Breast Cancer Awareness Month;
Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament; and
Gambling reform.

The SPEAKER: The matters will be set down for consideration at a later hour this day.

Rearrangement

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (18:23): by leave—I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the following items of private Members' business being called on immediately in the following order:

Return of Australian troops from Afghanistan—Order of the day No. 16;
Victims of terrorism overseas—Order of the day No. 22;
Australia’s future workforce needs—Order of the day No. 15;
Indigenous servicemen and servicewomen—Order of the day;
Meals on Wheels—Order of the day;
Breast Cancer Awareness Month—Order of the day;
Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament—Order of the day; and
Gambling reform—Order of the day.
Question agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

Afghanistan

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this House calls on the Government to set a date for the safe return of Australian troops from Afghanistan.

The SPEAKER (18:28): The question is that the motion moved by the member for Melbourne be agreed to.

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

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

Question negatived, Mr Bandt, Dr Washer and Mr Wilkie voting aye.

Victims of Terrorism

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this House:
(1) notes that:
(a) since the devastating terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001, over 100 Australians have died and many others have suffered injury as a result of terrorist attacks overseas;
(b) the victims of ‘September 11’, the two Bali bombings, the London and Jakarta bombings and the Mumbai terrorist attacks, were targeted because they were citizens of countries where people could choose how they lived and what faith they might follow; and
(c) 12 October 2012 will mark the tenth anniversary of the 2002 Bali bombings;
(2) recognises that:
(a) many Australian families continue to suffer as a result of their loss and injury from overseas terrorist acts;
(b) victims of overseas terrorism have not been entitled to compensation such as that received by domestic victims of crime under the various State and Territory victims of crime schemes; and
(c) the Government did not support amendments to the Social Security Amendment (Supporting Australian Victims of Terrorism Overseas) Bill 2012 which would have provided assistance for any action after 10 September 2001; and
(3) supports the Coalition’s request that the Minister make the appropriate retrospective declarations so that all of the Australian victims of overseas terrorism acts since 10 September 2001, or their next of kin, can receive this important, but modest, help.

The SPEAKER (18:29): The question is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to.

The House divided. [18:29]

Ayes ...................... 55
Noes ...................... 59
Majority ............... 4

AYES
Alexander, JG  Andrews, KG
Andrews, KL  Baldwin, RC
Billson, BF  Bishop, BK
Bishop, JJ  Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE  Buchholz, S
Chester, D  Christensen, GR
Coulton, M (teller)  Fletcher, PW
Gambaro, T  Gash, J
Griggs, NL  Hartsuyker, L
Hockey, JB  Hunt, GA
Jensen, DG  Jones, ET
Katter, RC  Keenan, M
### Australia's Future Workforce Needs

Debate resumed on the motion:

(1) commends the Australian Government’s:
- (a) commitment to meeting Australia’s future workforce needs;
- (b) strong investment record in skills and training; and
- (c) partnership with industry to meet Australia’s skills challenges;

(2) notes that all Australians should have the opportunity to get the education and skills they need for the jobs on offer, and the importance:
- (a) that the TAFE system plays in providing training opportunities; and
- (b) of Federal, State and Local initiatives to provide jobseekers with customised employment and training to meet their individual needs and the demands of the labour market for a skilled workforce; and

(3) calls on Governments at all levels to:
- (a) provide funding for employment and skills services; and
- (b) continue to invest in TAFE and skills training.

Question agreed to.

### Indigenous Servicemen and Servicewomen

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this House:

(1) acknowledges the sacrifices made by those who have served Australia in past and present wars and conflicts and the importance of Remembrance Day in honouring those who have fallen; and

(2) notes that many Indigenous servicemen and women have also made valuable contributions to the Australian Defence Force, and that:
   (a) in the past these contributions have not been fully acknowledged and recognised;
   (b) historically many people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background experienced difficulties in enlisting due to their race;
   (c) the full extent of the contribution of Indigenous peoples to past wars and conflicts is a subject that is still being researched today;
   (d) more information will only add to the valuable wealth of knowledge that informs Australia’s commemoration ceremonies and enriches the historic record;
   (e) it is estimated that at least 400 Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders served in the First World War, and between 3,000 and 6,000 in the Second World War, and limited historical records indicate that these figures may have been much higher; and
   (f) the maintenance of all war memorials, including those dedicated to the efforts of Indigenous people, should be a national priority.

To which the following amendment was moved:

Paragraph 2(e) omit “400” and substitute “1,000” and omit “between 3,000 and 6,000” and substitute “at least 3,000”.

The SPEAKER (18:37): The original question was that the motion be agreed to. To this the honourable member for Parkes has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER: The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

Meals on Wheels

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges the significant community contribution Meals on Wheels Australia has made to the most vulnerable in our society for nearly 60 years;

(2) values the many Meals on Wheels Australia volunteers that selflessly dedicate their time to ensure that our local communities’ most vulnerable members receive warm and nutritious meals;

(3) recognises that Meals on Wheels Australia allows elderly people to maintain their independence and provides them with regular social contact;

(4) acknowledges that nearly one-third of frail patients admitted to hospital are malnourished and that a further 60 per cent are at risk of malnutrition; and

(5) calls on the Government to:
   (a) support the Meals on Wheels Australia’s initiative to research new ways to improve the nutritional status of elderly Australians; and
   (b) recognise that this initiative to improve nutrition has the potential to change the health, happiness and well-being of elderly Australians.

To which the following amendment was moved:

Paragraph 5(a) omit “support” and substitute “consider”.

The SPEAKER (18:38): The original question was that the motion be agreed to. To this, the honourable member for Parkes has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER: The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

Breast Cancer

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this House:
notes that:
(a) October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and that Monday 22 October 2012 is Pink Ribbon Day;
(b) breast cancer is the most common cancer in Australian women (excluding melanoma) and the second leading cause of cancer-related death in Australia; and
(c) the incidence of breast cancer in Australia is increasing; and
(2) encourages women to have a mammogram every two years.

Question agreed to.

**Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament**

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this House:

(1) endorses the draft code of conduct at Appendix 5 of the report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests, Draft Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament; and

(2) requests the Leader of the House to bring forward urgently for the House’s consideration the proposed changes to standing orders and resolutions of the House necessary to give effect to the Code, procedures for considering complaints under the Code, and for the role of the Standing Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests in oversight of the Code.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The House divided. [18:41]

(The Speaker—Ms Anna Burke)

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<tr>
<th>AYES</th>
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<td>Ayes....................60</td>
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AYES

- Albanese, AN
- Bird, SL
- Brodtmann, G
- Butler, MC
- Champion, ND
- Clare, JD
- Crean, SF
- Dreyfus, MA
- Ellis, KM
- Ferguson, MJ
- Georganas, S
- Grierson, SJ
- Hayes, CP
- Jenkins, HA
- Kelly, MJ
- Livermore, KF
- Marles, RD
- Mitchell, RG
- Neumann, SK
- O'Connor, BPJ
- Parke, M
- Piiberseck, TJ
- Rishworth, AL
- Roxon, NL
- Saffin, JA (teller)
- Smith, SF
- Swan, WM
- Thomson, CR
- Vamvakionou, M
- Windsor, AHC
- Alexander, JG
- Andrews, KL
- Billson, BF
- Bishop, JI
- Broadbent, RE
- Chester, D
- Cobb, JK
- Fletcher, PW
- Gambaro, T
- Griggs, NL
- Hawke, AG
- Hunt, GA
- Jones, ET
- Keenan, M
- Laming, A
- Macfarlane, IE
- Matheson, RG
- Mirabella, S
- Moylan, JE
- O'Dowd, KD
- Pyne, CM
- Robert, SR
- Schultz, AJ
- Secker, PD (teller)
- Smith, ADH
- Southcott, AJ
- Tehan, DT
- Elliot, MJ
- Emerson, CA
- Fitzgibbon, JA
- Gibbons, SW
- Griffin, AP
- Husie, EN (teller)
- Jones, SP
- Leigh, AK
- Lyons, GR
- McClelland, RB
- Murphy, JP
- Oakeshott, RJM
- Owens, J
- Perrett, GD
- Ripoll, BF
- Rowland, MA
- Rudd, KM
- Sidebottom, PS
- Smyth, L
- Synon, MS
- Thomson, RJ
- Wilkie, AD
- Zappia, A

NOES

- Andrews, KJ
- Baldwin, RC
- Bishop, BK
- Briggs, JE
- Bachhola, S
- Christensen, GR
- Coulton, M (teller)
- Forrest, J
- Gash, J
- Hartsuyker, L
- Hockey, JB
- Jensen, DG
- Katter, RC
- Kelly, C
- Ley, SP
- Marino, NB
- McCormack, MF
- Morrison, SJ
- Neville, PC
- Prentice, J
- Ramsey, RE
- Ruddock, PM
- Scott, BC
- Simpkins, LXL
- Somlyay, AM
- Stone, SN
- Truss, WE
The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The Speaker—Ms Anna Burke

Ayes

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP

Bird, SL
Bowen, CE

Brodhman, G
Burke, AS

Butler, MC
Byrne, AM

Champion, ND
Cheeseman, DL

Clare, JD
Combet, GI

Crean, SF
D’Ath, YM

Dreyfus, MA
Elliot, MJ

Ellis, KM
Emerson, CA

Ferguson, MJ
Fitzgibbon, JA

Georganas, S
Gibbons, SW

Grierson, SJ
Griffin, AP

Hayes, CP
Husie, EN (teller)

Jenkins, HA
Jones, SP

Kelly, MJ
Leigh, AK

Livermore, KF
Lyons, GR

Marles, RD
McClelland, RB

Mitchell, RG
Murphy, JP

Neumann, SK
Oakeshott, RJM

O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, J

Perrett, GD
Pell, BF

Ripoll, BD
Rowland, MA

Rudd, KM
Sidney, PS

Smith, SF
Smyth, L

Swan, WM
Symon, MS

Thomson, CR
Thomson, KJ

Vamvakou, M
Wilkie, AD

Windsor, AHC
Zappia, A

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL

Billson, BF
Bishop, BK

Broadbent, RE
Briggs, JE

Chester, D
Buchholz, S

Cobb, JK
Christensen, GR

Fletcher, PW
Coulton, M (teller)

Gambaro, T
Forrest, JA

Griggs, NL
Gash, J

Hawke, AG
Hartsuyker, L

Hunt, GA
Hockey, JB

Jones, ET
Jensen, DG

Keenan, M
Katter, RC

Kelly, C

Question agreed to.

Gambling

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this House calls on the Council of Australian Governments to implement a National Partnership Agreement on gambling reform, that agrees to:

(1) implement a:

(a) national cap on electronic gaming machines; and

(b) long term national reduction strategy on electronic gaming machines underneath a national cap;

(2) refer the issue of revenue loss from a national reduction strategy to the State Tax Working Group, set up by the Tax Forum, so that any losses incurred are spread across State and Commonwealth revenues; and

(3) include online gaming reform, sports betting reform and horse, harness and greyhound race coverage reform to address links between problem gambling and national health outcomes, as well as any links to the proceeds of crime, money laundering and community safety.

The Speaker (18:47): The question is that the motion be agreed to.
Question agreed to.

STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE

Valedictories

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (18:51): As much as I would appreciate everyone waiting for my valedictory, there is no need.

The SPEAKER: Order! If everyone could leave the chamber quickly and quietly!

Mr ALBANESE: I rise to put on the record my appreciation for people who have made a contribution to the functioning of this parliament in the last year, but also to make some brief comments as the Leader of the House and as Minister for Infrastructure and Transport.

This has been, on any measure, a very successful parliament. We have carried 449 pieces of legislation through the House. And it is 449 not out, because not a single piece of legislation has been brought before this chamber and defeated—not a single bill. Indeed, not a single amendment has been carried to any legislation without the support of the government. Under Labor, since 2008 the House has been sitting for an average of 1,025 hours each year, compared with 771 during the Howard years. We are getting on with the work of government. We are still moving forward. We are passing important legislation. Indeed, in the last two days we have had the introduction of the NDIS legislation and the education reform legislation arising out of the Gonski review.

In my portfolio, this year we got the largest, most significant shipping reform done across the board. We had legislation relating to national regulators for heavy vehicles, maritime and rail. We have continued to roll out the largest Commonwealth investment in infrastructure in Australia's history, with the doubling of the roads budget, the increase of the rail budget by more than 10 times and a commitment to urban public transport greater than all governments combined in the previous 107 years from Federation up to 2007. We have also had 65 private members' bills and motions voted on in this chamber.

I want to take the opportunity to thank the Speaker of the House and thank also the former Speaker of the House, the member for Fisher, for their cooperation and for the relationship I have enjoyed with them as Leader of the House. Indeed, it is my view that the former Speaker was a very good chair of the parliament, and that you, Speaker, have presided over—including this
week—an extremely difficult period, with integrity and forthrightness in the way that you have chaired the chamber, and you have brought credit on the chamber. We members do not always do the best to do that, but you have brought to the position a great deal of authority in a very short period of time and I congratulate you on that.

To the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard—as she said, I do like fighting Tories. The Prime Minister and I have worked together on a basis of five or six meetings a day. I thank her for her trust in my judgement. From time to time, that has to happen as Leader of the House. In the effective running of this parliament, I know that I can make a call and be backed by the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and senior members of the executive. That is not to say that all the calls are always right. That is to say though that I use my best judgement not just for the interests of the government but for the interests of the nation.

To my mate, the Treasurer, Wayne Swan, we often have a meal together on Sunday night of sitting weeks, which probably means I have more dinners with Wayne than I have with my own family on Sunday nights. We have enjoyed a close relationship in portfolio also. I find it is always good to have the Treasurer on side when you are the minister for infrastructure. The Treasurer understands the nation-building agenda that comes through that long-term productivity investment. It is easy, when circumstances are difficult in terms of the fiscal environment, to say that we will make cuts to long-term investment programs, but in the long run that inhibits future economic growth. This government has ensured, whilst maintaining our commitment to return to surplus, that we have not put aside the long-term national interest in order to achieve short-term outcomes. I think it is very important that this government does understand that.

To my deputy, Stephen Smith, the member for Perth, we enjoy our banter and chats each morning. I appreciate his ongoing advice and his commitment to our common objectives which we on this side of the chamber show. To other ministers, I thank them for their cooperation and, indeed, I thank the entire caucus for voting in ways that are appropriate when they come into the chamber, and backing and supporting my position as Leader of the House.

To the Chief Government Whip, the member for Hunter, we had a very enjoyable night at the end of the year when I attended the Souths versus Newcastle game with him. It was almost a good night until Greg Inglis took out Uate, and that made sure that the Newcastle home based crowd were disappointed that night; but, like good working people that the Hunter Valley produces, they took it in very good spirit. It was a most enjoyable evening.

To the new whips, Janelle Saffin and Ed Husic, I thank you for your work that you do. To Anna George in the office, who works so hard in her position, I thank her too. Jill Hall has moved on as the whip to greater things, as chair of the health policy committee, to pursue that long-term policy interest that she has had. Jill Hall has been a mate of mine since I supported her in a preselection for Swansea many years ago, just before I supported her in a preselection for Shortland many years ago. Jill Hall continues to make a great contribution.

To the crossbenchers I say that I spend perhaps more time with them than is healthy for any of us. But the fact is that we have a relationship in which we trust each other's words. I know what they are going to do, because they keep their word, as I do with them in terms of the arrangements for and
the functioning of this parliament—which, in spite of its minority government status, has functioned extremely effectively.

To my opposite number, the member for Sturt, I say that I got an email the other week—and I do not know if he got this—that showed us in a photograph being friendly towards each other in spite of the fact that it was taken on a particularly rancorous day in the parliament. The member for Sturt is someone who is of good spirit. In terms of the relationship that we have when negotiating the functioning of the parliament, he conducts himself in a professional manner. In spite of the fact that we have political differences, on a personal level we have respect for each other, which is probably the best circumstance that you could hope for, given the nature of this parliament. I thank him for that on the record.

I wish all the other members of the opposition a good and safe festive season, particularly the Leader of the Nationals, as he is the shadow minister for infrastructure and transport.

I also wish a good and safe festive season to the Clerk of the House, Bernard Wright; David Elder and the whole team; Henry Thomson and the team in the PLO, particularly Ebony, whose good spirit brings cheer during the most difficult of days; the Chamber Research Office and the Parliamentary Library; the House of Representatives staff, including the Table Office; the Office of Parliamentary Counsel and Peter Quiggin—I chair the parliamentary business committee and often place quite unreasonable demands on them, but they have managed to deliver on them; the Sergeant-at-Arms; the catering, security and ministerial support staff; the staff who help us in the chamber, particularly Lupco Jonceski, who is always of good humour and is a very well liked person in this building; and all the other people who do all the work on a day-to-day basis. I thank them all.

Then there is my team. I wish a good and safe festive season to Mike Mrdak and his team; the staff of the department; my chief of staff, Michael Chouefate; my personal assistant, Karen Bissaker; the Leader of the House staff, with Moksha Watts in charge, ably assisted by Linda Townrow; the electorate office manager, Kris Cruden; and all of my staff, who work so hard and such unreasonable hours under such extraordinary pressure. I thank each and every one of you.

I also thank my branch members, party officials and supporters—in an election year, which is coming up, it is always wise to remember your base. They work very hard in an electorate where the opposition is not always the conservatives but often the Greens political party, which in my area take a very opportunistic and unprincipled approach to politics. In the coming year, or the next 10 months perhaps, that will certainly be a situation in which I look forward to them playing a role in the re-election of the Labor government.

In terms of my own family, to my wife, Carmel Tebbutt, and to my son, Nathan, the time we spend away from our family and loved ones is very difficult. We all feel that pressure. My son starts high school next year. He has had an experience whereby for a majority of his life he has had two parents who are ministers, one in state government and one in federal government. That is a particularly difficult situation; however, I am very proud of the way that he conducts himself. He is becoming a very fine young man. Carmel certainly has a great deal more political support both within and outside the Labor Party. I do not think she has an enemy in politics, which is something I am not in a
position to claim. I am indeed a very lucky man to have Carmel as my life partner.

I conclude by thanking the House and everyone for their cooperation. It comes in unusual circumstances sometimes. Christopher Pyne’s staffer James Newbury is someone I talk to more than most Labor Party staffers, such is the nature of it. James is a good fellow. I think Christopher Pyne inherited him from Joe Hockey, when Joe was the Manager of Opposition Business. I look forward to serving as Leader of the House with many more future managers of opposition business in future parliaments when we return after the election next year.

In conclusion, as transport minister I say one thing: please, we all have a role in our newsletters and in the way we communicate with our electorates to remind people to drive safely over the Christmas and festive season. Every year there are too many tragedies on our roads. We can build the best roads and have the best technology in cars, but at the end of the day people drive vehicles, and they need to be encouraged to drive safely, particularly during periods such as Christmas, when there are more cars on the road than usual and where some people who would not normally be behind the wheel are driving. Evidence has shown that that is one of the factors that can lead to additional fatalities.

I wish the House all the best for the festive season.

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of The Nationals) (19:08): On indulgence, at the end of a long and trying parliamentary year I am pleased to join with others in extending seasons greetings to those who work in the parliament and those in the community whom we serve. I wish everyone the very best for the year ahead.

I thank the Leader of the House for his kind comments, and it would have to be said we do not get terribly many kindly comments on our side from the Leader of the House. But he plays a key role in the parliament and we acknowledge that.

I begin by making a couple of comments about the parliament and the way in which the public observe its functioning. I think the public have reason to be concerned about the way in which the parliament has functioned. By this time next year we will have a new parliament and whichever side is elected I think the public will not want it to be a hung parliament. They will want it to be a parliament where the government can pursue its agenda and deliver a positive plan for the future. I do not think the new paradigm has delivered too much for the parliament or, for that matter, for the Australian people.

We can do a lot more to build the respect the public has for this place and to help them to understand more about the way in which the parliament works. It is, of course, a robust place, and it should be. But the public do not see very much of the long hours of genuinely cooperative work that goes on in this place. I think the arrival of A-PAC, which has opened the doors to quite a bit more of the parliamentary debate to television viewers across the country, is making a difference and helps to show that a lot of the things we do in this parliament are, in fact, done in a very cooperative way. They have learnt something about the committee reports and the work that is done in that regard to help develop policy. They have listened to some of the members make passionate speeches on behalf of their electorate and stand up for things that really matter to their community, and we have seen an illustration of that again today. I think it reflects well on the parliament when that kind of debate can be distributed and broadcast more widely to the community.
The Leader of the House boasted a little while ago about the number of bills that had been passed in the year. Certainly, he can speak more lavishly about the quantity rather than the quality. The reality is that the vast majority of bills have received bipartisan support. Occasionally there have been amendments, which have improved them, but more often than not there is bipartisan support—I think there have been a lot of bills with little in them, and that has perhaps made that claim a little easier, as well. But the reality is that there is a much greater spirit of cooperation to achieve good things for our country than is sometimes apparent.

Whatever disagreements I might have with those who sit opposite me in the parliament, I have always acknowledged that I think every person who is elected to this parliament comes here because they want their country to be a better place. They want to implement policies that make it better. Our differences are not that we do not all want a better country but that we have a different route to it. There are different ways in which we think it can be achieved.

Having made those comments I thank in particular all of those who have helped make the parliament work. For you personally, Madam Speaker, and for the Speakers Panel, it has been a pretty tumultuous year. I know that you, Madam Speaker, were in a particularly difficult position for quite a long time and handled that with grace and dignity. We compliment you on your new role as Speaker. I also recognise the Deputy Speaker and other members of the Speakers Panel on the way in which they strove to maintain order in the place and deal with the issues as they arise.

I acknowledge the Clerks, the attendants and the parliamentary staff. We appreciate their cheery disposition and courteous attention and their patient advice, which is often required at very short notice, and sometimes from left field. But the way in which we are greeted when we arrive in the parliament and the way people are willing to look after us is greatly appreciated, even if, on occasions, being our own centre of attention we do not always acknowledge it as well as we should.

I also recognise the Serjeant-at-Arms and the staff, the library staff and the Hansard staff. I would like to particularly mention the IT staff. They must have a nightmare of a job. Nothing ever seems to work, if you ask me, but it might have a fair bit to do with me rather than the IT staff! But in reality they are often there to help out when we actually need it. I also thank the dining room staff, the cafeteria people and the COMCAR drivers. I particularly make mention tonight of the staff from HRG, who make all of our travel arrangements. I am not sure whether members are yet aware of the fact that they have lost the contract and they will only be here for another week or two. I do not know why they have lost the contract, but these sorts of things sadly happen. Some of the people who have been serving us in this parliament for a very long time are not going to be here any longer. It seems the new contractors are bringing in new people. In the past the same people have often stayed from one contract to another. I particularly acknowledge Joe Larter, Sarah Matruglio, Andrea Giampa and Kylie Salmon, who have been looking after all of the members of this place with a great degree of diligence. We often change our minds, the airlines often change their minds and there are often crises on a Sunday night, and they get about their work with a great deal of diligence. We wish them well for whatever their future may hold. I understand that they will still be employees of HRG, but not in this building. I send acknowledgements to the cleaners and the gardeners and others who work in this
building. Thank you for your assistance over the year.

I also pay tribute to Tony Abbott as leader of the opposition. He shows extraordinary dedication, commitment and diligence. He never seems to tire. It has been a pleasure also to work with Julie Bishop and the shadow cabinet team. We really have a close working relationship, and that sometimes has been tried through the events of the day, but it has worked well, and it has been a pleasure to work in a coalition of this nature.

In my own party, I acknowledge Nigel Scullion as a very faithful and loyal deputy. He is the master of the mango daiquiri, but probably the hardest person to get hold of because he spends more time out in the desert and remote Aboriginal communities than anybody else in the parliament, and he does a terrific job. Barnaby Joyce and Fiona Nash—the leaders in the Senate—also do a great job for our party in their work in the Senate. My colleagues, many of whom are here tonight, the senators; their loyal support and cooperation is very much appreciated. It has been a great pleasure to work with them. Mark Coulton, our whip, does a great job. He is out whipping. For most of the year, he has had no clerical staff. I am pleased he has had a little bit over the last week or two. It really has been a challenge for Mark. He, and his wife Robyn, who is like a free volunteer, have managed to do the job and do it with a great deal of dignity and attention to detail.

