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SITTING DAYS—2014

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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FOURTH PERIOD

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

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Mrs Karen Lesley Andrews MP,
Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP, Mr Alexander George Hawke MP,
Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP,
Mr Ewen Thomas Jones MP, Mr Craig Kelly MP, Hon. Charles Christian Porter MP,
Mr Donald James Randall MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mr Brett David Whiteley MP

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

Party Leaders and Whips
Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Government Whip—Hon. Philip Maxwell Ruddock MP
Government Whips—Mr Scott Buchholz MP and Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

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

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

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<td>Hindmarsh, SA</td>
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<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
<td>O'Connor, WA</td>
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<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
<td>La Trobe, VIC</td>
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<td>Wyatt, Mr Kenneth George AM</td>
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<tr>
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### PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals;
IND—Independent; NATSWA—The Nationals WA; CLP—Country Liberal Party;
AUS—Katters Australia Party; AG—Australian Greens; PUP—Palmer United Party

### Heads of Parliamentary Departments

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Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans' Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Small Business</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business</td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Alannah MacTiernan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for External Territories</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Competition</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
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<tr>
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Wednesday, 22 October 2014

The SPEAKER (Hon. Bronwyn Bishop) took the chair at 09:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

BILLS

Dental Benefits Legislation Amendment Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

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

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes that the bill is one in a range of changes the government is proposing that would increase the cost of healthcare for all Australians."

Ms O’NEIL (Hotham) (09:02): I want to again extend thanks to the shadow minister for moving the second reading amendment. In my previous contribution I spoke about the important policy reform that was undertaken by the last government in the area of dental care. We have known for a long time in Australia that dental care has been in many respects the poor cousin of health care not for any kind of moral or sound public policy reasons but really through the different ways it has been managed by governments. In 2012 Labor announced the biggest investment in dental care since Federation. It was an enormous reform that has changed the situation for so many Australians, especially Australian children, who were the big focus of that scheme, and lower income adults, whom all of us in this chamber know are those who have really borne the brunt of what has happened to dental care over successive governments both state and federal.

In my last contribution I was talking a little bit about some of the concerns we hold on this side of the House about the progress of this important issue through this parliament. I am very sad to say that we have seen a pretty destructive pattern from those on the other side of the House. They appear to have come into government with very few ideas of their own and instead have put their energies towards busily unpicking some of the really good things Labor did while in government. I think we heard the beginnings of some quite disturbing rhetoric from the minister when he gave his second reading contribution. He talked about these early concerns that he had with the dental program. He talked about how they would be monitoring this program very carefully. Unfortunately, we have heard this story before from that very same minister. Whether it was promises to make no cuts to health and then immediately attempting to introduce a new tax to make changes and cuts to state funding to health, whether it was school and university funding, all of these things went through this same pattern of behaviour. I want to put the government on notice that with the leadership of the shadow minister we will be very much holding them to account on upholding what has been an important reform that was made by the Rudd and Gillard governments.

Of course, much of the bill pertains to administration of the transfer of arrangements that were made in 2012, and we are very happy to support those detailed elements of the policy,
but I say again that we will be watching. It is the same robust protection that we have turned on Medicare and other iconic elements of our system of social protection that we will also be putting onto the dental reforms.

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry) (09:05): I rise today to speak on the Dental Benefits Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. A strange sense of deja vu comes over me as I again have to fix another one of Labor's bungled attempts at finding their elusive surplus. When the Labor government decided to axe the coalition's Medicare Chronic Disease Dental Scheme we lost a great service. That scheme provided over 17 million services to approximately one million patients from 2007 to 2012. It provided $4,250 in dental benefits over two years for eligible patients with a chronic health condition. Then Labor cut the plan and had no backup system until 2014. It put those with chronic dental conditions out into the wilderness with no plan in place—and Labor preaches its concern and regard for the health of our nation! To this I say: rubbish, absolute rubbish.

Labor's alternative was just another program that did nothing but plunge the disadvantaged people into even worse circumstances. Dental care should be a basic right as an Australian citizen. Constituents in my electorate of Paterson, who cannot afford any more cuts in funding, wrote to me in droves as they discovered that a basic service like dental care was taken away from them. Pensioners make up a large percentage of my electorate and they are most likely to have other health issues that can get worse without regular dental check-ups and treatment. Parents with young children were told they would need to wait at least 13 months until they could get their children's growing teeth examined. Working families living in remote rural areas, who do not have immediate access to a public dental hospital, had to incur lost time, travel costs and invariably accommodation costs for what should be a given service to taxpayers. The disabled and the unemployed are already working within tight budgets and tough situations, especially the disabled where every aspect of their health needs to be carefully managed. These disadvantaged people had already endured other cuts by Labor when searching for a surplus—a surplus that was never achieved. The Labor government failed yet again. The Labor government failed to service those most in need—the chronically ill—yet they preach their commitment and their concern to the disadvantaged of this great nation.

The purpose of this bill that we are debating today is to restore sanity to the system. We have an opportunity to help those dentists who were so overwhelmed with patients that they did not have the opportunity to do the paperwork. The Dental Benefits Legislation Amendment Bill of 2014 will waive debts for dentists who, under the former Medicare Chronic Disease Dental Scheme, did nothing more than make minor paperwork errors and who have been waiting for way too long for an adequate resolution. The Chronic Disease Dental Scheme was set up in 2007 and provided access to benefits of up to $4,250 over two calendar years for patients with chronic health conditions. Eighty per cent of people who accessed this scheme were concession card holders. It was the country's biggest investment ever into dental care and in 2012 the former Labor government closed it down. For what purpose? Political gain. Another failure to add to the former Labor government's cap.

The scheme included a technical reporting requirement. Dentists needed to provide treatment plans to GPs along with a quote and a treatment plan to patients prior to commencing treatment. The former Labor government sought to use dentists' technical
oversights as a means of discrediting the scheme. They introduced a change that saw dentists who did not meet all of these reporting requirements pursued for repayment of the full amount of the Medicare benefits paid under the scheme although in most cases the dentists had met all other requirements of the scheme and, importantly, had provided much needed services to the patients. It should be all about the patients and their health care.

I understand that some believe this scheme was scrapped due to an abundance of dentists who committed fraud and did not comply with the other legal requirements of the program. This was clearly not the case. The majority of dentists provided services in good faith and treated their patients with the care they needed. They will now be rewarded for their service. It was yet another shameful act that a former Labor government used as a political power play.

The Council of Australian Governments Reform Council has released its latest snapshot on the progress of the Commonwealth against the 2008 National Healthcare Agreement. The *Healthcare in Australia* report notes six areas of concern. One of them is that more Australians are putting off dental care because it is seen as too expensive. It is a worrying precedent that some Australians are not going to see their dentist, orthodontist or other dental professional because of costs. The report finds that nearly one in five—18.8 per cent—of Australians aged over 15 put off seeing a dentist. The statistics are worse in our poorer communities. Amongst the poorer communities, one in four people put off going to see a dental professional because of the costs. If you go to the doctor, particularly in a disadvantaged area, it is bulk-billed; there is no cost to the patient. But, if you go to a dentist, there is a significant cost, and it is a big deterrent to people.

According to an Australian Bureau of Statistics report, *Census of population and housing: socio-economic indexes for areas (SEIFA)*, my electorate of Paterson has a population of 230,235 people. This report notes that, out of 722,685 doctor visits, 566,357 were bulk-billed. That is over 78 per cent of my residents who need bulk-billing. With that high a percentage for standard GP visits, you can only imagine the number who could not access dental health specialists.

Dental health is critical to maintaining good health. It is especially important when you already have other medical ailments, other health issues, to manage. This is increasingly common when you are in the older segment of our society, when you are elderly. In my electorate of Paterson, senior citizens make up a large part of my community—self-funded retirees and age pensioners. In Paterson I have 36,319 constituents aged 60 and over, who make up 28.4 per cent of the electorate. In Australia the number of constituents aged 60 and over is approximately 4.2 million, which equates to 19.6 per cent. So you can see we are batting above the average in terms of the elderly in my electorate of Paterson. By 2037, nearly 23 per cent of the nation's population will be 65 years old or older, and this equates to more than 6.4 million people by 2037.

As my constituents get older, they encounter more healthcare needs. As the following examples will explain, their dental health can prove interconnected with their existing conditions when it comes to treatment options. I was contacted by a constituent who wanted to complain about the axing of the Labor government's scheme. This person is 66 and was diagnosed with lupus, with secondary Sjogren's syndrome. Despite surgery on her saliva ducts, this lady's glands were producing a minimum amount of saliva. Due to this, her teeth
were deteriorating rapidly and she required a lot of dental procedures. Also factor in the cost of the additional trips to Westmead Hospital's Specialist Dental Centre, which involved hotel stays overnight. With her condition consisting of six extra issues caused by the first, she was seeing eight different specialists in all, so her medical bills were high, and, with the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme being closed down, she was concerned about the future of her health. I can fully understand why. She would not be on her own in that respect. My electorate is rural and, in parts, quite remote, so any visit to Sydney is quite a journey, and when you are sick it would be quite exhausting.

Another resident contacted my office. She too was concerned when the scheme was closed down. She was over 60 and being treated for breast cancer. This terrible disease had her enduring surgery, chemotherapy and radiation. In addition to all this, these services were causing problems with her bones and her teeth. Her GP referred her to a dentist under the scheme, but six weeks later the scheme was shut down. So not only does this resident have to endure the biggest battle of her life with breast cancer; she also has to take on dental issues as a second, encore round.

And it is not just seniors who are finding it tough. A resident in my electorate who goes by the name of Angel was seriously injured in a car accident when he was in his early 40s and was affected by the axing of the chronic disease dental plan. In this accident he broke his back in three places and his pelvic plate in five places and completely snapped his right hip joint. He broke his left leg and both his ankles and broke his heel bones off. He also received muscular damage and torn nerve endings. He spent four months in traction and six months in a wheelchair, and once he finally regained the ability to walk he was slapped with a $25,000 bill. So, already, Angel has taken on his fair share of the pain, and that is quite a recovery that he will have to make. Following all this, he has to take heavy medication for the pain and the nerve damage, which has an effect on his teeth. He estimates that his teeth will rot within a couple of years if he does not go to a dentist on a regular basis—which of course he cannot, without the scheme that was in place.

Now my constituent has to choose between going further and further into debt and losing his teeth at the age of 45. And I have to ask: how could the former government have been so cruel to those who needed their help the most? When you are fighting cancer you have to keep up good dental health because of the amount of surgery you will be having. That is why it is quite concerning for a senior citizen, whom I have mentioned before in this place, who is fighting breast cancer. She is having surgeries as a result of chemotherapy and if she does not find the money to fund her dental treatments she cannot continue to fight the cancer. As I asked at the time, when Labor was cancelling the scheme, what kind of a heartless government would cancel such a vital scheme that delivered so much to people outside the major cities? Let me take you back to 2012, when we were first discussing the ridiculous concept of scrapping the scheme. I told you about Margaret Rylands from Forster, who had been living with diabetes for 52 years. Her husband had to have five bypass operations and then they had little money coming in. They also had bad teeth. Now, with no scheme in place, if their teeth get worse or her husband needs another operation, they could be in real trouble.

Let me explain. I know of a young man in Forster who had jaw cancer. He needed to keep good teeth while battling this disease, at it could affect his general health. If he got so much as a gum infection in a tooth, it would flow on to his bones and down to his jaw. Now he has
cancer and an infection, and that infection could kill him. In my area of an ever-growing number of retirees, this could be catastrophic. If one of my elderly residents falls down and breaks their hip, they will need surgery. If they have bad teeth, they will now have to find the funds to first fix their teeth before they can even get onto the waitlist for a hip replacement. This means that they will need to find extra help just to get around, and then wait until their dental health is cleared before they can take the steps towards independence again.

As I said earlier, I yet again find myself having to fix another one of Labor's bungled programs. In the past year we have had to deal with many of their shoddy schemes—policies like disastrous home insulation schemes, the failed solar rebate, the implementation of crippling carbon taxes and mining taxes, and the lapse in border protection. All of these were especially felt in my electorate. And of course there were the never-ending issues with digital television, which I raised yesterday. To fix one more mess and assist the overworked, undercredited dental health specialists in my area is important. This bill will address that in part. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (09:18): In Australia, you should be able to get dental care on Medicare. Going to the dentist should be like going to the doctor: you can bring out your Medicare card and have treatment, in the same way. The mouth is part of the body, and if you keep your mouth and your teeth healthy you in fact significantly reduce the risk of contracting other, potentially more serious, diseases. But in Australia, when it comes to healthcare funding, we treat the mouth as being separate to the rest of the body. As we have been reminded, yesterday in particular, there were struggles in the initial establishment of Medicare, or a form of universal health care in this country, and it was resisted. But it was ultimately accepted and is now one of the things that people like about Australia.

The cost of going to the dentist, however, is getting to the point where many people are putting off treatment for themselves or for their family members. And we are seeing, increasingly, people presenting to GPs and in some instances to hospitals because of preventable diseases or health issues that have arisen because they did not get their teeth seen to in time. It is not only a health issue; it is also a social justice issue—you are less likely to get that job if you turn up to the interview with fewer teeth. Someone who turns up to a job interview with a full set of teeth, looking good and in good health stands a much better chance.

Prior to the 2010 election, the scheme that we had in this country, the CDDS scheme we are discussing here today as part of this legislation, was a measure that the federal government was taking towards health care and dental care. But by no means was it universal. It did not mean that you could front up to the dentist with your Medicare card and say, 'I need some treatment.' In fact, it only addressed the situation when it had got to that end where no-one wants to get to: the chronic stage. There was no federal government scheme to help people with the cost of going to see the dentist to stop them getting into that situation in the first place. There was no federal government scheme before 2010 that would allow you to do something akin to taking your Medicare card to the dentist to get support.

The 2010 election saw a power-sharing parliament. In 2010, thanks to the people of Melbourne, we were in the position of sitting down and saying to the government: we will support you but we will support you on conditions. One of those conditions was putting a price on pollution and taking world-leading action on global warming. Another of those
conditions, in an agreement that I was very pleased to sign, concerned reform of our dental scheme.

During the course of the last parliament, we commissioned some expert analysis from the Oral Health Council to say: if you wanted to start putting dental care into Medicare and making dental care universally available in this country in the same way that other forms of health care are, how would you go about it given that there may be a limited budget to spend? Also, from a straight health perspective, what is the best way to go? That council considered a number of options and reported back to the government and to us. They said very clearly: 'We can give you a few ways to go but here is what we think is best: the best way to improve the dental health of the Australian population is to start with the kids, to start with young people.

'Because if we can create a generation of young people who have no substantial dental health issues and know how to maintain themselves then we are going to, first of all, make a much healthier Australian public but, secondly, we are going to reduce the burden for generations to come on doctors and on hospitals who, at the moment, are seeing those people who are suffering from diseases that they could have prevented if they had only got to the dentist in time.'

So with that in mind, we crafted some legislation and some policies in the last parliament that said let's take Australia on the journey towards getting dental care into Medicare. Let us start making going to the dentist like going to the doctor. We followed the report of the experts, which was to say let's start, first of all, making universal dental care available to children. So we began by saying: if you are eligible for certain family tax benefits, you can now take your kid to the dentist, present your Medicare card and get a certain amount of treatment for free. We made sure in the package that was negotiated that that would not be an excuse for states to pull back on funding. In fact, we made sure there was funding available for states to expand their public health system so that people, including pensioners, who were on healthcare cards now had an expanded public health system to get into.

We were aware, because the experts told us, that this was not something we were going to be able to flick the switch to overnight. There actually were not enough dentists and health professionals in Australia at the time to enable the flicking of the switch to a universal dental healthcare scheme, so there was a proposal to train up some more health professionals to ensure that in time everyone would be able to get access to universal dental health if we proceeded on this plan. Part of that reform involved rolling the existing CDDS into this new scheme. Part of that was because the government insisted that there was not an unlimited amount of money and therefore it had to be found from somewhere and so should be found from this, but part of it was also a policy question. Rather than picking people up when they get to the extreme end, let's make sure there is support available for healthcare card holders, pensioners and those who cannot afford it and let's start making this a universal scheme where you can get access to it no matter how much money you earn and where the mouth starts to be treated as part of the body.

In that respect, I think the government, in moving and speaking to this bill, needs to tone down some of the rhetoric about the reasons for the closure of the CDDS. They may have a view that there was an ideologically mounted attack or it was about some health minister or other not liking a particular scheme, but I can tell you that from our point of view the reform of the scheme was necessary because it was a lot of money going to a few people whereas the
Greens believe in the principle of universal health care. We would much rather see money being spent across the board on everyone regardless of income and on improving the dental health of the whole of the Australian population. This should not be an excuse to attack a particular political party by saying that a minister had a particular vendetta. We should be having the debate here about how to spend Australian taxpayers' money to get the best return and to ensure that everyone in this country can go to the dentist no matter how much money they earn.

I say that, as someone who represents the electorate with the most public housing of any electorate in the country, there are many people who have just put off going to the dentist because they were not able to afford it. In some states, there have been very good programs run by the state governments for children through schools and through other public health providers. That has given children some access to it; but, for families in public housing, if something went wrong with their kids' teeth, prior to us morphing the CDDS into this new universal scheme there was nowhere for them to go. Parents who did not have a lot of money—and by definition that is what those in public housing are—were just not able to take their kids to the dentist. By 'kids' we are talking about people under 18 as well, not necessarily only those who are in primary school. I something goes wrong, they just could not take them to the dentist. Then that festers, and they are the people who in their 20s find themselves with fewer teeth than others. They are the people who, as they go on into their 30s and 40s find themselves at greater risk of heart disease because they do not have all their teeth in their mouth in good condition.

I am very proud that, working with the other members of the last parliament, we were able to change that so that low-income families in my electorate and right around the country can now take their children to the dentist, present their Medicare card and be able to get some free services. That is a good start, and we need to build on that.

Rather than having an ideological and small-minded partisan debate in this place, we should be having a debate about how we can make dental health care universal and how can we make it so that not only children, especially children of families up to a certain point, but everyone is able to front up to their dentist with their Medicare card just as they do with their doctor. There are plenty of places to find the money for it if we wanted to. We give billions of dollars each year in subsidies to the big banks, we give billions of dollars in subsidies to big miners and fossil fuel companies. If you asked Australians: 'Would you rather the government dollars go towards giving the likes of Gina Rinehart subsidised diesel fuel or would you rather the government use that money to ensure that everyone can go to the dentist when they need it?'—I know what people would say.

That is the debate that we need to have here because we do not have a budget crisis, as we hear from the government. If anything, we have a revenue crisis. We are not raising the revenue that we need to fund the services that Australians expect and that is the debate that we should be having here. People in Australia like Medicare and they want dental care to be part of it. Let us go down that road.

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (09:31): This bill amends the Health Insurance Act 1973 and the Dental Benefits Act 2008. It allows the operation of the Child Dental Benefits Schedule to be overseen in a similar fashion to the Medicare oversight process. Not only will the professional service review process be able to be applied to the Child Dental Benefits Schedule but also
the CEO of Medicare can request documents to substantiate Chronic Disease Dental Scheme billing is appropriate. These are sensible and appropriate measures that ensure compliance with the intent and design of the scheme.

I would just like to make some observations on this scheme and its history and some reflections on the previous government's dental policy and its development. The Child Dental Benefits Schedule commenced in January this year, but it is a leftover policy from the previous government. There has been a dental scheme absence, apart from state-based public dental schemes, since the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme was axed in August and September 2012.

The Chronic Disease Dental Scheme was a great scheme, with a good clinical basis and intent, but, like in any government scheme, there were instances where either patients or dental practitioners were pushing the boundaries to a stage where the envelope was broken. I am very loath to say 'abuse' or 'fraud' but in some cases the intent and the administration of it was not ideal, and the response was not appropriate to the problem. In classic ALP fashion, rather than instituting compliance and oversight, which you would think any sensible administration would bring into play if it had concerns, it appears to me that it gave them the excuse to get rid of a scheme or a coalition achievement that actually had some runs on the board.

There also appeared to be the opportunity to save the previous administration a heap of money, because there was no replacement for about 14 months. They also summarily demanded in retrospect refunds of thousands of dollars from dentists who had supplied services to patients. The justification of that, to me, seems to be a technicality—that the dentist had not filled out part of the paperwork. This also reflects badly on the previous administration because, surely, with most transactions in business you check that the work has been done before you pay the provider. That tells me that they were not checking on the processes that they should have had in place in the first instance.

For many people in my electorate this scheme was a godsend, because there are lots of elderly people, concession card holders and pensioners in the electorate of Lyne who unfortunately, because of the generation they grew up in, had bad dentistry. They also have serious kidney, vascular and heart conditions. The Chronic Disease Dental Scheme in many instances prevented further disease. Even though it was being done late in life for many of these recipients, it was very preventive. If you have kidney disease, gingivitis, rotten teeth or you cannot eat good nutrition because you have no teeth, this was a godsend. Twenty-five per cent of the electorate of Lyne either have a concession card or are in receipt of a pension, so this change had massive ramifications for the electorate. When the axe fell, many were left in limbo. In some cases, they were halfway through their treatment program. Others who had committed to it were left high and dry and struggled on in chronic discomfort or had to commit to multiple extractions and false teeth.

I think the previous administration were so desperate to save money anywhere that they just saw this as an excuse to blame the dentists and give them an account rather than institute what we are doing with this amendment. We are instituting proper oversight of a scheme which is targeted to a different cohort altogether. Paradoxically, the two-year-old to 17-year-old cohort probably have the best teeth in the country. We are also instituting means-testing so that it is applied to people who really need the help.
I am sure the spin doctors were consulted heavily in the development and rollout of this scheme, because it is hard to criticise anything that is targeted at children. Everyone knows that if children have good nutrition, have a toothbrush that is used, have fluoride in their toothpaste and are not fed sweet drinks all the time, most of them should be left with healthy teeth and gums by the age of 17. I hope this really is a dental program and not a spin doctor program that was punched out in the dying days of the previous government.

The coalition government will certainly be monitoring and observing this scheme to make sure it has the outcome that was intended. We still need to address the other problem: with the summary execution of the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme, many genuinely concerned and good practising dentists and dental practices were left with huge bills, in retrospect, months and years after they delivered good service. This is a classic case of using a fig-leaf response to cover up the deficiencies and inadequacies of the previous administration. The old saying 'Throwing out the baby with the bathwater' is applicable here. There were problems with the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme, but, rather than fixing them, they got rid of the whole scheme altogether.

The amendments to section 34 of the Financial Management and Accountability Act, with oversight and the CEO of Medicare able to inquire, and with professional services review processes, will simplify the process of garnering the debts that were levied. It will also give the department the ability to waive the debts. It will not excuse fraud; it will not excuse abuse. Currently, the investigation process whereby money is retrieved is so laborious and long that the amount of funds expended in getting funds back costs as much as the returns. Also, I find that it was an affront to bill retrospectively professional people who were doing a good job for patients with chronic disease.

I commend these amendments to the House. As I have said on so many occasions, when you are in government you have to have good administration. This is a good legislative response to a problem that is now going to be addressed and fixed. I commend the bill and the amendment to the House.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (09:40): I am speaking to the Dental Benefits Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. I think that the government has to be cognisant of the fact that we are a wealthy country—an extremely wealthy country by world standards. The government says that they are broke. There is a wonderful paper out about comparing the deficits of the allegedly terrible ALP government—and I probably would agree that it was a terrible government!—comparing Wayne Swan’s deficit with the Menzies last budget and the massive deficit that was registered there. But, of course, they were made to sound like irrelevancies compared to the deficits registered by the Queensland government that I was part of.

It was made mention of with Gough Whitlam yesterday—I might seem like I am wandering off track here but I can assure you that I am not, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker—that there was a vote of no confidence in Gough because he sacrificed economic growth for social reform. It was a very perceptive comment and, in my opinion, very accurate. There will be those who argue that social reform needed to come. Where I am going with this is that there has never been a government in human history that has not accused the outgoing government of making the government broke, 'We've got no money and therefore we can't do these things.' That is just standard operating procedure. After 41 years in parliament I think that every minister probably says it at least once every second day.
Where I am going with this is that here is this great, rich country—one of the richest countries on earth—and it cannot supply dental services to its citizens. My homeland is North Queensland's midwest, the country between Mount Isa and Townsville. I have lived there all my life and four or five generations before me. In that area, the four main towns in the midwest are Cloncurry, Richmond, Julia Creek and Hughenden. There are may be seven, eight or 10,000 people living in those towns. For my entire time as a state member I can never remember us having fewer than three dentists serving that area.

Normally when I have rung up over the last 10 or 15 years, there have been no dentists in the area. A person can go from Julia Creek on a 400- to 600-kilometre round trip to Mount Isa to see a dentist. A person in Hughenden can go to Charters Towers—a 500- or 600-kilometre round trip. Or maybe he has to go on to Townsville. The costs of doing this—and the ability to be able to do this if you have a job—are so high. That is in a remote area. Let me switch to the outer suburbs of Cairns, to Babinda. A good friend of mine came along to one of our meetings. He had taken out his own tooth on Channel 9 because he had waited for two years in pain. They had said, ‘Oh, we had you on the top of the list but we had to put you down again.’ This was after two years, he was in continuous pain and he realised that he was never going to get there. So he pulled the tooth out himself with a pair of pliers on Channel 9. Outrageous as that seems, it is a matter of public record; it was done on Channel 9. Similarly in Richmond another person pulled his own teeth out with a pair of pliers. So in this great wealthy nation there are people who go to the most primitive methods of medical treatment. With no painkillers or anything they haul their teeth out with a pair of pliers.

This is a very sad day for Australia. We are wasting the time of the House talking about an audit requirement. Quite frankly, the dentists I have spoken to have said: ‘Of course there should be an audit requirement. Surely that does not have to go in legislation.’ Any properly operated scheme anywhere does not need legislation to back it up. Just haul them in. Surely there is accounting oversight taking place now.

That is the bill as it stands. I was deeply disappointed when a minister who I considered to be quite a good minister, the now deputy leader of the Labor Party, abolished the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme, which dealt with cases like the one I referred to on the outskirts of Cairns where an elderly person had to take his own tooth out. It came to grips with that sort of problem. The approach that had been used was very good, but that money was taken away and put into some prevention program for children. Yes, all right, there might be value in a prevention program for children, but I would have thought that giving every kid in Australia a toothbrush and the schools a tube of toothpaste and getting them to brush their teeth every morning would be 100 times more effective than putting something on a video screen and having a teacher talk to them. It would go in one ear and out the other. It would be very practical if they actually brush their teeth as part of the school curriculum.

We spoke all of yesterday about the legacy of Gough Whitlam. I most certainly would not be hypocritical enough to say it was an all-good legacy—and I would probably say something short of that. There is the provision of a great fund of money to address the real problems of Australia, such as the health problems. A government has no higher priority than that. There was a wonderful article in The Daily Telegraph that stated that the primary responsibility of government is to protect the people. It should be to protect their people from one of the most terrible pains that can be registered. I have had enormous pain in my life playing rugby league.
and other such activities—and I dealt a bit out too, I might add. There are some times when
the pain of toothache can be really out of this world. Of course the Nazis used it as a torture
device to get people to speak because it is one of the worst pains you can possibly have.
People in Australia are taking the worst pain you can possibly have and they cannot get in to
see a dentist. In my home town of Charters Towers there are two dentists. The last time I
attempted to get in there was a three-month wait. If a dentist friend of mine in Townsville had
not stayed back an extra hour, I might have been running around with the pliers to pull my
own teeth out too.