I also acknowledge Paul Neville, who is sitting behind me. Paul has announced his retirement—indeed, his successor will be chosen this weekend. Paul has been an adornment to the parliament and I will say a lot more about that next year, but, unless something odd happens, this is likely to be the last time he is in the parliament for these acknowledgements, and I recognise his role as a National Party whip for a very long time, both in government and in opposition. He has worked really hard on that. His other particular interest has been in communications. He has taken a keen interest in regional areas and transport as well. Some of the Neville reports, when he was chairman of the committee, have helped to guide policy development over the years. Thank you to those people.

Thanks also to Scott Mitchell, our new federal director, and the Nationals secretariat. Thanks to John Tanner, who has retired as the president of our party, and Christine Ferguson, the new president. I also acknowledge the National's branch network across the country. We actually have the biggest branch network of any political party in the nation. That has its challenges, but it also is a great asset and one that we prize very much indeed. David Whitrow, and my office staff in Canberra, are very important to my capacity to do my job. I certainly appreciate that, along with the work that my electorate staff does, because I am not there nearly as often as I would like to be.

The leader of government business mentioned his spouse and family. I acknowledge not only Lyn—she has had a tough year—and the support that she gives to me but also the spouses of everyone. They are all absolutely key people. I do not particularly want to mention this too much, but I feel for Michael and Catherine at the present time. Catherine has had to go home to a house that has been smashed and burgled and belted up. Michael, we feel for you as you go back to help with the painting and whatever else is going to have to be done to make your house liveable again. This is a disgusting thing that happens from time to time, and you have carried on stoically these last 24 hours when things were not great at home. All of us go through these things from time to time, and that is what makes this job so tough.
Ladies and gentleman, Christmas is a special time of the year when families get together. Members are so often away and value that time, perhaps more than anyone else. During our own break we need to remember others: those who will be working this Christmas; those who will be on alert; the families that have lost a loved one—and we particularly think of the Prime Minister in this regard and of one of our own colleagues, Kay Hull, whose husband died just a couple of days ago. It will be particularly sad for those Christmas tables when there are empty chairs, when a loved one is not there this time.

It is Australia's disaster season, so let us pray for a safe season where there will be no floods, no fires, no cyclones and no other disasters. But we know that there will be people on call if, indeed, they have to act. Thank you also to the people who have to work over Christmas—carers in nursing homes and hospitals, the police, emergency services personnel and others.

May I as shadow minister join the minister in appealing to people to travel safely on the roads. Travel safely. There is nothing sadder than a Christmas having to be spent in a hospital or visiting relatives of people who have lost their lives. So let's make it a very safe Christmas.

In this regard, I also mention our troops in Afghanistan and other places overseas. It is hard to celebrate Christmas when you are away from your family, but I guess it is doubly hard when you are in a country where there is actually no particular recognition of Christmas or it has no meaning. And, of course, it is still very dangerous there. So we have a special prayer for our people in Afghanistan.

Next year will be a busy year—an election year. It will be a busy year for us all. I hope that we can go away and come back refreshed and willing to constructively build a better future for our country and work together. But then of course there will be a vigorous campaign at some stage. On our side, we hope that speeches on occasions like this will be done in an opposite order next time around.

Finally, let us not forget the true meaning of Christmas. The reason for the gift-giving, the lights and the wishes of goodwill is God's gift of his son Jesus to light the world. Spare some time this Christmas to also celebrate this very special event.

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (19:21): On indulgence: it has been a very big year in terms of politics, legislation and also events in the global economy and the national economy. It seems that every year new challenges present themselves and life just seems to get faster and faster. So I think we are all looking forward to Christmas, to spending some time with our families, to doing what we can to think about those in the community who are least fortunate at this time, to think of our troops overseas and to basically think about and value all of those things that drive us in our lives—not just our public lives but our family lives as well.

It has been a volatile year again in the global economy. Four years on from the global financial crisis we are still living with the aftershocks of that. That is very challenging for many people. Whilst our economy is resilient and has strengths that many other economies do not, there are many in our community who were affected by those aftershocks of the global financial crisis through a higher dollar, cautious consumers and rapid technological change. We also reaffirm that we must come here to this parliament and do everything we can to make life better for our fellow citizens.
When it comes to legislation, we have heard a very big year—something like 450 bills through the parliament. I particularly want to pay tribute to Anthony Albanese for the role that he has played in this parliament over the past year. It has been very difficult with a minority government to make sure that it worked effectively. I think I can say that this parliament has worked much more effectively than many other parliaments with clear majorities. Perhaps it is because of Anthony's approach to the job or perhaps it is because we are much more aware of the need to progress things in a more disciplined way. But it is extraordinary that legislation has passed the way it has in the situation in which we find ourselves. I think in no small measure that is a tribute to the efforts of Anthony and his team and his relationships with those across the parliament and on the crossbench.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Independents and the role that they have played. They have shown what can be achieved with a spirit of cooperation and a determination to deliver for all Australians. In particular, I would like to pay tribute to one Bob Katter, who I have spent a bit of time with in the last few years. I have a favourite memory of being with him up in North Queensland earlier in the year. We were at Mission Beach inspecting what needed to be done to restore facilities which had been impacted by Cyclone Yasi. That shows that we can work together across the aisle.

This is also a time to acknowledge the burdens we place on so many people—not just those who work in the parliament but also those who work in our offices, both here and in our electorates. It is important tonight to acknowledge the work done by the clerks, the Speaker, the deputy speakers, the security guards, the COMCAR drivers, HRG, the cleaners, the gardeners and the librarians—all those people who make our life in this parliament liveable. I particularly wanted to pay tribute to Peter Slipper and to Anna as well. I think they have both done a fantastic job as Speakers of the House. I think that is recognised quite widely.

It is also a time to acknowledge the efforts of our personal staff. We simply could not do the job without the superhuman efforts of our staff. In my case, I have been very well served both here in Canberra, in my ministerial office, and in my electorate office in Lilley. Tonight I pay particular tribute to three people in my ministerial office here—Jim Chalmers, Matt Coghlan and Matt Brine—who have served for a very long time. They are officers who demonstrate the spirit we find across all of our offices—people who have been absolutely dedicated to the cause and who, year after year, have worked very hard, motivated by the desire to make Australia a better place. I thank all my staff here in the ministerial office but particularly those three long-serving staffers who have done such a fantastic job. They are outstanding young Australians.

I also thank all the staff in my electorate office in Brisbane, led by Lisa Reynolds. It is always difficult when you are working in an electorate office and the member is a minister. It attracts a lot of attention and they work very hard and very effectively. So I thank, from the bottom of my heart, each and every one of my personal staff for the effort they make day in and day out to make Australia a better place.

I also thank all the officers of the Treasury—Martin Parkinson and his senior officers and all the officers who work in that fantastic organisation. Our Treasury is admired around the world for its skill and commitment to good public policy. Sometimes they do not get the thanks or acknowledgement they deserve—I guess that
it just a fact of the political debate. But I think we all acknowledge the professionalism of our public servants. It is why governance in this country is so admired around the world. We find that embodied not just in the Treasury but also in many other Public Service departments and I think it is very important to acknowledge the role they play.

Tonight I pay particular tribute to the Prime Minister. I think that, in the face of some pretty aggressive attacks, she has absolutely delivered in spades. Nobody in our history has had more hard yards to make in more difficult circumstances. She has done that with unmatched humour and determination. I am very proud of what she has achieved over the past year and I am very proud of what the government has put forward in that time—the NDIS, school funding reform, carbon pricing and so on. But tonight is not a night for discussion of policy.

I thank all of my cabinet colleagues and the caucus. There is a great team in the cabinet. I particularly thank the Treasury team—Bill Shorten, David Bradbury, Brendan O'Connor and Bernie Ripoll. I also thank Penny Wong, the finance minister, who has been terrific to work with. She is very committed and has done a fantastic job. I hope they all take the opportunity, over Christmas, to have a very good rest.

I also acknowledge the work of the opposition. Politics is a tough environment and we have some pretty vigorous exchanges. We do not often agree. But I do enjoy the tussle. I certainly wish the member for North Sydney all the best for Christmas. I know he might be into a bit of summer reading, so I thought I might send him a pack with the IMF reports, the OECD reports, the World Bank reports and all the other reports which talk about the resilience and strength of the Australian economy and how much better off we are than Greece, Ireland, Spain and all the other countries that are in trouble.

I do thank the opposition for what they do in this place because it is an important part of our political process. Joe, if you are travelling overseas at some stage in the next couple of months I hope you tell them how strong our economy is when you are there, yet again—as you did last time you were away.

Finally, I would really like to thank my family. I think we all understand here what a strain political life does put on our families. We simply could not do these jobs without the love and unqualified support of our families. To my wife, Kim, and my kids, Erin, Libby and Matt: I certainly thank them from the bottom of my heart for everything they have done to support me in my public life.

Lastly, I would like to sign off by thanking all of the electors of Lilley. I very much enjoy my role as a local member of parliament. It is a very important way of staying in touch with what people are thinking in our community. I would like to thank all of my local party members.

Once again, I would like to join with many others in acknowledging, particularly this Christmas, that we still have many troops serving overseas. In fact, I will be attending a return parade in the next week of troops returning from Afghanistan.

Having said all that, Australia has actually achieved a couple of significant milestones in the last 12 months. We are now the 12th largest economy in terms of global economic strength. This year we chalked up 21 consecutive years of economic growth. None of that would have been possible if it were
not for the fact that over a very long period of time governments have put in place the long-term reforms to build our prosperity and to build our economic resilience. This is the product of something that is very special about our country, the product of the hard work of a lot of people over a long period of time, by millions of Australian workers and businessepeople that have knuckled down and got on with the job of lifting our living standards and creating a better and fairer society.

At this time, particularly in the lead-up to Christmas, I think we do, in that spirit, always think of the most vulnerable in our community, and it is always important that we keep them very much to the fore of our thoughts.

To everyone, merry Christmas and a happy new year.

BILLS

Treasury Legislation Amendment (Unclaimed Money and Other Measures) Bill 2012

Returned from Senate

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

COMMITTEES

Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Committee

Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Madam Speaker has received a message from the Senate informing the House that Senators Brandis, Crossin, Scullion, Siewert and Thistlethwaite have been appointed members of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Constitutional Recognition of Local Government Committee

Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Madam Speaker has received a message from the Senate informing the House that Senator Crossin had been discharged from attendance on the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Local Government, and Senator Singh had been appointed a member of the committee.

BILLS

Wheat Export Marketing Amendment Bill 2012

Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with amendments.

Ordered that the amendments be considered immediately.

Senate’s amendments—

(1) AG (1) [Sheet 7294 Revised 2]/Xenophon (1) [Sheet 7328]

Clause 2, page 2 (table item 1, column 1), omit “3”, substitute “4”.

(2) AG (2) [Sheet 7294 Revised 2]/Xenophon (2) [Sheet 7328]

Clause 2, page 2 (table item 4), omit the table item, substitute:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Schedule 3</th>
<th>1 October 2014</th>
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However, the provision(s) do not commence at all unless, before that day:

(a) the Minister has published a notice in the Gazette under subsection 12(1) of the Wheat Export Marketing Act 2008 in respect of a code of conduct; and

(b) the code has been declared by regulations under section 51AE of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 to be a mandatory industry code.
Page 2 (after line 11), after clause 3, insert:

4 National wheat industry advisory taskforce to be established

The Minister must cause to be established a wheat industry advisory taskforce by no later than 5 February 2013.

Schedule 1, item 29, page 13 (line 19), omit “voluntary”.

PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

Valedictory

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (19:33): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS Rearrangement

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (19:34): I move:

That:

(1) the following arrangements apply for the remainder of this sitting:

(a) any division on a question called for in the House, other than on a motion moved by a Minister, shall stand deferred until the commencement of the next sitting; and

(b) if any member draws the attention of the Speaker to the state of the House, the Speaker shall announce that she will count the House at the commencement of the next sitting, if the Member then so desires; and

(2) any variation to this arrangement to be made only by a motion moved by a Minister.

This motion is to give people the security of being able to catch the planes that they have booked. There will be no more speeches from this side of the chamber, but my understanding is that there are a couple more from the opposition. We want to facilitate that without delaying every member of the House. I thank the House for its support.

Question agreed to.

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (19:35): On indulgence: as a bruising parliamentary year draws to a close, we should reflect on the fact that Australia is a nation where robust parliamentary debate is conducted as part of our great democratic process, conducted free from any threat of violence. In so many nations around the world people cannot take for granted the right to engage in the battle of ideas, the war of words, without fear that it will spill over into physical battle. With that privilege comes great responsibility. When we walk into this chamber, we must always remember that we never walk alone—with apologies to Gerry and the Pacemakers.

We each represent about 100,000 people who live in our electorates, and one of the great balancing acts with which we all deal is to both represent their concerns and also make decisions in the national interest, based on the evidence and knowledge that we are expected to have. It is the age-old challenge of leadership. As we return to our electorates, we will return to the issues that worry many people, and they can be other than the issues that dominate the daily national news—matters like the rising cost of electricity, the increasing cost of food and health care and a range of state and local government issues. As their federal representatives, we listen to their concerns and we strive to deal with them, even though some issues may not be within our actual sphere of responsibility as federal members.

We must also remember at this time that many Australians will not be able to be with their families this Christmas, for many reasons. Our soldiers serving overseas will continue to perform their important roles and
our hearts go out to their families at this time. Many members of the diplomatic corps remain on duty overseas, often providing consular support to Australians as they travel the world during the holiday period.

Next year, as we all know, will be an election year. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I have been inspired by the many outstanding people who won seats for the coalition at the last election and the candidates who have declared proudly that they want to be part of a future coalition government. People from across all sections of society join the Liberal and National parties because they share a fundamental belief and values system.

The many outstanding staff who support our work are also a vital part of the coalition family. We aspire to uphold the founding principles of the party, as articulated by our great founder, Sir Robert Menzies, which are as relevant today as they were in the 1940s. Our belief in freedom of the individual, choice, self-reliance and personal responsibility, and our belief in the initiative and creativity of enterprising Australians being at the heart of our economy, not government, and families and communities being at the heart of our society, not government—it is these values that guide the development of the policies that we will take to the Australian people as an appealing and responsible alternative government.

I want to thank all those who make this great institution function—the Parliament House staff, the Hansard reporters, the attendants, cleaners, caterers, travel agents, Comcar drivers, Parliamentary Library staff, security, gardeners, and guides that host visiting groups. I make mention of Peter Rose, the parliamentary chaplain. I thank all our friends in the press gallery—they know who they are. I thank our leader, Tony Abbott, and particularly I thank him for the support that he has given me personally. We have become close friends over the years and I admire his drive and his tenacity. He truly is a team leader who inspires our coalition to remain focused and committed to our cause. I hope that Tony, Margie and their three beautiful girls have a break over Christmas.

Warren Truss, the Leader of the Nationals, is a gentleman—a truly wonderful and principled person. Our leadership team is a tight-knit group: Joe Hockey, Chris Pyne, Eric Abetz, George Brandis, Nigel Scullion and Barnaby Joyce join me, Warren and Tony.

To my colleagues: they are a great group of people and a cohesive team. I enjoy their company, I am proud of them and I have been very touched this year by their support. And I want to make mention of my Western Australian colleagues. We have a special bond, travelling as we do so often across that great Nullarbor Plain.

I want to thank all coalition staff, who work so tirelessly and cheerfully, undertaking whatever is asked of them. And I make special mention of my personal staff in Canberra, Murray, Peter and Sam, who have provided exemplary support again this year. Back in Perth, my electorate staff during the year are Kirsten, Sue, Judy, Georgina, Josie, Gabrielle, Mandy and my wonderful volunteer, Alison. My electorate office runs exceedingly efficiently and I could not do what I do without Kirsten and the girls.

I also wish a happy and healthy Christmas to our political opponents in the Labor Party, the Independents and the Greens and their families. We are a diverse parliament, representing a diverse nation, but, as John Howard always used to say, the things that bind us are stronger than the things that divide us. And, although Madam Speaker has departed the chair, I want to place on
record that she has had a challenging year and she has risen to the occasion, as she came into this high office, for the betterment of the House of Representatives.

Let us hope that 2013 is a peaceful one for all Australians in this great land of ours.

Valedictory

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (19:42): I follow so many others in wishing everyone the very best for Christmas. Each year, I arrange with local school principals to identify some kids who are probably going to miss out and Santa Claus may not get to their homes. With a few friends, we are able to donate local awards and buy them bikes with helmets and so on. It means a hell of a lot to those kids. This year, one of the principals rang me and said, 'Can you manage three bikes at our school?' I said, 'Sure. What's the issue?' She said, 'I have a child of 10, a child of eight and a child of five who the department of community services said are never to be returned to their mother; their fathers cannot be found; they have to be separated into different families. The 10- and eight-year-olds are going into the foster care of a man in his early 40s and the five-year-old is going into foster care with two men in their 30s.' It just reminds you: there are still people doing it pretty tough.

The spirit of Christmas is more than salutations across the chamber. It is more than a holiday break. It is a reminder that there are a lot of people out there who are doing it pretty tough. They are not just adults; they are kids, not just here in Australia but around the world, and not just in more disadvantaged suburbs in the country but even on the North Shore of Sydney, which to some people seems a privileged area. But there are a lot of people in housing commission accommodation and a lot of people cannot pay the bills, like everywhere in Australia. So we have to remember those people.

So, in giving bikes to kids—with no media, nothing like that; just doing it because it is right—I actively encourage friends, particularly out of the business community, to donate the money. It is that act of giving that is important. Some of our friends in the media make a bit of fun of these occasions, but sometimes we need to remind them that there is a lot of work that individual members do that does change the lives of local constituents for the better. I think sometimes that is lost in a lot of the populist commentary about politics.

I do not accept the line that this is a more acrimonious parliament than any other. Maybe I am getting a bit long in the tooth, but I have seen acrimony in this place over the years and I have seen it in state parliaments and I have read about it. There has been plenty of acrimony in the House of Representatives, but ultimately we put the nation ahead of everything, as we should. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, it is far better to have debate and to use words against each other than to bear arms, as happens in so many other countries.

I want to place on the record my admiration for our Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott. I wish Margie and Tony and Lulu and Bridget and Frances all the very best for Christmas. It is going to be a big year, 2013—no doubt about that. I wish the best to Warren Truss and his wife, Lyn. Lyn is not only a wonderful wife but also someone that just does the yards with Warren. Warren is a very decent human being. I always thought John Howard used that term, 'decent', as the highest term of admiration for an individual—and I use it in deference to Warren Truss. To Christopher Pyne, who is here and is not a decent—no;
Mr Pyne: Deep down inside!

Mr HOCKEY: In our darkest moments in this place—we have highs and lows and all sorts in this chamber—Christopher just lifts the spirits. He is a much better person than he thinks himself to be sometimes—and certainly a better person than the majority of the population thinks him to be! So to Christopher and Carolyn and their beautiful children—and I know he is a magnificent father—I wish the very best for a nice break over the summer.

I thank my coalition economic team: Andrew Robb, who is stoic and does an enormous amount of hard work; Bruce Billson, who is an indefatigable fighter for small business; Mathias Cormann, who is just outstanding—you could not have a better shadow financial services minister and shadow Assistant Treasurer—and he is expecting a baby, so that is very exciting for Mathias; and Tony Smith, who does an enormous amount of work. They all work so incredibly hard.

I thank my personal staff. The Treasurer apparently has 27 staff, including five press secretaries. I have four personal staff, and I am very grateful for the work that they do. To Grant Lovett, my new chief of staff, thank you so much, mate, for coming on board. I feel incredibly privileged to be able to get someone of his calibre. I thank Tony Pearson, who has had a bit of rough year—he had a major operation. He has come through, and I am really proud of the work he does. Without mentioning them all, I really appreciate so much of what they do and give up. They are outstanding. I particularly want to thank Jackie Parker, who was my PA—this is going to shock you all—for 18 years. It is hard to believe someone could stick with me that long, but my wife and Jackie Parker have. I thank her. She resigned this year. Jackie has a relatively young family, and she has been fantastic. Trent Zimmerman was the head of my electorate office and is known to many of my colleagues. He is outstanding. I thank my FEC president, Rob Orrell, and Pam McClelland, who is a volunteer. My longest-serving volunteer, Erica Wyllie, died this year at the age of 95, and in the last 18 months I have lost two of the three mothers who volunteered in my office over the last 16 years.

To my political opponent, Wayne Swan: I wish him and Kim and their children all the very best. I think being Treasurer is the hardest job in the country after that of Prime Minister. I know that; I was very close to Peter Costello, in government, and I know how hard he worked. I know the stresses and strains that Wayne Swan goes through, so I wish him all the very best. I look forward to trying to take his job next year!

I particularly want to thank James Newbury, if I did not thank him earlier. I do not know why I am thanking him, because he works for Christopher Pyne now! But he asked me to thank him, so don't take offence at that! He has been an outstanding support as well. In addition to all the staff and assistants and everyone else—they are all thanked regularly and I really do appreciate their contributions—I thank the federal director, our party whips and so on.

Madam Speaker, congratulations on your elevation. I love this chamber; I always have. I feel an immense privilege every time I walk in here—every time. I was tortured, to be honest, by the way the chamber was previously going, with all the reputations that were tarnished, and I am glad that was resolved. You know where I am going. I wish you the very best, Madam Speaker. I know you threw me out for campaigning in
your seat a week ago or two weeks ago. Perhaps I will revisit that, but I will make sure it is well away from parliament so I do not get thrown out again!

Finally, I wish everyone a very merry Christmas. When I am introduced at events, people reflect on the fact that my father was born in Bethlehem. Every Christmas I think of Dad and where he has come from. He was no relation to—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: There was nothing immaculate about his conception, I was assured by my late grandmother! I managed to meet her. Dad is in his 80s. Mum is there and she is a fantastic support. I am very lucky to have all my family. My oldest brother turned 60 today. My other brother is going through chemotherapy, and so many families go through such times. But I feel so incredibly privileged to have a link back to the Holy Land, and I bear that in mind.

I thank my wife, Melissa, who is just a phenomenal woman in so many ways. She has been the main breadwinner, she has raised the children and she is a great support. For my children, Xavier, Adelaide and Ignatius, I will do it again this year: at midnight, I will go and put the flour down, put the Santa footprints in the flour.

An opposition member: Hey! They might be listening!

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: They are not listening; they are all in bed. If they are not in bed, I am in trouble! But we do that. Santa comes. Putting those damn toys together at three o'clock in the morning on Christmas Day—strewth! I wish there were instruction manuals for kids toys that were simple. So many of us do it. So many Australians do it, and that makes it all the more special.

I wish everyone the very best for 2013. Everyone has family in one form or another; everyone does. Even if you have no immediate relatives, you have family; you have a nation. Everyone does, and therefore we should be very grateful for what we have, reflect on how we can make it better and come back with more energy and more determination to make Australia an even better place in 2013.

Valedictory

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Manager of Opposition Business) (19:54): On indulgence—The valedictories are an opportunity to thank the people in this building who make the whole show work, who make us look as good as they possibly can, which is, in some cases, not as easy as in others. Obviously, in Joe's case it is very easy; in mine it is much less easy. The valedictories are an important tradition because, in spite of all the sound and fury—sometimes signifying nothing—the parliament goes on, members of parliament come and go and we are all part of the great historical continuum of this parliament. We are all fortunate to be here at this time representing the people in our electorates.

The clerks, Bernard and David, and all of the other officials in this building stay here long after those of us fortunate enough to have been be elected have come and gone, making sure that the parliament operates, that bills get passed and that the business of government goes on. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bernard and David, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk; Robyn McClelland, the Sergeant-at-Arms, and her team; people like Anne Kay, who leads the House attendants, and all the other attendants who take care of our every need in this building; and the Comcar drivers, without whom many of us would be lost. I tried a self-drive vehicle in Canberra for a while, but I decided
it was a dangerous thing to do and thought it might be better to have the Comcars taking me back and forth from the parliament.

**An opposition member:** Good idea!

**Mr PYNE:** Sometimes we overreach!

I would like to thank the Speaker's panel, Deputy Speaker Bruce Scott and Second Deputy Speaker Steve Georganas, who was recently elected. I would like to thank you, Madam Speaker. This has been a very difficult year for the chair. I think you are doing a sterling job—I have told you that privately and I am happy to say it publicly. I think you have taken the chair in very difficult circumstances and have acquitted the role very well. In 2013 I am sure you will continue to do that—until the election, when I hope of course for a coalition victory.

I know this will not be popular with my colleagues, but in spite of the difficulties that we had with the former Speaker this year—in fact, today is the anniversary of the former Speaker's election—as a human being, I feel he has gone through a very, very difficult year. It cannot have been easy for him or his family, or indeed the staff in his office. There are of course allegations that surround him and it cannot have been easy for those people who have been involved in that particular court case, but as another human being, I hope that he has a better summer than he has had in 2012 and that he can recover as a person throughout 2013, and into the future.

I would like to thank my long-suffering staff—as some would describe them—led by Adam Howard, my Chief of Staff. Kaye Gaskin is my PA and has been for a very, very long time; without her, I think I would probably have to resign from parliament because I do not know how anything works in my office—or in my personal life really!

**Mr Hockey:** How many children do you have?

**Mr PYNE:** Four children. Kaye Gaskin basically runs my life, and, without her, the whole thing would fall apart. Aliide Murphy, who is my one education adviser, does an incredibly good job. James Newbury, who runs the parliamentary side of my office, does an amazing job, and is practising the paso doble in my office as we speak. He will understand that allusion, not that most people in this building will. And, I thank all the rest of my staff in the electorate office who basically help me to get re-elected and to serve my electorate as well as I possibly can. Without them, I would not be able to be the member for Sturt and I would not be going into my 20th year. My anniversary is in March next year, and I am sure many of my colleagues will be very pleased to celebrate that on March 22 next year.

I would also like to thank my Liberal and National colleagues—we are a great team, we are a tremendous family and we pull together. So much happens in oppositions—and, I am sure, in governments—that goes unspoken. Mal Washer for example, who is basically the Parliament House doctor, spends a great deal of his time taking care of his colleagues, prescribing and reassuring. I have used his services this year for pulled muscles and other things that he has assured me are not anything to worry about. He is a great fellow, Mal, and we need him in the House doing that job for us. I do not know what we would do without him.

Thanks to all my other colleagues, who are so understanding of me as Manager of Opposition Business. I am certainly not the most popular person in the parliament—and that goes for my own side as well as the Labor side—often having to disappoint my colleagues and ask them to be forbearing, and they are all forbearing and patient and do a tremendous job to make the opposition hold the government to account and prepare it for government.
Amongst my colleagues, I especially mention Warren Entsch, the Chief Whip, and Patrick Secker, Nola Marino, Mark Coulton and Paul Neville, who all help in whips roles for both the Liberals and the National Party.

I thank the leadership team. We meet every morning; it is a great start to the day, we argue little, we agree a lot, and once we have decided on the direction for the day we are a very close-knit team. I thank Warren Truss, the adult in the room, Joe Hockey, not always the adult in the room, and Julie Bishop, the deputy leader, who has had a terrific week and a terrific year.

I particularly thank Tony Abbott, the Leader of the Opposition. It is the most thankless task in politics. Whether you are in state, territory or federal politics, being the Leader of the Opposition is a very difficult role, especially when you have been holding it for a very lengthy period, as he has since December 2009. He has held the team together, he is positioning us for government, and I think most fair-minded people in the press gallery and among the public would say that he has been the most effective Leader of the Opposition in living memory. He has certainly held the government to account, and in the book that he released this week, *A Strong Australia*, in the speeches that he has given over recent months, and over most of this year he has been laying out the agenda for the next coalition government, should we be fortunate enough to be elected. He is obviously a very close, personal friend of mine, since he has been in parliament since 1994—he came in after me, but I certainly do not hold that against him. We work very closely together as leader and as manager of opposition business in the House.

*Mr Hockey interjecting—*

*Mr PYNE:* Yes, he has done very well, Joe, thank you for pointing that out. But I am a servant, you see. The leader's office staff are marvellous, led by Peta Credlin, and they are a fantastic team as well, as is Warren Truss's office, led by David Whitrow, who is a good friend of mine too. He leads a fantastic team on behalf of the National Party. Luke Hartsuyker, the Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House; I could not ask for a more supportive deputy in this role. We work together very well and very amicably. We might be from two different political parties, but very little separates us, certainly in our opposition to this government and our desire to see it changed, so we can both be sitting on the other side of the House as Leader of the House and Deputy Leader of the House—that is a message to Tony Abbott, of course, if he is reading the *Hansard*.

I would like to comment a little bit on this year in 2012. I regard this year as something like Lemony Snicket's books, *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, for this government, starting with the Australia Day riots and shoegate, through to the unfortunate circumstances surrounding the member for Dobell and the HSU scandal, the change to the speakership and some of the issues that have surrounded the speakership, the introduction of the carbon tax, and ending this week with the AWU slush fund scandal. For this government it has been a series of unfortunate events—

*Mrs Lyons interjecting—*

*Mr PYNE:* Very unfortunate for you, because I beat you, Mr Lyons, at billiards this week, so no wonder you are here.

*Mr Lyons:* No, snooker!

*Mr PYNE:* Snooker. This has been a series of unfortunate events for the government and also for the country, and it has been a torrid parliamentary year. Most years are, but this one has been particularly difficult given some of the issues that I have
just raised. In spite of all that, I thank the Leader of the House, Anthony Albanese. Anthony Albanese is a man of his word, may I say. Every time he has told me that something will happen or that he will do something, he has kept his word, and I have tried to do the same thing.

In spite of the great difficulties the government has had this year—the obvious leadership challenge this year involving the member for Griffith and the Prime Minister, the unabashed carpet bombing of the member of Griffith and his supporters, the difficulties in the Labor caucus all year, their careering from one disastrous issue to another—the leader of the House always keeps a cheerful countenance. We try to work together. We try to hide that as much as possible but we do try to work together, and we do get along quite well, personally. We have even managed to have some fun in this torrid parliamentary year.

But that also speaks volumes for our democracy. In this country we change governments at the ballot box, not at the end of a gun, unlike many countries in the world. Even though he is at the spear tip of the government's attacks on the opposition, and I am at the spear tip of the opposition's attacks on the government, we can still have a perfectly reasonable and, in fact, a very healthy relationship. I thank him for that and acknowledge it.

I also thank Moksha Watts, who makes Anthony look good most days. She certainly tries to keep him out of trouble. Moksha and James Newbury of course, are the ones who know what is going on in the chamber most of the time. In fact, they are probably both dancing the paso doble at the Labor Party's party tonight. They are the ones who are really keeping the ship on an even keel.

In closing, I thank my opposite number, Peter Garrett. In spite of his obvious shortcomings he is a decent person. I think he is trying to do his best in the portfolio. I wish him and his family well for Christmas.

Finally, we are all lucky to be here. Our families allow us to be here. Without supportive husbands and wives, and patient and forbearing children, we could not do this job. Those of us who have chosen to come here have sought preselection and got elected. We love this job. We love the parliament. We love the opportunity to effect policy and to make a change in this country both at the macro level and at the micro level for our constituents individually—between them and government—but also with major government and opposition policy. But our families do not usually get much choice in the matter. So I thank Caroline, my wife of 19 years, for her forbearance and her support, and my four children: Barnaby, Eleanor, Felix and Aurelia. All of them regard this particular job as peculiar and weird and not in the least bit cool. They are amazing to put up with me and all the travel, publicity and everything else they would rather was not in the papers and the television. They would rather that they did not have people telling them that their dad is no good. Very few people tell them that their dad is any good but some of them might, hopefully, next year! They are great children. I have a marvellous wife. I have wonderful colleagues and I wish all of them a great and happy Christmas, a successful New Year.

I know there is quite a proliferation of Macedonians amongst the attendants and staff around this building, including the cleaning staff who take care of us. They are all very good people and I would like to say to them, 'Kako si ctrecen bozic i ctrecna nova godina na tebe i na tvojata familiya.'
The SPEAKER (20:04): I add to the debate by congratulating everybody who works in this building for the way they have ensured its smooth functioning this year. It has been a challenging year, as everyone has talked about. It has been characterised by significantly increased workloads and limited resources, but the parliament has functioned. We should be incredibly proud of the institution we have around us. The parliament has sat. It has worked. Regardless of what everybody has said about a hung parliament and all the rest of it, our institution does us proud. Our nation should realise that. If you go around the world to other parliaments—as Speakers get to do—you could not say that of every parliament across the globe. So, as a nation we should be incredibly proud of the institution we have.

I thank all the members who spoke today and all the others who have spoken on every bill throughout this year. We concentrate on question time and we look at that as the cut and thrust of parliament—it is not. It is all about those other speeches you give—constituent statements, adjournment debates and speeches in debates on legislation which might not mean anything to you but which may have an impact on one corner of your electorate or on one business, and you speak about it diligently. Those speeches do not get reported but they happen in this place.

It is because of the hard work of the members, their staff and the parliamentary staff that we have the amazing democracy that we have. Statistics give us a little of the picture. Up until yesterday morning, Hansard and broadcasting supported approximately 1,500 hours of parliamentary business—from Parliament House to hearings in remote communities. By the end of the year, it is expected that Parliament House will have hosted over 800,000 visitors and conducted over 1,500 tours. A lot of people come to visit this august institution and we should be proud of that.

The Parliamentary Library has been particularly busy. I suspect that is because the opposition is getting a lot of good work out of them. It has generated 359 new publications, completed over 14,000 individual client jobs and added nearly 4,000 new titles to the library collection this year alone. Some 190 bills have been introduced, 22 by private members—a record in the life of this parliament. There were 109 private members’ motions debated and 45 of those were agreed to. Whatever people might say about the new paradigm, private members have had a greater say in this parliament than in any other parliament since Federation.

Members and staff have worked diligently to discharge their responsibilities on House and joint committees. There were 114 traditional reports presented and 46 advisory reports on bills—usually done on very tight turnarounds. Again, this represents an amazing amount of work that is never reported on and most people never know about—and most of that work was done in a bipartisan way.

All areas of the Department of the House of Representatives have worked solidly through the year. A new edition of House of Representatives Practice was published in August—my staff and I think of it as the Olympic edition. Members will not be surprised that it records many firsts. In addition, there has been a redoubling of efforts in relation to old favourites, such as the Speaker's casting vote. The Clerk has accused me of aspiring to set the record for its exercise. I am not trying to, but maybe by the end of next year I will hold the record for making a casting vote on the most occasions.
We have looked after visits by 32 parliamentary delegations this year alone. We have made arrangements for 21 outgoing parliamentary delegations or Presiding Officer visits. One of the two major highlights of our interparliamentary activities has been the growth of the Pacific Public Sector Linkage Program, which provides parliamentary assistance to help emerging parliaments in the Pacific—again, this is something most people do not know about but something of which we should be incredibly proud. We are assisting democracy in our very region and we are assisting it greatly. Of particular note has been the work with the parliament of Samoa in a range of activities, including assistance with developing a members handbook and providing support in developing a community encouragement strategy. In one country I visited this year, the clerk said to me that all she wanted was for her parliament to actually meet. For all our faults and failings, we are here.

The other major highlight was receiving AusAID support for the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Pacific initiative. The initiative will provide opportunities to build connections between Australian and Pacific women parliamentarians in support of capacity building. It targets not only women in parliament but also women in other sectors of the community. This year PNG had their elections. It was pretty historic. Three women were elected to their parliament. It does not sound like much, but it was a huge achievement. Again, Australia played a significant role in that.

The year 2012 has seen great changes in the Department of Parliamentary Services, who provide us with such great support. The building would cease to function without them. DPS commenced 2012 under the leadership of Mr Alan Thompson. Following Alan's retirement, Mr David Kenny, a deputy secretary, acted as secretary for a period, as did Mr Russell Grove, former Clerk of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. We thank them for help with the interim arrangements. Ms Carol Mills commenced as secretary of the department in May this year following a distinguished career in the New South Wales Public Service. The Parliamentary Librarian, Ms Roxanne Missingham, resigned in February to take up another challenging role and Dr Diane Heriot was formally appointed to the position in May of this year. In July, the secretary of the department, Ms Mills, announced her key priorities for strengthening DPS as a department with a reputation for customer focus.

There were many key developments for the department in 2012. The new Australian Parliament House website was launched this year. The Heritage Advisory Board held its inaugural meeting in May—long overdue.

DPS implemented the transfer of responsibility for electorate office IT from the Department of Finance and Deregulation—something most members will not know about, but they will be very happy when it finally comes to fruition and IT is much easier for everybody. The Presiding Officers also accepted in principle the recommendations of the review of ICT. So much has been going on behind the scenes again this year that most people do not know about, but it has been functioning incredibly well. Over this year the parliamentary departments have continued to find budget savings, and this has been difficult while trying to maintain core services and the incredibly high standards that they deliver to all of us.

On a personal level, I could not undertake all the duties of the House without the assistance of my colleagues who occupy the
chair—in particular the two deputy speakers who have been recently been appointed and all the members of the Speaker's panel. It has been a trying year with the number of hours we have had to take on, the additional hours we get at short notice and the fact that most people do not realise we actually run two chambers and we staff them well. So I would like to say a very big thank you, particularly to the member for Maranoa, who is in the chamber today, and his staff, who have taken up the difficult role of rostering.

I would like to also pay tribute to the guidance that the clerks have given me and their absolute patience with me, particularly over the last couple of months. Without the knowledge and guidance of the clerks—particularly Bernard Wright and David Elder, here with us today, but all the clerks—and their colleagues, this place does not function. The chair does not work and the House does not happen without them. Their knowledge, experience and commitment to this institution are invaluable.

All members will be aware of the critical role played by the Department of Parliamentary Services. I thank all the staff, led by Carol Mills, particularly security, cleaners, drivers, PLO, Hansard, Broadcasting and many, many more who I cannot even thank. I also thank the attendants and the Table Office. Behind the scenes there are something like 6,000 people who run this building, and without them, again, it does not function. We need to say a very big thank you and wish them also a very happy and safe Christmas. The staff of the parliamentary departments have indeed provided us high-quality day-to-day service throughout the year, much of which goes unnoticed by even the occupants of this place, let alone the public.

I would like to especially thank the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the House, the Manager of Opposition Business and the whips. It might not seem as if I like them all the time! When I took on the role of Speaker, the member for Scullin advised me it would be 149 people versus me, and it does feel like that most days, but I really do admire and respect all those individuals who have taken on those incredible roles and do it to an incredible standard. So I wish to thank them all for their assistance over this year. All of their leadership and professionalism is essential to the successful functioning of this House.

The robust debate and passion that we see here in the chamber every day do often provide something of a spectacle, but they demonstrate the desire of all members to contribute and try to make our nation a better place. So, when we get the individuals coming in and complaining, I often say to them, 'You had to be there in the moment; you have to understand the passion and you have to see it from our side.' Sometimes you get that snippet on the news—even me telling everybody off. People here are dedicated to what they do, and I think the nation should be proud of and thankful for that.

I would like to thank all members and staff of the parliament for the cooperation, courtesy, civility and help that they have extended to me during this difficult year. I would particularly like to thank all my staff: the ever-present Chris Paterson for coming back, because without him I do not think any of this would happen; the effervescent Lindy Franklyn, in my office, who is a champion and the most organised person I know, even if she is tragically a supporter of Collingwood; Jason; Alastair; Rosemary, who has taken on the role of answering all those wonderful calls during question time.
and giving out the tickets; my electorate staff, who have been with me for a very long time—Janet, Rick, Liana and David, who have been there, and Emily, who is sadly off on sick leave at the moment. I am thinking of you and hoping all goes well. All of them make it happen for me. Without our staff—without the support of all around us—we cannot do this, so they are terrifically wonderful. Again, it has been a difficult year of juggling all the things I have had to do at very short notice, so they have been terrific.

To all my branch members and supporters, I say it is a very interesting role now as Speaker and also still running my electorate. As the member for North Sydney pointed out, I do have a very active candidate against me and I want to be out there as well, so I need to do both and do an interesting job of being non-political here and very political at home. So it is a great balancing act. I am incredibly proud of being the member for Chisholm. I have represented those people now for 14 years and I hope to get another chance to do so after the next election.

Finally, I give my sincere thanks to my incredible family. Maddie and John, like all of us, have put up with a lot. They have known nothing else because, of course, when I came here I did not have children and now I have two, so at one level they think my job is great and at another level they think it is bad. Maddie had her 13th birthday the day I became Speaker, which was quite terrible because everybody forgot about her 13th birthday—even if I had got her a really good present! They have put up with a lot and they are terrific. I say thank you to my husband, Steve, for his incredible, tireless support, to my mother, who does so much, and to my extended family, who are all around me—particularly Julian, who is going to score at the cricket tomorrow night for me; thanks for that. I am blessed like a lot of people to have an incredible support network and, again, we cannot do it without them. A thank you to them.

As we approach Christmas, I want to wish you all in this House and everyone listening a very happy, safe Christmas—a joyous time of the year. I think we should all be able to say, 'It's Christmas,' and to think about that tradition in the time we are all celebrating. As everybody else has said, be safe on the road and enjoy that time with one another. Think about what it means and the blessings that we all share. It is important for family and, I am sure, everybody else to enjoy a well-earned break. I know I have earned one and so over Christmas and January I am going to spend some time with my family. To everybody, a very large thank you.

Valedictory

Dr MIKE KELLY (Eden-Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary for Defence) (20:21): I do not wish to prolong our agony, but I think the last word should be to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your superb performance—I very sincerely make those comments—particularly in the circumstances under which you have operated. I echo the comments of the Manager of Opposition Business and others who have thanked the support staff in this building. Most of them are constituents of mine from Queanbeyan, so I do combine a lot of constituent work here with doing my business in this place.

I would very much like to wish all of my parliamentary colleagues—and particularly my New South Wales neighbours, from the member for Riverina through to the member for Hume and the member for Gilmore, all of whom I get on very, very well with and respect enormously—a great festive season and a happy Kwanzaa, a happy Hanukkah and a happy Christmas.
ADJOURNMENT

Dr MIKE KELLY (Eden-Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary for Defence)

(20:22): I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

Question agreed to.

House adjourned at 20:22
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Georganas) took the chair at 09:54.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Stirling Electorate: Balga Early Learning Centre

Mr KEENAN (Stirling) (09:54): I rise today to congratulate the Salvation Army Balga Early Learning Centre on its recent achievement of receiving the highest rating possible under the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care. The Balga Early Learning Centre attained an overall grade of 'exceeding quality standard', which is a great achievement for a non-profit childcare centre that is situated in what is traditionally quite a tough area.

Balga is one of the areas I am very pleased to represent. It is an area that traditionally has a lot of new migrants. It is an area that has a reputation in Perth for being quite a tough area. I am not sure that that reputation is particularly well deserved, because the area has changed significantly over the past decade. It is true to say that the Balga Early Learning Centre do an exceptional job in caring and catering for the community that they serve.

Under the National Quality Framework, the centre was given a set of seven criteria that they were marked on. They received the highest mark of exceeding quality standard for four of the seven criteria, including educational program and practice; leadership service management; children's health and safety; and collaborative partnership with families and communities. They then received the highest mark available meeting quality standard for the remaining three criteria, which include physical environment, staffing arrangements and relationship with children.

I would like to congratulate Jo Ineson and all the staff at the Balga Early Learning Centre for this tremendous result, which is a testament to their very hard work and dedication to educating and caring for young children. The Balga Early Learning Centre is a pivotal institution in Stirling that deserves this recognition for the brilliant work that they do throughout my community.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the children of the Salvation Army Balga learning centre for designing the image that we have used this year on our Christmas cards. The children drew pictures that reminded them of Christmas, including candy canes, presents, holly and a Christmas tree, which were beautifully coloured and which I will now use to be delivered to over 3,000 people for the Christmas cards that I am yet to turn my attention to.

It is a great pleasure to be able to visit institutions like the Balga Early Learning Centre within Stirling and to see the sorts of people who are working in these centres. They are going truly above and beyond to make sure that the children that they care for get the best possible start in life. It has got a wonderful atmosphere and the infrastructure that they use is relatively old but they have done a tremendous job in the way it presents itself and the way that they have brought that infrastructure up to scratch in a building that would date back to the 1970s.

I am very proud of what they do. They are a wonderful bunch of people, and it is a great opportunity to be able to update the House on what is a tremendous institution. (Time expired)
Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (09:57): I rise today to congratulate Father Joachim Rego from the parish of St Brigid's Marrickville for his election in Rome at the Superior General of the Passionist Order of the Catholic Church.

Father Joachim was born in Myanmar in August 1954 and migrated to Marrickville with his family as a teenager. He attended high school at De La Salle College in Marrickville, which is now Casimir Catholic College, before joining the Passionists in 1975. He professed his first vows in 1976 and was ordained a priest in 1981.

Joachim worked for 18 years in Papua New Guinea as regional vicar, novice master and formator, and was President of the Conference of Major Superiors of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. He worked as novice master in the Indian Vicariate of the Passionists Congregation and also in the parish of St Brigid's Marrickville prior to his election as Provincial Superior in 2007.

Joachim is the eldest son of Mr and Mrs George and Celina Rego of Marrickville. His brother, Father Aloysius Rego, is the regional vicar of the Discalced Carmelite Friars in Australia-Oceania. His sister Bernadette and brother Valerian live in Marrickville with their spouses and children.

St Brigid's church is just a short walk from my electorate office in Grayndler. It is well known throughout the community of the inner west for its charitable works and its commitment to social justice. My son was baptised there.

At the end of last year, I attended a function at Marrickville Town Hall to celebrate the 125th jubilee of the arrival of the Passionists at St Brigid's in Marrickville. It was a wonderful community celebration attended by members of the parish but also members of the wider community. This is a wonderfully inclusive community that goes out of their way to celebrate the multiculturalism that makes Marrickville such a diverse, interesting and vibrant community.

In addition to the church, the parish also includes St Brigid's Primary School and Casimir Catholic College—two schools that have provided a quality education to many thousands of local families in my electorate over the years, including to Father Joachim himself. I congratulate Father Joachim on his achievement and wish him the best of success as he embarks on a new chapter of his life in Rome.

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield) (09:59): I rise to speak on the topic of Bushcare in Bradfield and the importance of caring for native bush. The electorate of Bradfield is very fortunate in that almost everybody in the electorate lives within a few minutes of extensive swathes of natural bushland. It is a very important part of the character of the upper North Shore of Sydney. Unfortunately, there is a real danger of the unique character of our bushland being compromised. This is where the many volunteer Bushcare groups in the electorate of Bradfield do such an outstanding job. These hardworking volunteers do such things as removing rubbish and refuse from local bushland, and removing noxious weeds to stop them from spreading. They help preserve local biodiversity through caring for native plants and animals. They plant native seedlings and they educate and provide training workshops for
those who want to know more about maintaining local bushland. In recent months I myself have had the benefit of being educated in being able to recognise such species as lantana, privet and trad. These groups do outstanding work and I want to acknowledge the remarkable contribution they make.

We have a very large number of Bushcare groups in Bradfield—in fact, we have identified some 88 groups—and in recent months I have had the privilege of visiting several of those groups; for example, the Quarry Creek Bushcare group in West Pymble, led by Bill Jones; the Geary's Way Bushcare group in Killara, led by Hugh Lander; and the Broadway Bushcare group in Wahroonga, led by Harry Lock. In each case these leaders and the volunteers working with them were very generous with their time and expertise in sharing with me the stories of the work they do and showing me some of the areas which they have successfully regenerated. I also want to acknowledge the important work of Ku-ring-gai Council and Hornsby council in supporting the Bushcare groups and providing important resources and training to underpin their work.

Most importantly, I want to acknowledge the volunteers in the Bushcare groups. The native bush of Australia is extremely important to our sense of identity and sense of self, and is a critical element of our overall environment. That is as true of the electorate of Bradfield as it is of the nation more generally. Therefore, the work that the volunteers in these Bushcare groups do is of the highest importance in preserving that environment against the many pressures which today's modern life can create. They do tremendous work and I congratulate them on the contribution that they make.

Ms Sarah Cafferkey, Bacchus Marsh

Ms King (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing) (10:02): It is with great sadness that I rise today to reflect on the murder of one of my constituents, young Sarah Cafferkey of Bacchus Marsh. Sarah's mother Noelle describes Sarah as a happy, bubbly person who loved her 18-month-old labrador, Sprocket. Her mother said she wanted to be a movie star and a singer. She loved helping people, and only saw good in people. She was always a little actress from as young as Noelle could remember.

Bacchus Marsh is a growing community. It has a very strong and connected community base. That has never been more pronounced than over the past few days. On the main street of Bacchus Marsh, our shop frontages are respectfully adorned in pink; there are pink balloons, and pink ribbons and flowers which have been lovingly entwined around street poles. People of all ages have come out strongly to support Sarah's family and friends and to say no to violence against women in their communities.