The government is failing miserably in this area. I do not blame the minister and I do not
blame the last minister. They have been given very limited resources. The federal Labor
government was blaming the state Liberal governments and prior to that the Liberal federal
government was blaming the state Labor governments. I checked this and found really neither
were to blame in the sense that over a decade there has been an over 300 per cent increase in
federal spending on health in the state of Queensland and also a 300 per cent increase in
federal health spending.

In Queensland—and I suspect this may well be all over Australia—the long-serving
president of the AMA in the state quoted the figure again and again that 16 years ago there
were three hands-on health workers—nurses, doctors—for every backup staff, and now it is
reversed. I spoke to 11 doctors that have served for over 15 years and each of them said that,
yes, that figure would be about right. So we are carrying one of the most top-heavy—with
administration and PR and a whole run of other people—health departments.

We had an example of what they do in Queensland. I am pleased the member for
Leichhardt is here because I am sure he would back me up in this. Two of our doctors in
Cairns had the temerity to say, ‘A suspected Ebola patient came in here and they were just
treated like an ordinary patient until somebody said they were an Ebola suspect and raced
them off down to what was supposedly an isolation ward but really was just a ward down the
end of the corridor effectively.’ There was no particular characteristics of that ward that made
it an isolation ward. Those doctors were immediately punished. Under the successive Labor
governments in Queensland, there was a culture of fear that you were not supposed to speak
up.

Heavens, in the Bundaberg hospital there is a man losing his leg from gangrene. This is not
a hard thing to pick up. If any of my footballers break a limb, I would go down there to check
myself to see there was no redness or swelling because you have got to move very quickly if
you are dealing with something like gangrene. In the case in Bundaberg, this bloke visibly
had gangrene and only one single nurse had the courage to speak up, which is an absolutely
scalding indictment of the other people that worked in hospital who were quite happy to
preserve their jobs to watch a man lose his leg. It was claimed in the press that 11 times that
sort of incident was repeated in the Bundaberg hospital because everyone was too scared to
speak out. The nurse who spoke up, of course, was punished immediately.

That terrible culture that surrounded the ‘Doctor Death’ incidents at the Bundaberg hospital
is still there. It is alive and well and blossoming. Oh, an Ebola patient went into a general
ward in hospital and we have got no ability to deal with them, and all of these health workers
were exposed. What do we do? What we do is get anyone that opens their mouth. The answer
is not: what we do is make sure we introduce protocols to protect our health workers in our hospitals, no. That is not what we did. We immediately moved to shut them up.

It is to do with the health department in Queensland making sure that they have a great PR message to take out there and nothing to do with the health and welfare of the people. You can look no further than the incidents of the so called 'Doctor Death' at the Bundaberg hospital and look no further than the two top nurses that are still stood down at that hospital for doing the right thing. They were punished for doing the right thing, and it is a scathing indictment upon the administration of the health department in Queensland.

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (09:53): It is a great opportunity to speak on the Dental Benefits Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. This is a relatively uncontroversial bill but we are obviously having an important debate about dental care in our country. As the member for Ballarat said, oral health care is the missing link out of Medicare. I think there is a great deal of truth to that.

Oral health has been left to the states for a long time. What we have seen really out of the states' administration of this area is a system of have-nots. We have seen over the last couple of decades the federal government, by necessity, become increasingly involved in the area of dental care. We can go right back to when I joined the Labor Party. I can remember the Keating government embarking on a program to reduce state waiting lists for public dental care, because those waiting lists had grown so long—not just the time you waited to get seen but the time you waited to actually get the treatment. So, there were often two waiting lists: the waiting list to get an assessment and then the waiting list to get the treatment. And they blew out, particularly in New South Wales at that time. The member for Kennedy talks about people removing their own teeth. Sadly, sometimes people were going to that extreme, taking drastic action themselves, because of these terrible waiting lists.

So there was an endeavour by the Keating government at that time to address this matter, and we saw even the Howard government—no friend to Medicare, no friend to universality or to getting involved in state responsibilities—embark on the CDSS. We know that that was a poorly targeted scheme. It was meant to cost $90 million a year and ended up costing $80 million a month. Now, maybe that is because there is vast demand out there; I do not know. But one of the things we also know about it is that more than 20 per cent of the recipients were not concession card holders, were not pensioners, and more than 20 per cent of the spending was on high-cost restorative services. So, that was the record of the Howard government. They were getting involved in this area, I guess out of necessity, because the states were doing such a poor job. We all know that there were problems in that scheme, and those opposite should not try to run from them.

The previous Labor government, of course, embarked on a $4.1 billion scheme, and that was designed basically to clear waiting lists to create a workforce—and not just a workforce in capital cities but a workforce outside of capital cities—and also focused on children's health. Children's health is particularly important. The member for Ballarat in her speech talked about some terrible statistics—that 20,000 children under the age of 10 are hospitalised each year because of avoidable dental issues and that by the age of 15 six out of every 10 kids have tooth decay. We know that this is not just because they do not have toothbrushes or because of sugary drinks; it is because they do not see a dentist. A dentist is an integral part of oral health care.
The impact of oral disease is particularly important. The Department of Health, on its website—the National Advisory Council on Dental Health—talks about the National Oral Health Plan for 2004 to 2013. It says:

Oral health is fundamental to overall health, wellbeing and quality of life. A healthy mouth enables people to eat, speak and socialise without pain, discomfort or embarrassment. The impact of oral disease on people's everyday lives is subtle and pervasive, influencing eating, sleep, work and social roles. The prevalence and recurrences of these impacts constitutes a silent epidemic.

It goes on to talk about the international research that indicates associations between chronic oral infections and lung disease, stroke, low birth weight and premature birth. Associations have been made between periodontal disease and diabetes in international literature as well.

So, we know that oral health is vital to the health of the rest of the body. And the statistics that are there scream out for a shift away from the system of have-nots that is endemic in allowing the states to retain responsibility over this area. We know they have not done a good job. They have not done a good job for decades; this is not something that has sprung up overnight. I remember when the Rann government came to power in 2002 one of the things we acted to do was to aim to reduce the waiting list for public dental care, and that is because in electorates like mine I am often shocked—and I do not have great teeth—by just how bad some people's teeth are, and often they are desperate to get treatment. There are a whole lot of impacts, obviously, on their lives. It is very hard to seek work and it is very hard to socially engage if you have got really poor teeth. Obviously it is very painful and affects your overall health.

The statistics are very serious and pretty brutal. In 2010 nearly half of children aged 10 had experienced tooth decay in their permanent teeth. That is out of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the University of Adelaide's *Oral health and dental care in Australia: key facts and figures trends 2014*. So we know that those statistics are not good. In terms of tooth decay in adults there is the effect of geography as well. The proportion of people with untreated decay varied from 23.5 per cent in major cities to 37.6 per cent in remote and very remote areas. An obvious point that we know about our health system is that the further you are from the GPO, the harder it is to get health treatment generally. We know that prior to the previous government's opening of cancer centres there were some pretty horrendous figures in relation to cancer and degrees of remoteness—the further you were away from the GPO affected your treatment—and it certainly does in dental as well.

There is an income barrier as well. In 2004-06, the proportion of people with untreated decay was higher for those with a household income of less than $12,000 a year and lower where the household income was $100,000 or more. A higher proportion of uninsured people, 31.1 per cent, than insured people, 19.4 per cent, had untreated decay. So there is a gap related to geography and there is a gap related to income.

*Mr Briggs interjecting—*

**Mr CHAMPION:** You might learn a thing or two, Member for Mayo. I talked about the states before. I talked about their poor record—all of them, Labor and Liberal—in this area. So let us share the blame around. I know the member for Mayo is a centralist in his heart, just like his old boss, John Howard—a great believer in the federal government. We saw that in their ideology in Work Choices—the commitment to a single, central system in this country. It is something that I think is spread in the coalition. We would like to see that.
But back to the statistics about dental. About one in three cardholder adults had untreated decay, 32.9 per cent, compared to less than one in four non-cardholders, 22.9 per cent. Obviously there are big impacts related to geography and income in your ability to access dental care. These are all mapped out in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the University of Adelaide's report. It notes similar things in terms of gum disease, where age has an effect, gender has an effect and geography certainly has an effect. In terms of gum disease, 36.3 per cent of those living in remote areas had gum disease compared to 22.1 per cent living in major cities. In terms of income and gum disease, people on lower household incomes generally were more likely to have gum disease than those on higher incomes, varying from 42.3 per cent for those in households earning less than $12,000 per year to 14.3 per cent for those in households earning $100,000 or more. A lower proportion of the insured, 19.4 per cent, than the uninsured, 27 per cent, had gum disease. Cardholders had higher rates of periodontal disease than non-cardholders—some 33.6 per cent compared to 19.5 per cent, respectively.

These are pretty stark figures. We know that what this government is doing will not help these figures. We know that. We know of their plans in health generally—some $50 billion worth of cuts and the GP tax. It is a tax which cascades from your GP waiting room into the place where you get your blood tests and into the place where you get your scans. And if you have to go back through the process to see your doctor again to get more tests, to get more scans, then the $7 cascades over and over again. We know that those opposite are committed to that GP tax and they are committed to the $50 billion worth of cuts.

We know that one of the things they did in the last budget was also basically to defer a $390 million partnership. There are 400,000 people on dental waiting lists around the country and in some states this funding has helped to cut waiting lists by half. We know that if you let those waiting lists blow out the problems get worse. I have heard other speakers say, ‘Why did the previous government start with children?’ That is because prevention is better than cure and universality is an important thing. One of the things it does is it lets people see their doctor or their dentist before problems get out of hand, before people have to have more extensive work and before they have to be, God forbid, hospitalised. We talk about some 20,000 children across the country being hospitalised for avoidable dental operations and interactions, you know that prevention is better than cure. It is much cheaper, too—that is the thing. There is a saving in it for the Commonwealth, there is a saving in it for the states and there is a saving in it ultimately for the community.

We know that the delay of the $390 million national partnership programs is going to be a disaster. Griffith University Professor of Dental Research Newell Johnson said:

‘It's certainly going to make it worse for people who rely on the public system. It's high time we realised that dental health is as important as any other part of the body.

Australian Dental Association President Dr Karin Alexander said waiting lists could double or triple, depending on the delay:

Then the waiting lists are going to grow and you are going to have people sitting there in pain at once again.

It is not good enough for this nation, which is wealthy, which has experience of universal health care in Medicare—a reform that was hard fought for in the Whitlam era. It was hard fought for then; it was hard fought for by the Hawke government, which went down the
Medicare path and managed to institute it into our public life, make it untouchable for those opposite—and they will find the GP tax that they are so committed to will be their undoing. But it is not good enough to simply say that dental care should be left out of Medicare, that it should be a haves and have-nots system, that it should be a system where your health is dependent on your income and your ability to pay for a service that is vital for your interaction with the community, for your place as a citizen in this community. And if there is one thing we should learn from this debate it is that these schemes where the Commonwealth is fiddling about, trying to fix up what the states have not the wit, the inclination or the resources to do is an error. We should look at putting dental care in its rightful place in our public health.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (10:08): I am pleased to rise on the Dental Benefits Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. As this is a health related bill, I would like to firstly address my comments to rebut some of the points made by members of the opposition during this debate.

We have heard this common phrase throughout many of the members of the opposition's speeches about 'cuts to health spending'. I am not sure, but I think maybe in their talking points members of the opposition are told: 'Just keep repeating this, time after time after time. Never mind the facts, and then maybe it might become a truth.' I have more faith in members of the Australian public to look at what the actual facts are and determining those facts and seeing if they are being misled.

The facts are that for overall health spending this financial year there is a nine per cent increase—this government is putting $1.3 billion extra into health spending this financial year. Next financial year, on top of that $1.3 billion, there is yet another nine per cent—or $1.4 billion—increase in health spending. And in the financial year after that, the third financial year of this government's budget, there will be yet another nine per cent increase. That is another $1.5 million, on top of all those other increases, that is going to our hospitals from this federal government. So if members of the opposition come in here and think that a nine per cent increase every year for the next three years is not enough, it is up to them to simply say how much more they are going to put in, but most importantly where the money will come from. Where will the money come from if a nine per cent—$1.3 billion to $1.5 billion—increase each year in our health spending by this federal government is not enough? How much more do they want and where will that money come from?

Getting onto the exact provisions of this bill: to explain the details of this bill and the necessity for it, it is necessary to do a review of history to see how we have come to this stage. There is the concept that this government would like to see more money invested in dental care across the nation, but there is simply no such thing as free health care or free dental care. Somebody has to pay for it; the money has to come for it from somewhere. There is no such thing as Magic Pudding economics. At the end of the day the bills have to be paid by someone.

To go back to the origins of this bill we need to go back to 1996, when the previous coalition government were first elected. What they inherited at that time was a budget in deficit and $96 billion worth of accumulated debt—that was their inheritance. But even more importantly, they also inherited a liability to pay interest on that debt of $9.5 billion in the first year. So rather than having $9.5 billion to spend on all the many things that we needed in
our society, $9.5 billion worth of taxes had to be raised, taken out of the economy and used to pay the interest bill on the previous government's debt. And what we saw was a successful government; we saw they were successful because they created opportunity. They encouraged entrepreneurs to get out there and take risks, to experiment with their new business ideas and to innovate: that is what created the wealth and prosperity, so the money started to flow into the federal Treasury, which allowed us to slowly pay down the debt; to run a surplus year after year and to slowly wind back that debt.

One of the most important things the previous government did to wind that debt back was to lower company tax rates. It often sounds quite counterintuitive, but by lowering company tax rates the Howard and Costello government actually got more money in the coffers. For example, in the first year of the Howard and Costello government company tax rates were 36 per cent; about 3.3 per cent of GDP was raised in company taxes, something close to about $19 billion. But what the Howard and Costello government did was lower those tax rates; they wound those company tax rates back to 30 per cent. Now for those who do not understand how the economy works they would simply say, 'That will cause revenue to the government to fall', but the exact opposite happened. By lowering those company tax rates, by giving individuals and companies and businesses and small businesses the incentive to go out there and invest because of a lower company tax rate, we saw an expansion of the economy. What we also saw was the percentage of total GDP raised by company taxes increase, and increase substantially, at a lower rate of company tax.

So then we move forward to about 2005 or 2006. By then, after good economic management for close to a decade, we had finally been able to pay back that $96 billion worth of Labor debt. But most importantly, because there was no debt, there was no interest bill that the government had to finance. That freed up money to fund a lot of the social programs that are so desperately needed in our society. One of those social programs put in by the then health minister, now the Prime Minister, was the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme. This is one of the dividends of good economic management: when you have government keeping the budget in surplus and the economy running, the benefits and dividends you get allow you to spend on social programs. That Chronic Disease Dental Scheme, established during the Howard government by the now Prime Minister, provided $4,250 every two years for private dental treatment for people who had a chronic dental disease. Twenty million services were provided to over one million Australians who benefited under that scheme. One million Australians were the recipients of that good economic benefit—that dividend—through the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme. It was the most successful scheme for curing dental disease and dental issues in our nation's history.

But what happened when the Labor government came to power? We saw reckless and wasteful spending, and one of the saddest things of all was that they tried to delegitimise the success of the previous Howard government. They went out and criticised the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme. What they did so they could take it away—because they wanted to cut costs to try to wind their budget back—was go out looking for scapegoats. Remember, one million Australians received benefits under this scheme. So they went out looking for scapegoats and the scapegoats they found were the dentists who had made a mistake filling out their paperwork. That is simply what they had done: they had made a genuine mistake filling out the paperwork. Of course, the previous Labor government came out and said this
was roting. They found a few cases—a handful of cases—out of one million Australians who received treatment under the program, and that is the reason they gave for cutting this scheme off. The true reason was they were too embarrassed to admit this was a successful scheme brought in by the previous health minister, then opposition leader, and current Prime Minister, Tony Abbott.

This is what this bill addresses. It enables those so-called debts that were created—debts the government claims are owed by dentists—to be wiped off. They are not genuine debts; the services were performed. They are simply the result of an error of paperwork. We all know how hard it is to fill out government forms and paperwork. Only the other day I was at a volunteer awards ceremony in southern Sydney with all the volunteers. There were many worthy volunteers in that room. There were rural firefighters; people who volunteer in our hospitals; people who volunteer in our aged-care sector; and people who volunteer with our kids with disabilities. But the overall winner was a group called the 'form-filling helpers'. Their specific volunteer contribution to society is to help citizens fill out government forms.

This is why you cannot simply go back and look at a form in which there has been a slight discrepancy and try to take away the money that was paid to dentists for work they did in good faith—to claw that money back. That is what this bill addresses. It winds back and brings in amendments to make sure those so-called debts, where the work was done in good faith, are repealed. Without delaying the House any further, I commend this bill to the House.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (10:19): I speak in support of the amendment to the Dental Benefits Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. It is well known that bad oral health can have a negative impact on a person's quality of life. Untreated dental decay, as well as causing pain and infection, can affect nutritional status and growth and cause issues such as sleep disturbance, poor concentration and other behavioural impacts. Addressing oral health in children and young people in particular can significantly improve lifelong oral health, which is a key determinant of health and wellbeing throughout a person's life.

In my electorate of Kingsford Smith, particularly among young children, dental health is a real issue and as such it sparked a local public health initiative to tackle the problem. I am pleased and proud to say that the charity arm of the mighty South Sydney Rabbitohs, Souths Cares, launched an oral health care program on 8 April this year, designed to help spread the message of 'clean well, drink well' and the importance of oral hygiene for young people in South Sydney. Accompanied by graduate students from the University of Sydney, lead member of the Souths Cares team and former first grade rugby league player Rhys Wesser launched the program's first session at La Perouse for children from kindergarten to year 2. Rhys began by reading the children an Indigenous Dreamtime inspired story called "The healthy tribe: 'I can help my body stay well'. The book aims to educate children about oral health and general health and it focuses on the oral health message 'eat well, drink well and play well'. The story is about a young boy named Marley who talks about his journey gaining the knowledge to live a happy and healthy life, which is told through stories of the Biripi and Worimi people. These tales were developed so that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people could gain the knowledge to improve their health in a culturally appropriate way. I congratulate Souths Cares and all concerned with this organisation for the work they are doing to promote better health care, particularly among young Indigenous students in my
community. That is an example of one of the oral healthcare programs that runs in my electorate.

Labor, of course, considers dental health and dental care a vital component of good public health. In this area, it is fair to say, we have put our money where our mouth is. In August 2012, Labor introduced a $4 billion dental program aimed at providing access to government subsidised dental care to millions of children and adults on low incomes or in rural areas. As part of our plan to address increasingly poor oral health among Australians—in particular, low- and middle-income families—the unprecedented six year dental health reform package included $2.7 billion for around 3.4 million Australian children who will be eligible for subsidised dental care; $1.3 billion for around 1.4 million additional services for adults on low incomes, including pensioners, concession card holders and those with special needs, who will have better access to dental care in the public system; and $225 million for dental capital and workforce, which will be provided to support expanded services for people living in outer metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas.

This bill will create a waiver provision for the Medicare Chronic Disease Dental Scheme and make a number of amendments to the operation of the Child Dental Benefits Schedule. When Labor was in government an audit of the activity of the CDDS detected a high rate of noncompliance with the reporting requirements for dentists. As a result of this audit, activity debts were raised against dentists found to be noncompliant. The last speaker, from the other side, mentioned that it was his belief that this was one of the most successful healthcare programs that had ever been run in Australia. My experience from talking to GPs in our community was that, unfortunately, the CDDS was being rorted by a small number of doctors and dentists. I spoke to a number of GPs in my community who gave examples of people requesting certificates to say they had chronic dental diseases and required dental treatment under the scheme through Medicare when in fact they did not fit that category but had heard from others that there was an opportunity to get free dental health care through this program. That was uncovered in an audit of this program that was run by the previous government. That is why the program was shut down. It was found that taxpayers’ valuable dollars were being wasted—admittedly in a small number of cases—and there was no ability to put in place measures and other safeguards to rein in the rorting that was occurring in the scheme. That is why Labor acted to replace that program and make changes to the program. On the whole, I think the targeted program that Labor put in place, particularly to target those people on low to middle incomes and children, has been effective.

This bill also makes amendments to the Dental Benefits Act and the Health Insurance Act to align compliance powers and make those powers applicable to the CDBS. It also amends both acts so that the Professional Services Review scheme can be applied to dental services provided under the CDBS. The CDBS commenced on 1 January 2014 and provides to those aged from two to 17, who meet a means test, access to up to $1,000 in benefits over two calendar years for basic dental treatment. This program is an investment in prevention. We know that the oral health of our children is the best predictor of oral health as adults. We know that children from low-income families and low-socioeconomic areas have inferior dental health to those from more affluent areas. That is why this scheme was targeted and means tested for children who fit those criteria. The CDBS replaces the Medicare Teen Dental
Plan and provides more comprehensive coverage through a greater range of services to a larger group of children.

Labor also takes very seriously the issue of inappropriate professional behaviour and supports the application of compliance powers as well as the operation of the Professional Services Review scheme. The dental health reform package that Labor implemented is delivering a better and fairer system of dental care for Australians. It is an accessible and affordable scheme that focuses on prevention to deliver future improvements in Australia's oral health. From its commencement on 1 January 2014 until 1 March 2014, over 84,000 children received dental treatment under the CDBS, including over 26,000 children from outside of major cities. That is proof positive that this scheme is working and delivering its intended benefits without the rorting that we saw under the previous scheme that was put in place by the Howard government. In 2013, over 200,000 public dental patients received treatment because of Labor's program and its funding of the public dental waiting list blitz. It is because of Labor that over 280,000 adults now have better oral health as a result of free or subsidised care under the dental health reform package.

I am proud of Labor's improvements to dental health. I am proud that Labor has increased accessibility to dental health through a targeted scheme to ensure that low-income families in this country get the necessary support to access basic dental healthcare services and, importantly, that children, particularly those from low- to middle-income families and low-socioeconomic areas, have access to those dental schemes. It is a great legacy from the previous Labor government. This bill will tidy up the deficiencies in the Howard government's Chronic Dental Disease Scheme and will ensure that the legacy is removed forever. I commend the bill, with the amendment, to the House.

Debate adjourned.
to start by putting on record my thanks to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and the managers of business, both government and opposition, and including the whips offices, for allowing this debate to occur now—for a range of reasons which I do not need to go into—and for enabling me to participate in what is, obviously, a very significant debate within this portfolio area. I would like my thanks recorded.

This is perhaps the most significant piece of legislation which has been put to the parliament since the election of the Abbott government in respect of immigration and asylum seekers. It is a bill which has many parts to it—some we agree with and we see as being sensible; some we do not agree with. As always, the politics in this bill is highly leveraged.

There is much in this bill which is, in effect, a legislative response to actions of the judiciary. Some of that is understandable, but some of it is occurring where, really, the courts ought to be allowed to do their work. Whenever we are in the space of balancing the relationship between the legislature and the judiciary, balance is the key word. That certainly forms part of the judgements that we have made in respect of how to approach this piece of legislation.

Labor will be opposing this legislation in the House of Representatives because there are elements to it which we disagree with. Of course, how the legislation has been bundled is not of our making, but there are elements to this which we disagree with. That said, we will be seeking to move amendments in the Senate to give expression to those parts of this legislation that we agree with and those that we do not agree with. In addition, we may well end up moving amendments in the Senate to take into account the outcome of the inquiry that is being undertaken by the Senate and is due to be completed on 24 November. That said, my intention now is to go through the bill in detail and articulate to the House exactly what Labor's position is in respect of every component of the bill so that there can be no doubt about what we support and what we do not and what will then eventuate in terms of the amendments that ultimately arise from us in the other place.

The first schedule of this bill—there are seven—has been characterised by the minister as, in a sense, being a legislative decision in this place in respect of the question of turning back asylum seeker vessels. Let me be very clear in relation to that position up-front. Our view about the question of turning back asylum seeker vessels is simply this: we are open to any measure which saves lives at sea. Labor has been completely committed to doing everything we can to seeing an end to the human tragedy which unfolded on our borders. That is why we put in place the PNG arrangement, which has done an enormous part of the work in seeing an end to the flow of asylum seeker vessels. We understand that that needs to happen in order to end that human tragedy, and, touch wood, we are in a place now where we hope that we have seen the last of the deaths at sea.

We retain two anxieties in relation to the question of turning back asylum seeker vessels. The first is in respect of the impact that that policy has on our relationship with Indonesia. This is clearly a policy which the Indonesian government does not accept. This is clearly a matter which has been eroding our relationship with Indonesia rather than building it. If we are to have a policy in place which does not just have an impact on the flow of asylum seeker vessels over the course of the last few months but also resolves this issue over the course of the next few decades, then we need to have a relationship of co-operation between ourselves and our nearest neighbour—the country from which the bulk of the asylum seeker vessels emanates. So it is plain common sense: we must have a hand-in-glove relationship with
Indonesia in respect of dealing with asylum seeker vessels. That is what existed when Labor was in government. Our concern about the policy in relation to turning back asylum seeker vessels is the impact that it has on that relationship over the long term.

Our second anxiety in respect of the policy of turning back asylum seeker vessels is the question of safety at sea. Previously, we have had advice from Navy to this parliament about the question of safety at sea. It is, to be honest, difficult to have that question answered openly in this parliament in circumstances where the conduct that is occurring on our high seas is said by the government to be one of an operational matter and, therefore, the details are not made public.

Having any sense of public confidence then in the safety of these operations is simply an open question. We do not know. And we need to know, from the point of view of Labor, in order to have our support for a position of turning back boats at sea. Given there has been a history of advice to this parliament that there is danger in this, we need to be satisfied that this is a policy which can be carried out safety. They are our two issues in relation to the question of turn-backs—firstly, our relationship with Indonesia; secondly, the question of safety at sea. That is where we stand. I reiterate, our mind is open to any measure which seeks to save lives at sea.

The minister has sought to characterise schedule 1 as being, in essence, a vote on this question. It is not. Schedule 1 is about the government dealing with a case currently on foot in the High Court—the case of CPCF v Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Others. That was being heard in the High Court last week. In essence, what this legislation seeks to do is to scuttle one High Court case. It deals with each of the elements which are being put forward by the applicants in that case and, in a sense, were it to be passed through this parliament, would render the precedent value of that case redundant. It is a case which is fundamentally about the Maritime Powers Act. To be sure, the outcome of that case may well have an impact on the government's ability to conduct its turn-back policy.

If it is the case that we now have a situation by virtue of this legislation that raises the question of the legality of turn-backs, that is a point which the government must be clear about. In that context, it is important to say now that the rule of law matters. The High Court has a role to play. Were this schedule to be passed, it would make the role of the High Court redundant. In our view, that is inappropriate. It is inappropriate to be walking down this path right now when there is a case before the High Court. If, after the High Court has made its decision, the government believes that it requires legislation in order to empower it to do what it seeks to do, at that point it can come back to this parliament, it can come to the opposition and talk through what that proposal is.

What we have before us is a schedule which seeks to, in effect, scuttle a High Court case which is on foot right now, and in our view that is not an appropriate way to proceed. On that basis, we have a position of opposing schedule 1. That should not be read simplistically as a statement about our position in relation to turn-backs and that is why I spent some time articulating what that position is. But we do not think it is appropriate to be using this place, right now when this matter is before the High Court, to make a matter before the High Court redundant. The High Court should be allowed to continue the work that it has to do. That is our position in relation to schedule 1.
Schedule 2 deals with the question of temporary protection visas and a new visa class which will be called temporary safe haven enterprise visas. In relation to temporary protection visas, Labor's position is well known. We oppose temporary protection visas and, therefore, we oppose that part of this schedule and indeed those components of this schedule which are consequential on a reintroduction of temporary protection visas. Our view, very simply, is that people who come to Australia who are found to have invoked Australia's protection obligations ought to be provided with permanent protection visas from our humanitarian program and provided assistance in settling within our community as quickly as possible, so that they are off the government tab as quickly as possible and become constructive and contributing members to our society as quickly as possible.

Rather than keeping these people in a state of limbo through temporary protection visas, which in effect would mean this, any decision that these people would take in their lives that would be longer than three years in duration—three years being the duration of the temporary protection visa—would effectively be a decision that they cannot take. Taking out a personal loan, taking out a mortgage, going to university, falling in love—none of these decisions that we all make in our lives which are about being a member of this society, being a settled member of this country, will be on offer to people who are here on temporary protection visas because they do not know whether they will be here after three years.

But let us be clear, the vast majority of these people will be here for the rest of their lives. That is the experience that we saw during the Howard government when, in effect, temporary protection visas were abandoned. We saw that after the first period of review, people were able to convert their temporary protection visa to a permanent protection visa. The vast majority of people were able to do that.

What we would have with this legislation would be this situation: where people's circumstances back in the countries from where they have come have not substantially changed, they will be able to spend the rest of their lives here but they will have to do so on this three-year rolling basis of limbo and that will prevent them from contributing to our society in a way which we would want to see. That is therefore not in our interest as a nation and certainly not in their interest as individuals. That is why we oppose temporary protection visas.

This schedule also puts in place, just, temporary safe haven enterprise visas. I say 'just' because all the legislation does is name the visa class. It makes clear in the explanatory memorandum that next year regulations will be developed which will put meat on the bones, but right now all this legislative package is doing is putting a name in the act. This comes about, as we have heard, from the minister's statements and through discussions and an agreement between the Palmer United Party and the government in relation to this bill. It would seem that the Palmer United Party are concerned to have in place, to deal with some of the issues I have just addressed, a mechanism whereby people have a pathway to permanency. That, as an objective, is one we support. We think it is a good thing to have a situation, for all the reasons I have just described, where those people who are found to invoke Australia's protection are able ultimately to have a pathway to permanency and ultimately to have a pathway to citizenship. I do not think you could say right now that this legislative package guarantees that—far from it. In that respect, the Palmer United Party ought to be concerned with the fine print of the deal they have struck with the government.
We support conditionally the proposal of safe haven enterprise visas but in saying that we will be seeking to move amendments in the Senate which absolutely clarify that this visa class will provide a pathway to permanency pursuant to what we understand was the objective of the Palmer United Party when they entered into the agreement with the government. Accordingly, those provisions of schedule 2 which are consequential to the introduction of safe haven enterprise visas we would also support.

Schedule 3 is an important and technical machinery provision being proposed for the act. We support this. It would seek to clarify the relationship in respect of named visas between how they are described in the act versus how they would be described in the migration regulations. That makes sense. We would make the point that this says that, if there are no regulations which back up the way these visas are described in the act, then the visas will not be operative. One of the visas which are named is the safe haven enterprise visa. Of course, it is absolutely essential, therefore, that regulations ultimately be made for the safe haven enterprise visas or else they will not be operative. We do accept that there should be a clear alignment between the way in which cases are described in the act and in the regulations and that there should be a consistency in the way in which they are dealt with. So on that basis we support as a sensible reform those measures which are set out in schedule 3 of this bill.

Schedule 4 of the bill relates to the refugee assessment process. There are two aspects to this. Firstly, the bill seeks to speed up the process of assessing a person's refugee claim for those people who I might describe as being in Australia in an unauthorised way—that is, they are here either through an overstay on their visa or they are here having come by plane or sea and not having appropriate paperwork. For people who are here in an unauthorised way this will seek to fast track the assessment process for them. We are not sure how that will operate because regulations need to be developed for that and we are told they are coming. We will be opposing the entirety of schedule 4. The fast track process is the first part. The second part of this schedule, which is perhaps more concerning, is the establishment of what is described as the Immigration Assessment Authority, which would displace the role of the Refugee Review Tribunal in respect of those who are here in an unauthorised way and mean that for those people their assessments would have only a limited review right in relation to an adverse decision made about them.

We have, in this place, since the Abbott government was elected, supported much legislation which has come through the parliament and sought to make more robust and to strengthen the refugee assessment process. That was something which, when in government, we also sought to do. There is work which can be done to ensure that the processes of assessing people's protection claims are as robust as possible and to make sure that the ability to game the system is reduced as much as possible. What we have in schedule 4, in our view, goes well beyond that. This becomes something of a gutting of the assessment process. When talking about the limiting of people's review rights to the extent contained in this schedule, we cannot go there. Equally, the fast-tracking process would seem to us to not achieve much in terms of time but would go a long way in reducing people's rights. That is particularly the case in the timing of assessment processes when later on the government is seeking to remove the obligation which requires a decision to be made in respect of an application within 90 days. In any event, for all those reasons we would oppose schedule 4.
Schedule 5 has two components. The first is to seek that the removal powers of the act be seen and read separately from the refugee assessment process and without regard to the refugee convention. We support this. This is a situation where people have gone through their assessment process, having sought to invoke Australia's protection obligations, may take their case, if they get leave, all the way to the High Court but ultimately, having been found not to be a genuine refugee, in the normal course of events the removal powers of the act would then take effect and those persons would be facilitated back to the country from which they came. The act has been read through a number of court decisions as giving effect to the refugee convention in each and every one of its parts and therefore there has been ability for people to effectively relitigate their assessment claim in the context of the exercise of the removal power. We do not think that it is appropriate or reasonable and therefore we do support what the government is seeking to do here in making it absolutely clear that the removal power sits separately from the question of assessing a person's protection application and considerations of the refugee convention. It does not mean that the refugee convention does not apply to people when they seek to invoke Australia's protection obligations; of course it does. But it does in the context of their assessment as a refugee, not in the context of whether or not they ought to be removed, having had that assessment fail through the system of decision making and review that we have under the Migration Act.

The second component of schedule 5, we do not support. This is a component which seeks to remove any reference to the refugee convention within the act and, as the government would say, to codify the obligations which exist under the refugee convention into the act and indeed codify the state of Australia's law in respect of the refugee assessment process into the act. There is no good reason for this.

The stated reason by the government is that they would want, as jurisprudence develops in this area, to have Australian courts' decisions determine the progress and path that our law takes, rather than the decisions of international courts and other countries. I do not think, even if this were to pass the parliament, it will achieve that end. If you are using a set of words which are used in other countries—in other Commonwealth countries—inevitably, our courts are going to refer to decisions that they make in trying to work out how you interpret those words within our own system. It is clear from the minister's second reading speech that we remain a party to the refugee convention, and the Migration Act is the way in which we give a legislative effect to that. I do not think this will achieve the objective that the government seeks to achieve anyway, but there is no good reason for it.

Our concern is that, in seeking to codify the law in this way, mistakes can be made. There is, for example, a requirement that would be inserted into the act that, if persons are able to alter their behaviour reasonably, then they would not be able to seek protection in Australia. There are cases, which currently are being dealt with in the Australian legal system and decisions that have been made in the past, which do give effect to a version of that. Once you write it down, it raises a whole lot of questions, which will become more complicated. Would, for example, somebody who seeks protection on the basis of sexual preference be denied that protection on the basis that an alteration of their behaviour could result in them not being persecuted or harmed in their home country? I am not suggesting for a second that that is the intention of the codification which is being put in place here, but the moment that you walk down that path is the moment that those sorts of issues will arise. There is no good reason for
codifying the act here other than through in a sense false nationalism about saying that we do not want international courts to have a say on the development of our law—they will anyway, because our courts will refer to them, even if this were to pass this parliament. In any event, we oppose that part of schedule 5.

Schedule 6 deals with the question of the children of unauthorised maritime arrivals and goes to the matters which are being dealt with in the case of Plaintiff B9/2014 against the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. This is known as the Baby Ferouz case, and it is clear that this legislation will not specifically apply to the participants within that case. It will be prospective but it deals with the substance of the matters that come from that.

We support the government in respect of this schedule. We accept that the underlying principle throughout our immigration system is that children inherit the immigration status of their parents. If a parent is an unauthorised maritime arrival, then it is appropriate that children, no matter where they are born, inherit that same immigration status. That applies throughout our system with the one exception: permanent residents living in Australia giving birth to somebody in Australia would become an Australian citizen. Australians born overseas are Australians. Children born to persons holding a temporary visa of any kind in Australia will have a temporary status in this country. Consistent with that, we think schedule 6 is an appropriate piece of legislation and we support it.

Finally, schedule 7 relates to the question of the ability for the minister to put in place caps in relation to the protection visa stream. This comes by virtue of the case of Plaintiff S297/2013 against the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. We support the right of the minister to have an ability to cap the protection visa program, just as the minister has a right to cap visas throughout our entire migration system. It is hard to see how you could manage this appropriately without the minister having that power. We absolutely support that. We do so on the basis that actions the minister took last year in seeking to cap the protection visa program at the number of visas which had been issued to the point in time when the government's attempt to introduce temporary protection visas had been disallowed by the Senate. We saw that as an effective abuse of process that was in effect the substantive decision that was litigated through the court system, and the government lost that case. To be completely clear about this issue: we want to make sure that the 6,000-odd people for whom the bar had been lifted and that case applied would be able to seek a permanent protection visa, and so we will be pursuing an amendment to that effect in the Senate.

The final part of schedule 7 deals with the question of the 90-day rule, which was an important part of the case that was litigated. The government is seeking to remove the 90-day rule. We oppose that. The 90-day rule is an important accountability measure of any government about the speed with which it handles the decision-making load in relation to protection visa applications. It was, as I understand it, a rule that was introduced under the Howard government. At the time of the last election, when Labor left government, about half the decisions that were made in relation to protection applications were made within the 90-day rule. In the last report on the government's performance against the 90-day rule it has been found that only 14 per cent of decisions are being made within the prescribed 90 days. The 90-day rule is an important accountability measure and, accordingly, we would oppose any attempt to remove that from the legislation.
That outlines in detail our position on this bill. I reiterate that what we will seek to do is give expression to those positions, as well as any other amendments that may arise by virtue of the Senate inquiry, through amendments that we will move in the Senate. We will be opposing this bill in its entirety in the House by virtue of those components of the bill which we disagree with here.

**WYATT ROY** (Longman) (11:01): I think the shadow minister in his contribution on this bill, the Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Bill 2014, said something very telling. He said that the politics of this issue is highly leveraged—and he is right. I have sat in this parliament over the last four and a bit years and watched as the politics around this issue has become highly leveraged. Perhaps it was a sense of naive optimism that I thought that this issue could rise above partisan politics. But, unfortunately, that has not been the case.

One of the things that has amazed me the most in my time in this place is the hypocrisy of the left on this issue. The left like to tell the Australian people that they take a humanitarian position. The left try to tell the Australian people that they are on the right side of this issue and it is the humanitarian standpoint that drives whatever policy position they hold on whatever day of the week it is. But let us talk about the reality of the situation and strip away the partisan politics.

*Dr Leigh interjecting—*

**WYATT ROY:** The member opposite laughs. I hope he listens to this contribution, because I am going to make a very simple point here.

*Dr Leigh:* You just made the most partisan start you possibly could. Don’t pretend otherwise.

**WYATT ROY:** In 2007 four people were in detention centres—no children. Over the time of the previous Labor government 1,100 people—that we know about—drowned at sea. The Labor members still laugh and still make partisan points but the reality is this: 1,100 people, that we know about, drowned at sea as a result of the decisions that they put in place.

This year I was fortunate enough to go up and spend time with members of the Defence Force who are implementing the policies that we are talking about here today. I want to pay tribute to their professionalism, to their dedication and to their compassion. The member for Fraser is leaving the chamber, but I hope he listens to this point. The first thing they say to you is that—

*Dr Leigh:* Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask whether the member for Longman will yield to a question.

**WYATT ROY:** I will yield to a question.

*Dr Leigh:* Did the member vote for the Malaysia agreement, which would have saved lives at sea, or did he vote against it?

**WYATT ROY:** I did not vote for a nation that was not a signatory to the Human Rights Convention. I would also make the point that throughout this entire debate a set of policies that are known to save lives and stop people going into detention centres has been on the
Throughout the entire period that the member opposite was in government, they knew that these policies worked because they worked under the former government.

As I was saying, the first thing that members of the ADF who are implementing these policies say to you when they meet you—and I hope the member for Fraser listens to this; he is leaving again—is, 'Thank you for implementing policies that stop us lifting dead bodies out of the sea.' That is the first thing that members of the ADF say to you. When you think about it: 1,100 people, that we know of, drowned at sea and it was the responsibility of the ADF members to get those bodies out of the sea. That has a very significant professional and personal toll on the members of the ADF. I cannot understand what is a humanitarian standpoint when you implement policies that saw 1,100 people, that we know about, lose their life at sea and that saw 30,000 people arrive.

When we came back into government in 2013, there were not four people in detention centres and no children—I will not tell you what the figure is for all the people in detention—there were 1,400 children in detention centres. When we left government there was not one child in a detention centre and there were only four people in detention centres. So I cannot understand what it is that the left are saying is humanitarian about putting children into detention centres because of their policies. Those children are there because of their policies. I cannot understand what is humanitarian about 1,100 people drowning at sea.

There is no denying that these policies are difficult for us to grapple with as a nation. They are tough. But the result is that they have stopped the deaths at sea and they have stopped people going into detention centres. When we do that we actually free up the humanitarian dividend as a nation. We allow ourselves to get people out of detention centres and to take refugees from the most dangerous places across the globe and give them a safe haven and a new life here in Australia. If we do not have control of our borders, we do not have the ability to do that.

I want to talk about some of the successes of this government not only at saving lives at sea but also getting people out of detention centres. This is a figure that I am proud of and I particularly want to commend the Minister for Immigration. The latest figures that I have show that, since we came to government, the number of children in detention centres is down by 40 per cent. Because we have stopped people coming into detention centres, we can get them out and there are now more than 516 children who are no longer in detention centres, compared to when we came to government and inherited 1,400 children sitting in detention centres.

This legislation seeks to resolve that legacy by reintroducing temporary protection visas—something that we know works. It creates safe haven enterprise visas and it seeks to reinforce the government's ability to conduct maritime turnbacks. I know from talking to members of the ADF who do those turnback operations that they have a significant impact on people smugglers—people smugglers who, let us remember, are trading in a service or product that they know will kill a lot of people. What more evil trade can there be than one that trades in a service that they know will kill a lot of people? Turnbacks stop that trade. Particularly important in this legislation is the introduction of procedures that will speed up and streamline arrangements to get people out of detention centres and to process them, to deal with that legacy of 30,000 people that we inherited from the Labor government.
When you do these things—when you stop the deaths at sea, when you stop people coming into detention centres—you free up a significant humanitarian dividend for our nation. We know already that we are saving $2.5 billion with the measures that the government has already implemented, and we are getting children out of detention centres. I would say that once we deal with this legacy and the case load that this bill seeks to address, as a nation we should use that humanitarian dividend to offer new opportunities to people who are facing persecution across the globe, and rather than seeing them pay tens of thousands of dollars to risk their lives we should offer them safe haven and a new life here. Already we have seen the government do this, and I want to again thank the Minister for Immigration, the Prime Minister and this government for doing that. Because we have dealt with the asylum seekers coming by boat, because we are dealing with the issue in detention centres, this government has created 4,400 places in our intake for Christians and Yazidis from northern Iraq and Syria who, as President Obama said, are facing potential genocide. We could not do that if we did not implement the measures in this bill.

I think it is a great thing that we as a nation can say to 4,400 people who are facing the persecution from Da'ish, ISIL and its affiliates in northern Iraq and Syria, 'We can offer you a new life here in Australia', and that is the great thing about our nation: we are a successful migrant nation that has offered that new hope to people. But unless we stop the trade in people that people smugglers seek to sell, we do not have the ability to offer that greater generosity.

I would say that one of the great tragedies of modern politics is that it has become not only increasingly partisan but also increasingly short term. We do not talk about what our nation can do over 10, 20, 30, 40 or 50 years; instead we talk about what happens tomorrow. In this bill and in other measures that the government has taken, I can see green shoots appearing for what we can offer to the rest of the world over the coming decades. I think it is an appropriate time to start a discussion as a nation: if we get the measures in this bill right, what can our nation offer to people who face persecution across the globe? We know that today we take 13,750 refugees a year—and I am incredibly proud that that is something that we can do. As I said, there are 4,400 extra places that we can offer to Christians and Yazidis. Given that we are dealing with these issues, given that we are saving $2.5 billion over the coming decades, once this caseload has cleared I believe we should have a serious debate about lifting that refugee intake. I might suggest a figure of double that 4,400 places, with appropriate settlement services, over the long term. That would be the humanitarian dividend of these bills, and what could be better for our nation than to do that? But if we do not deal with these issues, that is something that we simply cannot offer to people who are facing persecution across the globe.

Nothing has amazed me more than the noise that has developed around this debate. I cannot understand how people on the left can say that it is a humanitarian standpoint to change policies day to day, to change political leader day to day, and see a situation where 1,100 people have drowned at sea. We sent our service men and women—some of the most professional, capable, dedicated and compassionate people in this country—out to pick bodies out of the sea as their contribution to this policy. This government has changed those policies, and people on the left can criticise us, they can say that we are 'evil' people, as they often like to say, but I would simply say to them: have a look at the facts. Have a look at what has
actually happened. The Minister for Immigration, who is a bit of a pariah to the Twitterverse and to people on the left, has probably done more to save lives than any other parliamentarian in this country in the last few years. Let us be honest about that. He has done more to get people out of detention centres than any other politician in the last few years. I would say to those people who seek to criticise the government and the Minister for Immigration: remember the 1,100 people who drowned, and their families and their children. They were inevitably somebody's father, brother, sister or friend. I would say to them: remember the 516 children who are no longer in a detention centre as a result of the policies of this government. Remember the 1,400 children who were sitting in a detention centre when we came to government in 2013 as a result of the Labor Party's policies. What is humanitarian about that? What is compassionate of us as a nation about that? In 2007, there were only four people in detention and not a single child.

As this debate draws to a close, can I say that undeniably this government inherited a very significant mess on our borders from those opposite, but the resolve, in the face of significant adversity, of the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, of the Prime Minister, of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and of this government has seen a complete and utter turnaround on this policy front. The Labor Party said, for the six years that they were in government—and particularly for the three of those years that I was in this parliament—that this could never be achieved, that this could never happen. Well, today we stand here, just over a year after we came to government, and we are saving lives at sea. The boats have stopped. People are coming out of detention centres and being processed through that. We are not seeing children coming into that system, which I think was probably the worst part of this debate. And it is a result of policies that we knew worked, because they worked under the former coalition government. We have seen the evidence, as we have implemented these policies once again, that they have worked, that they have stopped the trade in people's lives. They have stopped people coming into detention centres and they have delivered a humanitarian dividend.

Mr GILES (Scullin) (11:16): It is pleasing to see such interest in my contribution to this debate.

Mr Frydenberg: It doesn't often happen!

Mr GILES: No. I am very excited, particularly to see the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister here, because I might touch on matters of interest to him.

The member for Longman, in his contribution, which was a contribution I was pleased to be in the chamber for, started by talking about the need to rise above partisan politics in this debate—an interesting statement, having regard to the 14½ minutes that followed. He also spoke at some length of the hypocrisy of the Left. This was interesting too, because all he really spoke of—and we have a very large bill before us—was the politics of the asylum debate. I am not sure if, in the course of his contribution, he referred to any particular provision of this important piece of legislation which is before us. He merely painted with a very broad brush across the politics of this. The allegations at the heart of the member for Longman's contribution need to be drawn out, because they are so very extraordinary in light
of the history of this debate in this place and in the Australian community since 2001. It was just extraordinary to receive such a lecture from a member of this government in such terms.

There is no doubt that the policy challenges we face—and all developed and, indeed, many developing nations face—in respect of the world's problem of displaced people and refugees, people seeking asylum, are vast. They are vast, and there is no room in this place, from any of our perspectives, for the sort of triumphalism we heard from the previous speaker. This is not a problem which has been solved. This is not a problem which has been solved by Australia or indeed by anyone else. The policy questions are hard. The politics need not be. That is why it is so disappointing, when we are considering an important bill which raises some very significant issues, to have a contribution so long on rhetoric and so short on the serious questions before us now, as well as unmindful of the context within which this debate takes place globally and in our region.

I am pleased to join the shadow minister in opposing the Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Bill 2014. I am very pleased to put my opposition to the bill on the record. It is legislation of familiarly narrow purpose but which carries very wide-ranging consequences—for our approach to securing human rights and for the operation of our democracy. It goes very significantly to the way in which big decisions—decisions affecting lives—are made and how those decisions are to be scrutinised and those making them held to account.

I was interested, just as I was walking to the chamber, to notice that The Guardian today has reported on actions of the minister to issue conclusive certificates removing rights of appeal, on grounds of national interest. Again, we see here the action of a member of the executive to step around the inconvenience not only of the approach of the High Court but the inconvenience of going through the legislative process in terms of exercising his powers. What a stark contrast that makes to the remarks of the former minister Chris Evans, who was deeply troubled by the obligations imposed upon him to play God. Here—and this bill sets it out just as much as the issuing of the conclusive certificates does—we have a minister who is very, very well prepared for, and seems to wear lightly, the burden of determining people's futures himself.

This is a very complex piece of legislation, and it warrants very close attention. This complexity is compounded not only by the wide range of matters dealt with across its seven schedules but also by the extensive provision for regulations yet to be seen but which would do very significant work to enable the operation of the bill. I note that many organisations and academic experts have expressed significant concerns. As I said when this parliament last debated amendments to the Migration Act, I think it would have been preferable for there to be more time to consider these views, which go to the operation of what is a very technical piece of legislation that we all know has been the subject of very extensive judicial review, particularly in circumstances where the effect of recent judicial review clearly in significant part led to the bill before us.

This legislation, if enacted, would take Australia to a new and uncomfortable place in relation to our international obligations and, I believe, our international standing. I am mindful of the attitude the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has taken to the bill. In a statement dated 26 November, the UNHCR refer to serious questions going to the
interpretation of the refugees convention, a matter dealt with in schedule 5 of the bill. The statement reads:

UNHCR considers that any policy and legislation relating to the protection needs of asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons, must fully respect and comply with international refugee, statelessness and human rights obligations, and not unduly restrict these as some of the provisions appear to do. At a time when unprecedented numbers of people are compelled to flee persecution, serious human rights violations and armed conflict, a full and inclusive interpretation of established protection principles is essential for the integrity of the global system. The need for cooperation and responsibility sharing both regionally and globally is crucial.

It is a powerful statement and a statement all of us in this House should have regard to when we think about the effect of the jurisprudence here and internationally which is being thrown overboard—when we think simply about meaning what we say when we sign up to important international instruments. It is also a reminder of the tricky way in which this government through this legislation seeks, in effect, to weasel out of meeting obligations we have assumed and maintain we ought to continue to assume internationally. But it is also a reminder of the wider context of the world in which we now live.

That is not the context of the press releases issued by the minister and the member for Fairfax prior to this legislation being produced in the House. They are very different questions. It is troubling to me that the minister, who seems to be so very proud of the border protection part of his title seems so unconcerned by the state of the world beyond those borders. Australia must do better than this.

I said at the start of this speech and suspect I will have the opportunity to say again that the challenges of policymaking in this area are vast but the challenge Australia faces as a rich and free country to lead by example should not daunt us from rising to those challenges. In the uncertain world in which we now live we have got a choice available to us to take a high road and not always reach for the lowest common denominator. So, whatever else we must do, we must be an exemplar of human rights protections and recognise that this is a precondition to better regional engagement, to finding the real regional solution that Labor reached towards in government and which is a precondition to making meaningful progress solving these problems at a regional level. This sleight of hand replacement of references to the refugees convention with this so-called new independent and self-contained statutory framework setting out our version of what our convention obligations ought to be is just one of many troubling elements in this bill.

The shadow minister has gone through the many provisions in the seven schedules of this bill in some detail. I will touch only on a couple of aspects which I find particularly troubling, in particular those provisions set out in schedule 4 which restrict and in some cases remove the capacity for merits review of protection and decisions. In schedule 4 of the bill there is provided for a new scheme of fast-track assessment for protection schemes and a new path 7AA of the act. This would apply to specified categories of asylum seekers, in particular to those who arrived on or after 12 August 2012 and who have applied for protection visas.

Let me be clear about this: we in Labor support the prompt assessment of claims. Of course we do. That is part of minimising harm and doing justice to individuals. But, again, having regard to the determinations that we are talking about here cannot involve expedition at the expense of getting the decisions right. The process must be both credible and robust. I am
conscious standing here that a very similar regime was put in place in the United Kingdom and was found there to have been unlawful in July of this year, and this was as I understand it on broad unfairness grounds that may well apply to the regime set out in schedule 4.

This regime consists substantively of a new merits review body—the Immigration Assessment Authority—within the Refugee Review Tribunal which would have the objective of providing a mechanism of limited review that is efficient and quick in place of present recourse to review via the RRT proper. It sets out the manner in which the Immigration Assessment Authority would operate, although the details of this fast-track process are not provided for and remain presently unknown, going further to the concerns I set out in relation to the similar process in the UK.

I note that the explanatory memorandum states that natural justice requirements are to be provided for by regulation. Adverse initial decisions would be referred to this new body, which would be under no duty to accept or request new information or to interview applicants, which goes to concerns other members and I raised with regard to changes to protection arrangements in another bill debated recently in this House. Unhelpfully, this term is not defined in the bill. I do note the parliamentary secretary at the table on our second red tape repeal day. The government's enthusiasm for reducing the legislative burden does not seem to extend to the area of immigration law.

New information is only to be considered by the IAA in 'exceptional circumstances'. This should be an important provision; and, unhelpfully, this term is not defined in the bill, again going to these significant unfairness considerations. While it is the case that judicial review remains available, recourse to merits review is clearly very significantly restricted through this process. I also note that for certain people termed in the act to be excluded fast-track applicants will be denied any recourse to merits review. This scheme set out in schedule 4 of the bill before us would deny applicants a fair assessment of their protection claims. It raises a real risk of refoulement of people Australia is under an obligation to protect from serious harm. Ministerial discretion is no cure for concerns of this nature.