This Sunday on 2 December at 11 am, I, along with hundreds of people from across that community, will come together at the base of the iconic Avenue of Honour to take part in a walk in remembrance of Sarah Cafferkey. This walk will be representative of the strength of the community, its resilience and its determination. The colours of pink and white will, I am sure will be prominent—pink being Sarah's favourite colour, and white being in support of White Ribbon Day. This week, following White Ribbon Day on Sunday, I think it is very important to reflect on the very real and very personal circumstances behind the violence that occurs in our community, whether it be—and this is where White Ribbon Day started—the very hidden crime of domestic violence and the importance of having men in our community standing up
against that violence in every shape or form or whether it be the very public recent Victorian cases of Sarah Cafferkey, Jill Meagher and Sargun Ragi. Something is going very wrong in our communities when this sort of violence is continuing.

I think it is very important that Bacchus March as a community, particularly young people, have the opportunity to talk about this, to talk about what is happening in their own communities and how young people can stay safe in all circumstances in those communities. I am very proud of the young people of Bacchus Marsh; I have been following many of their Facebook pages. Again, there are some very emotional comments, and it is very important that people are very careful about that when there is a court prosecution about to be undertaken. As I said, I am very proud of the young people of Bacchus Marsh, who have come together and developed a walk, and are starting to really deal with these issues in our community. I say to Noelle, to Adrian and to the many people connected with Sarah how terribly sorry I am that you have lost your baby in such circumstances.

Tourism

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson) (10:06): I raise an issue of national importance that will affect our national interest. By that I mean the tourism and hospitality industry, which employs nearly one million Australians and produces $95 billion of annual spend towards our Australian economy. I refer to the headlines in the papers over the last couple of days—that is, the breakdown of the partnership between Tourism Australia and Qantas, and the withdrawal of sponsorship which amounts to some $50 million.

I am not here to champion the cause of Tourism Australia or Qantas, or to take any side in this conflict other than that of the tourism industry as a whole. The tourism industry is one that is built on perception more than reality. A breakdown, public fight or dispute will affect the operations of our tourism industry at a time when our peak tourism marketing season is getting underway, with shows like G'day LA and G'day USA, and the ATE in Sydney being planned and progressed, to name but a few. What people need is certainty in direction, not disputes. People are starting to work out whether to tag their brochures, their promotions, with Tourism Australia or Qantas; what will they do?

So today I call on Minister Ferguson to immediately intervene in the dispute. As the former head of the ACTU, he knows—like Bob Hawke, his predecessor, who acted in this way—that the relevant people must be brought to the table today. Speed is of the essence to minimise the impact and any damage. To do otherwise would be acting against the national interest. Tourism is a key employer, particularly in rural and regional Australia, and the flow-on effect of this will be very broad. I say to Minister Ferguson: you cannot sit back and allow the situation to unravel. You are the minister; your sole responsibility in the tourism industry is for Tourism Australia and the promotion of Australia to our international markets. Minister, we will support you in these endeavours to bring about a positive result for our tourist industry. If you do not sit down with these people, Minister, and the situation breaks down even further, we will see the effects of this both in the short term and in the long term on our inbound tourism markets. It will be reflected in sales, because there will be a lack of confidence in our product and our ability to deliver.

The final question, of course, is: Minister, given you are responsible for Tourism Australia, what will you do to fill the $50 million void that will occur because of this breakdown in the
partnership between Tourism Australia and Qantas? Minister Ferguson, I call on you today to act, to intervene and to get the parties together. (Time expired)

**Exports**

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM** (Braddon—Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (10:09): Good morning, colleagues. My region is well known for its many excellent business enterprises, and three of those businesses were selected recently as national finalists for the prestigious Australian Export Awards, which recognise Australian businesses for excellence and achievement in exporting. One was Walnuts Australia, which is the only large-scale commercial producer of quality walnuts in Australia using state-of-the-art technology. They export in particular to Germany, Italy, Turkey and China. The second was a producer of Australian quality honey, a family business established in 1955 specialising in Tarkine leatherwood honey, sold under the Blue Hills Honey label. They export to Japan, the UK, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. The third was Specialised Vehicle Solutions, specialising in design, manufacturing and support of underground mining products. I was very pleased that, just the other evening, the Forth-based Walnuts Australia was named the Australian Emerging Exporter Award at the 15th Australian Export Awards ceremony in Canberra. Congratulations to all those finalists and particularly the winner of the Australian board, the Forth-based Walnuts Australia. Well done, everybody there.

The second thing I would like to raise is that on Saturday 17 November I attended a rally in Burnie which was auspiced by the Australian Workers Union under the banner of Our Tarkine Our Future, practising mining and conservation since 1896. Attending the rally were 3,500 people, and I had the privilege of speaking at that rally.

The intention of the rally and the petition of 6,600 signatures that accompanied it—which was presented yesterday to Minister Burke, by me, delegates from the Australian Workers Union from my region, the national secretary, Paul Howes, and Tasmanian AWU secretary, Ian Wakefield—was to make the point that in Tasmania people are tired of the extremes in terms of economic development versus conservation, and that we can have a balance; we can have both. That is particularly in relation to the area designated as the Tarkine, where we have had mining, forestry, recreation and fishing. We want to maintain that balance rather than lock up the area purely for conservation. That was the message of the delegation yesterday. I congratulate everyone involved in the Our Tarkine Our Future campaign. (Time expired)

**Riverina Electorate: Health Services**

**Mr McCORMACK** (Riverina) (10:12): I rise today to say that last Friday I had the absolute pleasure to officially open the Temora Medical Complex in Hoskins Street. This was the realisation of a six-year dream for Temora, and no-one worked harder for that facility's opening than the new Mayor of Temora Shire Council, Councillor Rick Firman, in his capacity as a councillor and as deputy mayor before the last election as well as in his role as the chairman of the council's Health Strategies Committee. The project came in on time and under budget, and it came about as a result of funding as part of the fourth round of the government's National Rural and Remote Health Infrastructure Program, where the government provided $501,500. I thank the government for that funding, as well as the state coalition government for providing $2½ million. As I say, it was the result of six years of hard work and dedication by the Temora Shire Council, which is a very progressive council. Council's Kris Dunstan managed the project, and the general manager, Gary Lavelle, in
conjunction with the former mayor, Councillor Peter Speirs, worked very diligently to ensure that the dream became a reality.

All those at the opening, after the actual curtain pulling, could not help but be impressed by the exceptional layout and standard of the new centre, which incorporates consultation rooms, specialist rooms, on-site pathology, on-site parking, an ambulance docking area and a marvellous training facility. Training is so important in rural and regional areas because we not only need to attract doctors to the bush; we also need to retain them. So recruitment is important but retention is absolutely vital. Anybody who comes from regional areas certainly knows that health is one of the big gaps in service provision, so I am pleased to say that there are a number of exciting projects in the Riverina: the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital is being rebuilt, the Griffith Hospital private-public partnership has $11.3 million worth of funding and there has been $6 million for the Hillston multipurpose centre. Things are happening, and it is great. There are initiatives at the moment to get a rural medical school at Wagga Wagga, with both Charles Sturt University and the University of New South Wales working hard to achieve something there. Very great congratulations go to Temora, the builders NW Bland and Sons and all others who had a part in that complex. (Time expired)

Middle East

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (10:15): I rise to mark the importance of today being the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, as mandated by the UN General Assembly in 1978. The day marks an occasion and an opportunity for governments, parliaments and indeed public opinion to reflect on the events of 29 November 1947, when the UN resolved to partition Palestine, effectively splitting the Palestinian people from their land, displacing them and rendering them homeless and stateless for generations to come.

Today, 65 years later, in the UN General Assembly, in what is a historic move, a motion will be considered to recognise Palestine as a non-voting member state of the UN—a resolution that if, as expected, it passes will go some way to rectifying this historical injustice, an injustice that sits at the heart of continued conflict in the Middle East. In a show of solidarity with the Palestinian people, and with a slight sign of frustration over the latest failure in the peace process, most nations of the world, some 132, are expected to vote in support of Palestine's bid to be granted observer status at the UN General Assembly.

In acknowledging the Australian government's decision to abstain from this historic vote, I want to note my deepest regrets that we will not be on the right side of history by voting yes. I, together with a large number of my constituents and millions of Australians, reaffirm our support for a just, fair and peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—one that involves an independent Palestinian state and an Israel that is safe and secure in its borders. Contrary to what opponents of the yes vote suggest, a yes vote will not hinder the peace process between Palestine and Israel. On the contrary, I believe that it will advance it. This is a significant step in the right direction. Proclamations that the recognition of a Palestinian state are detrimental to the peace process must realise that the current stalemate in the peace process feeds discontent and frustration amongst the Palestinian people. Now, more than ever, they need a sign of hope; they need to feel that the international community, Australia included, has not abandoned them and has not turned a blind eye to their plight, but rather that it is prepared to be bold enough and wise enough to recognise their right to exist.
With your indulgence, Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank, with utmost sincerity and gratitude, those who have rallied and mobilised for a just outcome on Palestine’s membership at the UN. They are, of course: the ambassador, His Excellency Izzat Abdulhadi, Head of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific; the Australian Friends of Palestine—for all of their hard work; the Rev. James Barr, the Rev. Gregor Henderson, Jessica Morrison and all the team at the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network; and my constituents and the number of Australians who greatly support this action today.

(Time expired)

Australia Post

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (10:18): I rise to speak on the circumstances of the Wanneroo post office in my electorate of Cowan. This is not the first time that I have spoken on the Wanneroo post office, its inadequacies and its poor ability to provide service to my constituents. I think it is tragic that there was a great opportunity in the last few years with the redevelopment of the Wanneroo shopping centre, now Wanneroo Central shopping centre. There was an opportunity for the post office to upgrade and relocate to that centre so that they can, again, have adequate parking and enough room even for people to queue inside. It is a truly shambolic situation. It is shambolic inside the building where, again, people are queuing around between counters without any great order. It is shambolic in the way that the car park is arranged. What is pretty much a major thoroughfare of vehicles through the car park really does make it difficult and dangerous for people to walk, reverse and move their cars around that area. Three hundred and seventy-seven of my constituents have signed this petition, which I will seek leave to table, to draw attention to the circumstances of the post office.

Much of what is said in the petition is about the deplorable state of the surrounds and the exterior of the Australia Post office which is a problem. It is a safety risk for both seniors and families with children. There is a pathway which does not meet Australian standards with steps so high that cars can get caught on the footpath as they drive into the car bays and elderly people cannot step up onto the footpath. This is located in one of the fastest growing local government areas in Australia.

It is time for Australia Post to listen to what people have to say and the needs of people as listed in this latest highlighting of the inadequacies of its facilities. Maybe Australia Post should have a look at its own facility and determine that something needs to be done. The facility should be relocated. I cannot see how a complete renovation of the facility is going to fix up the problems that currently exist. It should be put into better premises in the town centre of Wanneroo. I take this opportunity to seek leave to table this petition as agreed to by the committee.

Leave granted.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Type 1 Diabetes

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (10:21): I rise to acknowledge two very special young people who are battling type 1 diabetes, Tess Macartney and Nici Cairney. They have come to Parliament House this week as part of Kids in the House program run by Juveniles Diabetes Research Foundation, JDRF, which as I understand is the world's largest charitable supporter of type 1 diabetes research. This year the Kids in the House program has brought 100,000 Australians,
including Tess and Nici, with type 1 diabetes to Parliament House to continue the ongoing public awareness and support for the type 1 or juvenile diabetes campaign.

Type 1 diabetes is an insidious disease that impacts on the lives of more than 100,000 Australians and their families. Type 1 diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases in children. It occurs more frequently than cancer, cystic fibrosis, multiple sclerosis and muscular dystrophy. It is important to be reminded when we are reflecting on the effects of type 1 diabetes to put yourself in the situation of children like Tess and Nici, who have to take multiple insulin injections daily and test their blood sugar by pricking their fingers for blood four, five or more times per day, literally in order to stay alive. Despite the daily routine that both Tess and Nici have had to endure, I am proud to say that they have both become successful youth advocates who this year has been promoting the Promise to Remember Me campaign run by the JDRF which has seen them both, separately, meet with me earlier this year to promote more awareness of juvenile diabetes.

Due to her efforts Tess was presented with the National Young Volunteer of the Year award by the JDRF at last year's Walk to Cure Diabetes event at Albert Park for leading a successful campaign with her mother and staunch advocate, Mairi-Anne Macartney. Last year this led to the reinstatement of the carers allowance for families of children over 10 years old with type 1 diabetes. It was a strong grassroots, community led campaign. Tess and her mother are now advocating for better supervision of diabetic children at day care, kindergarten and school. According to Mairi-Anne many schools, including Tess's, no longer have a nurse so it is essential that teachers and other caregivers are trained to recognise danger signs. For Mairi-Anne and Tess the key now is to ensure that at least one person at each school is trained to assist children with type 1 diabetes taking multiple insulin injections and testing their blood sugar levels.

Both of these young citizens, if you want to use that terminology, and their parents are a credit to their community. They are lobbying very hard to increase awareness of type 1 diabetes and its effects and to ask for more investment in medical research. To that end I welcome in a bipartisan way the Leader of the Opposition's $30 million commitment today, as I understand it. I would like to commend these two brave young people. They are advancing the cause of this insidious disease and leading the way in promoting awareness and medical research into this disease. (Time expired)

BUSINESS
Rearrangement

Mr HUSIC (Chifley—Government Whip) (10:24): I move:
That business intervening before order of the day No. 4, committee and delegation reports, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES
Economics Committee
Report

Debate resumed on the motion:
That the House take note of the report.
Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (10:25): The review by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics of the Reserve Bank of Australia’s annual report was tabled in the House on the last Thursday of the last sitting week in October. As members would be well aware, the economics committee of the House of Representatives meets with the Reserve Bank twice a year as part of its oversight function—an oversight function that has existed since the bank was granted full independence in 1996. As you would be aware, Mr Deputy Speaker Georganas, and other members would be aware, more recently the work of the committee has included questioning the bank over what has been described in the media as the ‘banknotes bribery scandal’.

This issue first emerged in the public sphere in May 2009. On that day the Melbourne Age reported allegations of bribery by overseas business agents of Securency International, a company half-owned by the Reserve Bank, that produces the polymer substrate material used in Australian banknotes. This was the first in a long series of articles by Age journalists Richard Baker and Nick McKenzie, alleging that the use of bribes to secure overseas business contracts was endemic to two RBA subsidiary companies. Soon after, the name of another RBA subsidiary began to be mentioned. The Age reported that Note Printing Australia, a wholly owned subsidiary of the RBA that prints the banknotes, had dismissed its foreign business agents after an internal company audit recommended that stricter controls were required.

Since May 2009 the allegations of bribery have mushroomed. There have been literally hundreds of stories written on the subject, as most members of this House would be well aware. There are legal matters still pending and, as I have always made clear, the parliament has no business involving itself with ongoing legal matters. As I have also made very clear in this chamber, the parliament has every business involving itself with the governance of the Reserve Bank. While parliament must always tread carefully in these circumstances, it must equally never forego its oversight function. It is an oversight function that is performed by the economics committee and it is an oversight function performed by the parliament. It is only through committees doing their job and rigorously applying oversight that any deficiencies can be identified and rectified, and it is only through rigorous parliamentary oversight that the rest of the world can be confident that the disinfecting qualities of sunlight are at work in Australia.

The report which was tabled rightly notes the importance of the oversight role of the committee. This report followed numbers of questions at numbers of hearings but culminated in a special additional hearing which was held for an entire day in early October. I submitted supplementary remarks to the report, because I do not think the report itself dealt with the issues in enough detail or dealt with them sufficiently, from my perspective, and I will take the time of the chamber to briefly run through those.

As I said, the hearings right back in November 2010, right through until the special hearing on 8 October, attempted to deal with the unfolding story of essentially what the leadership of the Reserve Bank knew, when they knew it and how they responded to it over that period. There are a couple of aspects I would like to focus on. I joined the committee as a supplementary member only at the beginning of this year. In all the articles that had been written in the lead-up to the hearing in August there were allegations that back in 2007 important information and allegations had been passed on to senior levels within the Reserve Bank.
Bank. Following these publications, the then deputy governor of the bank, Mr Battellino, faced some direct questioning at those August hearings. I was yet to be a member of the committee when that occurred, but it was here that Mr Battellino first alluded to the fact that a Note Printing Australia employee had raised an alarm, in 2007, about allegations of illegal activity by some of the company's foreign business agents. I want to take the time of the House to quote that important exchange, as I have in my supplementary remarks. The question was asked:

It has been suggested in the Age newspaper, since the last meeting of this committee, that that report said that at least one agent had admitted to bribery, at least one agent had demanded 'under the table' secret commissions, at least one agent had demanded excessive payments and that payments were being made to third-party accounts. Is that an accurate summary of what was in that report?

'That report' being an audit report. Mr Battellino responded:

I cannot recall. A range of issues were raised in there. Allegations had been made by one of the staff members that the agents had said certain things. The agents denied those.

Mr Battellino was not at the next hearing in February because he had retired 10 days prior to that hearing. So, naturally, questions were directed to Governor Stevens. By that time I was a supplementary member of the committee, so I pursued this specific issue. When I inquired about the precise nature of that warning, the governor initially responded by saying:

If you are asking whether the person in question wrote a letter or something to the bank, I do not think that he did, no.

But then in the dying seconds of the hearing, on some further questioning from me, he amended his previous assertion. He said:

I need to come back to that. I think I said that the bank was aware of that but that it was not in writing. Actually, that was not quite true. I have been reminded while we have been talking that, in fact, the deputy governor invited that person to put that in writing, which he did, and give it to the deputy governor. That written statement on the matter was available to the Freehills people that did the investigation in 2007. So, whereas I said I thought that we were aware of it but that it was not documentary, in fact it was invited to be put in documentary form, which it was.

And at that point the hearing ended.

It had become clear that not only did the former deputy governor, Mr Battellino, fail to provide pertinent information at the committee hearings in November 2010 and in February and August of 2011 but he also responded to direct questioning during those hearings in a manner that I have described as 'less than open'. In fact, in a piece I wrote for the Age I said:

Despite direct questioning on these matters at committee hearings in November 2010, February 2011 and August 2011, neither the governor nor his former deputy saw fit to volunteer these two salient facts - that a briefing paper containing allegations of impropriety by some NPA agents was written by an NPA staff member in mid-2007 at Battellino's request; and that Battellino met with the author of this memorandum around that same time.

Back in August of this year, the Age published the text of the alleged memorandum and that this had been authored by the then Note Printing Australia company secretary, Brian Hood. The memorandum not only contained allegations of bribery but also noted explicitly that one of the suspect agents confessed to working on behalf of Securency as well.

As I have made clear, I think the implications of that memorandum were extremely significant for all of the reasons I have outlined. The Reserve Bank, as that quote from the
The review of the Reserve Bank of Australia's annual report is an opportunity to reflect on the strength of the Australian economy and on some of the potential threats to that ongoing strength. If you had told any economic policy maker two decades ago that, three years after the biggest downturn since the Great Depression, the Australian unemployment rate would have a '5' in front of it, inflation would be in the middle of the target band and growth would be at around the long-term average, they would have said that you were dreaming. But that has been the stand-out performance of the Australian economy over recent years.

We have an unemployment rate which is low by the standards of recent decades, although we should always work to get it lower. The dispersion of unemployment is also lower than it has been in recent years, meaning that the differences across regions are not as marked as they have been in other periods. There has been talk of various threats to this continued prosperity and I want to take a few minutes to go through some of those, drawing as I do so on the recent RBA Statement of Monetary Policy and a terrific speech by RBA Governor, Glenn Stevens, delivered to a CEDA conference.
One potential threat is the end of the mining boom, it is said. This misses the fact that the mining boom is moving through a three-phase cycle. The first is the significant rise in prices—in some cases a doubling, tripling or quadrupling of prices—from their long-term average. The second phase, which we are now moving into, is a significant run-up in resource sector physical investment. There have been questions as to whether mining investment is coming off, but we have to put these into perspective. The long-run average of resource sector investment is one to two per cent of GDP. We are now arguing over whether resource sector investment is going to come off from nine to eight per cent of GDP. But, by historical standards, resource sector investment is extraordinarily high. When we are talking about projects conceived in an environment of extremely high prices, it is no surprise that some of those projects will not come to fruition. The third phase is an increased rate of extraction, which will be ongoing. The capacity of the mining sector has been possibly permanently increased as a result of the current boom, and that phase will continue for many years to come.

Another risk often raised is the potential slowdown in Chinese economic growth. I have just returned from an Australia-China forum discussion in Beijing, which I found incredibly valuable. It was striking to me that, since I had previously visited Beijing in 2006, China's economy has nearly doubled. As Glenn Stevens has pointed out, the increased size of the Chinese economy means that, even if growth slows from 10 per cent to, say, seven per cent, the total amount that China adds to world output every year will actually be higher than it was. He points out, for example, that seven per cent growth in 2013 adds more to global GDP than did 10 per cent growth in 2003. So, while there are of course risks—the Chinese housing market, political transitions, the management of state owned enterprises—I think we will see strong growth from China for many years to come. Another risk sometimes raised is the higher household savings rate. I do not regard this, however, as a bad thing. The savings rate in Australia has historically been over the current 10 per cent, and I think the rebuilding of household balance sheets in the years following the global financial crisis has been no bad thing.

Another is sluggish productivity growth. Productivity has not in recent years been a standout performance, although we have seen with some of the recent numbers some indicators that productivity may be ticking up again. I would commend to the House the outgoing speech of Gary Banks, chair of the Productivity Commission, whom I praised in the House this week, and his discussion of policy reforms to boost productivity. I am particularly enamoured of his focus on good evaluation. As an advocate of randomised policy trials, I think this is an effective way of ensuring sustained prosperity.

A final potential threat to world economic growth is what has been called the US fiscal cliff. If the US goes off the fiscal cliff, estimates are that annual growth in the United States will be three to four percentage points lower in 2013 than it would otherwise be. Experts are suggesting that would lead to a recession in the US in the first part of the year. Indicators that we have suggest that the chance of that is around 20 per cent, but that is clearly far too high.

Why is the US facing a fiscal cliff at the moment? Part of that is the intransigence of a Republican opposition that is unwilling to countenance any increases in taxation. I have seen from my second cousin, Alison Laughlin, who lives in Oregon, the importance of maintaining
unemployment benefits in the downturn, but the fiscal cliff includes the end of Extended (Emergency) Unemployment Benefits in the United States.

I think there are two lessons for Australia in this. The first is that parties that have an ideological tax-cutting obsession are going to get themselves into terrible trouble—and we see that here in Australia where the coalition has an ideological obsession with scrapping the mining tax and the price on carbon. As a result, they have gotten themselves into a terrible fiscal hole with their budget costings. The second is that Australia's system of superannuation, had it been adopted by the United States in the early 1990s, would have put the United States in a far better position than it currently enjoys. We think back to the early 1990s in Australia and the introduction of universal superannuation, which was hard fought. One can only imagine the fiscal situation Australia would be in now if people like the member for Mackellar, then Senator Bishop, had had their way and had blocked universal superannuation.

I pay tribute to the chair of the economics committee, the member for Parramatta, who gave a group of us a beautiful Liszt piano recital in the Great Hall this morning. I close by acknowledging the valuable work of my staff this year: Louise Crossman, Nick Terrell, Lyndell Tutty, Damien Hickman, Gus Little and Claire Daly; and earlier this year, Bob Harlow and Eleanor Cubis. I have been well served by a group of diligent interns: Phillip Metaxas, Matilda Gillis, Trudy McIntosh, Byron Hewson, Rebecca Mann, Michael Jones, Daniel Carr, Ben Molan, Tanya Greeves, Emily Murray, Kyneton Morris and Jack Brady; and by some hardworking volunteers: Barbara Phi, Ken Maher, Alison Humphrey, Shalini Arumugam, Joshua Turner and Samm Cooper.

Finally, none of us could do this job without the support of our families. I thank my extended family and, particularly, my extraordinary wife, Gweneth.

Dr LEIGH: I thank the member for Chifley for that intervention. Parenthood has changed me in many ways, not least reducing the amount of sleep that I come to this chamber with. Also, like I am sure the member for Chifley has felt, it has made me perhaps a little softer around the edges in my thinking of the world than I might have been in the pre-parenthood years.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley—Government Whip) (10:50): I move: That the Federation Chamber do now adjourn.