I turn very briefly to schedule 1, which would grant power to the minister to detain people and transfer them at sea, including on the high seas. It would appear that this relates to issues that are presently before the High Court. I note that we have a separation of judicial from executive and legislative power in this country, and we have it for good reason. I think we should be first considering what the High Court has to say and then considering whether legislative action is warranted rather than going about this the other way around. The High Court should be more than an inconvenience to this or, indeed, any government. It has significant responsibilities which we should all have regard to. As the shadow minister said, Labor members remain open to any policy that saves lives at sea.

However, we do have significant concerns about the safety at sea of personnel, as well as significant concerns going to the maintenance and the quality of our critical relationship with Indonesia—a matter I touched on earlier in the context of the broader desirability, indeed necessity, of achieving a meaningful regional understanding of how these issues can be progressed. I note and am mindful of the advice of the Kaldor Centre, which have advised that the provisions here grant extraordinary powers to the minister to detain people at sea and to transfer them. They also note that there are significant constitutional questions, further to my broader comments about the appropriate role of the High Court.
Finally I turn very briefly to the issue of temporary protection visas. I note that talk about this bill, particularly commentary by the member for Fairfax, raised some hopes and sparked some useful discussion about how we can do greater justice to people in need. Labor members here stand as being open to pathways to permanency. But a pathway to permanency is not before us; instead, what we see here is a return to the sorts of arrangements where we keep people in limbo—barring people from ever holding a permanent visa and denying them rights to family reunion, something that is so critical to maintaining mental health. Labor has a longstanding policy of opposing TPVs, for good reason—they do not provide a sustainable solution for refugees. The uncertainty exacerbates real mental health issues and denies people the capacity to live full lives. As well as significant international law concerns with these provisions, they put people in limbo. There is no deterrence value here, even if you accept that to be a valid policy objective—they only place vulnerable people in a place of uncertainty. For these reasons and many more, this is a complex, unnecessary and unhelpful bill which should be rejected by the House.

Ms PRICE (Durack) (11:31): How wonderful it is to have such support in the House today. I appreciate that all my colleagues here also appreciate how important this bill. So I am delighted to rise to speak on this bill, which of course is important to constituents Australia wide who want to see an end to the arrival of illegal boats and a satisfactory humanitarian solution to Labor's legacy of illegal maritime arrivals.

For my constituents in rural and remote parts of Australia's north-west, it is of special importance because it will benefit those seeking to fill job vacancies, those seeking to grow their business, those seeking longer term employees to become part of the community, and those that welcome ethnicity and diversity as a vibrant addition to the fabric of this multicultural community. And there are many in Durack.

The Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Bill 2014 amends a number of acts and regulations—including the Migration Act and Regulations, the Maritime Powers Act, and the Immigration Act—in support of the government's strategies to combat people smuggling and to manage asylum seekers, both onshore and offshore. The bill fundamentally changes Australia's approach to managing asylum seekers in various ways, such as reinforcing maritime operations to stop people smuggling at sea; strengthening border security and maritime enforcement operations; introducing temporary protection for those who arrived in Australia illegally; introducing more rapid processing and helping to resolve protection applications efficiently; and, deterring the making of unmeritorious protection claims.

The measures in this bill are a continuation of the government's protection reform agenda and clarify that there will not be permanent protection for those who travel to Australia illegally. Essentially the bill is designed to resolve Labor's outrageous and callous legacy. Our government has designed a package of measures to resolve the immigration status of a caseload of 30,000 human beings who arrived illegally under the former Labor government. The bill honours our promise to restore border protection and immigration measures to stop the boats. These measures, successfully used under the Howard government, were abolished by the former Labor government, leading to the abhorrent unresolved caseload of 30,000 human beings just left waiting. The bill re-introduces temporary protection visas and, importantly, introduces a new safe haven enterprise visa, SHEV, which is also a temporary
visa. The bill reinforces the government's powers to turn back boats and introduces rapid processing and streamlined review arrangements.

Specifically, the bill amends the Migration Act to (1) introduce temporary protection visas for unauthorised arrivals, whether by air or by sea, who are found to engage Australia's protection obligations; and (2) create a new visa class to be known as a safe haven enterprise visa. The government is providing temporary protection to illegal maritime arrivals found to engage Australia's protection obligations. The temporary protection visa will be granted for a maximum of three years and will provide access to Medicare, social security benefits and work rights.

These people will be provided with stability and a chance to get on with their lives—which, of course, is the humanitarian thing to do—while at the same time guaranteeing that people smugglers do not have a 'permanent protection visa product' to sell to those who are thinking of travelling illegally to Australia. The temporary protection visa will be for a period of up to three years. Thereafter a person's circumstances will be re-examined and if found to still be owed protection by the Australian government will only be granted a further temporary protection visa or a safe haven enterprise visa, which is also a temporary visa.

I shall specifically speak to the new safe haven enterprise visa—or SHEV, as it will now be known—which points to mutual benefits for the visa holder and potentially for nominated communities and businesses throughout Australia. The SHEV, once created and promoted, has the potential to assist small business considerably, particularly in regional Australia; strengthen regional Australian communities; and also reward enterprise. Very importantly, it is also a temporary visa, but in addition to Medicare, social security benefits and work rights, it will encourage earning and learning as well. The holder of a SHEV, which is valid for five years, will work in designated regional regions. If after 3½ years the holder has worked without income support they can apply for onshore visas, such as family and skilled visas as well as temporary skilled and student visas.

Ms PRICE: I just note that the SHEV is a very important visa, which I am sure my Nationals colleagues would appreciate given they are all from regional areas.

Mr Nikolic interjecting—

Ms PRICE: The holder of a SHEV, which is valid for five years, will work in designated regions. If after 3½ years—I am repeating myself now, but I think it is worthwhile saying this again—they have worked without income support they can apply for onshore visas, such as family and skilled visas as well as temporary skilled and student visas. Of course we all hope that after 3½ years the SHEV holders will have found a place in the community and the potential for a family visa would be welcomed by that community.

As we know, Australia is a multicultural community and there will be many members and senators in this place who come from families who escaped their old country for a better life
in Australia—some legally and others as best they could—perhaps as a stowaway on a boat, and we have all no doubt heard those stories. Now embedded in the Australian community, those people are making an enormous contribution—perhaps socially and of course economically—to the wellbeing of our communities, our electorates and, indeed, our nation. The SHEV has the added bonus of offering work and study, which of course leads to opportunities that can be provided in Australia that simply are not available in many places throughout the world.

These proposed amendments enable a visa to be granted to illegal maritime arrivals who are found to comply with Australia's protection obligations and who are willing to commit to working and/or studying in a designated regional location. This new category of visa will address some of the shortages of skilled people and labour in areas of Durack while providing the visa holder the opportunity to contribute to the economic and social development of regional Australia as well as a better life. It is important to stress that no-one will be forced to live or work in a particular area, but the SHEV provides that option. It is not a requirement for a temporary protection visa to live in one of these designated areas. The SHEV requires the applicant to commit to work and/or study in a regional area, but should they not wish to make this commitment they are able to apply for a temporary protection visa only.

Our government seeks to reward enterprise and this will encourage growth in regional Australia. Regional communities in Durack that are seeking to fill job vacancies and grow their business are able to benefit from this proposed legislation. The SHEV will be an alternative temporary visa and encourage enterprise through earning and learning. The SHEV will bring more people to the regions to participate in and contribute to the community and the economy—to attend learning institutions, to use services, to add a multicultural flavour and to work in new and different businesses—and this all leads to growth in regional Australia.

Durack towns such as Carnarvon and Kununurra and different parts of the Wheatbelt region have been seeking useful and appropriate visa and employment arrangements for some time. Small businesses need steady reliable employees while some agricultural and horticulture enterprises are seeking repeat reliable seasonal employees. Government, in particular local government, in regional towns of Durack are often pursuing long-term employees to live in and contribute to the community—not always easy to achieve. The new safe haven enterprise visa will benefit towns, businesses and, importantly, illegal maritime arrivals who may have left behind bitter circumstances and no economic opportunities and who are keen to both earn and learn as well as have a new life.

SHEV holders will be welcome in Carnarvon. This coastal town on the mouth of the Gascoyne River is midway between Geraldton in the Mid West region and the iron ore province of the Pilbara. Horticulture, fishing and agriculture have long been the lifeblood of the town of Carnarvon and, as one might expect, the mango and banana plantations and the farms are owned and worked by a range of Asian families, primarily Vietnamese; European families, primarily Croatian and Italian; and Australian families. They have labour needs that cannot be satisfied locally; likewise the Carnarvon tourism and hospitality sectors. For a long time the Carnarvon small business sector and horticulturalists have bemoaned the current visa arrangements, and more recently have rejoiced at the announcement of the new SHEV. Should Carnarvon apply to become a designated area, then SHEV holders will be transposed.
to a warm and inviting multicultural community, a diverse and thriving town on the Coral Coast with whale sharks and the Ningaloo reef, and with a fine TAFE facility—and plenty of fresh fish, fruit and vegetables. SHEV holders will be welcome in Carnarvon.

In the far north-east of my electorate, in the Kimberley, the small town of Kununurra lies just 37 kilometres from the eastern Australian border with the Northern Territory. It has an abundance of fresh water, conserved by the Ord River dam, with tropical agriculture crops grown in the Ord River irrigation area. Tourism and mining have also become important to the local economy. Many communities in Australia typically have a colourful history of immigration and multiculturalism, as does Kununurra, including considerable foreign investment when the Koreans became involved in intensive agriculture in the region. However, now that the rights for stage 2 of the Ord River irrigation area have been won by the Chinese, one is seeing a strong and welcome Chinese presence in this far-flung town where, once again, SHEV holders will be most welcome. There is plenty of work to be done both on the existing farms and on the new agricultural expansion, which will grow sugar cane. It is a community that boasts many ethnic groups and all that comes with such diversity: food, customs, colour, skills, knowledge and culture.

The SHEV will be open to applicants who have been processed under the legacy case load and are found to engage Australia's protection obligations. Those granted a SHEV will work in designated regions, identified through a national self-nomination process. A state or territory government, local government or employer can request to be designated. The visa will be valid for five years, and like the temporary protection visa will not include family reunion or a right to re-enter Australia. SHEV holders will be targeted to designated regions and encouraged to fill existing regional job vacancies. It is an option to the temporary protection visa, but there is no compulsion.

The Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Bill 2014 amends a number of acts and regulations in support of the government's strategies to combat people smuggling and to manage asylum seekers both onshore and offshore. It will help to resolve the appalling immigration status of the illegal maritime arrivals legacy case load of 30,000 people who arrived under the former Labor government.

This bill restores border protection and immigration measures to stop the boats. The introduction of this new SHEV will encourage people to work and/or study in regional Australia, which I welcome wholeheartedly. This may address some of the shortage of skilled people and labour by providing illegal maritime arrivals with the opportunity to contribute to the economic and social development of regional Australia in a humanitarian and sensitive manner. This in turn will support small business and contribute to growth. I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Deregulation

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (11:45): by leave—Today bills are introduced for the second red tape repeal day. It is the second of many repeal days to come. Every day this government is working to build a strong, prosperous economy for a safe and
secure Australia. Every day we are seeking to identify ways to make life easier for individuals, community groups, charities and businesses large and small. Our Economic Action Strategy aims to remove burdens from business, make our country more competitive and drive more jobs and higher living standards for all Australians. But today—this day—I am pleased to report that since the election this government has reduced annual red-tape costs by over $2 billion. This more than doubles our original commitment of a $1 billion a year cut in red-tape costs.

While some regulation is necessary, and nearly all regulations originally had some point, we are now suffering from regulatory overkill. Between 2010 and last year, an act of parliament was passed every two days. Under the former government some 21,000 new regulations became part of our national life. That does not include the regulations, laws and by-laws that were added at state and territory and local levels. While it is easy to point to bizarre examples, like the ACT government's attempt to require safety supervisors at sausage sizzles, the purpose of this government today is to look beyond the absurd. It is to identify the raft of red tape that adds costs without commensurate public benefit. Talk to any butcher, newsagent, drycleaner or cafe owner and he or she will tell you that it is the accumulation of regulation that damages initiative, productivity and the willingness of people to have a go.

If red tape can grow incrementally, then it can be cut in the same way and that is what the government is doing today. When it comes to regulation, we are changing the culture of government. Deregulation units are now in place across government; ministerial advisory councils have been established in each portfolio so that the people impacted by decisions can have a say on them. Portfolio regulation audits are underway. The performance pay of senior public servants now includes deregulation as a key performance indicator. The site cuttingredtape.gov.au has been established, allowing every Australian to make a contribution to the government's deliberations on cutting red tape. Regulatory impact statements are required for cabinet submissions because assessing the cost of any regulation is as important as knowing its benefits. Soon, a regulatory performance framework will drive cultural change within regulators and help to ensure that regulations are administered effectively and efficiently.

In March, we held the first ever red tape repeal day. On that day, nearly 10,000 unnecessary or counterproductive regulations and 1,000 redundant acts of parliament were removed. That day we relegated some 50,000 pages of redundant regulation from the law books to the history books. Since the first red tape repeal day we have scrapped the carbon tax and the mining tax. Scrapping the carbon tax has not only saved typical households $550 a year and removed a $9 billion a year handbrake from our economy, but it has provided a direct red-tape saving to business of $85 million a year.

Each repeal day is an opportunity to reduce or eliminate regulation and legislation that has outlived its usefulness or does more harm than good. Today we add to this with almost a thousand acts and regulations to be scrapped. More than 7,200 pages of legislation and regulation will go as a result of this second red tape repeal day.

These changes, large and small, are about making people's lives easier, because we are a government that is freeing up businesses so that they focus on the people they are meant to serve. We will make it easier, for instance, for bricks-and-mortar shops to compete with online stores by reducing their compliance costs because, all too often, the retail sector has to
interact with multiple agencies from local, state and national government. We are making it easier for Australian Apprenticeships Support Network providers, who will no longer have to maintain some three million paper files and waste money every quarter doing so. By reducing administrative costs, these service providers can better focus on assisting apprentices and employers in meeting the skills Australia needs. We are also making life simpler for users of managed investment schemes, who will no longer have to undertake two separate know-your-customer checks before they can complete their applications, because one check should be enough. Every year there are over 500,000 new applicants for these schemes and every duplicate check costs the managed funds around $40—as well as the time the customer spends providing the same information twice.

In health care we are reducing the time taken to list medicines on the PBS to improve access to those vital life saving and life enhancing drugs. We are delivering a one-stop shop for environmental approvals. Reducing these approval delays is expected to result in regulatory savings to business of over $426 million a year.

Our Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda is promoting lower costs, better skills and the have-a-go ethos that is so much a part of the Australian character. By reinvigorating Australian businesses we reinvigorate the economy. Deregulation is an essential part of that agenda because bubble wrapping our creative minds in red tape stifles innovation and flexibility. Importantly, the competitiveness agenda includes proposals to reduce duplication of our regulatory arrangements where trusted international standards have already been met or trusted international assessments have already been made. Our guiding principle is that if a system, service or product has been improved under the trusted international standard or risk assessment then Australian regulators should not impose any additional requirement without a demonstrable reason to do so.

We are already seeing the benefits of this. For instance, the Therapeutic Goods Administration has just advised Cochlear, who make the bionic ear, that all of its products are eligible to use European Union certification to streamline TGA certification and that implementation will begin from next month. This change, according to Cochlear, will mean that thousands of people here and overseas will have access to the very latest devices, sometimes up to a year earlier than may otherwise have been the case.

As well, we are making it easier for small to medium exporters to finance their export activity now that the Export Finance and Insurance Corporation has the flexibility to lend directly for all types of exports—not just capital goods—reducing business costs and processing time. EFIC’s adoption of accelerated execution processes for some transactions could shorten processing time by 40 per cent. This could save an average of $5,000 per export contract. These measures will make it easier for entrepreneurs to transform ideas into reality and create an environment where small businesses can do more.

With changes to the Corporations Act governing the administration of general meetings making it harder for activists to make vexatious requests for shareholder meetings, the management of Australia's largest companies can spend more time focused on managing their company and managing their shareholders. We are making these changes because people do not work for government, government should work for people. It is government's job to serve the people, not the people's job to serve the government. We are a country of people who work hard, pay their taxes, volunteer in their local communities and save for their retirement.
Where we can make it easier for people to spend their time as they choose, rather than waste it filling out forms, we should. For example, a working mother who does not want to be contacted by telemarketers during her spare time will be able to register both her home and mobile phone number on the Do Not Call Register. By keeping her numbers on the list indefinitely we are now also making sure that she does not have to remember to re-register every eight years. This same mother could also benefit from the rollout of the myTax online portal that prefills individual's tax returns so that they do not have to spend hours flipping through the pages of a paper tax return. For over 250,000 people this program should reduce the time taken to submit a tax return. And the broader myGov system means that Medicare, Centrelink and Child Support customers can obtain information, make claims and access services without having to visit a service centre in person or spend time on hold on the phone.

Cutting red tape is about making life easier. It means anything from less time in airports waiting in queues because of SmartGate to more forms of identification that marriage celebrants may accept. Cutting red tape should mean less time in queues, less time filling out forms and less time searching for information. These changes and other changes since September of last year have removed over $2 billion in annual red-tape costs. But this is the start, not the end. We are not only cutting red tape but changing the culture that fosters and encourages it. Regulation should not and must not be the default option for policymakers, because more regulation is not the answer to every corporate, community or personal failing. We are a country with highly skilled and highly capable people running businesses, helping community groups and making our country better. We are putting more trust in them to make the right choices and we know that our people are up to the task. I am proud of the progress that we have made so far and I pledge that there is much more yet to come.

Ms LEY (Farrer—Assistant Minister for Education) (11:59): by leave—I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the member for Watson speaking in reply to the Prime Minister's statement for a period not exceeding 13 minutes.

Question agreed to.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (12:00): I thank members of the government for enthusiastically voting for the motion to allow me to speak for 13 minutes! I certainly hope that the repeal day coming up goes better than the last one. The Prime Minister said in his ministerial statement just then that 'our purpose is to look beyond the absurd'. That would have been a valid aim on the last so-called repeal day.

Since the last one I have had a chance to go through the costings provided for the savings. The Prime Minister just now referred to a number of global figures for how much will be saved through these bills. Last time we ended up with costings for how much individual acts were contributing, in dollar terms, in red tape reduction. The Amending Acts 1901 to 1969 Repeal Bill 2014 allegedly saved—and it is part of the global total the Prime Minister uses—$210,000. This was the act that repealed a Defence Act, which had a definition relating to a naval officer of a state navy, notwithstanding that the states have not had navies since 1913. It repealed the Defence Act 1909 that, among other things, stipulated that the owner of a mule or bullock required for naval or military purposes shall furnish it for such purposes and the owner may have to register them from time to time. The minister who is at the table, the Minister for Agriculture, will know the extent to which the owners of mules and bullocks have been frightened that—
Mr Joyce: It does not take much for a bullock to be frightened.

Mr BURKE: That is very good. He knows the extent to which they were frightened the Australian government was going to come in and take their stock for military purposes. It also repealed the Judiciary Act 1914 that made the High Court of Australia a Colonial Court of Admiralty, notwithstanding that Colonial Courts of Admiralty had ceased to exist in 1988.

Somehow getting rid of these laws that were redundant, meaningless and had no impact on anyone—so there was no problem getting rid of them; we did not oppose it—adds up to $210,000 worth of savings. I do not know how. I do not know how those numbers get put together, but it makes more sense than when they established $350,000 worth of savings for the Statute Law Revision Bill (No. 1). This was the bill that removed hyphens and commas. The purpose of that bill was to remove one comma in the Patents Act and 11 hyphens in various Commonwealth statutes. Where it said 'e-mail' they decided to remove the hyphen and just make it 'email'—obviously on the technical understanding of email, probably from the Attorney-General—and where it said 'facsimile' or 'facsimile transmission' they changed it to 'fax' in 16 pieces of legislation. Somehow this is $350,000 worth of savings. In the way the government is calculating the savings on these bills, when you add it up that would amount to in the order of $10,000 per comma. There is a fair bit of hype going on in the total dollar figures of the savings to business and consumers through these bills.

Mr Frydenberg: You belittle the measures and then you question the numbers. How about getting on board?

Mr BURKE: I hope that the government simply does better than it did last time. The member for Kooyong needs to understand that we are willing him to succeed in this. We just want him to do a good deal better than he did last time.

The other test that is often applied here is simply the number of regulations. Since the last repeal day I understand that the government has introduced 600 new regulations. Most of those regulations are good things to do. Simply having a regulation is not a measure of whether you have something stifling business. I give the simple example—and this was supported by the Liberals opposite and opposed by the Nationals opposite—of when we deregulated the wheat industry. When we got rid of the AWB monopoly it was a deregulation measure but it involved more regulations on the statute books than had previously been there. So to simply have the number of regulations as the test does not actually mount your policy case for whether you are providing more freewheeling opportunity for business to avoid unnecessary regulation.

That last time the government dealt with this issue they put a number of proposals. We are not arguing that there was not a cost saving to government but we would certainly argue with the merit of the proposals that they had. Last time they claimed savings, more than a quarter—28.3 per cent of the $700 million—involved the watering down of consumer protections for the Future of Financial Advice reforms and giving a fresh licence for contractors to cut the wages of cleaners through the abolition of the Commonwealth Cleaning Services Guidelines. I do not dispute that there were savings there, but they were savings without merit. They were savings that hurt consumers and savings that hurt some of the lowest paid workers in this country.
If we get rid of regulations, is it automatically good? Getting rid of redundant regulations is a reasonable thing to do. We got rid of in the order of 16,000 regulations in the time we were in government. Sometimes, as I have said before, the introduction of additional pieces of regulation is of itself a deregulation measure—and the abolition of the AWB monopoly is a perfect example of where something like that was done. I acknowledged that the National Party opposed it. Almost everybody sitting around you, Minister Joyce, supported us on that one, but, as I have acknowledged already, your decision was to oppose us on that.

We will wait till we see the legislation in full before we make a decision obviously as to which way we are going to vote. Last time it took some time before the full list of what the government had abolished became clear.

Last time, the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor was abolished on red tape repeal day; only for the government to later realise that this was something they wanted to put in place; they have since committed to bring it back. So this was a position that existed; there had been bipartisan support for it to exist. On regulation repeal day, they got rid of it. But only shortly after they said: 'Oops! Didn't mean to do that one.'

The government acknowledge that simply getting rid of a regulation is not automatically a good thing. Some things are there for national security purposes. Many things are there for consumer protection purposes. Many issues are there for occupational health and safety. There are a range of regulations that are there for a good purpose. That said, if there are regulations that are redundant or if there are ways of streamlining the rules for business, that is a good thing to do.

Since the last repeal day, the Prime Minister has boasted about savings—and he referred specifically to the issue of carbon pricing—to households. In the interim, though, we had a budget which put a cost onto those same households and which eclipses the figures that the Prime Minister just provided to the parliament. In the same way, in the interim, we had the government propose for small businesses to be saddled with an avalanche of job applications when the government proposed that job seekers were going to have to put out 40 job applications a month. Not one small business thought that that idea from the government made the other proposals they had in red tape reduction worth it. Small business across my electorate and across the country knew quite clearly that, for all the talk of regulation repeal, what the government was putting in front of them was an avalanche of extra paperwork that they did not want.

The government also, in the comments made by the Prime Minister, referred to a number of reforms which have involved putting information onto the internet and providing access to information through various webpages, which are good initiatives. He has referred to the myGov website, which is a good initiative but an initiative that did not begin with the advent of this government. An initiative of people being able to access government services through the myGov website was well and truly set up and well and truly underway under the previous government.

The SmartGate system at airports was an initiative started under the Howard government; advanced fully during the years of the Labor government; and continued under this government. For it to be now announced in a ministerial statement by the Prime Minister of Australia as though it is something new, and part of red tape reduction day, when it has been a process going through Australia for near on a decade, is an absurd claim.
Similarly, I will concede that what they have said about myTax is true; that is theirs, because they have renamed e-tax, which was available under the Labor government, which was progressively being updated and which would have evolved in its next generation to be exactly what myTax is now. But they wanted to be able to claim that they had one new. So, for three different things that they were doing on the internet, they thought: 'Well, we'll at least rename one of them, because then it will be true that myTax is new'. Yes, that one is new, which does roughly something similar to where the e-tax system was already up to and was continuing to evolve.

Labor will work through the legislation when it is introduced, because at the moment all we have is the occasional op-ed from the parliamentary secretary opposite—

Mr Frydenberg: Excellent articles! You should read them!

Mr BURKE: I do read them. And I will concede that his latest op-ed was better than the previous ones I had read. So they are improving.

Mr Frydenberg: You never even did a regulatory impact statement!

Mr Frydenberg interjecting—

Mr BURKE: I have a response for the Minister for Agriculture's interjection, but I am holding back. The final thing I will say is that the government makes much of regulatory impact statements, claiming that due process will be followed in cabinet. We have seen in this parliament how quickly all of that falls away the moment there is a deal with the crossbench—for example, look at the future of financial advice reforms. Are we to believe that—in the space of 24 hours, when the new deal was cut—there was a cabinet submission, with a regulatory impact statement attached, to work out what the new cost to the public was, on a change of policy that was being negotiated outside the Senate door? Is that what we are meant to believe? The answer here is quite simple. The government has been willing to ditch any of these processes the moment there is a political deal on the table with the crossbench. We have seen it time and again and we will see it into the future.

Getting rid of old regulations is a sensible thing to do. If the government does that, we will continue to support that, as we did last time. But, please, do not trumpet the ordinary work of government as though it is something new and exciting. And, please, do not come into this House—to the members opposite—claiming that they are somehow adding up these global figures, when what they are doing is attaching a dollar figure to hyphens and commas.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (12:13): I move:

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

Question agreed to.
BILLS

Omnibus Repeal Day (Spring 2014) Bill 2014

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

Second Reading
Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (12:14):

I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

In a report soon to be released by the global professional services firm Deloitte, it is estimated that in Australia there are one million people working in the compliance sector. This is three times as many people as work in the mining sector and represents one in every 11 Australians.

This represents, very graphically, a failure by both federal and state governments over a number of years. And no government was as culpable for the increase in regulation than the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments. They gave us 21,000 additional regulations, despite Kevin Rudd promising a 'one in, one out' policy. In fact, Kevin Rudd told the Australian people that business regulation is 'out of control'. Craig Emerson, the former Minister for Small Business, said that he would take 'a giant pair of scissors to cut red tape'. But despite this, they introduced the carbon tax, with 18 different acts and 1,100 pages of regulation and legislation, and the mining tax, with 11 different acts and 525 pages of legislation and regulation.

This is why we came to government promising to cut $1 billion a year in red tape each year. This is why we promised to establish deregulation units within every portfolio. This is why we committed to setting up ministerial advisory committees, who could advise the relevant ministers on the priorities and the areas for cutting red tape. This is why we have changed the remuneration for senior public servants, so that they would be incentivised to cut red tape as opposed to increasing it. This is why we tasked the Productivity Commission to come up with a framework for auditing the performance of the regulators. This is why the Prime Minister himself has taken responsibility for the deregulation agenda and why the Office of Best Practice Regulation and the deregulation units that were previously housed in the Department of Finance have now been moved to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. And this is why we have assigned two days every year for this parliament to debate the repeal of unnecessary and redundant pieces of legislation and regulation.

In our first repeal day in March of this year we had great success. We removed more than 10,000 pieces of legislation and regulation, removing more than 50,000 pages from the statute books and announcing more than $700 million worth of compliance savings. There were issues like offshore petroleum approvals processes; opening up the Comcare scheme to allow companies that operate in multiple jurisdictions to self-insure; changing the building certification requirements for aged care so that they do not overlap between state and federal; changing the way that movies, DVDs and 3-D movies are classified, ensuring that they do not have to get multiple classifications when the content is still the same. We have had great success in moving this through the Senate because of the Omnibus Repeal Day (Autumn 2014) Bill 2014. The changes to the agvet chemical system and also to the classification
system have all successfully moved through the upper house, together with the changes to the future of financial advice, which brought nearly $200 million worth of compliance savings.

So, we have had success with repeal day 1. And now we are repeating it with our second repeal day next week and the introduction to the House of the Omnibus Repeal Day (Spring 2014) Bill 2014 today. We are removing more than 7,200 pages from the statute books and getting rid of nearly 1,000 pieces of legislation and regulation. And it is important to understand that it is a net figure of $2.1 billion worth of compliance savings. The number will be exponentially bigger than that when you talk about the positive impact for the economy, because if you have a streamlined environmental approval process then billions of dollars of investment that otherwise may have been deferred or cancelled will now go ahead, creating many new jobs, stimulating innovation and encouraging entrepreneurship.

We are all about jobs, and deregulation goes to the heart of productivity and job creation. There are three key themes in the various bills and measures—more than 400—that we have announced through these repeal day processes.

Firstly, we are making people's interaction with government easier. The Prime Minister referred to the myGov site, where five million Australians have accounts to be able to access Medicare, Centrelink and other services on one, centralised online portal. And there is myTax, which ensures that individuals can have data pre-populated on their tax return when that data is already in the possession of the government, like interest on bank accounts, or the income from their salary or dividends from their shares.

We are also ensuring that job service providers do not need to go out and incur great expense getting documentary evidence for whether somebody actually has a job because that information is already in the possession of government. ADF personnel who leave the force and become veterans will no longer have to go through a 100-point identification check when they are seeking a claim from Veterans' Affairs because their ADF badge or their ADF identification will be sufficient. Two hundred-and-twenty hearing service providers, who provide services to more than 640,000 Australians can now lodge their applications online. This has already reduced the number of calls to government from 900 to just 170 a day. All these changes are about using new technology to ensure that the interaction of people and families with government is easier, cheaper and more time efficient.

The second set of reforms which we are introducing as part of our repeal day measures goes to the heart of trying to reduce compliance where it is duplicative, too expensive or unnecessary. One good example is the 100-shareholder rule. If Woolworths has more than 400,000 shareholders, just 100 shareholders should not be able to call a special general meeting, as they have in the past, leading to costs of $1 million for the company, let alone the time taken out by senior management and the board to acquiesce to that request. So we are saying that 100-shareholder rule need not apply, but 100 shareholders can still put issues on the agenda at a special general meeting.

The Federal Safety Commissioner requires accreditation for builders who are tendering for certain government contracts. The member for Herbert brought to my attention that in Townsville there are builders of Defence housing—some 900 Defence houses were built over the last year—who cannot afford the $75,000 for federal safety commissioner accreditation and the $38,000 each year it costs to maintain their accreditation. Therefore, they cannot afford to tender for government projects like Defence housing. This means big builders from
the cities have to come to the country, regional and remote communities to do the work, which means that local plumbers, sparkies, carpenters and others miss out on doing the job. When there are overlapping occupational health and safety requirements already at the state and federal level, this additional layer of compliance for the federal safety commissioner is unnecessary in this case, so single dwellings will be exempt from that red tape requirement. This is really significant because this could open up huge amounts of jobs. I congratulate Senator Abetz also for his important work in this regard.

My colleague and friend the member for Dunkley, Bruce Billson, the Minister for Small Business, has done a lot of work to ensure that 32,500 small businesses that do not pay GST no longer have to do a BAS statement. And 432,000 small businesses that have minimal income and have to submit a BAS statement will now be exempt from the pay-as-you-go system. This is again removing red tape for small business—the heart and soul of the Liberal Party and the Nationals—and ensuring that they get a fairer go.

Aged care providers last year made 10,000 calls or submissions or applications to government departments to tell them when they changed key personnel, which may even have included a nurse. We have said that is unnecessary. So in the bills today is a reform in this area which means only if an aged care provider feels they cannot materially carry on their job will they need to make a subsequent notifications to the government. All this is about is sensible reforms to reduce compliance. One hopes that those opposite see the sense in these changes.

The third suite of reforms is around making Australia a more attractive place to invest. It is here that the one-stop shops, where the Minister for Environment has so successfully led the charge, are going to lead to more than $420 million of annual compliance savings by streamlining approval processes between state and federal governments. The Business Council of Australia documented one case where a company wanted to make a $1 billion investment in the resource sector in Australia and sought an environmental approval. It took that company more than two years, cost them more than $20 million, required 4,000 meetings and required a 12,000-page report. And when the approval came back, it had 1,500 conditions attached—300 at the federal level, 1,200 at the state level—and 8,000 sub conditions. Now I ask you: which company can go through that process and expect to want to invest again in Australia? We are not the only country in the world that produces iron ore or coal or uranium. We are in a global market where business is not sentimental and capital is mobile, and that is why we have to make Australia a place to invest.

The Minister for Trade, Andrew Robb, should be congratulated for the changes he has made to the Export Finance Insurance Corporation, which will allow small and medium enterprises—the exact constituents that the member for New England and the Minister for Agriculture are defending day in day out—to get support from the government when they are looking to expand their businesses overseas. Currently there is a requirement that EFIC can only support producers of capital goods, not non-capital goods. But capital goods are only five per cent of exports, so you have got all these non-capital goods. One of the problems is somebody who is exporting cows could have the support but not somebody who is exporting milk. We need to extend the ability of EFIC to loan to these small and medium enterprises that export non-capital goods and not confine them to just a credit guarantee, which means that they have to pay extra costs.
There are lots of little changes that are also significant for red tape, which colleagues on this side of the House understand benefit their constituents and will be selling day after day in their electorates. Exporters no longer need to put little green tags of the tales of cattle when exporting to Europe. Nine million Australians on the Do Not Call Register will no longer need to renew their position every eight years because once they are on, they will be on indefinitely. And 70,000 motorcycles will not have to go through the extra expense of being retrofitted with special mudguards because we are bringing ourselves in line with jurisdictions overseas like Europe. People who are submitting for Defence honours—more than 13,000 applications were received last year from veterans, their families and Defence personnel—can now do it online as opposed to going through a paper based system. Companies that are limited by guarantee, more often than not with incomes under $1 million who are not-for profits, will no longer be required, as a result of changes we are introducing in the House today, to appoint an auditor. They have never been required to have an audit so why do would they need to appoint an auditor? It is just common sense.

Takeover panel members can now participate in teleconferences when they are overseas, as often they are. Importers of Defence equipment will no longer need separate permits for every consignment, for hundreds of consignments, of the same product. They will be able to have one single permit which will assist them in streamlining red tape. Exporters will no longer need to get a certificate of origin to export under the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement; they can now self-certify, saving them $70 each time they do a self-certification. NBN users will no longer be mandated to have a backup battery; it will be optional because so many people have mobiles and do not need this expensive backup battery. University staff, particularly researchers, will no longer be mandated by the government to do expensive research surveys. The Minister for Education should be congratulated on his work here because 31,000 researchers in our 39 universities will save thousands, more than 3,300, days' worth of their time. These are significant changes across the board.

The Omnibus bill, the Amending Acts 1970 to 1979 Repeal Bill 2014, the Statute Law Revision Bill (No. 2) 2014 and the Spent and Redundant Instruments Repeal Regulation 2014 are whole-of-government initiatives which are going to lead to so many pieces of legislation being repealed and pages being removed from the statute books. In this Omnibus bill are 26 deregulatory measures from across nine different portfolios. The Fishing Industry Policy Council is a ministerial advisory council in the agriculture portfolio that has not been convened since the Fisheries Administration Act commenced in 1991. That will now be abolished. The Product Stewardship Advisory Group was created in December 2012 to advise the Minister for the Environment on a list of classes of products that should be accredited or regulated under the Product Stewardship Act 2011 but the Department of the Environment already consults industry on the list on an 'as needs' basis. So that will also be abolished. And the Oil Stewardship Advisory Council will also be abolished as the Department of the Environment is better placed to consult with industry on an 'as needs' basis in relation to product stewardship arrangements for oils and the recovery and recycling of used oils under the Product Stewardship Oil Act 2000. This is consistent with the recommendations in the Commission of Audit, led by Tony Shepherd, which said that the government needed to consolidate so many of our bodies. And we have done that with the abolition of more than 70 bodies already.
Also in this Omnibus bill are examples of spent and redundant acts that will be repealed. The Home and Community Care Act 1985, which was made redundant in the context of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations 2008, will now be repealed. The Papua and New Guinea Loan (International Bank) Act 1970, which relates to a guarantee of a 1973 loan to PNG that matured in 1994 and which the Bank for Reconstruction and Development has confirmed has been repaid in full, will now be repealed.

There will also be a streamlining process through measures in this Omnibus bill such as modernising the publication of requirements for the Australian Communications and Media Authority under the Broadcasting Services Act 1992. ACMA will no longer be required to publish a notice in the Commonwealth Gazette when determining, varying or revoking a program standard but instead must publish a notice on ACMA's website and in one or more forms that are readily accessible to the public. These amendments will provide ACMA with increased flexibility to choose a method of publication that is most appropriate to reach its target audience and will better alert stakeholders to regulatory change. The Minister for Communications has done a fantastic job looking at every element of his portfolio and working with his parliamentary secretary, the member for Bradfield, to try to cut red tape right across the board. Both the minister and his parliamentary secretary deserve to be congratulated.

Under the Fuel Quality Standards Act 2000, fuel producers and suppliers report certain information to the Bureau of Resources and Energy Economics on a monthly basis for the compilation of the Australian petroleum statistics. They will no longer be required to report that information on an annual basis under the act as well. Again, that removes duplication.

Importantly, the Minister for Social Services, who again is undertaking reform of red tape, is amending the Aged Care Act 1997 so that aged-care providers, who are currently required to notify the Department of Social Service of changes to key personnel within 28 days, will instead only have to notify the department of changes that materially affect the provider's suitability to provide care. So, as you can see, in this Omnibus bill there are many, many important measures.

In addition to our initiatives on repeal day one and now on repeal day two, we are doing a lot through our competitiveness agenda. My colleagues sitting behind me have come to the table with important ideas and reforms, particularly around how we can recognise in Australia products, systems and services that have already been approved under trusted international standards overseas. The fact is that we do not need to put companies like Cochlear through a second hoop here if they have already gone through that hoop overseas.

Why in Australia do we have a situation where, as was pointed out to me by the member for Longman, a manufacturer of footballs and cricket balls who brings into Australia a leather cutting machine from Italy has to pay $3,000 to get it accredited here and also has to wait a significant amount of time? Why does the approvals process that Cochlear has to go through here in Australia take 14 months longer than the same process in Europe? When a branch office of an American medical device maker that employs 52 people here in Australia wants to bring in a heart valve device from America why does it take 31 months to get approval? It costs them $300,000 to pay the application fees, get the data and employ consultants whereas that some process in Canada took just a few months and cost a quarter of the amount. By the
time they had the approval for this medical device a second-generation device was already on sale in Europe. So Australian consumers missed out.

Why do importers of flame retardants that have been deemed to be a non-hazardous chemical overseas have to pay up to $100,000 to get accreditation here? Why does that happen? Why does a company importing commercial cooking equipment into Australia incur a $12,000 cost—$8,000 for testing and $4,000 for the application—before it can actually give that cooking equipment to the hospitality industry, the tourism industry or the aged-care industry? This is all about reducing significant costs, and I thank the members behind me for their absolute commitment in this respect.

What about COAG? Again, COAG is an important opportunity where we are trying to streamline deregulation by better cooperation with the states and territories. There are four specific areas where we are looking at deregulation, and the individual states and territories have been tasked to come back to COAG with ideas on how to progress reform: manufacturing, higher education, early childhood—where Sussan Ley, the member for Farrer, is doing so much good work, responding to the Productivity Commission report—and small business. The fact is that in Australia a cafe may face 75 different sets of regulations—25 at the Commonwealth level, 29 at the state level and 11 at the local level. A winery with cellar door sales could be facing up to 140 different types of regulation, just to meet its requirements.

The other key area for us is around the role of the regulators. The Commonwealth has more than 150 regulators. Some of those regulators are big, like the ATO, ASIC, APRA and ACMA, and some are much smaller, like the passports office. But what these regulators need to understand is that, from the government's perspective, we want them to take a risk based approach. We want them on one hand to understand what the risk to the community is, and the protections that are required, and on the other hand to understand what the real cost to the community and the stakeholders is if the level of compliance is so great that it is a disincentive to investment, innovation and entrepreneurship. And it is about getting that balance right, it is about ensuring good governance, about ensuring on one hand that these regulators who are setting rules are also enforcing those rules—separating those two functions. Often those regulators are able to operate on a cost recovery model, and we do not want those regulators to try to mitigate risk all the time and therefore impose additional costs on their stakeholders because they have a cost recovery model. To rein in the role of the regulators, to get them to adopt a risk based approach, is something that I know the member for Mitchell very much understands and has been a good advocate for in this place.

It is not just the coalition that has said that these reforms are important. These reforms have been supported publicly by groups like APPEA, ACCI, the BCA, the Australian Industry Group, Universities Australia and the Australian Retailers Association. Groups that employ millions of Australians have applauded this government's determination. I want to say that this has been a whole-of-government effort. The Prime Minister has led it and his ministers have driven this reform. And I want to congratulate each and every one of them for the role they have played.

My role has been assisted by a fantastic group of colleagues on a deregulation committee: the member for Bass, Andrew Nikolic; the member for Pearce, Christian Porter; the member for Deakin, Michael Sukkar; the member for Reid, Craig Laundy; the member for Hindmarsh,
Matt Williams; and the member for Ryan, Jane Prentice. They have provided absolutely wonderful support to me and to the government as we have been coming up with ideas, as we have been trying to implement them and drive them forward with our colleagues.

I want to finish with an anecdote told to me by my friend and colleague the member for Hughes just a few days ago. He said that in his electorate he was asked to go and present volunteer awards. He expected to go and present a volunteer of the year award to Lifesaving volunteers, or to those in the rural and regional fire service, or to members of his school council or local school councils. But the award he presented, for the volunteer team of the year, was a to a group of 'form fillers', people with the best of intentions who worked hard and were wonderful volunteers and members of his community and whose single job it was to help their fellow citizens navigate their way through the maze of government. What are our systems coming to when we have to take the time of volunteers and rely on their good offices to actually help other citizens fill in government forms? It is no surprise to me, when I think that the combination of our tax acts is more than 5,000 pages, or that the Corporations Act is small by comparison at more than 2½ thousand pages, or the fact that it has been documented that this chamber has doubled the amount of federal legislation and regulation approximately every 15 years since Federation. We are saying to those opposite: enough is enough. We on this side are succeeding where they failed. We on this side will not allow another 21,000 additional regulations to be introduced into the parliament, into society, without rigorous economic analysis.

As the Prime Minister said, regulation will no longer be the default action of government; it will only be a means of last resort after every other avenue has been exhausted. And we are alert to the costs to families, we are alert to the costs to individuals, we are alert to the costs to small businesses and we are alert to the costs of the not-for-profit sector.

I and my colleagues on this side of the House will ensure that the men and women of Australia are unshackled from the regulations that the Labor Party left them. No longer will we deny them an opportunity to employ more people, to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation and, at the end of the day, to boost productivity. This is an important agenda, and $2.1 billion of savings is an absolutely brilliant result for this government. I commend the Omnibus Repeal Day (Spring 2014) Bill 2014 to the House.

Debate adjourned.

**Amending Acts 1970 to 1979 Repeal Bill 2014**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Frydenberg.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (12:45):

I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill continues the government's efforts to streamline the statute books by removing 656 amending and repeal acts enacted between 1970 and 1979. This builds on the Amending Acts 1901 to 1969 Repeal Bill, which was part of the 2014 autumn repeal day package and repealed over 1,000 amending acts made between 1901 and 1969.

This bill repeals each act mentioned in its schedule. In all cases, the repeal of these acts will not substantially alter existing arrangements or make any changes to the substance of the law, and has a compliance cost saving of $100,000.

These acts are no longer required as the amendments and repeals have already happened.

If an application, saving or transitional provision is included in one of those acts, any ongoing operation of the provision will be preserved. The acts do not contain any other substantive provisions that are not already spent.

Repealing these acts is important because it will reduce the regulatory burden and make accessing the law simpler for both businesses and individuals. It will make the statute books simpler and quicker to use by reducing the time it takes to locate current laws.

At present, the acts proposed to be repealed in this bill form part of the current law and it is not obvious whether the acts have force in and of themselves.

Repealing these acts will remove any confusion about the status of these laws. It will also facilitate the publication of consolidated versions of acts by the Commonwealth and by private publishers of legislation.

People with a specific interest in the legislation can continue to access these acts as they will remain publically available on ComLaw as historical records.

The bill repeals, for example:

- over 40 acts that amended numerous, different sales tax acts. Nine principal acts from the 1930s, titled the Sales Tax Act (No. 1) 1930 through to Sales Tax Act (No. 9) 1930, were each amended in 1970, 1975 and 1978, and these amending acts will be repealed as the principal acts became inoperative in 2006 following the introduction of the goods and services tax on 1 July 2000;

- the Anglo-Australian Telescope Agreement Act 1971. This act amended the now repealed principal act of 1970 by updating the title of the Compensation Act which applied to Australian members of the Anglo-Australian Telescope Board. The board has since been dissolved and is now part of the Australian Astronomical Observatory in the Department of Industry; and

- the Australian Federal Police (Consequential Amendments) Act 1979, which amended certain acts in connection with the enactment of the Australian Federal Police Act 1979. It replaced provisions referring to the 'Commonwealth Police Force' with the newly formed 'Australian Federal Police' in the Fisheries Act 1952 and National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975, and references to 'Commonwealth Police Officer or member' with 'member of the Australian Federal Police' in the Crimes Act 1914 and Commonwealth Prisoners Act 1967. These consequential amendments happened over 30 years ago and the amending act will be repealed.

There are numerous other items contained in schedule 1 of the bill which amend a principal act multiple times over the decade and are no longer necessary.
Amending acts enacted after 1979 will be repealed on future repeal days.

I commend this bill and the entire 2014 spring repeal day package to the chamber.

Debate adjourned.

Statute Law Revision Bill (No. 2) 2014

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Frydenberg.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (12:49):

I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Statute Law Revision Bill (No. 2) 2014 is the third bill in the government's 2014 spring repeal day package.

The bill continues the work of the Statute Law Revision Bill (No. 1) 2014, which was part of the 2014 autumn repeal day, correcting minor errors in the statute book and repealing spent or redundant legislation. The bill:

- removes provisions that are obsolete or no longer have effect;
- corrects outdated terminology and removes gender-specific language; and
- improves the useability of the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 by consolidating and better signposting the act's definitions.

By improving the useability and the accuracy of legislation, the bill will save individuals, businesses and community organisations time and money, and has a compliance cost saving of $420,000.

Schedules 1 and 2 to the bill have two main purposes:

- correcting minor technical errors in principal acts, such as typographical and numbering errors; and
- correcting errors in amending acts, such as misdescribed amendments.

Correcting these legislative provisions helps make the law easier to understand and use.

Schedule 3 to the bill updates outdated language in a number of acts in two respects, by:

- replacing the word 'servant' with 'employee'; and
- removing gender-specific language.

These changes improve the relevance and inclusiveness of Commonwealth legislation.

Schedule 4 to the bill improves the way that defined terms are managed in the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986. These changes mean that users can refer to one main provision to find a definition that applies throughout the act, or the definition's location elsewhere in the act, rather than needing to peruse over 25 definitions sections. Schedule 4 also makes minor technical amendments to improve the usability of the act.

Schedules 5 and 6 of the bill repeals spent or obsolete provisions and acts. For example:
the Broadcasting Services Act 1992, which set annual captioning requirements for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 financial years for commercial television broadcasting licensees and national broadcasters. As those financial years have ended, the provisions that set the targets can now be removed from the statute book. I thank the Minister for Communications, who is in the House, for his hard work in seeking a number of measures across his portfolio.

the Immigration (Education) Charge Act 1992, which imposed an English education charge on non-citizens whose applications for stay visas were maintained between 1993 and 1997. As those non-citizens will have completed their tuition by now, the act can be repealed.

This work to correct minor errors in the statute book and repealing spent or redundant legislation will continue in further repeal days.

I commend this bill and the entire 2014 spring repeal day package to the chamber.

Debate adjourned.

DOCUMENTS
Spent and Redundant Instruments Repeal Regulation 2014 No. 2
Presentation
Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (12:53): For the information of honourable members, I present the Spent and Redundant Instruments Repeal Regulation 2014 No. 2.

BILLS
Broadcasting and Other Legislation Amendment (Deregulation) Bill 2014
First Reading
Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Turnbull.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading
Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (12:53): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

As the Prime Minister said in the House earlier today, and as Parliamentary Secretary Frydenberg just said with great energy and persuasion a moment ago, the key task of any government and especially this government is to help, not hinder, businesses and individuals to do their work, to innovate, to go about their lives and to ensure that we are enablers of every aspiration, every dream that the citizens and the businesses of Australia have.

As far as regulations are concerned, in enacting regulation and considering regulation to meet a policy objective, as the parliamentary secretary said, echoing the Prime Minister, governments should use regulation as a last resort and always look for a simpler, more straightforward answer. Is regulation needed? Because we are in the business of making laws, there is a tendency for governments and parliaments to assume that every problem needs a law, every problem needs a new regulation. And it does not. We need to be very practical and focused on ensuring that there is the lightest touch on business, consistent with achieving our policy objectives.
In terms of existing regulations, our statute books are littered with regulations that are an unnecessary burden on business. I will not repeat the parliamentary secretary's address, but I thought he set out very well the way in which the government, by going through this exercise of regular spring cleaning, is able to save billions of dollars of expense off the shoulders of business, and indeed off the shoulders of government, because of course unnecessary regulation has a cost both to business and to government.

The approach that we need to take with every regulation is to say firstly in respect of it: what is the policy objective this regulation is designed to achieve? Is that policy objective still relevant? Do we still agree with it? If the answer to that is no then the regulation should go. But if the answer is yes, yes the policy objective is still a valid one and a relevant one, then the question is: is there a smarter, cheaper and more efficient way of achieving that policy objective?

The innovations that we have seen in terms of digital platforms that the parliamentary secretary and the Prime Minister described earlier in this debate are so relevant. The fact is that invariably legislation and regulation are playing catchup with technology. Technology is moving so quickly we cannot just sit back and think that when we are making laws with respect to transactions and regulations between citizens and government, we can leave them there forever untouched. The technological context in which they operate is changing so quickly we have to make sure the laws can be brought up to date. That is why, ideally, one should have a minimal level of regulation because the less regulation you have, the less you have to update and spring clean, and we should endeavour wherever possible to make that regulation technology agnostic so that as technologies change they continue to be effective.

Turning to the specifics of the Broadcasting and Other Legislation Amendment (Deregulation) Bill, I note that the telecommunications and broadcasting sectors, which are within my responsibility and my department, are two of the most heavily regulated parts of the Australian economy. Their regulatory frameworks are still fundamentally based in a mid-1990s world of relatively stable technologies and business models. They are still in large measure pre-internet regulations. The world we live in today has seen the rise of the internet and mobile devices. Smart phones have become ubiquitous. And we have social media and fast broadband networks, not just the NBN Co but so many other wireless networks and so forth. Of course empowering all of this, is the rise of cloud computing. The combination of greater computing capacity, greater telecommunications capacity and innovation has utterly transformed the communications environment in which we live.

The pressures that these changes will make on our regulatory arrangements will only increase. We will always seek, as we go through our deregulatory agenda in this portfolio, to ensure that we strike the right balance between deregulation and ensuring that there is diversity in our media industry, whilst always ensuring that consumer protections are both effective and relevant.

As part of the first repeal day, we removed more than 1,000 pages of unnecessary regulation in my portfolio, which has saved the communication sector $35 million a year. Today my parliamentary secretary and enthusiastic deregulator, the member of for Bradfield and I are announcing a package of measures to eliminate yet more unnecessary red tape and remove more onerous and outdated reporting requirements across the sector. Of course, many of the reforms in the broadcasting and communications area have been included in the
omnibus package that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister spoke to a moment ago, but a number of measures are dealt with in specific bills dealing with broadcasting and later my parliamentary secretary will deal with similar deregulatory changes in the telecom sector.

This bill amends the Broadcasting Services Act 1992, the Radiocommunications Act 1992 and the Australian Communications and Media Authority Act 2005. It removes unnecessary legislation and reduces the regulatory burden on the broadcasting industry. The bill will implement a number of broadcasting related measures identified in the communications deregulation road map I released in May this year. It will also address issues raised through extensive consultation with industry and accessibility advocates. The bill will remove some of the onerous requirements placed on the free-to-air broadcasters and subscription television licensees, streamline and simplify broadcasting legislation and save industry time and money.

Schedule 4 to the Broadcasting Services Act provided the regulatory framework for the transition from analog to digital-only television broadcasting. The last terrestrial analog television services were switched off on 10 December 2013. After completion of digital switchover in each licence area, the restack program commenced. This restack program involves the progressive reorganisation of television services in terms of their location in the spectrum across Australia. This is to ensure that broadcasters do not use the digital dividend spectrum, which was the spectrum vacated as a consequence of the switch to digital, and a large part of it has been licensed for the purpose of wireless broadband, and also to ensure that television services are transmitted in a more spectrally efficient matter. The restack program is on schedule to be completed by 31 December 2014. Therefore, many of the licensing and planning provisions in broadcasting legislation that regulated the industry during the simulcast period are redundant or, for the purpose of restack, are about to be. This bill will remove or amend those provisions.

The bill will also amend the framework for the planning of broadcasting services band spectrum by the Australian Communications and Media Authority. While many of these planning provisions were necessary when the ACMA first established its planning instruments, many are now considered onerous, given the other legislative requirements the ACMA is required to adhere to.