Dame Mary Gilmore DBE

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (10:50): Next Monday will mark 50 years since Australia lost Dame Mary Gilmore, the female face of our $10 bill, our first 'lady of letters' and a champion of social justice. She spoke for the voiceless—for women, children and Indigenous
Australians—when it was unfashionable and often dangerous to do so, in our formative years as our nation came of age in the 20th century.

She was a prolific writer, a poet, a journalist and a trail-blazer in the fields that were strictly patriarchal. She brazenly carved her own path and stood toe to toe with anyone who dared stand in her way. She was a passionate nationalist, a zealous activist, an advocate for workers' rights rather than union largesse and a champion of the oppressed. But, above all of that, she was a wife, a mother and, maybe to the surprise of those on the other side of the chamber, my great great aunt.

Aunt Mary grew up near Goulburn, the product of a country state school education. At 16 she became a pupil teacher at the public girls school in Wagga Wagga but, after a series of placements in outback New South Wales, she requested a transfer to Sydney, where she returned in 1890 to teach in Neutral Bay. In the decade that followed, her interest in social reform burgeoned. She seized her pen and began to write of the injustices she saw in the world around her. It was at that time that she crossed paths with the renowned poet, Henry Lawson, and struck up that famous relationship. She later said it was a strange meeting but that Henry would become one of the greatest influences upon her work. There was an unofficial engagement between the pair, but it was not to be.

According to the Australian Women's Register, Dame Mary became the first female member of the Australian Workers Union, but it was by no means a passive membership. She claimed to have signed up initially under her brother's name, but she certainly went on to make a name for herself. Joining William Lane's New Australia Movement, she travelled to his utopian and soon to be hopelessly failed settlement experiment, Paraguay, in 1896, where she married a fellow Aussie, a shearer from Victoria by the name of William Gilmore, Uncle Bill, and they had a son—another Uncle Bill. Her hard and lonely years in South America revealed a determined and indefatigable spirit and a dedication to her family and the welfare of her son, which are well chronicled in Anne Whitehead's excellent book *Blue Stocking in Patagonia*.

Aunt Mary returned to Australia and threw herself back into her writing and politics, editing the women's page of the *Australian Worker* from 1908 to 1931. Mary published her first tome of poetry, a collection of poems. She became a staunch supporter of journals, including the *Bulletin* and *The Lone Hand* and even dipping into her own purse to keep the *Bookfellow* afloat.

When war broke out, Mary grappled with the horrific reality through her poetry. Her second volume, *The Passionate Heart*, published in 1918, featured the poem *Gallipoli* and she donated the royalties of that work to soldiers blinded in battle. From that time onward Mary's works were constantly in print and she published new material right up to her 90th birthday. Some of her driving thematic concerns included nationalism, pioneering women's rights and the experience of motherhood, Aboriginal welfare, pensions and health.

In 1937 she was appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire—the first Australian to be granted the award for services to literature. Mary was a founding member of the Lyceum Club in Sydney, the founder of the Fellowship of Australian Writers, a member of the New South Wales Institute of Journalists and a life member of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.
She passed away at 97, a day after my father's birthday—to whom she was very close. As a young constable, my father, John, patrolled the streets of Kings Cross. He would often at that time pay a visit to Aunt Mary to be regaled with her poetry, her stories and of course her jams, which were forever on the boil in the kitchen of her Darlinghurst flat. Aunt Mary was honoured with a state funeral.

In a society that still searches for role models for our young women, there are few ladies of greater inspiration than my great great Aunt Mary, of whom my two daughters should be very proud to call their aunt. Even to this day they look on the $10 note with great pride. She was an immensely talented and compassionate woman of fierce conviction and heart. She may well not agree with everything I agree with today, but she was a woman of great conviction and a great Australian. With her words, Dame Mary challenged a nation to its core, but she also helped to heal the grief of a war-torn people. The spirit of those famous lines she penned in 1940 in her poem No Foe Shall Gather Our Harvest still resonate today. Dame Mary wrote:

We are the sons of Australia,
of the men who fashioned the land;
We are the sons of the women
Who walked with them hand in hand;
And we swear by the dead who bore us,
By the heroes who blazed the trail,
No foe shall gather our harvest,
Or sit on our stockyard rail.

This December, we will remember a remarkable woman; my family will remember a remarkable woman of who we are deeply proud.

**Scullin Electorate: Domestic Violence**

**Mr JENKINS** (Scullin) (10:55): I congratulate the member for Cook on a very splendid contribution to a great Australian woman. Regrettably, I have to report to the Federation Chamber that on a week that commenced with White Ribbon Day on Sunday—Australia's campaign to stop violence against women—that the city of Whittlesea, a large part of which is in the seat of Scullin, sees a great rise in domestic violence. This can be characterised by the interest shown by local papers: 'Police action on family violence' in the Northern Weekly of 23 October and 'Family violence rise sees victims double' in the Whittlesea Leader on 30 October. Since statistics were kept on family violence, there has been an increase of about fourfold: 329 instances in 1999-2000 in the Whittlesea municipality and it has now risen 1,231 in 2009-10.

The community, to its credit, has not just sat back and thought, 'Well, we can't do anything about it.' I want to pay tribute to community agencies that have started to tackle this by trying to engender community awareness about the problems of domestic violence. A couple of weeks back, at Whittlesea Community Connections, we saw the launch of Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project—a scoping exercise report. This was in conjunction with Whittlesea Community Futures, and had the support of the Scanlon Foundation. It looked at culturally and linguistically diverse communities and it looked at the way in which we can approach the problems of family and domestic violence within those communities. I
think, Acting Deputy Speaker Vamvakinou, that you would be aware of this because there are similar problems within your electorate of Calwell, and definitely in the municipality of Hume.

What impressed me about this document is that it sets out a way in which we can go forward and it talks about the things that we can do as a community. For instance, in its integrated approach to family violence it says that the overarching aim should be an integrated model that should support CALD communities, newly arrived migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to break the cycles of family violence, and empower communities to confront and respond to the challenges.

We have the empowerment of CALD women. CALD women are definitely in isolation, not only because of the geographic isolation on the urban fringe but because of language and cultural differences. There is also building of capacity of community and religious leaders, so this goes beyond not only the response by disclosure of incidences but tries to empower these community and religious leaders to take initial action.

The next suggestion is prevention of family violence by early intervention in the settlement processes, with programs targeting young people and reducing recidivism by increasing access to behavioural change programs. A number of those types of programs have been put in place by other agencies throughout the northern suburbs of Melbourne and have been very successful. CPS has a very good program for dealing with Indigenous communities in this regard, and empowering and strengthening fathers in the family unit.

The other document that I wish to pay some attention to in this very brief adjournment speech is a document produced by Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service and Kildonan UnitingCare. It is catalyst paper number 2, Credit, debt and economic abuse. We should really understand that family and domestic violence is not just about physical acts; it can be a whole host of things, including economic abuse. Violence is defined as an act which makes another person feel fearful, unsafe and not in control of their own destiny. Family violence can include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, verbal and financial abuse. We should recognise that and take steps to tackle that. As this document put out by Kildonan UnitingCare and Good Shepherd, says, it 'aims to encourage discussion of what practices might stop economic abuse continuing as women attempt to rebuild their lives and become financially stable following domestic and family violence'.

I urge the community to come together with these agencies, to tackle full frontal this scourge on our community. (Time expired)

Apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants

Mr IRONS (Swan) (11:00): I congratulate the member for Scullin and the member for Cook for their contributions on both the items they addressed. I guess the member for Scullin's was a segue into what I am going to speak about.

We have just passed the date of the third anniversary of the national apology to the forgotten Australians. The horror stories of abuse, negligence, starvation and rape told by many people in the care of Australian institutions and orphanages were formally recognised by the federal parliament on 16 November 2009. The then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and the then Leader of the Opposition, Malcolm Turnbull, apologised in parliament to an audience of more than 1,000 people. Mr Rudd delivered a speech that gave the attendees and their
families a warm feeling of relief that the man who held the highest office in this country had recognised their grief and their lives. The flood of tears and emotion were released like a tsunami over the crowd when Mr Turnbull delivered the line, 'We believe you,' in his speech and then hugged Peter, who came to the stage when Mr Turnbull mentioned him during his speech. It was those speeches that gave the apology the gravitas and genuineness it required, and it sparked a celebration of joy and achievement at the front of Parliament House for the whole of that afternoon.

The pursuit of recognition and the seeking of the apology was for a group of Australian British and Maltese children who had been in a system that had many good intentions and many charitable people working in it but which was infiltrated by paedophiles, sadists and pervers, who would not gain employment working with children in today's regulated working-with-children framework. Three years on, the government has announced a royal commission, and I, along with the Opposition, welcome that.

I recently met with a group of the forgotten Australians in Perth, along with Senator Siewert and my wife, Cheryl, to celebrate the third anniversary. During that meeting, I addressed the meeting. One of the things I stated to the group, who were overly excited about the pending announcement of a royal commission, was that they should be careful about statements they make so as not to pre-empt any outcomes of the royal commission. I will now attempt to do that myself.

It was disappointing to see parts of the mainstream media, and particularly the ABC, so blatantly and obviously attack one institution and the sanctity of confession. These attacks were so vindictive that many people will be surprised if the point of the attacks are not in the findings, and that it is through their efforts that this royal commission might not achieve the outcomes that will provide the justice for the people who suffered during their times in the institutions. The mainstream media and the ABC should be very careful not to use their influence to direct and coerce the royal commission because of their own prejudices.

In a speech in 2010, I said that many of the charities and churches that received taxpayers' money to care for these children should contribute to the redress funds and care services. They should return the money they were paid because they did not provide the services that were paid for and have falsely claimed the monies from taxpayers through governments. I would have liked to have seen them confess their sins and to contribute to help those who lost their innocence and their childhoods in their care.

We need to recognise that not all children suffered in this system, that many were given the care that they deserved and have gone on to lead what we call normal lives in our society. I know that the forgotten Australians will continue their fight for redress and support, and that this third anniversary will provide a spark for them to continue with renewed vigour. They will never give up.

It was this time last year that on this day—the last day of the sitting year—that we had a new Speaker. I see that the former Speaker is in the chamber. A lot has happened in that time since that day last year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people in my electorate, particularly my staff and my family, and all my parliamentary colleagues on both sides of the House, and to wish them a merry Christmas and a happy and safe New Year. I know there are times when we get excited and address each other in the wrong ways across the House, but at the end of the day this is the job I love doing and I love doing it with the
people with whom I share this place, on both sides of the House. I know we all come to this place with good intentions and we all want to achieve the best that we can for all Australians as well as those in our electorates. To everyone out there, merry Christmas and a happy and safe New Year.

Cremation Ceremonies

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (11:05): I was recently approached by Surinder Singh, a member of the Sikh community in my electorate, who raised an issue relevant to the carrying out of the sacred death rituals of Sikhs, Hindus and Buddhists, particularly in relation to the disposal of ashes after cremation. I spoke to several members in my community who affirmed that there are concerns that need to be addressed. With approximately 15 per cent of my electorate made up of people who identify with these religions, I feel it is important to recognise their death rituals, respect them and set their minds at ease that they will be able to carry out their rituals within the laws of the country.

In these religions, at the death of a loved one, thousands of years of tradition require a body be cremated and released into free-flowing water, such as a river, which moves towards the ocean. The death rituals across these religions are diverse and vary in detail, but a common aspect of their cremation ceremonies emphasises the immortality of the soul over the body. An important theme we must consider is how to preserve the cultural customs of our diverse population in Australia.

Currently in the Sydney area there is only one designated place for the release of ashes, at the Georges River. It is known as Satyam Ghat and it has been allocated by Liverpool Council as a disposal point for ashes. Devotees can conduct ceremonies there as long as the items they cast into the river are biodegradable, including flowers and the mesh bags that the ashes are carried in. This is also in line with advice I received from New South Wales Health. Satyam Ghat is just a cemented spot where ceremonies can be performed and ashes released into the water. There are no adornments or identifying features that mark this place as a final resting place, and nor is this required.

Unfortunately, there are aspects of this site which do not meet the requirements of some customs, specifically the fact that practitioners have to release the ashes on the banks of the river rather than further out where the water moves freely. For many that seek a special place, a trip to Satyam Ghat is not possible because of their geographic location. Many Indian Australians also opt to send the ashes for disposal back to India, leading to unnecessary cost. For others, the location for disposal is only significant in that it meets the requirement of water flowing into the ocean. The actual place where the ashes are released is not visited again. The reality for many who wish to uphold these customs is that they make arrangements such as hiring a water taxi and taking a small number of people out towards the heads in the harbour and releasing the ashes there. I am told by the relevant authorities that the disposal of ashes into the ocean is quite legal, yet my community tells me that even as they release the ashes they fear they will be found to be doing the wrong thing, adding additional stress and tainting what should be a special moment for families.

The Environment Protection Authority of New South Wales has advised me that they are sensitive to cultural practices and do not believe that regulatory controls are necessary or that the disposal of ashes has any environmental impact. They suggest that religious organisations and temples develop simple guidelines to bring peace of mind to the mourners and to protect
the environment, and I am looking forward to working with my community on doing just that. The guidelines might include things such as: the conditions under which the release of ashes should take place—for example, in estuarine areas which are well flushed or in fast-flowing waters; the conditions when release of ashes should not take place—for example, in periods of low flow or in tributaries that are not well flushed; and the need to avoid use of non-biodegradable matter which could adversely impact on marine life, including litter such as plastic containers or bags and wreaths using plastic or metals.

The EPA also supports the establishment of designated sites in consultation with councils. Ideally these would be located in areas that are quiet, where prayers and ceremonies can be performed in peace. On advice from Surinder Singh, the construction might be as simple as a jetty which allows easy access away from the river bank towards the running water or even a boat ramp that allows for a boat to enter into the channel. They also suggest that they might rotate the use of designated sites to avoid overuse. There is already an awareness in the communities that I have spoken to that as more and more people dispose of the ashes of their loved ones there may be a need to monitor rates and locations. The temples I have spoken to are prepared to cooperate to ensure a sustainable practice that gives peace of mind to the community and to the mourners. There is an awareness that there may be permanent or temporary restrictions on access to some locations for a range of reasons that may include water flow at various times of the year.

Funeral services carry both spiritual and cultural significance and stress the hope for rebirth in these religions. The disposal of the ashes is one of the last of many rituals after death, and it would be good to be able to see it done in an open way in our community. I urge local authorities and communities to work together to develop guidelines and locate appropriate sites, and I look forward to working with the local Sikh, Hindi and Buddhist communities in finding a space for these important rituals.

National Archives of Australia

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:10): This year, 2012, has been a very exciting and successful year for the National Archives of Australia. It has been an honour for me to continue representing the House of Representatives as a member of the National Archives of Australia advisory council. This time last year, we saw the former director-general Ross Gibbs retiring. In the last 12 months we have welcomed the new director-general, David Fricker, and a new chairman, Dr John Bannon. Whilst there has been a lot of change, there have also been a lot of achievements. One of the biggest challenges facing the archives has been how to capture, maintain and preserve the sheer volume of their digital records so that they are available for all future generations of Australians. In July 2011, the archives were officially appointed as lead agency in the implementation of the whole-of-government digital transition policy. This policy means moving from paper-based to digital information management for efficiency purposes. The archives leadership role is testament to their authority and expertise in digital information management across government, and indeed around the world, where we lead other countries in this area.

With more than 40 million items in the national archival collection, and an increasing amount of records continually transferred into their custody, the archives have continued to build their capability in ensuring that these records are preserved for future generations. A preferred site for the National Archives preservation facilities has been identified in the...
Canberra suburb of Mitchell. This large, purpose-built repository for the archives digital, paper and audiovisual records will ensure the best possible preservation of the nation's archival resources until at least 2013. I place on record my appreciation to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for expediting their deliberations on this so that we can move quickly to start the redevelopment of that site.

In September 2011, acting director-general, Stephen Ellis, travelled to Korea to accept the UNESCO/Jikji Memory of the World prize for Australia's work in digital preservation and iron gall ink research. The archives have decided to use the prize money—which was US$30,000—to fund a conservation scholarship. In addition, the archives will also match the prize money with the UNESCO/Jikji National Archives preservation training program, which will provide conservation training to Pacific and Australian Indigenous communities.

During the year, the archives continued to foster and strengthen their strategic relations with other archival organisations around the world. A huge amount of work was undertaken in collaboration with the International Council on Archives in the lead-up to the ICA Congress—a major international conference on archives held every four years. This year, we successfully hosted it in Brisbane, Australia. Once again, it was testament to the digital work of the National Archives of Australia with Australia at the forefront and leading other archival bodies around the world. We had an outstanding congress in Australia. Despite other world impacts, we had an excellent turn-up of people from around the world, and some outstanding guest speakers. I would like to place on record my appreciation to Aladin Rahemtula, the Queensland representative on the archives advisory council, who led the way in seeking for Brisbane to host the event. And, of course, the director-general and the very hardworking staff at the National Archives ensured that it was highly successful event for everyone. I would also note that during the year we had what we call the Constitution Day Forum. This year it was held in Sydney at the ABC studios on 2 July. At the Constitution Day Forum 2012 speakers included Professor Mick Dodson AM, Professor Frank Brennan AO, Professor Megan Davis and Alison Page on the subject 'Where to next for Indigenous recognition?' It is great that we are making the Constitution a living thing that Australians can look at as something to debate; it is not just some dusty document left behind on a shelf. We need to ensure that there is regular, lively debate on the Constitution and its implications for our country.

The other area of achievement is of the great digital initiatives where people can upload photographs onto the National Archives and have their relatives placed on permanent record. Also, a big thank you to Dr Stephen Ellis, the outgoing Acting Director General of the National Archives, for his dedicated contribution. (Time expired)

**Calwell Electorate**

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (11:15): It has been a very busy year in my electorate of Calwell. As part of what we all refer to as the 'round up' of the year's events I refer to some of the more recent events in my electorate that I consider to be important developments for my constituents. Last week I attended the Hume City Council's business breakfast at the Hume Global Learning Centre in Craigieburn, where Dr Tim Williams, who is one of the world's leading thinkers on high-speed broadband was the guest speaker.

As the Labor government's NBN initiative continues to roll out in parts of my electorate it was fitting to hear from Dr Williams as to how the evolving digital economy will continue to
transform and facilitate the way that we as a community communicate and do business. Incidentally, earlier this year I had the pleasure of opening the Craigieburn learning centre, which is a facility that came about as a result of the federal government's $9.47 million investment into Calwell for the purposes of improving facilities for the community.

With an additional 70,000 new residents predicted to settle in Hume in the next 20 years, our council and all of our people, as you would imagine, are planning to accommodate this growth in the future. This is why a new agreement with some of Australia's leading tertiary and vocational education training providers is pivotal for the educational prospects of our community, and that is what happened last week. An agreement was signed in which the Hume City Council and its partners Deakin University, Victoria University and the Kangan Institute of TAFE joined forces to bring a range of undergraduate courses to satellite sites across the municipality of Hume through the new Hume Multiversity project.

This project is an Australian first, and it will be delivered at the Hume Global Learning Centres in Craigieburn and Broadmeadows, and at the Sunbury Neighbourhood House. Students in Hume and right across Melbourne's north will be given the opportunity to enrol in undergraduate courses in various disciplines such as the arts, business and sciences, and they will be able to complete their studies a stone's throw away from where they live and where their families and friends are. Enrolments are now open to graduating secondary students as well as mature-age students and those currently enrolled in diploma courses. This new collaboration is the first step in bridging a large gap that many local students encounter between where they live and where education facilities are. Applications will also be welcomed from people without traditional qualifications as well as from those entering higher education through a more formal route.

One of the other important events I would like to talk about occurred last Sunday, where I had the pleasure of chairing an interfaith dialogue at the Banksia Gardens Community Centre in Broadmeadows. This dialogue involved two very important speakers: one a former Broadmeadows resident and today the first Greek-born person appointed to the Supreme Court of Victoria, His Honour Judge Emilios Kyrou; the other a very well-known—certainly to Melbournians—author and activist, Mr Arnold Zable. Both speakers addressed a group of young people who visited my electorate from the other side of town, young people of Jewish background who sat together with other young people from my electorate in order to listen to both His Honour and Arnold speak about their personal experiences when they were growing up as young migrants in multicultural Australia.

I would like at this point to submit a petition which comes from the Northern Turkish Women's Association in Meadow Heights. This is a wonderful group of women who have been collecting petitions petitioning the government on a range of issues. The petition was considered at a recent meeting of the Standing Committee on Petitions and certified as being in accordance with standing orders. I therefore wish to present the petition to the House for tabling and to thank the women of the Northern Turkish Women's Association for the great effort they have gone to in petitioning this parliament. (Time expired)

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (11:20): In so many ways the conflict between Israel and Hamas terrorists is a struggle between the enlightened values of a modern democracy and the benighted values of mediaeval theocracy; a struggle between Jerusalem, where women serve
as Supreme Court justices, and Gaza, where a woman's sworn testimony is worth half that of a
man's; a struggle between a government that rules by the ballot and a government that rules
by the bullet; a struggle between a society in which liberty of conscience is protected and a
society in which freedom of speech is rejected. At its essence it is a struggle between
civilisation and barbarism. These are harsh words but it is time for some straight talk, time to
assess the cold, hard facts in the cold, hard light of day. Those facts reveal that Hamas is an
armed and dangerous terrorist movement with mass murder on its mind. It not only seeks the
destruction of Israel as a political entity but also craves the extermination of every Jewish
man, woman and child. You do not need to take my word for it. Article 7 of the Hamas
covenant declares:

… the Islamic Resistance Movement aspires to realize the promise of Allah, no matter how long it
takes. The Prophet, Allah's prayer and peace be upon him, says: "The hour of judgment shall not come
until the Muslims fight the Jews … when the Jews hide behind trees and stones, and each tree and stone
will say: 'Oh Muslim, oh servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him' …

In other words, the official doctrine of Hamas preaches that the coming of the Mahdi, the
Islamic redeemer, will be ushered in by divinely inspired genocidal slaughter of the
Jews.

The movement is not very fond of gays either. Hamas foreign minister Mahmoud Zahar
calls homosexuals 'a minority of perverts and the mentally and morally sick'. Nor has the
Arab Christian community of Gaza fared too well under Hamas rule. There has not been a
Christmas tree in the central square of Gaza City since Hamas seized total power in 2007. A
few years ago the Palestinian Christian manager of a Gaza Bible Society bookstore was shot
dead after being accused of evangelising on behalf of his faith. I note in passing that the
invitation to this year's government staff Christmas party features a caricature of Tony Abbott
as a green-faced grinch. But the real Grinch who stole Christmas is alive and well in Gaza,
packing an AK-47 and wearing a green Hamas headband.

The contempt shown by Hamas for the most fundamental principles of liberty should come
as no surprise. After all, no-one should be surprised that theocrats do not turn out to be
democrats. But what is astounding is the aid and comfort offered to hardline Islamic
extremists by hardline Australian leftists. This past weekend a few hundred protesters
assembled in Sydney to denounce Israel for having the temerity to defend itself from
incessant Hamas rocket fire. The Greens were there, Marxists were there and so were some
jihadi sympathisers. It was bizarre to see advocates of same-sex marriage parading shoulder to
shoulder with advocates of a global caliphate who think that homosexuals should swing at the
end of a rope. But as the TV footage showed, there were banners of the Greens and Socialist
Alternative flying alongside the Hezbollah flag. Speaking from the podium was the most
fanatical opponent of Israel in this parliament, Greens senator Lee Rhiannon. While speaking
on the Middle East, I would be remiss if I did not mention this government's disgraceful
reversal of policy at the United Nations. Foreign Minister Carr describes Australia's decision
to abstain from the General Assembly vote on the elevation of Palestine's status as 'a good
compromise'. But it was no compromise; it was a cave-in. It was a cave-in by a beleaguered
Prime Minister prepared to sacrifice anything, including support for Israel, on the altar of her
own political survival. We all want to see a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian
conflict but this will only be possible when those pledged to Israel's destruction finally see the
error of their ways. The upgrade of Palestine's status at the UN will set back the prospects of
peace. It will embolden Palestinians to think they can get their way without any need to—

(Time expired)

Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

Mr MELHAM (Banks) (11:25): At the Seymour Centre in Sydney on Tuesday, 20 November I was a member of a privileged audience who witnessed an outstanding performance of young talent. This was the 2012 music theatre showcase presented by graduates of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, or WAAPA, at Edith Cowan University. At the outset, I will declare an interest. One of the talented young people performing was my cousin Ainsley Melham. Apart from performing *Let it sing*, from *Violet*, Ainsley created the choreography for that routine as well as two of the other performances. Ainsley has performed in many WAAPA productions since he commenced there in 2010. In 2011 he was awarded the prestigious Bill Warnock scholarship, which is presented to the most promising second year music theatre student.