Reflecting stakeholder feedback, the communications portfolio deregulation road map identified captioning reporting as an area for reform in 2014. The ACMA and my department have consulted with industry and key accessibility groups on a range of potential reforms that primarily seek to improve administrative arrangements for the free-to-air broadcasters and subscription television licensees while requiring that they continue to meet their captioning obligations. I want to make it quite clear that broadcasting licensees will still be required to meet the same specified level of captioning for television programs to assist viewers with hearing impairment. In recent years, captioning requirements on the free to air television stations have gradually increased to such an extent that it has become very clear to consumers when services do not meet them. This allows a move to a complaints based system instead of the existing onerous annual reporting arrangements. The change will reduce compliance costs for free-to-air broadcasters and it is a condition of commercial broadcasters licences that they do supply captioning services and a breach is a serious offence which could result in a direction from the ACMA or, in more extreme cases, the suspension of a licence.
The captioning requirements placed on subscription television licensees, pay television licensees, are considerably more complex than those applying to free-to-air television broadcasters. Subscription television licensees are required to provide differing levels of captioning over a 24-hour period on different channels, which means there is currently no easy way for consumers accurately to know whether a particular program is required to be captioned. A move to a full complaints based system for subscription television licensees therefore is not appropriate for these licensees at this time. To achieve a better outcome in the long term, the Department of Communications will conduct further consultation with the industry to identify ways in which the subscription television captioning regime could be improved to best suit the needs of all stakeholders. In the meantime, this bill introduces a number of measures designed to enhance flexibility and to reduce the regulatory burden on subscription television broadcasters.

The amendments will also reduce record keeping requirements and provide greater flexibility for the ACMA when assessing whether subscription and free-to-air broadcasters are providing high-quality captioning services. Among these changes, there is the amendment of section 130ZV to allow for the aggregation of captioning targets across an identified associated group of sports channels which would allow a channel provider to direct its live captioning budget to those events of greatest interest to subscribers. To ensure that subscription broadcasters are not able to meet the entire aggregated target on one channel we are also setting a minimum captioning level for each channel. This will assist in ensuring an appropriate distribution of caption content across the various types of sports content.

The bill will also make changes to the way in which increases in population affect the regulation of broadcasters. It will do this by providing grandfathering relief for commercial broadcasting licensees that, through no fault of their own, would otherwise be placed in breach of the statutory control rules and local content rules for commercial radio if they maintained their existing operations. This measure will ensure a more consistent application of grandfathering arrangements to deal with any inadvertent consequences arising from changes in population.

The bill will also correct an anomaly in the way certain licence areas are treated with respect to the media ownership and control rules. This will make sure that the method used to calculate media diversity voices—the requirement variously five or four independent media voices—more accurately reflects the practical reality of commercial radio services available to residents in certain licence areas.

The bill will ensure, for example, that, where a smaller commercial radio licence area is entirely within another larger commercial radio licence area, the commercial radio services licensed to operate in the larger licence area are also counted as media diversity voices in the smaller licence area.

Finally, the bill repeals section 123A which requires the ACMA to conduct periodic reviews to assess whether a number of provisions of the Broadcasting Services Act operate in accordance with prevailing community standards. The provisions require industry codes of practice to apply the classification system provided by the Classification (Publication, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995 to films that are broadcast and include additional measures to ensure that films are suitably modified, broadcast in appropriate time zones, and that consumers are aware of the reasons for a particular film's classification.
I note there has never been a review under section 123A since its enactment in 1992 as there are alternative mechanisms for the ACMA to determine whether these provisions operate in accordance with prevailing community standards. This may be based upon the volume of complaints received from viewers or the ACMA’s own inquiries. Codes of practice are also periodically reviewed and the ACMA is required to ensure that a draft code provides appropriate community protection.

The bill also repeals a similar provision that applies to datacasters which also suffers from the same redundancy as section 123A. This particular provision is even more unnecessary as there has never been an industry code of practice for datacasters. Both provisions are clearly redundant and should be repealed.

The government is committed to reforming broadcasting legislation, particularly in areas where onerous regulation is holding the industry back. This reform process, this deregulation process, does not end today; it will be a continuing part of the Abbott government’s agenda as the Prime Minister has said today. Every government, I think, in the history of civilisation has promised to cut red tape and to deregulate. We are determined not just to talk about it but to do it. This bill and many others that are being introduced today are evidence of that. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Deregulation) Bill 2014
First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Fletcher, for Mr Turnbull.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications) (13:11): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Deregulation) Bill 2014 (the bill) is to contribute to the government’s deregulatory agenda to reduce red tape for industry and individuals and streamline the delivery of public interest telecommunications services by reducing bureaucratic duplication and enabling clear lines of accountability.

The bill includes: measures dealing with the abolition and transfer of the Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency (TUSMA) to the Department of Communications; and deregulatory measures in relation to extending the Do Not Call Register registration period, reducing the scope of telephone pre-selection obligations, reducing reporting and record-keeping requirements on telecommunications companies, and other minor amendments.

Abolition and transfer of TUSMA (Public interest telecommunications services)

TUSMA was established as a statutory agency dedicated to the implementation and administration of telecommunications service agreements and grants within its own legislative framework.
In line with the government's current policy to consolidate smaller agencies to reduce administrative and governance costs, the government, as part of the May 2014 budget, announced its intention to abolish TUSMA, transfer TUSMA's responsibilities to the Department of Communications and transfer provisions relating to the assessment and collection of the Telecommunications Industry Levy to the Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999 (Consumer Protection Act).

The abolition and transfer of TUSMA's responsibilities to the Department of Communications will:

- enhance lines of accountability and help the government focus on its core responsibilities and priorities
- ease the cost burden on business by modestly reducing the amount of the telecommunications industry levy that industry pays to help fund the cost of delivering the universal service obligation and other public interest telecommunications services
- create greater certainty for industry by having a single agency responsible for policy and implementation of telecommunications universal service matters.


Deregulatory Measures

The bill also includes a number of deregulatory measures through amendments to key provisions in the:

- Do Not Call Register Act 2006 (DNCR Act)
- Telecommunications Act 1997 (Telecommunications Act)
- Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act. Do Not Call Register

The bill amends the Do Not Call Register Act by implementing an indefinite registration period for the Do Not Call Register and the 9.3 million numbers currently registered on it.

The Do Not Call Register is a popular consumer protection measure introduced by the Howard government with over two-thirds of Australian households with fixed-line telephones and over four million mobile telephone numbers now registered.

The extensive consultation undertaken by the government also supports this position with consumers overwhelmingly preferring an indefinite registration.

The amendment will allow consumers to register their telephone, mobile phone and fax numbers indefinitely, avoiding the need to re-register every eight years. This saves $3.4 million a year over a 10-year period in administration costs.

The current exemptions for political parties and charities to make telemarketing calls remain intact and are not impacted by the amendments.
Pre-selection

The bill also relaxes the obligations on telecommunications companies in part 17 of the Telecommunications Act to provide pre-selection.

When the telecommunications market in Australia was first opened up to competition in the early 1990s pre-selection was a very important mechanism to stimulate competition.

The incumbent was required to provide 'pre-selection' so that customers taking a service from the incumbent could choose another provider for long distance and international calls.

This introduced competition in long distance and international services—without new entrants being required to build out their own access networks.

Today, however, the market has evolved to a point where pre-selection is used by only a small number of customers—around 30,000—because pricing structures have changed, long distance and international calls are now much cheaper, and many customers take a bundled service offering unlimited calls in exchange for a flat payment per month.

In this context, the cost of requiring pre-selection capability to be built into platforms is not justifiable and can act as a deterrent to these platforms being used for voice services.

The bill will limit pre-selection to legacy networks—public switched telephone and integrated services digital networks only.

This will not reduce pre-selection for existing customers, but will reduce costs to the telecommunications industry.

The government anticipates that these changes will also increase flexibility in the delivery of telephony to Australian consumers.

A new ministerial power will be created to enable, by legislative instrument, particular telecommunications networks to be either excluded or included within the redefined scope of pre-selection.

These changes to pre-selection are a measure of a healthy and highly competitive telecommunications market in Australia.

The amendments in the bill will limit pre-selection to legacy networks, thus reducing costs to the telecommunications industry by an estimated $3.2 million a year.

Record-keeping requirements

The bill will also make changes to reporting and record-keeping requirements in part 13 of the Telecommunications Act which prohibit telecommunications companies from using and disclosing information, except in certain circumstances.

The current record-keeping and reporting obligations contained within part 13 are administratively burdensome and have little practical consumer benefit.

The bill repeals the obligation for telecommunication companies to report annually to the industry regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), on information disclosures made.

The bill will also reduce the obligation on telecommunications companies to make and keep records for the following purposes:

- when disclosing information to assist regulators, including the ACMA, the Australian Competition and
Consumer Commission, and the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman

- when disclosing information to assist when summoned to give evidence as a witness
- when disclosing information when the person concerned has consented.

This amendment will save industry $0.19 million a year in administration costs.

**Telephone sex services**

This bill will also repeal part 9A of the Consumer Protection Act, which regulates the supply of telephone sex services via a standard telephone service.

These provisions are now out-dated due to advances in technology, the evolution of the telecommunications market and changes in consumer behaviour.

The government is not reducing the level of protections and community safeguards for content. The strong content rules established by the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 will remain in place.

**E-marketing**

The government also proposes to remove the arrangements for the ACMA to register e-marketing codes under part 6 of the Telecommunications Act.

In June 2014, the ACMA deregistered the eMarketing Code because its relevance had significantly diminished since it was first registered some nine years ago.

In line with this rationale, the government considers the e-marketing provisions in part 6 are also no longer relevant and it is unlikely that any future codes dealing with e-marketing activities will be necessary.

The interests and rights of consumers are in no way compromised by removing these provisions. The regulatory regime established by the Spam Act 2003 remains in place and is more than adequate to deal with future e-marketing issues.

**Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman**

The bill also makes some minor amendments to the publishing requirements in part 6 of the Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act. It removes antiquated 'gazettal' publishing requirements to bring them into the 21st century.

These changes reflect consumer reliance on web-based information and modern-day publishing practices.

**Customer Service Guarantee**

Lastly, the bill also includes minor amendments to streamline and improve the operation of the Customer Service Guarantee (CSG) to help reduce the compliance burden on industry without impacting on the protections the Customer Service Guarantee provides for consumers.

The proposed amendments and deregulatory measures in the bill are the result of extensive consultation that began almost 12 months ago.

There has been extensive and close consultation between industry, consumer groups, government agencies and the Department of Communications as the bills have been developed.
This involvement has been crucial to the deregulatory measures that are before the House today. I thank all those who have been involved for their involvement and their commitment to this reform process.

This bill delivers real reform in the communications portfolio through better regulation to lower the cost burden on industry and consumers, with expected savings of $6.9 million a year.

Debate adjourned.

**Telecommunications (Industry Levy) Amendment Bill 2014**

**First Reading**

Bill presented by Mr Fletcher.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications) (13:23): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.


These amendments are necessary to ensure an industry levy will continue to be collected when the Telecommunication Universal Service Agency (TUSMA) is abolished and its functions transferred to the Department of Communications.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority will continue to collect this levy from telecommunications carriers who earn $25 million or more in an eligible revenue period.

This industry levy contributes to meeting the cost of delivery several public interest telecommunications services including:

- the Universal Service Obligation which ensures a reasonably accessible standard telephone service to all Australians on an equitable basis, regardless of where they live or carry on business;
- the National Relay Service which enables people with a hearing or speech impediment to make and receive telephone calls; and
- the triple zero national emergency call service.

Transferring TUSMA's functions and responsibilities to the department will help ease the cost burden on business by modestly reducing the amount of the Telecommunications Industry Levy.

By clearly delineating policy and regulatory responsibilities—and making administrative savings which will result in a modest levy reduction—these changes within the Communications portfolio are making a positive contribution to the government's program of cutting red tape and streamlining public services.
Debate adjourned.

**Export Finance and Insurance Corporation Amendment (Direct Lending and Other Measures) Bill 2014**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Billson.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

**Mr BILLSON** (Dunkley—Minister for Small Business) (13:26): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am delighted to be able to introduce this bill today, because it is an important part of our package of red tape reduction on this repeal day, contributing to a reduction in business compliance costs, especially for small- and medium-sized businesses.

The Export Finance and Insurance Corporation, or EFIC, plays an important role in maximising Australia's trade potential. It helps ensure that Australian small- and medium-sized businesses have access to the finance they need to grow their business overseas and in turn support our economy and jobs here in Australia.

In recognition of EFIC's valuable role and to restore funds removed by the previous government, the coalition government has provided EFIC with a capital injection of $200 million in the 2014-15 budget. At the same time, we have renewed EFIC's focus to the provision of support to SMEs, which combined with the capital injection will provide the flexibility to ensure EFIC's products and its operations can respond effectively and efficiently to the evolving needs of our economy.

The Abbott government recognises the importance of finance as the oxygen of enterprise to small business and is refocusing EFIC to increase its capacity to finance small- and medium-sized businesses seeking to capitalise on global trade opportunities. The vast majority of Australia's exporters are small- and medium-sized enterprises, but traditionally they find it more difficult to secure export finance through banks, particularly when exporting to emerging markets.

EFIC plays an important role in supplementing the provision of credit for exporters and we are repositioning it to best support exporters into the future. EFIC, under its new CEO, Andrew Hunter, is improving its own practices by simplifying its documentation and streamlining SME application processes. EFIC has also recruited additional staff to respond and support their SME work. Over the last 12 months EFIC's focus on small business has been demonstrated by a growth in the SME team to 30 people, including six new hires in June 2014 in Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth, the simplification of core SME product and loan documentation and more efficient end-to-end loan processes.

EFIC turned around a bond application for FFF Engineering in Western Australia this year, in just 21 days compared with similar transactions that in the past could take more than 200 days to process. These changes will help double EFIC's SME business over the next four years, and it is probable that the majority of these clients will be new to EFIC.

Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that only five per cent of Australian goods exports are capital goods. And yet, under the current EFIC Act, EFIC can lend directly in...
support of capital goods but not all goods. This means EFIC cannot lend for exports of many of the products in which Australia excels, like pharmaceuticals, or consumer goods like food and wine. For example, this means EFIC can support the export of cows, but not milk.

The government has, therefore, decided to enhance EFIC's capacity to support small- and medium-sized businesses by allowing it to lend for the other 95 per cent of exports, thus improving the export potential of Australian small- and medium-sized businesses. To implement this measure, this EFIC Amendment Bill is required to delete the word 'capital' from the definition of an eligible export transaction in the EFIC Act.

This amendment will also support the government's deregulation agenda and benefit exporters by reducing the time and paperwork required to access EFIC support. The new direct lending arrangements will remove the need for exporters of non-capital goods to obtain a guarantee from EFIC before they can secure funds from a bank, which doubles the due diligence processing time and requires two sets of documentation and legal fees.

This has a real impact on business.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The minister will have leave to continue his remarks when the debate is resumed at a later hour.

STATMENTS BY MEMBERS

National Week of Deaf People

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (13:30): This week is National Week of Deaf People. The theme, 'strengthening diversity', means respect for each other. On Saturday, Deaf Australia celebrated the Deaf Festival beside the Parramatta River with family and friends. Thanks to Dave McQuiggin and Al McEwin of the Deaf Society, Lauren Townsend of Deaf Australia and Kate Matairavula and Danni Wright for organising this event. Thanks also for sharing the celebration with me.

Honourable members: Well done!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Yes, well done for simultaneously delivering your speech in Auslan.

Total Recreation: Dancing with the Celebrities Ball

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (13:31): It was great to once again attend Total Recreation's Dancing with the Celebrities Ball. This year I was given the tough task of judging the event, with fellow judges, Dr Len Notaris and Andrew Barcroft. Now in its eighth year, this event showcases the talents of people with disability in our community. Total Recreation members are partnered with local celebrities, and they attend classes for a couple of months practising for the big night. This year's event raised over $20,000, which was just fantastic. Great effort, everyone.

This year's participants included Richard Knuth and Tylea Herweynen; Caitlyn Strathie and the amazing Tony Burns; Amanda Mouthaan and Daniel Gerlach; Karen Klose and Lorenzo Strano; Margaret McGregor and Stephen Purkis; and Nicole Milsop and Hot 100's Harry Dodshon. Congratulations to everyone, but especially to my good friend Ray Roach, who took out the grand champion crown with his celebrity partner, Ilaria Brophy from local radio station 104.9. Joshua Kelly and the gorgeous Tina Griffiths were named best couple. Geoffrey
Winsely and Athina Tsarbas were the rhumba champions. Matthew Lucas and Caroline Jape were crowned gypsy tap champions. Callum Bateman and the acting Lord Mayor, Jeanette Anictomatis, were foxtrot champions. And Megan Bateman and Mark Taylor won the ‘strictly ballroom’ award. It was an amazing night and I thank everyone for a great night.

**National Week of Deaf People**

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (13:32): I just want to say congratulations to the member for Parramatta on behalf of everyone in the parliament for bringing Auslan to the parliament in this National Week of Deaf People. It really was terrific to see you signing, Julie, and I know that people who are deaf will be so pleased that people here in this parliament are coming to better understand the power of Auslan. People are celebrating the National Week of Deaf People here in the parliament today and right around Australia. This year's theme is 'strengthening human diversity', drawing on the principle of respecting the human rights of the deaf community and recognising differences as possibilities rather than disabilities.

In my electorate, I have two mainstream schools—Charles La Trobe College and Rosanna Golf Links Primary School—which have excellent Auslan programs. Charles La Trobe enables students to study Auslan as a VCE subject. Rosanna Golf Links Primary School works to increase acceptance and awareness of deaf students. All students from prep to grade 6 learn Auslan. Prep students use basic Auslan at playtime, not just in their lessons. The Auslan program is also delivering a special deaf studies program to their deaf students, giving them practical skills such as hearing aid maintenance and teaching them about deaf culture. This is giving them the chance to view and experience the world in a different and exciting way. Congratulations to everyone involved. *(Time expired)*

**Green Army Program**

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (13:34): Last week I launched one of the first Green Army projects in South Australia, just down the road from my office, at the Living Kaurna Cultural Centre in Marion. The project involves grassy woodland protection and restoration in the Field and Sturt River catchments and will see real environmental benefits for my local area. The Green Army is first and foremost an environmental program. In this case, young people will be removing weeds and revegetating to create landscape linkages and to improve habitat for endangered woodland birds like the black-chinned honeyeater. The City of Marion has had a long experience with Green Corps, the previous program, and I would like to congratulate the leadership of the City of Marion, Felicity-ann Lewis, and Workskil, who are delivering this program.

One of the things that really struck me was the huge amount of enthusiasm the young participants had for the project and the Green Army concept. I was told that competition to be involved was quite fierce. For example, my electorate of Boothby is in Adelaide's southern suburbs, but I spoke to one young woman who lives in the northern suburbs of Adelaide who wanted to be part of the Green Army so much that she takes two trains every morning and evening to get to the project site, a round-trip commute of about four hours. This is a fantastic local initiative. I congratulate Marion council for getting behind the Green Army and I encourage other councils—City of Onkaparinga, who I have already spoken to; Mitcham council; and Holdfast Bay council—to also support and get behind the Green Army initiative.
Petition: Falun Gong

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (13:36): I rise to table a petition that has been presented to me by a group of Western Australians. This is effectively half of a petition, and I understand that one of my Liberal colleagues from Western Australia will be tabling the other half. This petition was provided to me by Dr Albert Lin and a group of Western Australians who practice Falun Gong.

The petition read as follows—

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

This petition of certain citizens and residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House that Falun Gong is a peaceful meditation practice based on the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance. Falun Gong practitioners in China have been subjected to the most brutal and relentless persecution by the Chinese Communist regime since July 1999.

According to investigative reports published by human rights lawyer David Matas and former Canadian Secretary of State for the Asia Pacific David Kilgour, a large number of imprisoned Falun Gong practitioners have been subjected to forced organ harvesting for China's transplant market and lost their lives ( www.organharvestinvestigation.net ).

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

from 4,130 citizens

Petition received.

Reid Electorate: Education

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (13:37): Last Saturday I was delighted to attend the St Mary's Catholic Primary School fete in Concord. This school is part of the Parish of St Mary's and was established within the first church at Concord around 1850. The school provides an outstanding Catholic education for boys and girls from kindergarten through to year six. It is a wonderful school that is a central part of the Concord community. They have around 530 boys and girls enrolled at the school, and it is blessed with dedicated teachers and supporting staff, all of whom do an incredible job. The school is strongly supported by the Parish of St Mary's through the outstanding long-term leadership of parish priest Fr Paul Crowley.

I have a personal connection to the parish, with my youngest daughter, Annalise, having made her first communion at St Mary's.

The school's vision for learning is 'open minds, open hearts and open hands', and I am pleased to say that this approach to education ensures the students are able to achieve their full potential.

The aim of the fete was to help raise money for a planned multipurpose sporting facility for netball and basketball. The fundraising target was around $60,000, and I understand they have made great strides in that respect.

I was pleased to be in the company of so many friends on the day and I was thrilled to draw the winner of the colouring-in competition and to introduce the wonderful Nic DiCecco, who is a very talented local singer, an old boy of the school and the son of a very proud mother who is a teacher at the school, Vanessa DiCecco.
Congratulations should go to all the volunteers involved in the event, with particular
mention to school Principal Anna Marsella, chair of the organising committee Yvonne Diab
and Father Paul Crowley. I am already looking forward to next year's fete.

Walk Together

Mr CLARE (Blaxland) (13:39): A few weeks ago I said Australia is like a fruit salad: we
all like apples, orange and watermelon, and they are great on their own, but they are even
better when they are together. Australia is exactly the same: we are better when we are all
together. If you agree then this weekend you have an opportunity to show it. This Saturday in
cities and towns right across Australia people will come together and walk together to
celebrate multiculturalism and diversity and say no to racism and bigotry. If you want to
know more about it, just Google 'walk together'.

Yesterday we lost a Labor legend in Gough Whitlam. He was the father of
multiculturalism. He was the architect of the Racial Discrimination Act. Gough is now gone,
but his ideas, his policies, his vision live on. They live on in us, and this weekend we have an
opportunity to celebrate that.

In Sydney the walk will start at Sydney Town Hall at one o'clock, and I will be there. If
you believe, like me, that we are the best country in the world and that we are the best country
in the world because we are made up of people from all around the world living in harmony
then come and walk with me. Let's show the country that, just like that fruit salad that I talk
about, we are better when we are all together.

Eden-Monaro Electorate: Hospitals

Dr HENDY (Eden-Monaro) (13:40): On Friday, 26 September I represented federal
Minister for Health Dutton at the topping-out ceremony for the South East Regional Hospital
in Bega. There I was joined by the New South Wales Treasurer and local state member
Andrew Constance and by the New South Wales health minister Jillian Skinner. Also present
were Dr Max Alexander, CEO of the Southern New South Wales Local Health District;
Jennifer Symons, the chair of the local health district; Heather Austin, General Manager of
Bega Valley Health Service; and David Ghannoumo, Managing Director of the builders
Brookfield Multiplex.

This $187 million project is the biggest single infrastructure project in Eden-Monaro. The
federal government is contributing $160.1 million. Despite the need to get the budget under
control, this hospital remains a top priority of the federal government, recognising the health
needs in our region. This is just part of the massive investment by both federal and New South
Wales governments in health infrastructure over the coming years. The topping out marks the
completion of the highest point of the construction since the awarding of the tender for main
works earlier this year. It has been great to see the construction of this bipartisan project
proceed from the first concrete pour in May to topping out in September. It is certainly on
track to being opened on time in early 2016.

Kingsford Smith Electorate: Clovelly Road Better Block

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:42): On Sunday the people of Clovelly
came together to reimagine their streets and their suburb. They transformed Clovelly Road
into the street that they want to live in and the environment they want to be a part of. The
result was more trees and plants, wider foot paths with public chairs and tables, slower traffic
and more bike lanes, street art, performances and kids' activities. They created the public space that we all want to live in. The result was an overwhelming success. Thousands came to participate and be part of the Clovelly Road Better Block project. I want to congratulate and thank the volunteers and supporters of Clovelly Road Better Block for their hard work and vision to transform Clovelly Road.

Their is a vision for our future and how we want our cities and our suburbs to develop: more interaction between people, safer streets for our kids, fewer cars and more bikes and walking. These are the cities and suburbs that people want to live in, and we as leaders and politicians must listen to them.

The Commonwealth can be involved in activities such as this. In the UK at the moment they have a policy of spending 10 pounds per person till 2020 on developing bike and walking paths. We can transform our cities. Clovelly Road Better Block proves that.

**Deakin Electorate: Education**

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (13:43): I rise today to acknowledge and thank all of those who took part in the 2014 Deakin student leadership roundtable series over the year. Over three sessions students in leadership positions at secondary schools in the Deakin electorate met in my office to discuss a wide range of issues impacting young people in our community. Issues discussed in those roundtables included improved local job opportunities for young people, fostering greater cooperation between local schools and ways to improve their student curriculum.

I want to mention all of the students who attended these sessions: Abbey Heron, Anne-Marie Ionescu, Ashley Raiteri, Ashley Rowland, Brett Cosgriff, Caitlyn Harwood, Campbell Mayne, Chris Piccirillo, Claire Murray, Darren Lee, Dima Kulshitsky, Dylan Fulton, Edwin Cornish, Elina Makela, Ellena Kouris, Felicity Bonsu, Gordon Hoxley, Holly Tregenza, Imone Mukhopadhyay, Jacqui MacDonald, Jemima Spike, Jenny MacDonald, Jon Luu, Jordan Galbraith, Joshua Bulman, Kate Ellul, Katelyn Ramsay, Kim Alford, Laura Placella, Maddi Veares, Meg Powson, Megan Williams, Nick Mutton, Nyrobi Flory, Olivia Low, Olympia Sarris, Rhys Bennett, Robert Macdonald, Rosie Rattle, Ryan Adams, Sarah Fearn-Wannar, Serena Carter, Thomas King, Tiffany Cooper, Tim Wollmann, Timothy Abbott, Tom Collins, Vanessa Laino and Zoe Higgins. Once again, I would like to congratulate all the students for their participation this year. (Time expired)

**Lalor Electorate: Cystic Fibrosis and Kalydeco Medication**

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:45): I rise to table this document to the parliament. This bundle of papers is actually over 13,000 signatures calling for the government to add the drug Kalydeco to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. This is a drug that can provide hope to those with cystic fibrosis. It is a new and innovative drug that has potential to provide relief to patients. It is a drug that also costs around $300,000 per patient—beyond the reach of most if not all those who require the treatment.

This need was first brought to my attention by some local families whose lives are critically affected by cystic fibrosis—passionate families wanting to do the best for their children. These very active families in my electorate of Lalor have collected these signatures in just over two months. I would like to thank the MacPherson, Haikalis and Rathbone families for bringing this to my attention and the hard work undertaken to collect this huge
number of signatures. I am sure all those in the House will join me in wishing Brody MacPherson, Ellie Haikalos and Tim and Mark Rathbone, along with those living with cystic fibrosis, all the best for their future treatment options. Given one baby in every 2,500 are born with cystic fibrosis, this is a vital decision that needs to be made as soon as possible.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Has this been to the Petitions Committee?
Ms Ryan: No, I am tabling it as a document.