While I obviously attended the showcase in support of my young cousin, I was impressed by the talent of his graduating colleagues in the music theatre showcase. These young people demonstrating their talents and skills in music theatre were Mia Donatelli, Benjamin Gillespie, Kerrie Anne Greenland, Timothy Grimes, Ben Hall, Nicholas Hedger, Emily Langridge, Antoinette Issue, Rob Mallett, Diana Perini, Jessica Pesti, Karla Tonkich, James Traille, Matthew Verevis, Caleb Vines, Georgina Walker and Jessica White. In the audience for the acting showcase, which was done separately, were such luminaries as John Bell, obviously on the lookout for talent and obviously providing support for the next generation of Australian performing artists. Professor Julie Warn, AM, the director of WAAPA, described them as 'a very talented cohort who have enthusiastically embraced every opportunity and challenge throughout their time at WAAPA'.

One need only look at the depth of the various programs offered to realise that WAAPA has made an outstanding contribution to the performing arts. From Aboriginal theatre to stage management, WAAPA graduates are to be found nationally and internationally. Professor Warn advises new students commencing their studies at WAAPA: 'You are about to embark on a very rigorous but wonderfully exciting period of your life. Training at WAAPA is exacting and sometimes exhausting.' The graduates demonstrate that the exacting training pays off; we need only consider some of the well-known alumni to prove that. WAAPA graduates include Jacob Allen, Alex Papps, Tara Gower, Rachelle Durkin, Hugh Jackman, William McInnes, Marcus Graham, Tim Minchin, Eddie Perfect, Tom Woods, Meyne Wyatt and Lisa McCune. The wonderfully talented Lucy Durack, who graduated in 2002, is currently starring in *Legally Blonde* at Sydney's Lyric Theatre. WAAPA was established in 1980 and in its over 30-year history has produced a plethora of performers in all areas of the arts. This includes gifted and highly trained designers, producers, craftspeople and technicians. This year the *Hollywood Reporter* compiled an inaugural list of the top performing arts academies in the world. WAAPA was included in that list together with NIDA. This is a clear international recognition of WAAPA's 30-year history and the quality of its graduates.

With all my family, I am immensely proud of what Ainsley has already achieved in his studies. With his fellow graduates, I wish them all well in a precarious career. However, given the enthusiasm and talent displayed at the 2012 showcase, they have every ability to succeed.
What strikes me is that the inspiration for this nation can be gained from young people, enthusiastic people, at every level. In the old days, you looked at the elder statesmen to provide inspiration. From my point of view, every time I go to a performance by young people such as these, I walk away knowing we have a very secure and bright future. I wish them all well.

McTernan, Mr John

Mr BRIGGS (Mayo) (11:32): Today I rise to speak in relation to my role as a scrutiny of government spokesperson for the coalition and a flagrant abuse of taxpayers' money. Earlier this year, the new SA Premier did a rare good thing and cut a program called Thinkers in Residence, a program that was simply a way for former Premier Mike Rann to abuse SA taxpayers' money by offering patronage to left-wing mates.

The worst example of this was the failed British political operative, Mr John McTernan, who was supposedly thinking during 2011. According to reports, Mr McTernan was paid some $200,000 for his time thinking. The topic of Mr McTernan's thinking was, ironically, delivering a more effective public service. Some 12 months after the completion of this thinking, no report has been prepared and there is no sign either of the two toolkits he was supposed to produce.

This disgraceful fact is that the SA taxpayer has footed the bill to bring a Labor mate to Australia. But what makes it worse is that the Prime Minister decided to employ this failed British headkicker, again, using large amounts of Australian taxpayers' money. This FIFO political adviser is employed in the Prime Minister's office on a taxpayer funded salary, somewhere in the vicinity of $200,000.

Mr McTernan is a self-confessed political fighter, a class warrior. He describes his approach to politics in the following way:

If you get to senior positions, you have to be able to kill your opponents. It is not pretty, it's not pleasant, but if those at the top can't kill, then those at the bottom certainly cannot. High politics demands very low political skills, too.

He affirmed this approach to Labor staff earlier this week, and Ben Packham at the Australian reported:

Julia Gillard's media director John McTernan has reminded ministerial staff that politics is a contact sport, urging them to hit back hard whenever the opposition attacks. Illustrating his point yesterday, McTernan borrowed countryman Sean Connery's classic line from The Untouchables: 'If they pull a knife, you pull a gun. If they put one of your men in the hospital, put one of theirs in the morgue.'

He certainly is obsessed by killing this character. That is what happened earlier this year. Mr McTernan started this year with a New Years' Eve tweet:

Happy New Year to friends, colleagues, commentators and combatants in Australia. 2012 is going to be fun.

He has not let us down. It all started on Australia Day and the infamous Australia Day riot when a member of the PM's staff on our most sacred day told a group of protesters that the Leader of the Opposition had said something he had never said. A young Labor staffer named Tony Hodges, a good young Labor man, took the rap for this; however, we know from the former Attorney-General, the member for Barton, that this decision was made much further
up the line. That young Labor staffer was in effect collateral damage. Maybe this just confirms Mr McTernan's words from 2011:

Full disclosure is important, but—speaking cynically—only of what will eventually come out.

We see that in operation every day. More recently, we have seen the so-called misogyny speech and campaign that the Leader of the Opposition has been sexist and antiwomen. What is really interesting is that Mr McTernan wrote in the British Telegraph in 2011 that the UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, has a problem with women. It is not just Liberals who have felt the full force of the attacks: look at what happened to the member for Griffith in February this year when he had his character systematically assassinated. This vicious brand of low-rent political muckraking should never be welcomed in Australia. The type of campaigns Mr McTernan brags about when he wrote:

Around the world, campaign after campaign shows that fear beats hope.

The 457 visa program—and well may you laugh—is designed to bring in skilled workers where there is no-one available in Australia. Surely, even this Labor government can find someone in Australia to be employed in the highest office in the land. As a seasoned political observer put it to me yesterday: 'Mr McTernan is an international political jihadist who is interested in raising his profile with no regard for the future of Australia.' I call on Mr McTernan to pay back the $200,000 he has fleeced from the South Australian taxpayer, and I say to the Labor caucus: roll this Prime Minister again, as you did earlier this week, and send this self-promoting British Labour reject and his putrid politics back to where they came from.

Our Stories: 52 Stories in 52 Weeks

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (11:35): In May this year, I spoke in this place about a project that I commenced in February called Our Stories: 52 Stories in 52 Weeks. This project aimed to highlight the stories of those in our community who often shun the limelight, but work tirelessly to make our community a better place. Over the last 10 months, it has been an honour to put the spotlight on the wonderful stories of volunteers and inspirational community leaders who, through their actions and deeds, have made a real difference in the local community that I represent. Each story that has been highlighted is a positive story. It aims to encourage others to become more involved in their own community. Each inspirational story encourages us and inspires us to play a more active role in our communities. It is striking to see how each story also reveals the deep satisfaction and sense of achievement felt by those who are making a difference in our local neighbourhood.

It has been said that Australians, in these times of increasing financial and time pressures on family, are less able to spare the time participating in service clubs, community organisations and other activities. So our country loses as we are unable to fully participate in the life of our community, and in many cases stand up for community issues. The stories that I have spoken about—and will briefly speak about and will briefly speak about again—show the transformative power of reconnecting with their own communities and keeping alive local institutions that make a difference, and improve the liability of the local area. They are the social glue in our area. This is all about, I think, collectively working for the common good. It is what a society should do, and it is also what a government should be obligated to do, and should always seek to do.
As I said, I have previously spoken of inspirational stories in this place, and while I am not going to have enough time today, I just wanted to mention more of those stories that we have spoken about in this local 52 stories in 52 weeks initiative.

George Nicol, a fantastic human being, has volunteered at the Cranbourne Information and Support Service for the last 10 years, and he was the former President of CISS. Michelle Halsall played an instrumental role in establishing the Casey Community Floods Support Group in the aftermath of the February 2011 floods. Eric Wieckmann, otherwise known as Captain Eric, is the founder of CHIPS, Christians Helping In Primary Schools, which he has been involved with for over 10 years, transforming the lives of countless young Australians. Judy and Russell Owen are professional, caring and committed volunteers who have served the local community in a number of roles over many years. Both Judy and Russell have been involved in the Berwick Air League for over 20 years serving in various roles.

Grace Woltanski has been the President of the Polish Forty Plus Club for 17 years. Tony O'Hara is the Treasurer of the Hampton Park Progress Association, and one of the main organisers for the annual Day of Nations event held on Australia Day in Hampton Park. Les Boyes has worked tirelessly with the Doveton Neighbourhood Renewal, assisting on the Australia Day committee, and also Myuna Market and at the learning centre. Then there is Dale Sheppard. Dale's life was changed forever when he was 18. His bicycle collided with a motor car as he was riding home from work. The accident left Dale an incomplete quadriplegic. Dale was deemed to be uninsured at the time as he was riding a bike, not driving a car. But, through his consistent and relentless campaigning, Dale's accident resulted in amendments to the Victorian Transport Accident Act that ensured that people who found themselves in circumstances similar to Dale's would in fact be covered by this act. This is an incredible achievement. Elizabeth Anning is a leader at the Narre Warren North Girls Guides. Susan Bergman has been an active member not just in the Cranbourne community but also right across the City of Casey for well over 10 years. Susan is heavily involved in the arts community, particularly the BATS Theatre Company, and is a very good friend of Lady Uppity Crust, who is a character we see around the events in the City of Casey. Val Motta is a highly active member of the Italian Pensioners Club of Cranbourne who always goes above and beyond her responsibilities as club president. Hector De Santos, as a volunteer committee member of the Friends of Frog Hollow, has assisted with coordinating a number of tree-planting events that have seen more than 60,000 native trees, plants and grasses planted in the reserve, literally transforming the community—all volunteer work. Warren and Lorraine Calder have been living in the Hampton Park community for close to 40 years. Lorraine has worked as a volunteer hall manager for the Arthur Wren Hall for approximately 10 years, and Warren has been President of the Hampton Park Progress Association for many years.

I could go on and on. These are the people who make Australia a great country, and we will continue to highlight their stories—their Australian stories.

Renewable Energy

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (11:40): In the short time I have available today I raise the cost-of-living issues that are affecting many Australians out there today. One example is Coca-Cola. Coca-Cola is almost an international commodity, sold in just about every country in the world. In our supermarkets here in Australia the price for a two-litre bottle of Coca-Cola is currently $3.79. Last week I had the privilege of going on a delegation to Taiwan.
hosted by the Taiwanese government, and I thought I would check out the price of Coca-Cola in Taiwan. I went to a small 7-Eleven supermarket, and the same two-litre bottle of Coca-Cola that I buy at a supermarket in Sydney for $3.79 was on sale for 35 New Taiwan dollars. That is A$1.20 for something I am paying $3.79 for in Australia. It is not only Taiwan. Just before I spoke I looked on the UK website mySupermarket. Right now in the UK I can buy a two-litre bottle of Coca-Cola for the equivalent of A$1.90. This is just an example of the costs of living that are out of control in this country through our uncompetitive markets and the problem we have with competition in our retail sector.

If we are going to take the pressure off the cost of living we must make sure that all our industries are working to their maximum efficiency. Therefore, in my remaining time, I highlight the delusion we have with investing billions of dollars of our country's precious resources and wasting it by investing in wind farms and wind turbines. Nothing could be a greater waste of our national resources than to build more wind turbines in this country. Yet over the next decade under the current policy we could waste $10 billion of resources on wind farms.

I quote two letters from Dr Alan Watts, who holds the Order of Australia since 2004, when it was awarded to him for his services to medicine. He is also a member of the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal College of Physicians in the UK. He has spent the majority of his life working for the welfare of his fellow citizens. Dr Watts' letter from 11 September 2012 reads:

They plunder our environment while enriching foreigners all under the guise of some mythical societal benefit. They take our health, our land, our peace of mind and our taxes. We surrender our precious mountains to this most gross industry. And in return they give us social chaos, environmental destruction, lies, deceit, scorn, and ill-health.

... ... ...

The wind industry is based on greed, ignorance, subsidy and institutional deceit. Its propaganda rewards the greedy, flatters the gullible, exploits the well-intentioned.

Industrial wind is a fraud of enormous consequence. And people who value intellectual honesty should not allow themselves to be cruelly deceived by such industrial treachery or even by their government’s callous indifference.

That says it all. But Dr Watts, in a further letter to the editor of the Australian on 7 November, only a few weeks ago, also wrote:

Wind industry propaganda flatters the gullible, exploits the well-intentioned, and nurtures the craven.

... ... ...

Industrial wind is a fraud of enormous consequence whose foundation is based on greed, ignorance, subsidy and entrenched institutional deceit. People who value intellectual honesty should not allow themselves to be quietly fleeced by such industrial treachery or even by their government’s callous ignorance and indifference. It represents not only poor science and wasteful economics but is ignorance in defiance of truth and indifference to the welfare of Australian rural families.

That sums it up. If we want to put a cap on the cost of living for our fellow countrymen, we cannot continue to invest billions of wasted dollars on useless wind farms which do absolutely nothing to change the climate or the temperature of the planet.
Petition: Live Animal Exports

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (11:45): The three boxes beside me contain over 60,000 signatures to a petition which has been considered by the Standing Committee on Petitions and approved for tabling, and which I now table.

The petition read as follows—
To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives
This petition of undersigned citizens of Australia calls on the Australian Government to end the export of live animals from Australia to the Middle East.

We the undersigned therefore call on the House of Representatives to ensure that the Australian government ends this trade and, in doing, restore Australia's reputation as a compassionate and ethical nation.

from 60,723 citizens

Petition received.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON: The petition calls on the Australian government to end the export of all live animals from Australia and calls on the House of Representatives 'to ensure that the Australian government ends this trade and, in so doing, restore Australia's reputation as a compassionate and ethical nation'. This very large petition is part of the strong nationwide response to video footage—obtained by Animals Australia and shown on Four Corners—of the brutal mass slaughter of thousands of Australian sheep in Pakistan. The petition will now be referred to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Minister for Trade and Competitiveness and will be placed on the Petitions Committee's website.

I want to take this opportunity to express my horror and outrage, which I know is felt by millions of Australians, at the Pakistan sheep cull, which was an event of absolute chaos, with animals being dragged and beaten, having their throats sawn at with blunt knives and being thrown into mass graves, some of them still being alive hours later. I think it was predictable that, when Pakistan discovered that they had accepted sheep rejected by another country on health fears, there would be repercussions. It appears that the parties had in fact colluded to keep the history of this shipment from them. I think that Australians would be pretty unimpressed if a consignment of goods that had been rejected by another country as diseased were fast-tracked into Australia on the quiet. So the Pakistani government clearly felt that they had been deceived in relation to this matter.

Nevertheless, I do not think we should be exporting live animals to Bahrain and Pakistan. We are poles apart from these countries on animal welfare issues, and I think that people there have a completely different understanding of how you treat an animal. To have a senior Pakistani bureaucrat telling us that the Muslim method of slaughter is more humane than non-Muslim methods, when we saw barbaric footage of animals buried when they were not even dead, I thought was just pathetic. The claims of foot and mouth disease, anthrax and so on were, frankly, ridiculous. We should not be exporting animals to countries which can act in such a capricious, unfounded and inhuman way.

I want to draw to the attention of the parliament a resolution passed by the federal parliamentary Labor Party this week concerning this issue, which I think is of quite some significance. It says:
Noting the 2011 National ALP Conference Platform commitment to the establishment of an independent Office of Animal Welfare, the FPLP Caucus endorses the Caucus Live Animal Export Working Group to develop a model for an Office of Animal Welfare for the purpose of developing and reviewing domestic animal welfare standards, harmonising domestic laws, monitoring and reporting on surveillance and enforcement of domestic and live animal export regulation, and other appropriate activities.

The report to the Caucus on this model will consider:

- the location of the Office within government and the legal status of the Office;
- the relationship of the Office to state and territory jurisdictions, including interaction with the existing animal welfare committee of the standing council on primary industries, how the Office can complement state and territory responsibilities for domestic animal welfare, and how to continue the progress made on model codes of practice;
- how the Office would interact with stakeholders; and
- an approximate cost of its operation.

The preferred model will be presented by the end of February 2013 for consideration by the Government.

Further, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry will continue to actively engage within the OIE and other international fora to promote Australia's leadership in animal welfare standards, including ESCAS, and stunning prior to slaughter.

It is noteworthy that many members of caucus, including the member for Corangamite who is in the chamber now, have expressed their own concerns about this issue. I am very pleased that this resolution was carried and I look forward to the opportunity to work on the development of an independent office of animal welfare, which I think has the capacity to do a great deal of good.

In closing I should mention that another petition has been sent to me and, I note, to the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Prime Minister. This petition is from Henry Rischbieth of Echunga in South Australia and also talks about the need for an end to live animal export from Australia. It says that animals endure terrible suffering both on the journey and in the way that they are slaughtered. It says that the live export industry has failed to prevent the suffering and deaths of 2½ million animals during transportation over the past three decades. Mr Rischbieth says that the answer is more abattoirs in Australia and the export of chilled meat. That petition has 218 electronic signatories.

Riverina Electorate: Youth Events

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina) (11:51): Australia's youth are wonderful and this is certainly so in the Riverina. I opened the Shout Out regional New South Wales Youth Summit at Griffith last Wednesday and then spent an absorbing time at the event at which local high schoolers had the opportunity to meet local decision-makers, share their experiences with education and meet inspirational people such as Sam Cawthorn.

Sam survived a near fatal car accident in Tasmania in October 2006 in which he suffered horrific injuries including losing his right arm and much of the muscle in his right leg. Despite this he recovered and during his long and painful rehabilitation dreamt up Be Motivated, a program aimed at providing challenged young people with skills to improve their confidence and self-belief in order to attain personal goals while remaining positive when faced with adversity. He is truly an amazing man and it is little wonder that he was the recipient of the
2009 Young Australian of the Year for Tasmania. He captivated the teens from Narrandra, Leeton, Griffith and elsewhere and captured the moment by uploading a YouTube video featuring the kids. As he would have said, awesome stuff! The day was well organised by Youth Connections National Network national executive officer, Rebekha Sharkie, of South Australia.

On Saturday I attended the Rotary Youth Program of Enrichment, RYPEN, for Rotary district 9700 at the Borambola Sport and Recreation Centre. There were 55 teenagers in attendance from all parts of the Riverina as well as a few from the Central West. A Rotarian from Wagga Wagga, Neil Pinto, helped organise the day and did a wonderful job with these kids who truly are amazing youngsters.

On Sunday I presented a very special award to fine young Narrandra girl. Bridget Baldwin received her Pioneer Pin, which is the highest national award a girl can achieve in the New South Wales Girls' Brigade. She was badged at a service at St John's Uniting Church as part of the 147th New South Wales Girls' Brigade's presentation. Her brigade colleagues were also given awards for their efforts during the year. It was a great moment for Anne Beckett, who organised the service, is the captain of 147th New South Wales and is also Bridget's grandmother. She was very, very proud and so she should have been.

Today 11-year-old Thomas Zambon from Griffith is here in Parliament House as part of the Kids in the House program to recognise the importance of type 1 diabetes. Thomas came first in the Riverina martial arts tournament in the category of boys 10 to 12 years. He is a charming young fellow and a real brave battler. I understand today he is going to be presenting me with a bear, Rufus. Rufus is the bear which is given to kids with type 1 diabetes to help them identify the sites on their body where they need to have needles inserted to help them with their condition. I call on all governments to do more to fund diabetes in kids. There is a growing incidence and these kids are wonderful. They need all the help they can get from all sides of politics.

Yesterday the kids from Collingullie and Uranquinty public schools were here in parliament. I receive many, many kids because my electorate is so close to Canberra. The kids are always wanting to ask questions and find out why there are so many clocks and how many rooms there are in parliament. They are always amazed by the long corridors and they get a real buzz when they see somebody really important—for instance, the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition. Another two great schools doing wonders in my electorate are at Ganmain, a community 55 kilometres west of Wagga where the public school recently celebrated its centenary. There are 32 kids at the local Catholic school, St Brendan's. The principal, Kathy Gaskin, is really firing up their imaginations and their literacy skills with the Flat Stanley project. This is Flat Stanley, and Ganmain people have taken Flat Stanley right throughout the world and had his photo taken. I will just hand him to the member for Wannon so he might get into Hansard—hold Flat Stanley up.

Flat Stanley has really helped with their literacy skills and to write stories and inspire these kids. Flat Stanley is now going across to the Labor side so the member for Corangamite can hold him, and the kids from Ganmain will be really pleased to know that we are using this prop in parliament. They will be excited by the fact that he has been to both sides of politics. It is a great little school. Both the schools at Ganmain are tremendous schools and may they
long last into the future and the kids out of there will have many great opportunities. *(Time expired)*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Is the member for Riverina seeking to table Flat Stanley?

Leave granted.

**Shortland Electorate: Hunter Sports High School**

**Ms HALL** (Shortland—Government Whip) (11:59): On Tuesday 20 November, Hunter Sports High School held their 14th annual sports award presentation. Hunter Sports High School has 900 students, and 424 of those students are enrolled in the targeted sports program. It draws from areas, including Newcastle, Central Coast, Port Stephens, Hunter Valley and of course Lake Macquarie. Fifteen sports are offered in the targeted sports program and there are 31 external coaches. As well as the coaching provided by the excellent teachers at that school, they draw on the expertise of external coaches and 21 internal teachers and coordinators, all with those specialised sporting skills.

There were 181 Hunter sports representatives in 2012: 35 New South Wales representatives in 2012 and 19 Australian representatives in 2012. There were 396 government schools competing in state knock-out competitions, and Hunter sports high had three state championship teams in 2012. A further 10 teams finished second, third and fourth, making a total of 13 of the teams at Hunter sports high finishing in the top four of the state competitions. That is an absolutely outstanding record, and it also shows the dedication of all those teachers and other people involved at the school.

A number of Hunter Sports High School sports stars of the future were identified on the night. Kyle Schneider was a 2011-12 Golden Gloves champion in his age division. Last school term he was invited to attend the world ringside boxing championships in the US.

A female recipient of the sports stars of the future award was Hannah Southwell. She represented the school in state finalist teams in touch, basketball, cricket, football and baseball. She was selected in the Hunter region open CHS softball team as a year 7 and 8 student as well as the Hunter regional athletics team where she competed in the shot put, discus and javelin at the state carnival. What an outstanding record because, as well as that, she was selected in the New South Wales country cricket and basketball teams for her age group and the Australian under-14 soccer team. She is currently training with the Newcastle Jets women's league team. The sportsperson of the year was sponsored by the *Newcastle Herald* and the male recipient was Tyler Jones. Tyler achieved on the national scene. He also competed in the New South Wales short walks championship and is national champion in his sport. The female recipient was Tulia Palozzi, who was selected in the Hunter open football team and received a New South Wales Institute of Sport scholarship for football this year. She was selected in the under-15 Australian all-stars. With the 2HD senior sportspeople of the year, the male recipient was Sione Mata'Utia-Leiﬁ, who was selected in the Hunter and Greater Northern New South Wales representative teams. He plays his club football for the Newcastle Knights and his performance for the Knights throughout the year has seen him named as captain of the New South Wales under-16 team which beat the Queensland under-16 team in the curtain raiser to the first State of Origin match. Fantastic. The female recipient was Mariah Williams, who was selected in the Australian all schools under-16 hockey team, the New South Wales open women's hockey team and the Australian youth team that played
in the World Cup. She will attend the Australian Institute of Sport hockey program in Perth from 2013.

The Bing Lee sportsperson of the year was Ben Fitzgerald, schools state champion in shot-put and discus in the open age group. Outside the school sports system he has been selected in the NSWIS and Australian Institute of Sport under-19 talent squad. He has broken records of current Olympian Benn Harradine, who also comes from Shortland electorate, including by up to three metres at the recent New South Wales school titles in the discus event. He threw a personal best of 65.94 metres, which set a new record by a massive 8.8 metres. The throw also saw the young man gain the number one world ranking for the discus in his age group.