Lindsay Electorate: Local Sporting Champions
Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (13:47): Today I rise to support the many young men and women from the Lindsay community that have represented the people of Lindsay at either the state, national or international level on the sporting field. Local Sporting Champions works to support young athletes, young coaches and young officials. Firstly I would like to congratulate Corey Dehn, a gymnast Glenmore Park, who competed in the 2014 Australian National Championships in Melbourne. Two athletes who competed in the World Junior Athletics Championships in Oregon, USA, were Costa Kosuparis, a hammer thrower, and athlete Jasmine Dighton from Cambridge Gardens. Joshua Kalwy along with his good friend Kevin Achamporn participating in the National Under 16 Championships in basketball in Victoria. In football, Luke Cotton from Glenmore Park participated in the New South Wales Under 14 State Titles at Orange. Mikayla Hinkley and Karleigh Melville in cricket competed in the Australian Junior Indoor Championships in South Australia. Tanya Borazio competed in football at the National Youth Championships at Coffs Harbour. Mikayla Weber, an incredible young skater from Emu Plains, competed in the Australian Artistic Roller Skating Championships in Queensland. I would like to congratulate all of these young athletes.

Bendigo Electorate: Student Welfare Officers
Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:48): Six hundred and twenty qualified and trusted student welfare officers face the sack under new government guidelines. The Abbott government has decided to cut funding for student welfare officers and only give schools the ability to employ religious chaplains. One of the people facing the sack is Prue Robertson, a qualified social worker who works as welfare officer for three small schools in my electorate. One of her schools, Campbells Creek Primary School, has collected already over 1,500 signatures calling for school councils to continue to have choice when it comes to the chaplaincy funding.

I know from talking to many of the parents at Campbells Creek how important Prue is to their school community. Principals and school communities are in the best position to determine the welfare needs of their students, and they should be given the opportunity to choose the most effective way to assist students at the local level. One of the parents said to me, and it was backed up by one of the teachers, that Prue encourages and ensures that children are in the classroom ready to learn so that the teachers are ready to teach them. Campbells Creek primary school has done an outstanding job collecting so many signatures so quickly. It demonstrates how important Prue is to the school and it demonstrates how out of touch this Liberal government is with regional Victoria.

Swan Electorate: Mental Health
Mr IRONS (Swan) (13:50): On Friday 10 October I had the pleasure of joining with over 800 business and community leaders on World Mental Health Day to raise awareness of
mental health and to help remove the stigma that is often attached to those with depression by attending the Youth Focus Night of Nights Annual Charity Ball.

As members know, despair of depression is not discriminatory. A person's ethnicity, religion, gender or age does not matter—this despair can be felt by anyone, and too often a person who suffers from its impact believes that their only way to find solace is through suicide. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Causes of death report there were 2,535 reports of death due to suicide in 2012, equating to almost seven deaths by suicide in Australia each day. It is because of these staggering numbers that it is vital we have organisations in our communities who have the necessary people and resources to support those who seek help.

In my electorate of Swan, Youth Focus is one such organisation whose life-saving work in youth suicide prevention I have been humbled to support in this place and in the community. I am pleased to inform the House that the charity ball was once again successful in raising much-needed funds for Youth Focus, who do not get any government support at all, to provide these support services, matching their fundraising efforts from last year of about $500,000. Congratulations to everyone at Youth Focus and their commitment to making a difference and supporting the lives of so many young Western Australians. The fundraising efforts I witnessed by all those in attendance was magnificent. I also acknowledge that the Hon. Helen Morton MLC attended. Congratulations to Youth Focus CEO Jenny Allen and staff for putting together such a wonderful event.

Indi Electorate: Yea

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (13:51): It is with pride that I rise today to speak of a fantastic project from the community of Yea in north-east Victoria. High school students and local organisations have produced a book called What Gets Us Through Hard Times. It is written by youth for youth in the Yea area about dealing with difficult times. It was a collaborative effort between Yea High School, Berry Street, Evolve, and Yea and District Memorial Hospital. What Gets Us Through was developed by five year 9 and 10 students from Yea High, with support from Andy Lacy, the high school counsellor and Yea and District Memorial Hospital counsellor.

The project ran as part of understanding the boys' reflections on hard times in a small rural community, including the aftermath of the fires. The boys were interviewed in a safe context in order to capture some of the many insights and the wisdom and learning they have realised in response to dealing with serious life problems. The book is a resource, rich in helpful local ideas and strategies, written in a way that is accessible to other young people, and of enormous potential benefit to young people and their families right around Australia.

Congratulations to Matt, Kane, Mick, Brydon and Aiden, and to Andy Lacy, who coordinated the project; and congratulations on the leadership provided by Yea and District Memorial Hospital, Yea High School and Berry Street. Great job—well done!

Page Electorate: St Joseph's Primary School Woodburn

Mr Hogan (Page) (13:53): There is a celebration this weekend in the electorate of Page. It is the centenary of the St Joseph's Primary School at Woodburn, celebrating, obviously, 100 years of wonderful education in that community. It draws families from Woodburn, Evans Head, Broadwater and surrounding rural areas like New Italy, Swan Bay, Kilgin and
Bungawalbin. This school was started by the Sisters of St Joseph, who—as you, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott, would know—pioneered schools in times of great hardship and poverty. The first quite humble building is now a wonderful school. The principal, Janette Wilkins, and the parish priest, Fr Richard Foley, are very actively involved in running this very successful school community.

On Saturday night there is going to be a formal dinner at the Woodburn Evans Head RSL, and on Sunday everyone is invited to attend mass at 9 am and the official centenary celebrations at 11 am, which I am very much looking forward to. To all the current staff and students and, indeed, to all past staff and students: I look forward to catching up with many of you at the mass and the official ceremony on Sunday.

I would also like to pay my respects to the Sisters of St Joseph. They are a group of nuns who taught me as well. They have left their mark in the community of Woodburn, as they have in many communities across our country.

Canberra Electorate: Asbestos

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:54): I rise again to address the House on an issue I have spoken about before: Mr Fluffy asbestos. This is an issue causing significant concern in my electorate. Many Canberrans, up to 1,000, are living in limbo as they await the government's response.

Mr Fluffy is a type of loose-fill asbestos commonly used in the ACT in the late sixties and seventies. From 1988 to 1993, the Commonwealth removed asbestos from more than 1,000 Canberra homes and, for a while, we thought we were rid of Mr Fluffy. However, recently it was found that a number of houses that had their asbestos removed still contained residual fibres.

I have been meeting with families who have been forced to leave their homes, leave behind their children's toys, leave behind their clothes, and start from scratch. Their homes cannot be sold or rented, and, nine months after learning their homes were potentially unsafe to live in, they are still waiting for answers. I am aware of 40 families who have been forced out of their homes and are living in emergency rental accommodation. The uncertainty they are facing is placing them under extreme stress, and the sooner we find an outcome the better. In fact, on the weekend I ran into friends who have a Mr Fluffy home, and they said that the stress and strain is enormous and is placing enormous strain on their family.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Minister for Employment Senator Abetz for meeting with victims of Mr Fluffy asbestos, and I am looking forward to the government making an announcement regarding Mr Fluffy asbestos in the very, very near future.

Centenary of Anzac

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (13:56): Last week I launched a book by Launceston author Julian Burgess titled *William Gow's Anzac Diary*. It was a timely tome, given that, on 20 October, we marked the centenary of Australian troops departing Albany for the war in Europe. Six months after the convoy left, our troops were first ashore at Anzac Cove, and these are significant milestones in Australia's history—defining events that helped shape Australia, our character and our place in the world.

There is not enough time to properly articulate what was achieved at Gallipoli in establishing our identity and culture, but it is sufficient to say that the answer to any question
about who we are as a nation begins with Gallipoli. Our ethos of a fair go, service to the
nation, mateship, a larrikin character, egalitarianism—all have their roots in this period of our
national development. By way of example, William Gow came home and established
Launceston Legacy, to support widows and orphans of World War I soldiers.

Tasmania provided about 13,000 service men and women during the Great War. More than
2,500 Tasmanians died as a direct result of their war service, and few communities escaped
the toll.

I congratulate Julian Burgess on a wonderful book, which is a very special component of
northern Tasmania’s commemoration of the centenary of Anzac.

Kong, Associate Professor Dr Kelvin

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (13:57): I rise to congratulate a wonderful Novocastrian,
Associate Professor Dr Kelvin Kong, an ear, nose and throat specialist who has been
 nominated as a 2015 Hero of the Year finalist in the New South Wales Australian of the Year
Awards. Dr Kong made history by becoming Australia’s first Indigenous surgeon and is now
breaking new ground with his mobile clinics and ear surgery mobile units in Aboriginal
communities to cure ear disease in children.

The most common ear disease encountered is otitis media, a condition that is very rare in
first world countries but is rampant in Indigenous populations in Australia. Effective
treatment of the condition, particularly in children, can have a life-changing, life-long effect,
and simple surgery at a young age can make an enormous difference to the life of the child—
keeping them in school, opening up life choices and making sure that bright and talented kids
do not get left behind.

In partnership with the Awabakal Medical Service in Newcastle, Dr Kong has launched a
suite of animations and educational material aimed at improving ear health. The Lil Mike
program uses culturally appropriate, evidence based information to improve understanding of
ear health, in a package that is fun and interactive. The star of the program is Lil Mike, a
young Aboriginal rapper, whose catch-cry is, ‘If you can’t hear, you’re missing out.’

I encourage all members to check out Lil Mike and his ear health message, and
congratulate Dr Kong for his nomination and the Awabakal Medical Service for their
continued dedication to closing the gap.

Hume Electorate: Agriculture

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (13:59): The recently released agricultural green paper outlines
how we will get a farm gate price that rewards farmers, so that they will invest, create jobs,
produce more, export more and create prosperity in the regions. It highlights what I have been
saying for years: that there are things we have got to fix if we are really going to capture the
agricultural opportunity we face—things like opening up export markets that were shut down
by those opposite. It highlights the desperate need for investment in infrastructure, training
and research while nurturing the fast-evolving family farm. The green paper has been built
from the ground up, and I thank producers who contributed to a task force meeting in
Goulburn in March this year.

The SPEAKER: The honourable member is interrupted and will resume his seat. In
accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:00): My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, how much worse off will seniors be after the government axes the seniors supplement?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:00): Seniors are much better off thanks to this government abolishing the carbon tax. We have abolished the carbon tax but we have kept the carbon tax compensation, which means that seniors and households right around Australia are better off, on average, by $550 a year. It is worth pointing out to the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr Shorten: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order: relevance. I asked the Prime Minister a very straightforward question.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr ABBOTT: This government has abolished the carbon tax and that means that seniors, in common with every other Australian—

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence from the member for Jagajaga!

Mr ABBOTT: will be better off on average to the tune of $550 a year per household. We are doing the right thing by the people of Australia. If seniors are anxious they should be anxious about members opposite, because if the members opposite ever got back into government the first thing they would do is bring back the carbon tax—a $550-a-year hit on households.

Ms Macklin: They are anxious about you!

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga.

Mr ABBOTT: If the seniors of Australia want good government, they know who to stick with.

National Security

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (14:02): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on action the government is taking to protect Australians from the threat of foreign fighters?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:02): I thank the member for Bowman for his question and his interest in these issues. As citizens of a peaceful democracy, Australians are naturally reluctant to reach out to overseas conflicts but sometimes—as we have sadly discovered—these conflicts reach out to us. There are at least 60 Australians we know of fighting with terrorist groups in the Middle East. There are at least hundred Australians we know of supporting those terrorist groups with recruitment or financing. At least 60 Australians have had their passports cancelled to prevent them from going overseas to fight with terrorist groups.

The ISIL death cult has declared war on the world, as its various spokesmen love to repeat. Last month a radicalised fanatic tried to murder two policemen here in Victoria. Overnight, it seems, a radicalised fanatic has killed a soldier in Canada—apparently trying to replicate the
terrorist execution on the streets of London a couple of years ago. I can inform the House that today I spoke with Prime Minister Stephen Harper to express our solidarity with Canada as we stand against this worldwide terrorist threat.

The government has committed a further $630 million to strengthen our security agencies, and we have introduced foreign fighters legislation to make it easier to keep returning terrorists in jail. I welcome the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence and Security and thank its chairman and its deputy chairman, the members for Wannon and Holt, for their work. The government will adopt all 37 of its recommendations, particularly the last one that the parliament pass the amended bill. I hope that will happen in this sitting fortnight.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his steady and consistent support on national security. We disagree on many things, and I dare say our disagreement will be evident again in 36 seconds time; but on national security it is best that the government and the opposition stand shoulder-to-shoulder together, as we have thus far. I have three key messages for the Australian people: firstly, the government will do everything we reasonably can to keep Australians safe; secondly, our efforts are directed against terrorism, not religion; and thirdly, people should live their lives normally because the terrorists' objective is to scare us out of being ourselves.

**Pensions**

Mr **SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. Why does the Prime Minister want to cut the indexation rate of pensions and threaten a comfortable and dignified retirement for millions of age pensioners in Australia?

Mr **ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:05): I may well ask why the Leader of the Opposition wants to saddle pensioners with $25,000 per head of government debt, because that is the budgetary disaster—the debt and deficit disaster—that this government inherited.

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The **SPEAKER**: The member for Jagajaga is warned.

Mr **ABBOTT**: Under Labor, debt and deficit was ratcheting up to $25,000 per Australian man, woman and child.

Ms **Plibersek** interjecting—

The **SPEAKER**: The member for Sydney will desist.

Mr **ABBOTT**: Every pensioner in this country would have $25,000 in government debt around his or her neck thanks to the policies of members opposite. We were elected to fix this problem.

Ms **Plibersek**: You promised no cuts!

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

Mr **ABBOTT**: Pensions will continue to increase every six months and every year. They will, however, go up by CPI—the same indexation factor that members opposite think is fair and reasonable for the family tax benefit. Pensions will continue to increase under this government but, unlike under the policies of those opposite, they will increase in a sustainable way. The seniors of Australia understand, because they have had long lives dealing with
budgets, that—like businesses, hospitals, households and governments—governments too have to live within their means. The members opposite did not understand this.

*Ms O'Neil interjecting—*

The **SPEAKER**: The member for Hotham.

Mr **ABBOTT**: This government does, and we will deliver.

Mr **Pyne**: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would alert you to the wall of noise that is coming from the opposition today. The Prime Minister tried to answer that question and he could hardly be heard over the din coming from the opposition. I would simply alert you to it so they can be properly dealt with if they continue in this vein.

**Iraq and Syria**

Mr **NIKOLIC** (Bass) (14:08): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister update the House on the outcomes of her visit to Iraq, and how will this contribute to international efforts to combat ISIL and other terrorist organisations?

Ms **JULIE BISHOP** (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:08): I thank the member for Bass for his question, and I note that he is a former serving officer of the Australian Defence Force and has a great interest in this matter. Over the weekend I visited Iraq and spent time in Baghdad specifically. I met with the President of Iraq, the Speaker of the Parliament, Prime Minister Abadi and Foreign Minister Jaafari. I was able to reach agreement on the legal framework that will now enable our special forces to be deployed to Iraq to train, advise and assist the Iraqi security forces. Our Defence department and Defence Force will now be able to put in place the necessary administrative arrangements to enable that deployment to take place. I can report to the House that the senior leadership representatives I met with in Iraq expressed extreme gratitude for Australia's agreement to be part of an international coalition of nations determined to assist the Iraqi government and the Iraqi people in combating ISIL—or Daesh, as it is called in Iraq. They were very grateful for our preparedness to provide assistance, particularly airstrikes, because those airstrikes are making a difference and have essentially taken away ISIL's capacity to mass troops, equipment, tanks and the like and have degraded their capability.

I also took the opportunity to meet with representatives of a number of minority communities—Yazidis, Christians, Mandaeans and Shabaks. They told me of the terrible plight facing their people and the horrific atrocities that have been committed by ISIL and other terrorist organisations operating in Iraq. Indeed, the situation in Baghdad itself is still tense. On Saturday evening, while I was there, a number of bombs went off which killed about 20 or 30 civilians in Baghdad city itself. Indeed on Sunday morning, while I was addressing our embassy staff and our security staff, at one point a bomb went off somewhere in Baghdad. It was certainly clear to all of us that Baghdad is a city that is under some stress as a result of these activities.

I announced today that the Australian government will provide further humanitarian assistance in Iraq. There will be a further $10 million, bringing to a total of $17 million Australia's funding to support those who have been displaced and who need shelter, food and water. And there will be a further $5 million for Syria, bringing to $136 million our total response in Syria. We will work with other countries to defeat ISIL, to take back territory and to enable the Iraqi government to protect its citizens.
Mr CLARE (Blaxland) (14:11): My question is to the Prime Minister. According to NATSEM modelling, families in the Prime Minister's electorate are $144 worse off every year because of his unfair budget. But families in my electorate of Blaxland, which is the hardest hit by this unfair budget, will be almost seven times, or $990, worse off every year. Does the Prime Minister think families in my electorate are 'leaners'?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:12): I thank the member for Blaxland for his question. I respectfully put it to him that there is nothing fair about saddling Australians with debt and deficit for generations to come. And that, unfortunately, was the result of the policies—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left! The Prime Minister will resume his seat. The member for Grayndler, the member for Rankin and the member for Chifley will remain silent. The question has been asked and you are awaiting the answer. There will be silence on my left. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: The fairest thing we can do for all Australians, wherever they live—

Opposition members interjecting—

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

The member for Charlton then left the chamber.

Mr ABBOTT: is to get Labor's debt and deficit disaster back under control. That is what we were elected to do and that is what we are doing. Every day during the election campaign, over and over again, I said this government would stop the boats, repeal the carbon tax, build the road to the 21st century and bring the budget back under control.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left! The member for Moreton will leave under 94(a).

The member for Moreton then left the chamber.

Mr ABBOTT: That is what I said day after day, hour after hour, before the election and that is what this government is delivering. Members opposite know how important—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr ABBOTT: If they are not interested, I have concluded the answer.

National Security

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (14:13): My question is to the Prime Minister. Isn't it the case that, by getting Australia more involved in the war in the Middle East, your government is increasing the risk of an Australian being taken hostage or a terrorist attack occurring on home soil?

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my right! The member is entitled to ask his question and the Prime Minister is entitled to answer it in silence. The Prime Minister has the call.
Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:14): I respectfully say to the member who asked the question that passivity in the face of the ISIL death cult would be the thing that is most likely to increase the risk of terrorist attacks here in Australia. I absolutely accept that the member who asked the question, like every other member in this House, wants to ensure that our country is safe. We all want to ensure that our country is safe. The truth, though, is that, today, national security and international security are indivisible. We cannot preserve national security without doing what we reasonably and prudently and proportionally can to protect and preserve international security. That is why we are involved, along with some 60 countries, in the coalition against the ISIL death cult in the Middle East.

Finally, may I say to the member for Melbourne, we have long been a target. We were a target long before the Howard government got involved in Iraq in 2003, as the Bali bombing demonstrated. The United States was a target long before the 2003 Iraq war, as the September 11 outrages demonstrated. The regrettable truth—which I am sure, in his heart, the member for Melbourne well knows—is that those who would do us harm hate us, they hate our way of life, they hate everyone—they hate everyone's way of life that does not conform to their own narrow fanaticism. They have declared war on the world. They particularly dislike our freedom, our tolerance, the welcome we give to outsiders and the protection we give to minorities. That is what they dislike about us. That is, in fact, the glory of our culture, our country and our civilisation, and long may it be so.

Border Protection

Mr IRONS (Swan) (14:16): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Will the minister update the House on recent activities of our federal agencies to protect Australians from threats on our borders?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:16): I thank the member for Swan for his question. He will be pleased to know, as I am sure all members on this side of the House will be pleased to know, that one of the things we are obviously doing is continuing to stop the boats. We are doing that with all of the effectiveness that we have done over the course of the time we have been in government. It has now been more than 80 days since that single, solitary venture turned up this year on our watch. We know that, on this side of the House, we will continue to have to do that task, not with the support of those opposite but we will continue to do it on our side of the House and in the parliament only with the support of crossbenchers in the Senate.

Today, we finally got the answer to the question from those opposite on whether they support turn-backs and whether they support TPVs after the election. Having been told by the Australian people that they wanted turn-backs and that they wanted TPVs, they have come into this place today and have said, 'We're going to oppose them. We're going to vote against turn-backs and we're going to vote against temporary protection visas.' When they consulted people about this matter, I bet they did not talk to the constituents of Lindsay; I bet they did not talk to the constituents of Swan or Petrie or Barton or Dobell up in the central coast, or Robertson or Solomon, or any of those places, because if they did they would have found out that the Australian people support the policies of this government to stop the boats.

The Leader of the Opposition does not have the ticker for turn-backs—never has and never will. Only this side of the House can be relied upon to do what is necessary on our borders. And they know that, also, because it is not just on border protection and stopping the boats. It
is this government that has had the ticker to fund our border protection agencies, reversing more than $700 million in cuts to our border agencies in the last budget. And you know what that has produced—including an additional $88 million to increase our screening? In the first quarter of this financial year, there has been a 30 per cent increase in the screening of air cargo consignments. We have screened 1,700 more sea containers than was done by the previous government on their watch. There have been half a million additional international post items checked by this government's policies that those opposite refused to fund when they were in government.

In addition to that, we are getting the results through our Customs and Border Protection Service, working with our federal agencies, and I commend them on it. Ninety kilograms of methamphetamine on 9 October was seized in Western Australia. Just recently on the Torres Strait, last Sunday—as the member for Leichhardt will know—9.8 litres of P2P precursors, that would have produced drugs on our streets, was seized. Commendation goes to those who were involved in doing those works, but they are backed by a government who believes in border protection, is prepared to fund it and has the ticker to do what is necessary.

Quarantine

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (14:20): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Can the minister explain why it is so important that biosecurity remains part of his portfolio responsibilities within the Department of Agriculture?

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (14:20): As the member for Hunter knows, it is vitally important that we keep our edge in the new markets of the world and the markets we are developing, because we have a clean, green image. We know that, if foot and mouth were to come in, it would cost our nation in excess of $50 billion over the next 10 years. We know that, if rabies were to come in, it would change the lifestyles of not only our Indigenous communities in the north but also communities all the way down into urban environments as well. We know that screwfly is extremely important in the whole of the animal industry. We know that, if papaya fruit flies come in, each year we have to push this disease back out of the Torres Strait.

We also know that we have to work as seamlessly as we possibly can between agencies. I can tell you right now: we are already doing that. Myself and Minister Mr Dutton, on health, in our actions make sure that we keep Ebola out of this nation and work seamlessly as we speak. I would like to commend the Minister for Health for the great work that he does in keeping this nation free of diseases such as Ebola. I know that the work that Mr Morrison does has been incredibly effective in ridding our nation of the scourge of people just making their own way into this nation, and there are all those who drowned on the water by reason of the lack of attention to this portfolio by those opposite. But I know that our nation will have, as one of the premier items of our agricultural soft commodities, strong biosecurity.

Illicit Drugs

Mr WHITELEY (Braddon) (14:22): My question is an important question to the Minister for Justice. Will the minister inform the House of the latest steps the government has taken to combat organised crime and the scourge of drugs like ice?

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (14:22): I thank the member for Braddon for that question. I know that he is working very closely with members in his community to
tackle the scourge of ice. Sadly, he is not the only member whose communities are affected by what is rightly described as a pandemic across the country. Crystal methamphetamine, often referred to as ice, is a drug that is highly addictive and poses extremely serious health risks for those who use it. In its most recent illicit drug report, the Australian Crime Commission found that the number of seizures of amphetamine type substances in Australia was the highest on record. This drug has devastating effects in our community. It is linked to family violence, increases in crime and it keeps our emergency services busy doing things when there is plenty of pressure on them to do the sorts of things that they should be doing as well. Unfortunately, this pandemic is real. Demand is very, very high. It is a very easy drug to manufacture and it can be done with rudimentary tools, often in dangerous, clandestine laboratories that could be just within suburban areas.

We know that outlaw motorcycle gangs are involved in the manufacture and sale of ice across the country and the government remains deeply concerned about this trend. As the Prime Minister said earlier this year, the war on drugs is ongoing, but it is one which we will always fight and it is one in which we will never surrender. At the Commonwealth level, we are taking strong action against organised motorcycle gangs who peddle these drugs in our communities.

Since coming to government, we have fast-tracked the establishment of the National Anti-Gang Squad and we have established strike teams in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia, and liaison officers in all other jurisdictions, including in the member for Braddon's home state of Tasmania. This model involves state and federal law enforcement co-locating and harnessing all of the resources at the disposal of both levels of government. This unprecedented cooperation between state and federal law enforcement is working.

On Monday, the Australian Federal Police in conjunction with Queensland Police and Customs and Border Protection dismantled an organised crime syndicate importing 10 litres of precursors into Australia. These precursors would have produced ice with an estimated street value of $2½ million. As the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection has also referred to, cooperative work between our law enforcement agencies resulted in the seizure of 90 kilograms of methamphetamine in Perth, which is the largest seizure ever in Western Australia.

Last financial year, law enforcement seized more than four tonnes of amphetamine type drugs and so far this financial year we have seized more than 1.7 tonnes. But the threat that we face from the criminal organisations that would peddle these drugs in our communities remains very serious, but we will continue to work with our state and territory partners to do everything we can to disrupt the supply of this drug and to arrest and imprison those who peddle it.

**Budget**

*Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (14:25):* My question is to the Prime Minister. According to NATSEM, families in the Prime Minister's own electorate will be $144 worse off every year because of his unfair budget. But families in my electorate of Calwell will be over five times, or $783, worse off every year. Why are families in my electorate bearing the heaviest burden for the Prime Minister's broken promises?
Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:26): There are in fact 41,242 families in Calwell and each and every one of them will be better off because of the abolition of the carbon tax, and each and every one of them will be hurt by Labor's plan to whack the carbon tax back on. As sure as night follows day, if Labor get re-elected, they will put the carbon tax back on because they love taxes. They love taxes almost as much as they love unsustainable government spending, which is why all of those households and all of the people of Calwell would have been saddled with $25,000 of debt around their neck had the policies of the members opposite been persisted with. I understand that there are measures in the budget that not everyone likes. There is no easy way to tackle the debt and deficit disaster that Labor have saddled this country with, but tackle it we will. It is what we were elected to do.

Carbon Pricing

Mr O’DOWD (Flynn) (14:27): My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Will the minister update the House on the benefits that are flowing to households and businesses because of the repeal of the carbon tax? Are there any threats to these benefits?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (14:28): I am delighted to receive this question from the member for Flynn because I can inform the member for Flynn and the members of this House that at 11 am today the Australian Bureau of Statistics announced the largest quarterly fall in electricity prices in Australian history—the largest quarterly fall in the 34 years of records for which statistics have been kept. So it is likely that it is not just a 34-year record; it is likely that it is a record which stretches back to the Second World War, and maybe stretches further back.

But we were told that electricity prices would not come down, that it would not work. Well, the Bureau of Statistics just this morning made it clear that electricity prices, as part of the CPI, have fallen by the largest amount in Australian history. You ask about a figure. In Queensland, where the member for Flynn voted to repeal the carbon tax, Simply Energy reduced electricity prices by nine per cent. A little further down the road where the member for Rankin voted against repealing the carbon taxes, Ergon Energy delivered a 9.4 per cent decrease in electricity prices. The member for Rankin voted to keep that price high; the member for Flynn voted for lower electricity prices. In terms of small businesses, ERM Power delivered for constituents of the member for Flynn and for everyone else in Queensland a 9.1 per cent decrease in electricity prices. Energy Australia delivered a 9.1 per cent decrease in electricity prices, but the member for Flynn asked whether somebody wanted to bring back the carbon tax. I am sorry, but there is somebody.