(Time expired)

Herbert Electorate: Bruce Highway

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (12:01): We are coming towards Christmas, and Christmas in North Queensland means the wet season. The wet season also means that the Bruce Highway will be cut a number of times this year. This affects our cost of living as well. Every time there is a tropical low off the Coral Sea there is a 25 per cent levy or tariff placed on all transport in North Queensland because they know that sooner or later they will be held up on the side of the road. It is something that we have to work through. I am pleased that the report that the technical people have given the Queensland government in relation to where the priorities lie for repair of the Bruce Highway has centred on the bridges in North Queensland. The worst stretch of road on which I travelled a couple of years ago was between Miriam Vale and Rockhampton. Clearly we have the worst bridges in Australia in North Queensland.

The worst stretch of road on which I travelled a couple of years ago was between Miriam Vale and Rockhampton. Clearly we have the worst bridges in Australia in North Queensland. The Haughton River bridge is very dangerous. It came very close to being closed last year and we must make sure it is being repaired as soon as humanly possible.

One thing I am very pleased about is that Blakey's Crossing will be fixed next dry season. We have to get through this wet season but thankfully the state member for Townsville, John Hathaway, was able to follow my lead and get the LNP state government to finally fix Blakey's Crossing. Blakey's Crossing is the major industrial link between the industrial suburbs of Garbutt and Bohle. When they go under, traffic backs up from Townsville's growth area of the northern beaches all the way through and what should be a 20-minute trip to town can become 2½ hours. It was a federal road and was gifted back to the local council as a matter of course when the Mather Street and Woolcock Street extension was brought in. This was the Bruce Highway and it has been the Bruce Highway for an awfully long time, and it should have been fixed and should never have been accepted back by the local council.

We were very lucky lately that I had Gary Humphries, the coalition's emergency services spokesman, visit Townsville to be briefed on a project we are trying to bring into reality on the northern beaches. We will be getting a community centre there as part of the Stocklands northern beaches or north shore development. What I would like to see done and what I am trying to get the community behind is to have it upgraded to a cyclone evacuation centre. After Cyclone Larry in 2006 the then Labor Premier of Queensland, Peter Beattie, said every centre in northern Queensland should have a cyclone evacuation centre. He built absolutely zero and now the ones that are being built are being built with charity given to us from the United Arab Emirates. To have the federal government pay for that little bit extra so that we can make sure there is a full commercial kitchen and that the building is absolutely safe for
those residents of the Northern Beaches for a flight of fancy. We are looking at people in high flood-rate risk zones, tidal surge zones and in caravan parks up there.

I was pleased that at the meeting were Andrew Wallace from Stockland North Shore and Councillor Sue Blom from that ward of the Townsville City Council. The Northern Beaches really have no greater advocate than Councillor Sue Blom; she loves it out there and has lived there for 28 or 30 years. AFL Townsville was represented by John Dirkin, and the AFL nationally has taken a great interest in the Northern Beaches. I am pleased to say that we are getting a NAB Cup game at the beginning of next year between the Gold Coast and the mighty North Melbourne Kangaroos—they are coming to Townsville! Join in the chorus, sing it one and all, North Melbourne is coming to Townsville! Christine Buckland joined the meeting from the North Townsville Community Hub. They are a great community hub and the community centre at Deeragun is a great space, but it is more for meetings and collectives to get together in, not an evacuation centre for times of distress. They will play a huge part in getting ready for a cyclone. Peter Raffles from Townsville Cricket has been a fantastic advocate for this, and Lachlan Bell from the Townsville and District Rugby Union has also made sure that we are looking at this for an holistic and global response.

To Townsville's own Mitchell Johnson, who re-joins the Australian Cricket Team: Wanderers Cricket Club in Townsville is very proud of you and the way you have come back from terrible injury. As a personal plea to those other football clubs chasing Johnathan Thurston: please, he has a home! We took him on as a 21-year-old from Canterbury, he has made North Queensland his home and he is marrying a North Queensland girl—stay, JT, stay!

(Time expired)

Shortland Electorate: Hunter Sports High School

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (12:06): Could I add to the speech I made earlier that the female recipient of the 2HD Senior Sports Person (Female) Award was Mariah Williams; she was the member of the NSW All Schools under-16 hockey team, the NSW CHS under-18 hockey team and the Australian All Schools under-16 hockey team. She plays hockey outside school for the NSW Open Women hockey team and the Australian Youth hockey team. She is an outstanding young woman who was given that award.

Queensland Government

Mr RUDD (Griffith) (12:07): A place to call home is fundamental. Home is a base from which we raise our kids, from which we become members of our community and where we seek to build our lives and our careers. However, for many Australians the reality of homelessness and housing vulnerability is all too familiar.

I would like to tell a story about a potential housing crisis in my own neighbourhood in Brisbane. Just a few minutes from my own home is the Monte Carlo Caravan Park. The park was established in 1947 and has 152 sites which house almost 200 people. Many of these people are some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Almost 60 per cent are over 65, many of whom are aged pensioners. More than half have been living at the park for more than five years. Ninety-five per cent of residents own their own dwelling—many have spent their life savings renovating their slice of the Australian dream.

In July, the then Queensland Minister for Housing and Public Works sent letters to every single resident telling them that the Newman government intends to sell the ground from
under them. Not one single resident has been offered alternative accommodation. Not one single resident has been offered counselling about this decision. I have met with these good folk now on a number of occasions, and their stories are quite heartbreaking. Not only is this just plain wrong but it does not make economic sense either.

Let us say the Newman government earns several million dollars from the sale of the land; the truth is most of these people would now have to be accommodated in one form of social housing or another at what is likely to be a much greater cost to the government and the community—assuming such social housing could be organised in time. But, regrettably, and typically of the decisions we are seeing emerging from the Liberal National Party government in Queensland, we are seeing a wrecking ball put through basic public services, including housing. This Liberal-National Party government has already slashed more than $40 million in health funding for Southside hospitals. This will result in the loss of preventative health programs and essential front-line workers who deliver basic health services and will compromise public health care in Queensland over time.

The Liberal-National Party's decision to evict the residents of the Monte Carlo Caravan Park is part of their slash-and-burn agenda. They do not have a mandate to sell this park. Nothing was said about this prior to the state election. They failed to consult with any of the stakeholders, and they have supposedly asked residents to fork out money for a valuation. And yet the state budget documents identify $12 million in revenue from the sale of three parks, including the Monte Carlo Caravan Park. Clearly, this indicates that the state government has already undertaken some form of 'valuation assessment'. If so, why tell the residents to undertake such an expensive exercise themselves? Why won't the local state member and the minister for housing, now that the former minister has been replaced, be up-front with the residents? Why doesn't the federal member for the area pick up the phone, call his Liberal-National colleagues and stand up for his constituents? Is there nobody in the Liberal-National Party—council, state or federal—who will stand up for the residents of this caravan park? They do not actually live in my electorate. They live next door. They used to be in my electorate a long time ago.

The residents tell me that the state government is still in consultation mode—whatever that may mean. I have a real fear that this consultation process will only result in one outcome. For these good folk and quite poor people this is simply not good enough. The state government is stringing these vulnerable residents along. It is not good enough that the state government refuses to release critical information about the economic modelling on the sale of the caravan park.

To further add to the matter, the minister who was responsible for looking after these residents has been forced to resign on another matter. I am informed that the new minister has started the process again by asking the residents to resubmit their proposal, a process that could take another two to three weeks. This makes for a very unhappy Christmas for these good people who live in this particular area. It is not good enough that, after 10 weeks of so-called consultations, the residents are still in the dark about their future. Nor should they have to bear the brunt of a Liberal-National Party government in chaos, with multiple resignations and accusations spreading right across the ranks of that government. That is why, very simply, I am calling on the Liberal-National Party government of the state of Queensland and the new minister for housing to do the right thing and stop this sale. It is unnecessary, it is
inhuman and it makes no economic sense. I have made it clear in the past that how we deal with our most vulnerable is a window into the hearts of how we choose to govern our communities.

**Carbon Pricing**

Ms LEY (Farrer) (12:12): I rise today to speak about the Perilya zinc and silver mine in Broken Hill in my electorate of Farrer and the very serious effect of the carbon tax on its operations. I just want to talk about Perilya and make these comments. Before the global financial crisis the zinc world price was $1.28 a pound. It is now 84c a pound, which shows us that under the old cost structure the company would now be bankrupt if they had kept going the way they were. However, they resized, they laid off 400 people and they got costs down to where they are this year—50c to 60c a pound. Their margins are razor thin. They are very lean and highly skilled. They are an operation of which we as a nation should be very, very proud.

The carbon tax is now costing Perilya $3.5 million a year. With the Renewable Energy Target it is obliged to participate in, that is $5.5 million. In its most recent quarterly accounts, Perilya reported that its electricity costs were expected to increase more than $3 million per annum because of the carbon tax, a situation that just could not be maintained indefinitely.

Asked to respond earlier this month by the local paper, the Barrier Daily Truth, the office of the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency said that 'the carbon price impact is a very small component of Perilya's revenue and does not significantly impact on their competitiveness'. I repeat: this minister's office are so clearly on top of their brief that they apparently know better than the legal reporting that Perilya is required to give its own shareholders. Despite their diligent research, the minister's staff did not note that a $3 million carbon tax slug on Perilya actually equates to three times its annual operating profit. This company directly employs 409 people in a city of just 18,000 people. It is now forced to rely on its sister mine in the Dominican Republic to survive—that is right, Deputy Speaker. I talked about Perilya's proactive action in surviving the global financial crisis, and the government then introduced a carbon tax and a mining tax. I know the current mining tax does not apply to Perilya, but in that environment of uncertainty, with the crazy approach this government was taking to the miners who have built wealth in this nation, Perilya made a strategic decision to invest not in Australia but offshore in the Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic, a developing country, has a mine operated by a company in Broken Hill that is subsidising those operations. I bring this example to the House to show how ridiculous this government and this minister are on the subject of the crippling effects of the carbon tax on manufacturing and mining.

Perilya's managing director, Paul Arndt, responded to comments from the minister's office in the Barrier Daily Truth and said that to say that 'the network charges of the NSW government owned Essential Energy have been the main driver of electricity price increases in Broken Hill' and are 'completely unrelated to the carbon price' may be a little misinformed. In gross terms, the carbon tax will increase Perilya's power costs at its Broken Hill mining and milling operations by in excess of $3½ million per annum.

The minister this week said that the carbon price is unquestionably having a positive effect on the economy. Well, Minister, it is not. Almost all of Perilya's production is sold overseas, and its competitors are not impacted by a carbon tax. Perilya's international competitiveness is
adversely impacted by the carbon tax. It is an export exposed business, and that just shows its vulnerability in the current environment being operated by this government.

Perilya do not receive any assistance or offset of any form from government. Because of this obvious gap in knowledge, the managing director has personally invited Mr Combet or any of his staff to visit their operations to provide them with a detailed brief of the impact of the carbon tax in Broken Hill. Perilya are not grandstanders. They are, as I said, a company of which we should be proud. I would at least expect the minister to respond to their correspondence dated 14 November and give them the response and the understanding, take them seriously and acknowledge their role in today's economy. This is the carbon tax that was never going to occur under the Prime Minister— (Time expired)

Thomas, Mr Brian

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (12:17): I rise to pay tribute on the occasion of the passing of a great Labor man, whom you will know, Madam Deputy Speaker Owens: Brian Thomas of Blacktown. On Remembrance Day I received the news that Brian had passed away. Brian was the FEC campaign director in Greenway, and he was also the President of the Lalor Park and Districts Branch of the ALP, which has been my branch since I joined the Labor Party 23 years ago. Brian had been president of that branch for longer than I can remember, and I do not recall him ever missing a meeting, other than that which occurred in the month leading up to his death, when we realised that he was very ill.

Brian was a wonderful husband to Judy. He was a wonderful father, grandfather and great-grandfather. Unfortunately, as is often the case after people have passed away, you realise at their funeral how wide their family networks are and how much they are loved by so many people whom you have never met. Judy and Brian were two names that you would always use together: 'What are we going to do about this? Brian and Judy will take care of it.' 'Who are you going to sit with at the dinner? Brian and Judy will be there.' They were very much coexistent throughout their lives and were two people who loved each other so very much.

I did not really get to tell Judy at Brian's funeral last Tuesday, but Brian and I would spend a lot of time together. You spend a lot of time with people you campaign with. Judy, he was so proud of you. Judy had a career as a very skilled professional surgeon's nurse. One of her highlights before she retired was being sent to Rome, at the express selection of some very skilled doctors, to teach people how it was all done. It was one of those stories about how skilled Judy was that Brian would always tell me, even though he probably knew he had told me a hundred times before. As to Brian himself, I always said to him, 'Brian, you punched above your weight in getting Judy' because Brian's career was as a professional truck driver. It was a hard life, and a long life.

Brian became involved in the Labor movement when he decided to put up his hand to become a TWU organiser. His love for the Transport Workers Union was absolutely second to none. He loved that union so much. He would tell me stories about his time on the road and it was his influence that led me to become such a big supporter of the Safe Rates campaign. He would tell me about the guys he would see on the road who would juice themselves up to meet the most unrealistic deadlines. He would tell me a story about the issues of safety on the road. There was one time when he just had to pull over during the night to ring Judy and say, 'You had better come and get me. I can't drive any more, even though I am pretty close to home.' Then, another time when he had to put on the brakes—he saw into the eyes of a baby
in a baby's capsule in a car that had just stopped suddenly in front of him. He got out shaking and just said to the driver, 'The first person who saw my rig coming at them was your baby.'

He was so diligent with respect to prosecuting the case for truck drivers' safety that even after he retired he founded the TWU veterans so that he could make sure that he kept going to worksites. We did that. One of the last photos of me pregnant, earlier in the year, was with Brian—my tummy was out to here—at a worksite at a depot in Blacktown, talking about safe rates. He worked like an absolute Trojan on the 2010 election campaign and in the years leading up to that, including when I was on council, and in every single state, federal and local government election Brian was there.

When you get to make your first speech in parliament you have the opportunity to mention a couple of people and quote from them. People often quote from famous people; I quoted from Brian Thomas. I was always thanking him for everything he did for me. He said, 'You know, I'm not doing it for you, I'm doing it for me. I am doing myself a favour so that I have a Labor representative.' Brian, I will miss you terribly. I will always picture you in a comfy tracksuit. I dedicate this speech to you and I dedicate the term of the new parliament to you, Brian. (Time expired)

Palestine

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (12:22): Australia will shortly face a vote in the United Nations: whether or not to elevate the Palestinian Territories to observer status, bringing it in line with the Vatican City. The reasons are wide and varied as to why Australia should vote 'no', the most pertinent reason being that the Palestinian Territories are simply not ready for this upgrade in status. This is evidenced by the deep and violent frictions that exist between Fatah and Hamas. How can we expect the Palestinian Territories to progress as one entity with any degree of certainty whilst there are still two independently recognised governments? Who will put forward foreign policy—Hamas or Fatah? And on whose authority are decisions carried out—Hamas or Fatah? The practicalities of the situation are impossible.

In addition to this, any official recognition or legitimisation of Hamas should be vigorously contested at every opportunity. Hamas is a terrorist organisation whose objective is not to live in peace alongside Israel but rather exist in a world where Israel does not.

We have learnt this week that there are real divisions amongst the government as to how to vote on this issue. We have learnt that the Prime Minister, to her credit, understood these complexities and recognised that this symbolic gesture was counterproductive to attaining a sustainable and long-lasting peace in the Middle East. Whilst the Prime Minister's interest in this has been in more recent years, I cannot flaw her logic that has led her to that position. But the Prime Minister was rolled in caucus by her Minister for Foreign Affairs, by other cabinet ministers and by her own backbench. There have been reports that Senator Carr, the foreign minister, was ready to speak out had the Prime Minister not caved to the militant Left in her own party, which hold the same views as their government partners, the Greens. What is most concerning to me are the reported motives that led the foreign minister to his position. Was he thinking of Australia's best interests? No. Was he thinking of the best interests of the peace process in the Middle East? No. Was he even thinking about the plight of the Palestinians? No. The only consideration the foreign minister had was the vote in western Sydney. He was more concerned about Labor's grasp on power than what is in the best interests of national foreign policy.
Today we see reports in the *Australian* that:

Some sections of the party suggest Victorian Labor is too close to the Israel lobby and does not fully understand the underlying changes in Sydney's outer suburbs.

Since when should foreign policy be dictated by demographic changes? It is up to our nation's leaders to lead, to build a rational and justified position based on facts and reasoning. Foreign policy should not, and must not, simply be based on what would win more votes at an election. It should be based on what is right. Until now, Australia has long held a bipartisan support for Israel and a two-state solution. We support Israel because it is a beacon of democracy in an otherwise autocratic region. Israel offers human rights to all of its citizens regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation. No country is perfect, but this does not mean we should not stand up for our values of democracy, fairness and equality.

Minister Carr has failed in his duties to look after the best foreign interests of our country. He has proved that he has failed to use our voice in the international community, which was something that he said was so critical when campaigning for a temporary seat on the United Nations Security Council. He also proved that the Prime Minister lacks authority in her own government. If only we had a Prime Minister who had the courage of her convictions to stand by her original position, rather than one who simply only ever speaks out passionately when it is in defence of her own job and her own position in government. If only we did not find ourselves in such an invidious position as this where we are seeing the constant delegitimisation of Israel in the international community through such motions as the one that has been placed before the UN today.

### Operation Slipper Farewell Parade

**Mr CHAMPION** (Wakefield) (12:27): On 13 October, it was my great honour to represent the Minister for Defence at the 1st Brigade's farewell parade for Operation Slipper at the RAAF base Edinburgh. I was joined by Senator David Fawcett, who was representing the shadow minister for defence; the Hon. Jack Snelling, the Treasurer of South Australia, who was representing the Premier; Lieutenant-General David Morrison, Chief of the Army; Brigadier John Frewen AM, Commander of 1st Brigade; Lieutenant-Colonel Mick Garraway, who is the commanding officer of 7th Battalion-Royal Australian Regiment; and Lieutenant-Colonel Malcolm Wells, who is the commanding officer of the 7RAR task group.

It is an impressive sight to see this parade. It was done with the usual degree of professionalism that we have come to expect from the Australian Defence Force, and in particular from the Australian Army. I can only speak very highly of all those involved. It was a day when a number of emotions come to mind. Obviously, one of the emotions was pride, because we have so many young men and women who are serving in the military and serving on operations, in this case in Afghanistan, which is a very dangerous environment. They serve in the same tradition as every other Australian soldier has served: protecting the values of liberty, justice, mateship and democracy. In a world that is so replete with tyranny, these values are a guiding light, a shining light, to people who are innocent, who want a better way of life and who want a way of life that is akin to Australia. These values are terribly important. 7RAR will be mentoring the Afghan National Army's 4th Kandak. This is an important mission, because it is the beginning of our transition out of Afghanistan and it is setting the conditions for the redeployment of the Australian mission by the end of 2014. Obviously this mentoring is not without risk and it is not without reward. 7RAR will be
setting up the security arrangements to make sure that Afghanistan does not become another failed state, and to make sure that the terrible tragedy of war, warlordism and terror is not revisited on Afghanistan. I think it is a very important mission, and it was my great honour to be part of that farewell parade. I can only wish them luck and a safe return, which I know all the friends and family who were there that day would also wish.

The other duty I had—and it was a sad duty—was to attend the military funeral of Corporal Scott Smith. I was lucky enough to attend with the Hon. Chris Evans, who was representing the Prime Minister; Stephen Smith; the opposition leader, Tony Abbott; David Johnston, who is the shadow minister for defence; and the Premier of South Australia, Jay Weatherill; along with the Chief of Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison; Air Marshal Mark Binskin; Mr Dennis Richardson, who is the secretary for Defence; and Major General Gus Gilmore, who is Special Operations Commander Australia.

Many kind words have been said in this parliament about what a great soldier Scott Smith was. What came through to me at his funeral was what a great person he was and what a great man he was. There was a particularly touching eulogy from his partner, Liv, and if you did not have tears in your eyes at the end of that, you had to have a pretty hard heart. You got a real picture into what a great person he was, and the fact that Scott Smith was the love of her life.

My condolences go to Scott Smith's parents, Katrina Paterson and Murray Smith, and to his sister, Roxanne. It was a very sad duty that day. Scott Smith reminded me of every other country lad that I grew up with in the Barossa Valley. His loss will be felt by all of his family and friends and, of course, all of those in the Barossa Valley.

Wannon Electorate: Warrnambool Exchange Fire

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (12:32): I rise today to place on the record an incident which occurred a week ago, which was a fire in the Warrnambool exchange. The impact that that fire has had on south-west Victoria has been considerable and significant—66,000 landlines went down, all the Telstra mobile telecommunications went down, and all the broadband and ADSL went down. Some parts of the community are still waiting for landlines to be restored. Most of them are getting their ADSL back. I have had notification that in Portland today—a week later—there is ADSL back on there. We are still waiting in Warrnambool for ADSL to be restored, and it could take a further two to three weeks for that to happen. The economic cost of this disaster will be in the millions, if not in the tens of millions, of dollars to the local economy. The Telstra technicians have been working around the clock doing 12-hour shifts to restore services. On Tuesday at midday I went and saw the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Stephen Conroy, and impressed upon him the need for an inquiry into what had occurred and how we can prevent such things occurring again. We live in a digital world; our reliance on telecommunications grows every single day. I think that my community has been shocked by the impact that such an outage can have. Our basic transactions nowadays are all done through telecommunications. What happened here was that the banks could not lend money, people did not have cash and businesses could not operate their credit systems. People hung on to their cash because they knew it had become a precious item. So, commerce literally came to a standstill.

Obviously, we also had the issues to deal with for landline customers who have medical conditions. That was a real worry. We had to make sure that the hospitals—whether they were
Warnambool, Hamilton or Portland—could operate without proper communications being available to them. This was a significant, significant event, and it is one that the whole nation needs to learn from.

I am glad that Senator Conroy has agreed to establish an inquiry into what has happened, and has outlined the types of issues that this inquiry will look into. I say this in all seriousness: with cyberterrorism on the rise we need to make sure that our communities can be protected and that there are proper backup plans in place because we have seen firsthand what the impact—and in this case it was an accidental fire—can have on people's lives and especially on the local economies in south-west Victoria.

This inquiry will need to be thorough. I am pleased that Telstra have said that they will cooperate with the inquiry. It is essential that we learn the lessons from it. And it is not only essential for the south-west, so that the south-west will not be placed in the same predicament again but it is also important for the rest of the nation. If this event occurred in one of the CBDs or if it occurred in one of our remote mining sites it could literally bring that region to a standstill. We have seen it firsthand in our region, and our region is a major economic contributor to this nation. Victoria's largest export comes from there. It is the largest dairy supplier in the nation. We need an inquiry, and we got it. (Time expired)

Protect

Mr SYMON (Deakin) (12:38): Last Wednesday, 21 November, I was grossly and maliciously defamed by Senator Helen Kroger, the Liberal Party's chief whip in the Senate in an adjournment speech. Senator Kroger made several false and untrue allegations in this speech which I cannot leave uncorrected on the record.

Senator Kroger stated that in 2007 I was a field officer for an organisation called Protect whilst I was a candidate for the federal electorate of Deakin. This is false. If the senator had actually done her homework she would have found from many publicly available documents that I actually worked for Protect for two years, spanning the years 2000 to 2002. Further, my role was as a compliance officer, not a field officer—again, a fact that is readily available.

Protect is an electrical industry severance fund that was established by unions and employers to provide severance, redundancy and income protection insurance benefits for workers whose employers contributed to the fund. It is still operating to this day and continues to be run jointly by both union and employer organisations.

Protect was formed by the merger of two previous funds, the employer-run Electrical Industry Severance Scheme and the union-run Incolink number 3 fund. The merger was undertaken in late 2000, and my role was to ensure that both employers and employees knew about the merger and the new fund rules and procedures. This administrative role involved an enormous amount of time ensuring that moneys from both funds were correctly allocated as receipts from employers and allocations to employees. Hundreds of employers and thousands of employees had accounts with both of the existing funds, although not necessarily with details that matched exactly. By working closely with Australian Administrative Services, who received and paid all moneys due under the Protect funds deed, over this time these details were successfully merged.

My role involved no collection of moneys nor disbursement of any moneys from the Protect fund. It was the role of Australian Administrative Services to do that and provide
these details to the jointly run board of Protect that continues to be run by representatives of employer and union organisations. Debts that were owed to the fund were pursued by a company employed by the Protect board where payments had not been made when due, and it is grossly offensive that Senator Kroger accused me of being a 'bag collector' and a 'debt collector'. Not only do I find this grossly offensive, it is also untrue and the Cole Royal Commission, as referred to by Senator Kroger, did not make this or any other finding in relation to me or any of the work that I did over two years for the board of the Protect fund.

This laziness of research and the slovenly approach of Senator Kroger has defamed me without recourse, due to parliamentary privilege being attached to the speech. I will not let stand comments from this senator who with her smears, sleaze and mud has attempted to tear down my hard work, honesty and integrity by comparing me to people in New South Wales such as Eddie Obeid and Ian Macdonald—people I have never met nor had I even heard of them until I read about them recently in a newspaper. If Senator Kroger cannot read and understand publicly available documents then she should resign as a senator as the duties of the role are obviously beyond her limited capabilities.

**Australian Securities and Investments Commission**

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (12:41): The Australian Securities and Investments Commission has failed in its duty to several of my constituents, who have contacted me over the course of the past 12 months. On ASIC's website under 'What we do', ASIC states:

*administer the law effectively and with minimal procedural requirements*

*enforce and give effect to the law*

Mr Peter Leech came to my office to seek advice in early 2012 after the company he worked for, SIG Security Intelligence Group Pty Ltd, was placed into administration. Peter and at least one other colleague, Aaron Carden, were left out of pocket with unpaid wages and superannuation for their work at the company. Mr Leech has been extremely diligent in his pursuit of the moneys to which he is rightly entitled. However, 18 months after the company wound up, Peter is no closer to having his problem resolved. The problem that we face is that the responsible regulatory body, ASIC, has shown no interest in pursuing this matter and yet this is the organisation with the resources—and indeed the obligation—to get to the bottom of any wrongdoings which may have occurred.

Mr Leech has asserted to me that this company has engaged in 'an intentional, deliberate and cyclic avoidance of taxation and superannuation obligations'. Mr Leech alleges the company has gone into liquidation leaving unsecured creditors, such as employees with outstanding superannuation entitlements, out of pocket. The company then re-emerges with a slightly different name and continues to operate within the same industry with the same clientele. Such liquidations allow the company to avoid paying unsecured creditors—such activity is known as a phoenixing.

Mr Leech has contacted the liquidator of the company, who was unable to retrieve moneys to pay employees left stranded. Mr Leech subsequently contacted the Australian Taxation Office, which was unable to assist. Assiduously, Mr Leech then contacted ASIC to report the company's activities, as is clearly recommended on ASIC’s website. Mr Leech lodged a complaint with ASIC shortly after the liquidator was appointed, approximately 18 months
ago, and this was subsequently rejected—ASIC was not interested. Mr Leech then appealed this decision and the appeal was rejected—ASIC was still not interested.

This whole affair leads me to ask: if ASIC is not interested in looking into such matters, who is? The answer is no-one. ASIC is the body that is tasked with this work. However, it has shown no interest in pursuing this on my constituent's behalf. Mr Leech is left with the unpleasant, expensive and likely futile option of pursuing the unpaid wages and superannuation through legal action. I say futile because we have received advice that such legal action could cost thousands of dollars with a very unlikely chance of retrieving the money to which Mr Leech and other former employees are clearly entitled.

I made representations on Mr Leech's behalf to Minister Shorten in June 2012. By November I had still not received a response despite months of repeated calls to his office. On 2 November my office received an email from a Minister Shorten staff member arguing that the minister could not instruct ASIC what to do and that Mr Leech was effectively on his own. Another example of this issue can be found in the treatment of my constituents, Andrew and Daniel Vivian, by their former employer, Nelson Plastering. Andrew and Daniel worked for this company for three and six years respectively, but in this time none of the mandatory nine per cent superannuation was ever put into an account on their behalf. In 2011, the company went into receivership with very large debts, including Andrew and Daniel's unpaid super. Despite being in receivership, the business continued in a slightly different form, largely on a cash-only basis, with Daniel still working for the same person, under almost the same conditions.

The Vivians have been told by the liquidators assigned to the firm, Pitcher Partners, that it is highly unlikely that they will ever receive any of what is owed to them as unsecured creditors of Nelson Plastering, as there are few assets left in the business to meet this obligation. Their mother has made numerous reports to the ATO about the fact the business is still operating in some form, but it has thus far not taken any action against the person running it that they are aware of. The current penalties for not paying superannuation are solely of a financial nature. This effectively means a firm can neglect to pay superannuation, declare itself bankrupt and then avoid their debts along with the supposed punishment for their wrongdoing. There is no regulatory body and no government minister willing to step in and enforce rules that relate to this practice of 'phoenixing'—although it is illegal, it is being allowed to happen by the likes of ASIC while employees like Andrew and Daniel Vivian are left high and dry without the many years of superannuation they are entitled to.

Are ASIC overburdened? Do they have adequate resources to undertake such investigations? Are ASIC under instruction to pursue only large companies? If this is the case, who is regulating and who is pursuing those small- and mid-tier companies who are accused of wrongdoings? I had very great respect for the former chairman, Mr Tony D'Aloisio. Unfortunately, his replacement, Mr Greg Metcalfe, seems to have dropped the ball on this issue. He should do better. (Time expired)

**Australia-China Forum**

**Dr LEIGH** (Fraser) (12:46): Earlier this month it was my pleasure to attend the second annual Australia-China forum. Established during a difficult period in the bilateral relationship, the forum provides an opportunity for businesspeople, government officials, academics and journalists to discuss issues that matter to our two countries. The Australian
delegation was led by the indefatigable Gareth Evans, and the Chinese delegation was led by another former foreign minister, Li Zhaoxing. We were generously hosted by the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, CPIFA. By chance, the forum took place on the precise day that the new Chinese leadership was announced to the world.

The economic rise of China since 1978 has been astonishing. In the short time since I last visited in 2006, China's GDP has nearly doubled. Australia's economic fortunes are now tied more closely with China than with the United States. Next month, Australia and China will mark the 40th anniversary of the bilateral relationship. As the *Australia in the Asian century* white paper noted, China is far more to us than a buyer of commodities, and we are more to them than a buyer of manufactured products. Australian architects are designing buildings across mainland China, while Chinese students are studying at every Australian university. Hundreds of thousands of tourists travel between the two countries annually. Billions of dollars of foreign investment occurs in both directions.

Among the issues discussed at the forum was foreign investment. Australian representatives made clear that there is broad recognition across the parliament that we have more jobs and higher wages as a result of foreign investment. Since the Channar joint venture between Sinosteel and Rio Tinto in the 1980s, Australia has welcomed foreign investment by China, and no proposal has been rejected by the Foreign Investment Review Board, although some have been approved with conditions. Similarly, many Australian firms are now investing in China, across a wide range of services and manufacturing industries.

Another important issue is foreign aid. As a Lowy Institute report has noted, both Australia and China are major donors in the Asia-Pacific region. Working together—either bilaterally, multilaterally, or through vertical funds like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria—will be important in reducing poverty in our shared neighbourhood.

As with any good discussion, there were differences. In the case of the competing claims in the South China Sea, Australian representatives stated that this was a regional issue that required a regional solution, with relevant governments clarifying and pursuing their territorial claims and accompanying maritime rights in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

In terms of military engagement, Chinese representatives criticised Australia's decision to allow a small number of United States marines to rotate through Darwin in the dry season. My own view is that the US 'pivot' towards the Asia-Pacific is welcome, and Australia can maintain strong relationships with the world's two largest economies. Some commentators, including Hugh White—who was not at the forum—have suggested that the rise of China will have to cause Australia to rethink its strong alliance with the US, but I am more optimistic about our options. Australia can be a good friend to China while being honest on difficult issues such as human rights. Australia's relationship with China has suffered some difficulties over recent decades, most notably during the 'deputy sheriff' era of the early 2000s. To make sure we maintain a strong relationship, people-to-people dialogues are important. Australia now has over 30 bilateral dialogues with China, many at a ministerial level but also some including 1.5-track dialogues such as the Australia-China forum. The Australian delegation included Professor Richard Rigby; Ambassador Frances Adamson; Rowan Callick; Tracy Colgan; Mike Gallagher; Henry Makeham, the founder of the Australia-China Youth
Dialogue; Hamish McDonald; Peter Rowe; Trevor Rowe; Warwick Smith; Catherine Tanna; Frank Tudor; James Zeng; and BJ Zhuang.

I am grateful to officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for their organisational efforts and to the other participants for their insightful comments. Unfortunately, I was the only federal parliamentarian in attendance, as the invited coalition parliamentarian was unable to rearrange his diary so as to be able to attend. I very much hope that the coalition will be able to actively participate in the next forum, particularly as it is scheduled to be held in 2013 at the Australian National University, placing it within my own electorate of Fraser.

In conclusion, I returned from Beijing with a strong sense that the Australia-China relationship is vigorous, dynamic and will continue to strengthen over coming decades. I am grateful to have many Chinese-Australians in my electorate and to have had the opportunity and indeed the privilege of attending the Australia-China forum.

**National Disability Insurance Scheme**

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (12:51): Today I rise to speak on the NDIS, the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The coalition strongly supports the recommendations of the Productivity Commission for an NDIS and has pledged to work constructively with the government to implement those recommendations as soon as possible. It is certainly high time the establishment of this scheme found extra funding, and it is up to us politicians throughout the House to support the scheme itself.

I believe that the complete implementation of the NDIS would be nothing short of a breakthrough for people with disabilities and for their carers—their carers are a very important part of the whole equation. As the Productivity Commission recognised, this implementation will require a high level of consultation and attention to detail which cannot be rushed without risking the scheme's success. We need to look at all aspects of the NDIS to make sure we get it right the first time.

Even though the Queensland state government has not been able to reach an agreement with the federal government, I highlight that they are still committed to a disability service. I hope that they can get their finances sorted out so that they will join us in committing to an NDIS for Queensland. As the scheme gathers momentum I am sure the Queensland government will introduce a scheme that is timely and effective. It could even work better than the national scheme if they get it right.

The establishment of this scheme highlights the need to get the nation's finances sorted out so that necessities like the NDIS can be established more quickly and without cuts to other sections of the economy. In light of this, the government has allocated only $1 billion for the first phase of the NDIS over the forward estimates rather than the $3.9 billion the Productivity Commission said was necessary. That is something that has to be sorted out as we go through this new bill.

That aside, I congratulate the Gladstone Regional Council on their allocation of funds to the audit of disability infrastructure throughout the whole of the Gladstone region. Care and support for those living with a disability and their carers require support from all levels of government, and I am pleased that all levels of government in Gladstone and Central Queensland are supportive of the establishment of a national support scheme. I congratulate
all the workers and volunteers at the Gladstone Community Hub and throughout the rest of the community for doing such an amazing job in the area of disability support. I reiterate my commitment and that of the coalition to the establishment of the NDIS. The coalition believe that the Productivity Commission timetable on the establishment of the scheme is achievable with prudent government and good economic management. We still need answers to a few questions from across the table, but I am sure that, with everyone pulling together, these different areas can be sorted out.

There is another branch of the NDIS that I want to bring to the House's attention, and that is DANA, Disability Advocacy Network Australia. This is a body that sits outside the NDIS, and the Productivity Commission has recommended that they stay outside the NDIS. Its role is to safeguard people who might fall through the cracks of the NDIS, so to speak. DANA is an extension of the NDIS. It is a network of 60 agencies throughout the country. People can go to them for help if they feel they have missed out on the NDIS. So we should consider DANA as an important part of the NDIS when it comes to funding.

Renew Newcastle

Ms GRIERSON (Newcastle) (12:55): I rise to update the House on the progress of an incredibly successful initiative in my electorate, Renew Newcastle. Marcus Westbury, founder of Newcastle's national This Is Not Art festival, launched Renew Newcastle in 2008 with the ambition to rejuvenate our city centre by facilitating artists and creative entrepreneurs to activate otherwise empty commercial spaces. The result? Many arts based cultural and retail projects are thriving in the heart of our CBD, drawing locals and tourists alike, and complementing the growing inner-city cafe culture.

Tonight, Renew Newcastle is officially opening its latest project, the Emporium, in the former David Jones building, featuring everything from fashion outlets to art galleries. I wish them great success and wish I could be there. It will be a great deal of fun.

To date, over 90 Renew Newcastle projects have been launched. Over 50 locations throughout the CBD are now no longer empty thanks to this initiative, activating once empty, lifeless shells and attracting more permanent businesses.

I am absolutely delighted that the federal Labor government and Minister Crean recently announced funding of $80,000 for Renew Australia to host its inaugural conference 'Creating Spaces' in Newcastle in March next year. Renew Australia, of course, was born out of the initiative's local success in Newcastle. Marcus Westbury is to be congratulated on driving this, along with the innumerable local artists, graphic designers, writers and textile workers, and the dedicated organising team in Newcastle, led by Marni Jackson.

Renew Newcastle has spawned many projects, such as Renew Adelaide, Renew Townsville, Made in Geelong and Pop-up Parramatta. And, recently, I visited Renew Rotterdam, where a group of young people are using the Renew Newcastle example for arts based community development and place making.

In Australia and around the world, modern living sees people engaged in a busy working, studying and online lifestyle, so much so that it becomes harder for people to connect to their own local community. Too often, communities only come together around disasters; but the Renew Newcastle model encourages creative engagement opportunities which help to build vibrant and very satisfying communities—and I love it. The Renew Newcastle project was
subject to an economic evaluation by SGS Economics & Planning, who found in January 2012 that, for every dollar invested, there is a tenfold return to the city's economy.

Interestingly, there are still those who peddle the line ‘fix our city’. They overlook the contribution of this grassroots, community-up approach and still look for big-city, big-fix solutions to be imposed on the Newcastle CBD. Well, it is time they got with this program, because the people of Newcastle have made it quite clear how much they value Renew Newcastle.

Arts NSW, the primary financial sponsor of Renew Newcastle, recently announced a cut in funding of $20,000 which threatened the continuation of this program. It rightly outraged locals as well as many people around the nation with previous involvement. Such passion drove them onto social media, and I have to say it was a wonderful campaign. It trended nationally and it was the largest trending topic on Twitter. It is wonderful when the power of social media is used for good! Bombarded by the tenacity of that campaign, the New South Wales Premier intervened and, thankfully, has now reinstated the funding to Renew Newcastle.

I do question, however, the true commitment of the New South Wales Liberal government to the arts, because I noticed that the state member for Newcastle's newsletter, spruiking how wonderful this initiative was, hit letterboxes just after his government actually cut the funding to it. So a bit of face-saving was undertaken, I think. It is of course also a government that has cut funding to TAFEs, and that will have a serious impact on the Newcastle Art School TAFE campus, which is very much a part of the rejuvenation of our city. We have the largest number of artists and art galleries per head of population of any city in Australia, and we value that. It enriches our lives and it comes at a very low cost; it should not be cut.

Similarly, the New South Wales government has failed to match the federal funding of $7 million to the Newcastle Art Gallery redevelopment. Naturally, I want to see that funded. Everybody in Newcastle wants to see that funded. We celebrate life and we do it through cultural and art experiences. So I say it is time that the New South Wales Liberals stopped talking the talk and started walking the walk when it comes to investment in the arts and art education in an arts community and in Newcastle.

Question agreed to.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 13:01
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Health and Ageing: Commonwealth Grants
(Question Nos 1261 and 1265)

Mr Briggs asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 18 September 2012:
1) For (a) 2008-09, (b) 2009-10, (c) 2010-11, and (d) 2011-12, how many Commonwealth grants were approved by the Minister’s department, and at what total cost.
2) For 2012-13 (to date), how many Commonwealth grants were approved by the Minister’s department and at what total cost, and of these, how many have (a) signed funding agreements, and at what total cost, and (b) been paid to the approved recipients, and at what total cost.

Ms Plibersek: The answers to the honourable member’s questions are as follows:

(1) Grants approved by the Department of Health and Ageing were:
   (a) 2008-09: 2,716. $1.99 billion (inc GST);
   (b) 2009-10: 5,499. $4.96 billion (inc GST);
   (c) 2010-11: 3,347. $3.44 billion (inc GST); and
   (d) 2011-12: 3,955. $6.90 billion (inc GST).
   The values provided represent the original grant approval amount which may include multi-year agreements, and do not include potential subsequent variations. Details of funding agreement values are published on the Department’s website.

(2) For the period 1 July 2012 to 18 September 2012, 2,602 grants were approved by the Department of Health and Ageing, to the value of $4.65 billion (inc GST). Of these:
   (a) 2,602 funding agreements have been signed at a value of $4.65 billion (inc GST); and
   (b) to provide the requested information would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.

Health Workforce Australia
(Question No. 1269)

Mr Laming asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 9 October 2012:
In respect of Health Workforce Australia (HWA), will she provide (a) the annual breakdown of agency costs for every year since HWA was established, broken down by (i) staff, (ii) consultants, (iii) program and project, (iv) events, and (v) travel, and (b) the list of (i) projects delivered or being delivered, since HWA was established, and the respective cost of each, and (ii) events held, including relevant details such as location and venue, and the cost of each event since HWA was established.

Ms Plibersek: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) The annual breakdown of agency costs for Health Workforce Australia (HWA) since HWA was established can be found in the HWA annual reports for 2011-12 (pages 69 & 84) and 2010-11 (pages 45 & 58). Total costs are outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency costs (exclusive GST)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>$6.563m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>$75.416m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>$349.636m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(i) Employee costs are included in the HWA annual reports as outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Employee costs (exclusive GST)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>$2.899m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>$6.863m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>$13.784m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ii) Consultant costs are included in the HWA annual reports as outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Consultant costs (exclusive GST)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>$0.740m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>$4.567m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>$3.086m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(iii) Annual costs against HWA programs as specified in the National Partnership Agreement on Hospital and Health Workforce Reform are at Attachment 1.

(iv) Events that HWA has held to the end of October 2012 are outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events (exclusive GST)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Australia Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Forum for the Integrated Regional Clinical Training Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Health Workforce Reform implementation Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Health Leaders Conference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(v) Travel costs are included in the HWA annual reports as outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Travel costs (exclusive GST)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>$0.370m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>$1.274m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>$1.557m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) (i) The cost for each HWA program, as specified in the National Partnership Agreement on Hospital and Health Workforce Reform, delivered or being delivered, since HWA was established is at Attachment 1. Information relating to projects can be found in the 2010-11 and 2011-12 annual reports and the quarterly HWA Work Plan progress reports that are published on the HWA website at www.hwa.gov.au.

(ii) Events held, including relevant details such as location, venue and cost are provided under item (a) (iv) above.
Portfolio Budget Statements  
**Question No. 1275**

Mr John Cobb asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, in writing, on Tuesday 9 October 2012:

In respect of the 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Table 2.1, Outcome 1, Program 1.3: Forestry Industry (page 23), what proportion of the $8,944,000 attributed to ‘Special appropriations’, is budgeted to be funded by (a) the Government, and (b) industry.

**Mr Burke:** The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount attributed to ‘Special appropriations’ in 2012–13 PBS Table 2.1</th>
<th>(a) Commonwealth Government funded</th>
<th>(b) industry funded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program 1.3 Forestry Industry</td>
<td>$8,944,000</td>
<td>$3,580,000</td>
<td>$5,364,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Portfolio Budget Statements  
**Question No. 1276**

Mr John Cobb asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, in writing, on Tuesday 9 October 2012:

In respect of the 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Table 2.1, Outcome 1, Program 1.4: Fishing Industry (page 24), what proportion of the $17,295,000 attributed to ‘Special appropriations’, is budgeted to be funded by (a) the Government, and (b) industry.

**Mr Burke:** The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount attributed to ‘Special appropriations’ in 2012–13 PBS Table 2.1</th>
<th>(a) Commonwealth Government funded</th>
<th>(b) industry funded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program 1.4 Fishing Industry</td>
<td>$17,295,000</td>
<td>$16,375,000</td>
<td>$920,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Portfolio Budget Statements  
**Question No. 1277**

Mr John Cobb asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, in writing, on Tuesday 9 October 2012:

In respect of the 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Table 2.1, Outcome 1, Program 1.5: Horticulture Industry (page 24), what proportion of the $82,842,000 attributed to ‘Special appropriations’, is budgeted to be funded by (a) the Government, and (b) industry.

**Mr Burke:** The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount attributed to ‘Special appropriations’ in 2012–13 PBS Table 2.1</th>
<th>(a) Commonwealth Government funded</th>
<th>(b) industry funded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program 1.5 Horticulture Industry</td>
<td>$82,842,000</td>
<td>$43,000,000</td>
<td>$39,842,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Portfolio Budget Statements
(Question No. 1278)

Mr John Cobb asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, in writing, on Tuesday 9 October 2012:
In respect of the 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Table 2.1, Outcome 1, Program 1.6: Wool Industry (page 24), what proportion of the $61,000,000 attributed to ‘Special appropriations’, is budgeted to be funded by (a) the Government, and (b) industry.

Mr Burke: The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount attributed to ‘Special appropriations’ in 2012–13 PBS Table 2.1</th>
<th>(a) Commonwealth Government funded</th>
<th>(b) industry funded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program 1.6 Wool Industry</td>
<td>$61,000,000</td>
<td>$11,500,000</td>
<td>$49,500,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Portfolio Budget Statements
(Question No. 1279)

Mr John Cobb asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, in writing, on Tuesday 9 October 2012:
In respect of the 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Table 2.1, Outcome 1, Program 1.7: Grains Industry (page 24), what proportion of the $64,348,000 and $91,113,000 attributed to ‘Special appropriations’, is budgeted to be funded by (a) the Government, and (b) industry.

Mr Burke: The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount attributed to ‘Special appropriations’ in 2012–13 PBS Table 2.1</th>
<th>(a) Commonwealth Government funded</th>
<th>(b) industry funded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program 1.7 Grains Industry</td>
<td>$64,348,000</td>
<td>$26,044,000</td>
<td>$38,304,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program 1.7 Grains Industry</td>
<td>$91,113,000</td>
<td>$35,473,000</td>
<td>$55,640,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Portfolio Budget Statements
(Question No. 1280)

Mr John Cobb asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, in writing, on Tuesday 9 October 2012:
In respect of the 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Table 2.1, Outcome 1, Program 1.8: Dairy Industry (page 25), what proportion of the $53,290,000 attributed to ‘Special appropriations’, is budgeted to be funded by (a) the Government, and (b) industry.

Mr Burke: The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount attributed to ‘Special appropriations’ in 2012–13 PBS Table 2.1</th>
<th>(a) Commonwealth Government funded</th>
<th>(b) industry funded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program 1.8 Dairy Industry</td>
<td>$53,290,000</td>
<td>$19,345,000</td>
<td>$33,945,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mr John Cobb asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, in writing, on Tuesday 9 October 2012:

In respect of the 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statements for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Table 2.1, Outcome 1, Program 1.9: Meat and Livestock Industry (page 25), what proportion of the $72,812,000, $23,869,000, $2,160,000, $540,000, $6,304,000, $11,207,000, $45,357,000 and $17,580,000 attributed to ‘Special appropriations’, is budgeted to be funded by (a) the Government, and (b) industry.

Mr Burke: The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount attributed to ‘Special appropriations’ in 2012–13 PBS Table 2.1</th>
<th>(a) Commonwealth Government funded</th>
<th>(b) industry funded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program 1.9 Meat and Livestock Industry</td>
<td>$72,812,000</td>
<td>$72,812,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program 1.9 Meat and Livestock Industry</td>
<td>$23,869,000</td>
<td>$23,869,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program 1.9 Meat and Livestock Industry</td>
<td>$2,160,000</td>
<td>$2,160,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program 1.9 Meat and Livestock Industry</td>
<td>$540,000</td>
<td>$540,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program 1.9 Meat and Livestock Industry</td>
<td>$6,304,000</td>
<td>$6,304,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program 1.9 Meat and Livestock Industry</td>
<td>$11,207,000</td>
<td>$11,207,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program 1.9 Meat and Livestock Industry</td>
<td>$45,357,000</td>
<td>$45,357,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program 1.9 Meat and Livestock Industry</td>
<td>$17,580,000</td>
<td>$4,800,000</td>
<td>$12,780,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>