The Leader of the Opposition wants to bring back not just carbon pricing and carbon taxes but wants to increase electricity prices, but he will not be honest about it. He had an interview on Sky News with David Speers on Monday, 13 October. He was not asked once or twice or three times; he was asked four times whether or not he wanted to increase electricity prices—specifically, 'What do you necessarily mean higher electricity prices, the whole point I suppose of having a price on carbon?' He would not answer once, he would not answer twice, he would not answer three times, he would not answer four times, but here is the difference. The member for Flynn voted for lower electricity prices; the member for Rankin—(Time expired)
Medicare

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:31): My question is to the Prime Minister. According to the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association, the Prime Minister's decision to abolish bulk-billing incentives will mean that women who were previously bulk billed will now pay up-front costs of up to $712 to diagnose breast cancer. Why is the Prime Minister determined to wreck Medicare and increase costs for women to have breast cancer diagnosed?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:32): The government's proposal is for a very modest $7 co-payment on visits to GPs. A $7 co-payment is what we are putting forward. We think that a modest co-payment—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The question is not about the GP tax; it is about diagnostic imaging. The Prime Minister is not at all being directly relevant to diagnostic imaging.

The SPEAKER: The question is about bulk-billing. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: The only change the government is proposing is a $7 co-payment. How can it be unfair to have a $7 co-payment—

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: on GP visits when members opposite think that pensioners should face a $6 co-payment when they go to the pharmacist for their PBS drugs? What we are proposing is fair, it was reasonable. It was first introduced by Prime Minister Bob Hawke.

Ms Claydon interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Newcastle is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: As a result of policies, it was supported by the member for Jagajaga and, as we know, by the member for Fraser. It is good policy and it will help to keep our great Medicare system sustainable.

Small Business

Mr PASIN (Barker) (14:34): My question is to the Minister for Small Business. Will the minister inform the House how the government's approach to cutting red tape and unnecessary regulation will benefit the 15,900 small businesses in my electorate of Barker and elsewhere?

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley—Minister for Small Business) (14:34): I thank the member for Barker for his question and congratulate him on the outstanding job he is doing representing small businesses, family and farming enterprises in his electorate. When we were together in Mount Gambier we heard from those small businesses and family and farming enterprises. They told us about the ever-growing burden of red tape and compliance costs which they have to carry, how these costs were burdening them and taking their eye off running their businesses and growing opportunities and economic potential in their region. They very much echoed what the Prime Minister said today when he said it is government's job to serve people; it is not the people's job to serve government. We were able to share with them our ranking, a ranking we inherited from the previous Labor government. It saw us 124th in the world out of 148 countries in terms of the burden of government regulation. The World
Economic Forum Global Competitive Index tells us the story of compliance and red tape burden laid on by the previous Labor government, layer upon layer. That is why we made the commitment to repeal $1 billion worth of red tape, to get out of the road, to try to support small businesses and family enterprises, creating opportunities and livelihoods that are so important to communities like those in Barker.

With today's announcements by the Prime Minister and his very talented parliamentary secretary for deregulation, we have announced $2.1 billion of red tape and green tape savings—not $1 billion as we promised but more than double that amount. That is taking out of the economy the burdens of red tape and compliance inflicted by the Labor Party. We have enabled small businesses which have had very little requirement in terms of PAYG instalments to just deal with their reporting obligations as related to their business activity statements. For those who had very little in the way of activity that they did not need to put in a BAS as long as they reported in PAYG. That is 372,000 small businesses sharing in the $67 million of red tape and compliance costs; the Small Business Superannuation Clearing House, moving out of Human Services and Medicare into the ATO, a 24 per cent increase in participation; changes to the Corporations Act; the announcements today to make sure our Export Finance and Insurance Corporation can get behind those small and medium enterprises that see market opportunities to grow our economy and to grow jobs.

We have more to do: our franchising reforms are deregulatory whilst they are more effective and our employee share ownership initiative, getting that right and fixing Labor's problems but reducing the compliance burden. We have $48 million of savings on double handling of paid parental leave. We want to get on with that job. We want Labor to get out of the road. We know that Liberal and National members in this place are the only friends small businesses have. We want to get behind their enterprises and help them. (Time expired)

Ms KING (Ballarat) (14:37): My question is to the Prime Minister. According to the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association, the Prime Minister's decision to abolish bulk-billing incentives will mean general patients who are previously bulk-billed will now pay upfront costs of up to $2,207 for a liver metastasis diagnosis. Why is the Prime Minister determined to destroy Medicare and slug Australians more to have their liver metastasis diagnosed?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:38): I do not accept the proposition that has been put by the member for Ballarat.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will just pause for a moment. There is far too much noise, and the member for Ballarat has asked a serious question. She presumably wishes to hear the answer without interjection. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr Dreyfus: It would be good to have a serious answer.

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

The member for Isaacs then left the chamber.

Mr ABBOTT: As the member for Ballarat should know, the bulk-billing incentive is to be replaced by a low-gap incentive to try to ensure that we get the same incidence of a $7 co-
payment as we currently have of bulk-billing. I simply say to members opposite: the information they are peddling is false and they should desist from this scare campaign.

*Mr Champion interjecting—*

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

The member for Wakefield then left the chamber.

**Mr ABBOTT:** All we are proposing is the same modest co-payment in Medicare, as the member, who is now shaking her head and looking very sanctimonious, is quite happy to have for the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

**Ms King:** I seek leave to table the attachment from the Diagnostic Imaging Association which shows that figure of $2,207 and also the measures from the budget which clearly show you are scrapping the bulk-billing incentive for diagnostic imaging. I seek leave to table both of those.

**The SPEAKER:** The member knows that under the rulings that documents that are public documents, which includes the budget papers, are not permitted.

**Ms King:** And the diagnostic imaging?

**The SPEAKER:** Is leave granted?

Leave is not granted.

**Ms King:** I am happy to provide you with the table.

**Higher Education: Regulations**

**Ms SCOTT** (Lindsay) (14:40): My question is to the Minister for Education. I would like to remind the minister that the University of Western Sydney’s chancellery is in my seat of Lindsay. Will the minister please outline to the House how the government’s approach to cutting red tape and the unnecessary regulations will be of benefit to the higher education sector?

**Mr HUNT** (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (14:40): I am very pleased to get a question from the member for Lindsay about cutting red tape and unnecessary regulation in higher education, because I know that she has a terrific relationship with the University of Western Sydney. In fact they will be enormous beneficiaries of the government’s reforms. Today the omnibus repeal bill and other appeal measures were introduced into the parliament by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, the member for Kooyong, and other ministers. In higher education, they will make a real difference to regulation, red tape and cost.

So the government is not only delivering on its promises to abolish the carbon tax and so reduce the burden on households and small businesses; it has abolished the mining tax, which was a handbrake on the growth of the economy. It has also more than doubled the promise we made before the election that we would reduce the cost of red tape and regulation to business by a billion dollars because after these measures are introduced, the reduction in costs to business will be $2 billion. The Prime Minister is not only the infrastructure Prime Minister but he has also reduced enormously the cost of red tape and regulation on business.

In higher education, the measures that have been introduced today will, for example, reduce the four annual reports that universities have been required to deliver on disability,
indigeneity, disadvantage and the Commonwealth scholarship scheme—to simply one. So rather than the universities having to report to four different masters, they will simply have one equity report, saving the money.

It will also free the universities from collecting the Australian Graduate Survey and, instead, will contract Graduate Careers Australia to do that job, saving the universities time and money. It has ended the Sustainable Research Excellence and the Staff Hours Survey—it is quite a mouthful—which the opposition thought in government was a good measure. It took 9.1 years of staff time for universities to collect that information simply to tick another box in the previous government's massive red tape and regulatory burden on universities. We are abolishing that, because we can get the information from other sources—something Labor never thought of when they were in government; they simply asked the universities to do more of their work for them.

We are also going to be reducing through our reforms to TEQSA the regulatory burden on institutions across Australia doing a real risk assessment rather than the current one-size-fits-all. In summary, these measures will save over $15 million for universities—money that can instead be spent on students and better quality universities.

**Bulk-Billing**

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:43): My question is to the Prime Minister: according to the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association, the Prime Minister's decision to abolish bulk-billing incentives will mean people who were previously bulk-billed will now pay upfront costs of up to $1,326 for a thyroid cancer diagnosis. Why is the Prime Minister determined to destroy Medicare and slug Australians more to have their thyroid cancer diagnosed?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:44): Why is the Deputy Leader of the Opposition accusing Bob Hawke of wanting to destroy Medicare? Because it was Bob Hawke who first proposed a Medicare co-payment—it is true.

Ms Plibersek: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on the issue of relevance. This is not about the GP tax co-payment; it is about the abolition of the bulk-billing incentive.

The SPEAKER: This is not an opportunity—

Ms Plibersek: He was a health minister. He should—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume her seat. A point of order is not an invitation to stand up and debate one's own question—and it is time the Deputy Leader of the Opposition knew it. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: We are replacing the bulk-billing incentive.

Mr Husic interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley then left the chamber.

Mr ABBOTT: We are replacing the bulk-billing incentive with a low-gap incentive. That is what we are doing.

Ms King: Not for general patients.

The SPEAKER: The member for Ballarat will desist or leave.
Mr ABBOTT: The claims by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition are simply false. They are simply false.

Telecommunications: Regulations

Mr PORTER (Pearce) (14:45): My question is to the Minister for Communications. Will the minister outline to the House how the government's approach to cutting red tape and unnecessary regulation will benefit the telecommunications and media sectors?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (14:46): I thank the honourable member for his question. The telecommunications and media sectors are, of course, among the most innovative parts of our economy—innovation at an accelerating pace—but they are also the most regulated. Over the years governments have imposed red tape and regulations on the telco and media sectors and the broadcasting sector and then, as technologies have changed, have tended to add more regulation rather than pruning back that which was already there. The previous minister for communications, and I am obviously not referring to the member for Grayndler, who was minister for communications during what he often describes as the 'short golden age' of just a few weeks—

Government members interjecting—

Mr TURNBULL: Before that all too brief golden era, we of course had Senator Conroy as the minister for communications. Senator Conroy not only imposed substantial additional red tape on the telecommunications sector but also said that he was so powerful that the telecommunications executives would be obliged, if he were to direct them, to wear red underpants on their head as a condition of getting an audience.

A government member interjecting—

Mr TURNBULL: It is a horrible prospect, isn't it? Imagine telecommunications executives with red tapes around their ankles and red underpants on their heads—sort of a Conroybian meets Shades of grey, really. It is a horrible dystopian prospect.

We are reducing red tape in a very practical way. I can say that at the end of the first repeal day we removed more 1,000 pages of unnecessary regulation in my portfolio, which is expected to save the communications sector at least $50 million a year. The overall red tape savings for the portfolio for our second round of repeals is approximately $18 million. The aggregate page reduction for this year to date is 3,480 pages.

I will give some examples of the changes. Firstly, we are amending the Do Not Call Register to ensure that, when you put your number on the Do Not Call Register—which of course millions of Australians have done—it will be on the Do Not Call Register forever, indefinitely. At the moment it is only there for eight years. That is a very practical change. We are also allowing homeowners and businesses to decide whether they actually want the bulky battery back-up system installed in their homes as part of the National Broadband Network rollout. That clearly reduces costs and inconvenience both to the NBN Co and consumers. The key issue is this: the Abbott government is genuine about deregulation.

Bulk-Billing

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:49): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister's previous three answers about his decision to abolish bulk-billing for diagnostic imaging services and about the extra costs to people with
breast cancer, thyroid cancer and liver metastasis. Is the Prime Minister seriously not aware of the consequences of the decisions that he has made or is it that he just does not care?

The SPEAKER: I call the honourable the Prime Minister, who may ignore the last part of it as being debate.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:49): The propositions that are being put by members opposite are simply false. They are simply false. At the moment diagnostic providers that bulk bill receive 95 per cent of the rebate and the bulk-billing incentive. Under our proposal, if they charge a $7 co-payment they will receive 95 per cent of the rebate and the low-gap incentive, which is exactly the same. The Leader of the Opposition should stop running around the countryside trying to scare people and start dealing with the facts. We simply want to replace bulk-billing with a very modest $7 co-payment—that is all. It is exactly the same as Bob Hawke wanted to do—and he was a Labor legend.

Mr Shorten: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister has said that things are false when in fact they are true, and I seek—

The SPEAKER: This is not a time to debate. The member will resume his seat.

Mr Shorten: I seek to table the document from the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association, which contradicts the Prime Minister.

The SPEAKER: The answer is no.

Social Services: Regulations

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (14:51): My question is to the Minister for Social Services. Will the minister outline to the House how the government's approach to cutting red tape and unnecessary regulation will benefit charities and the aged-care sector?

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Social Services) (14:51): I thank the member for Reid for his question and I commend him on his caring representation for the residents of Lidcombe, Homebush and Concord and surrounding suburbs in his electorate of Reid. This government is cutting red tape in many areas, including in my portfolio and particularly in the areas of aged-care and charities, which the member for Reid asked me about.

I can remind the House that, on the first repeal day, in the aged-care area we removed the federal certification requirements. These were building requirements which duplicated what was already required at municipal, state and territory levels. They were actually triplicating regulatory requirements, and we removed them. It was common-sense to remove those requirements, and the consequence is millions of dollars saved over time to the aged-care sector. That is a win-win, because it is a saving for the aged-care sector and, in turn, a saving for the residents of aged-care homes right throughout Australia.

We have continued on this second repeal day by reducing red tape further, and one of the measures is to remove the key personnel change requirements. These were simply superfluous requirements but they also added a burden to the aged-care providers throughout Australia.

We are not stopping there. For the past nine or 10 months I have been working with a group of aged-care providers in Adelaide in South Australia and, as a result of that work, we have recently launched the South Australian aged-care innovation hub. This is an ongoing trial which involves 10 providers in South Australia, along with the agencies—the Aged Care Quality Agency and the Aged Care Financing Authority. In addition to that the Council on the
Ageing in Australia, COTA, represented by Ian Yates, is part of this trial, and it will be independently evaluated. The result will be that the successful elements of this trial which come to light from time to time as the trial continues will be able to be rolled out right across the aged-care sector in Australia. This is another example of practical reductions in red tape.

The honourable member asked me about charities as well. We are deregulating in other areas. We have abolished the National Gambling Regulator and we propose to abolish the charities commission. So whether it is in aged care, family services or charities, we want to break the shackles of red tape around the ankles of these agencies. We want to allow them to do what they do best—not filling in forms and completing red tape but serving the people of Australia.

Budget

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:54): My question is to the Prime Minister. According to NATSEM modelling, which takes into account budget impacts including the abolition of the carbon price, families in the Prime Minister's electorate will be $144 worse off because of his unfair budget. But families in my budget of Watson will be $935.50 worse off—even after the impact of the abolition of the carbon price has been taken into account. Why are families in my electorate, in my part of Sydney, bearing the heaviest burden for the Prime Minister's broken promises?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:55): I absolutely accept that there are some tough decisions in this budget. I absolutely accept that, and I absolutely accept that there are a lot of decisions in this budget which a lot of people would not like. And, under different circumstances, this government would not have needed to take them. But we were left with a debt and deficit disaster by members opposite. Members opposite know that it is important to get back to surplus, because, let's face it, for years they boasted not just that they were getting back to surplus but that they had got back to surplus. They never, ever delivered it.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order on direct relevance. The question went to why some parts of Australia are paying a higher burden than others by a significant proportion.

Mr ABBOTT: Members opposite used to understand that it was important to get back to surplus. They boasted constantly that they were producing a budget surplus for a strong economy but, do you know what? They never, ever delivered it. They never ever delivered it.

Having misled people through six years of government, they are now continuing to mislead people. David Speers the other day asked the Leader of the Opposition, 'You're blocking a lot of the budget measures they want to implement in getting back to surplus. So putting the government to one side, I suppose, when will we get back to surplus? When do you think we should bet back to surplus?' Shades of Swanny, this is the Leader of the Opposition, 'We're more likely to get back to surplus under a Labor government than this current mob.' Here he is, the deficit king, pretending to be a surplus king. They just cannot be believed.

Foreign Investment

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (14:57): My question is to the Minister for Trade and Investment. Will the minister advise the House of steps the government is taking to enhance Australia's reputation as an investment destination? Is he aware of any threats to these efforts?
Mr ROBB (Goldstein—Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:57): I thank the member for Corangamite. I make the observation that the member is proving to be as effective as her mother, who served the region of Geelong with such distinction for many years.

With regard to attracting critical foreign investment in Australia, the biggest challenge we have had has been to restore the gold standard reputation for low sovereign risk that was trashed by the actions of those opposite when we saw the four biggest budget deficits in our history, the live cattle debacle, the introduction of a highly punitive carbon tax when no-one else had one, the blind siding of the resources sector with a mining tax, and, of course, the blow-out of up to two years for the approvals of major projects. These and a host of other actions have bludgeoned our reputation for low sovereign risk. For that reason, this government has moved swiftly to make amends.

We have scrapped the carbon and mining taxes. We have laid down a program to live within our means. We have moved to create a one-stop shop for project approvals and implemented a six-monthly regulation repeal day. We have completed two free trade agreements with two of our biggest trading partners. We have moved quickly to restore trust in our trading relationship with Indonesia, and we have prompted the emergence of many major infrastructure projects with an asset recycling plan. We have also had 42 investment roundtables in 16 countries around the world, explaining our direction and program as a government.

Yet we see that Labor, even from opposition, can bludgeon our reputation for low sovereign risk. The Labor opposition in Victoria, led by a man who is a wholly owned subsidiary of the CFMEU, Dan Andrews, has announced that, if elected at the forthcoming state election—just like this leader has announced he will reintroduce the carbon tax—it will tear up the contracts for Australia's biggest road-building and tunnelling project, the East West Link, a $16½ billion project. Such an action will reverberate around the investment world, causing immeasurable damage to our ability to attract critical infrastructure investment. Running a country or a state carries with it a great responsibility to avoid reckless action like promising a new carbon tax or scrapping an East West Link. The Victorian Labor opposition must urgently reverse this decision, as must the Leader of the Opposition in regard to the carbon tax.

Drought

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (15:01): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Why hasn't the minister returned to the House to correct the following drought related statement he made during question time on Monday:

… you actually get the money until the department decides that you are not allowed to get the money. So you keep on getting the money until such time as, on the application being assessed, they decide you are not eligible for it. But it is not the case that you apply for the money and then you have to wait for your application to be approved … You actually get the money straight away.

(Time expired)

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

The SPEAKER: Before the Leader of the House puts his point of view, at the moment you could describe the question as incomplete, because the member's time elapsed before he had completed—
Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence! The time ran out before the member had completed asking his question. However, whether or not the question makes any sense without it having been completed is the question at issue.

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, I think you have summarised it well. The point is that there was no discrepancy pointed out that needs to be corrected. There was simply an assertion made, and therefore there was no question, and the call should go to the member behind me.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The question was at the start, where the minister was asked why he has not returned to the House to correct the statement, and then the statement was given. There is no standing order that says the question has to be at the end. You can say, 'Why haven’t you returned to correct this?—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. The question did begin precisely as you said. He did ask why the minister did not return to the House. He then went on to give a statement as to why he believed he should—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left! In his question, he went on to give the reason, including a quote, which was lengthy. However, he did not complete the question within the time frame.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the quote was difficult to decipher, but there is no argument that says at what point the quotation had to conclude. The question was asked: 'Why has the minister not returned to the House to correct this statement?' The statement was then read. Whether or not—

Mr Pyne interjecting—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker?

The SPEAKER: I can hear you adequately.

Mr Burke: I do not see how there can be a ruling that there is not a question, when we asked, 'Why has the minister not returned to the House to correct this statement?' and we read the statement. How is that not a question?

The SPEAKER: As I have said, the difficulty is that the question was not completed within the time allocated under the standing orders. Although the question 'Why has the minister not returned to the chamber?' was asked, the reason why you were purporting that he should have was not completed within the time.

Mr Fitzgibbon: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. First of all, the minister should know what he said on Monday, surely.

The SPEAKER: I am sorry; this is not a point of order.

Mr Fitzgibbon: Madam Speaker, even if you accept that the whole of the last sentence of the quote was not complete before I ran out of time, how does that in any way change the question and the meaning of the quote? Go back simply to the allegation that the money is automatically paid. That point was made in the quote. It is wrong, and the minister should be required to address that issue.
The SPEAKER: If the member for Hunter had not bothered to get up on that point of order, he actually might have got away with it, but I think that sinks it.

Mr Fitzgibbon: Are you now saying—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat! The basis of the ruling is simply that you did not complete the answer within the required time.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There is no requirement under standing orders, if someone intends to ask three or four questions and they only get through some of them, that therefore the entire question is ruled out. There is nothing within the standing orders—to the point of order—that says we have to determine whether or not someone would have liked to add other words. The one thing is: was a question asked? A question was asked. I reckon it will be challenging for him to answer, but we would love to hear the answer. It might be as good as Monday's!

The SPEAKER: The lesson from this is that people should abide by the standing orders and ask their question within the time allowed. I call the member for Hindmarsh.

Infrastructure

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (15:07): Thank you for your patience in allowing me to rise to my feet. My question is to the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will the minister please update the House on the progress of the North-South Corridor in South Australia, and can the minister update us on the benefits for jobs and also for small businesses in my electorate and South Australia?

The SPEAKER: Before I call the assistant minister could I advise the people who are determining when the clock is switched on and off to kindly do it correctly. That is at the beginning of the question. The assistant minister.

Mr BRIGGS (Mayo—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (15:07): Thank you to the member for Hindmarsh for that question. We know in this House that the member for Hindmarsh was the lead advocate for the Torrens to Torrens project.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr BRIGGS: He argued very strongly—

Mr Albanese: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Is it in order for the minister to mislead the House? Torrens to Torrens was in the 2013 budget, and Steve Georganas—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. The member knows perfectly well that, if he wishes to make an assertion as to misleading the House, there are proper forms of the House to do it. This is not the way. The assistant minister has the call.

Ms Kate Ellis interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Adelaide will desist.

Mr BRIGGS: He has had a big couple of weeks, and congratulations to the Bunnies on their win, Member for Grayndler.

The Torrens to Torrens project was advocated very strongly by the member for Hindmarsh. In fact, he wrote to me on 27 September—I think it was the day he was sworn in—

Mr Albanese: It was budgeted in 2013!

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will desist.
Mr BRIGGS: to ensure that we funded both the Torrens to Torrens project and the Darlington project, which the Labor Party opposed. The member for Boothby has been fighting for the Darlington project for many years. In fact, the member for Grayndler actually had the Darlington upgrade of South Road as a priority in 2008.

In addition to that, the infrastructure prime minister made very clear in October last year that we will upgrade the entire North-South Corridor in Adelaide in a decade because it is a very important economic upgrade for our economy and we all know in South Australia that the economy is struggling. It is struggling under 12 years of a very bad government at state level.

Mr Feeney: What about the submarines?

Mr BRIGGS: The honourable member mentions the submarines. It is interesting.

Ms Kate Ellis interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Adelaide will desist.

Mr BRIGGS: If the honourable member’s cabinet had done something about the submarines in the six years you put off the decision, they would be being built today. We know Labor’s record was failure not just with regard to infrastructure but also with defence procurement. It was a complete and utter failure. In fact, they cut $25 billion out of the defence budget, putting the project well behind.

Mr Shorten interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will desist.

Mr BRIGGS: The Torrens to Torrens and Darlington projects will create thousands of jobs over the next four years. They are funded by nearly $1 billion of federal government money and $600 million of state government money. Stephen Mullighan, the state minister, has been terrific to work with to get these projects up and away. He shares the commitment that we have to do both the Torrens to Torrens and the Darlington project. And we are also working on ensuring that we have a 10-year plan to upgrade, as the infrastructure prime minister’s commitment made very clear.

This is a government that has an economic plan. We are delivering upon our economic plan. We are fixing the mess that was left to us by the Labor Party—the budget crisis we were left—but we are getting on with our growth plan to create more opportunities, more jobs and a stronger Australia.

Mr Abbott: I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

COMMITTEES

Selection Committee

Report

The SPEAKER (15:11): I present the report No. 15 of the Selection Committee relating to the consideration of committee and delegation business and private members’ business on Monday, 27 October 2014. The report will be printed in the Hansard for today, and the committee’s determinations will appear in tomorrow’s notice paper. Copies of the report have been placed on the table.

The report read as follows—
Report relating to the consideration of committee and delegation business and of private Members’ business

1. The committee met in private session on Tuesday, 21 October 2014.
2. The committee determined the order of precedence and times to be allotted for consideration of private Members’ business on Monday, 27 October 2014, as follows:

Items for House of Representatives Chamber (10.10 am to 12 noon)

COMMITTEE AND DELEGATION BUSINESS

Presentation and statements

1 Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry:
   A clearer message for consumers—Report on the inquiry into country of origin labelling for food
   The Committee determined that statements may be made—all statements to conclude by 10.20 am.
   Speech time limits—
   Mr Ramsey—5 minutes.
   Next Member—5 minutes.
   [Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 2 x 5 mins]

2 Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples:
   Progress report on the inquiry into Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
   The Committee determined that statements may be made—all statements to conclude by 10.30 am.
   Speech time limits—
   Mr Wyatt—5 minutes.
   Next Member—5 minutes.
   [Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 2 x 5 mins]

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

Notices

1 MR WILKIE: To present a Bill for an Act to give the community rights in relation to the development of phone towers and certain telecommunications facilities, and for related purposes. (Telecommunications Amendment (Giving the Community Rights on Phone Towers) Bill 2014)
   (Notice given 30 September 2014.)
   Time allotted—10 minutes.
   Speech time limits—
   Mr Wilkie—10 minutes.
   [Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 1 x 10 mins]

Presenter may speak to the second reading for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41.

2 MRS PRENTICE: To move:
   That this House:
   (1) recognises that:
   (a) over the next four years, total annual Commonwealth funding to Queensland is increasing by around $5.8 billion (including GST);
(b) despite the tight budget conditions, the Commonwealth is increasing annual funding for Queensland hospitals by 40 per cent, and schools by 47 per cent, over the next four years; and

c) this represents a combined increase in funding to Queensland schools and hospitals of over 40 per cent by 2017-18, on 2013-14 funding levels;

(2) commends the Government for investing $13.4 billion to build the infrastructure of the 21st century for Queensland, including:

(a) $6.7 billion towards fixing the Bruce Highway; and

(b) almost:

(i) $1.3 billion towards the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing; and

(ii) $1 billion towards the upgrade of the Gateway Motorway North; and

(3) notes that the Queensland Government estimated the impact of the carbon tax to be $148 million in its 2013-14 state budget and its repeal will help support jobs and investment.

(Notice given 30 September 2014.)

Time allotted—40 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Mrs Prentice—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 8 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

3 MS KING: To move:

That this House:

(1) expresses grave concern about the outbreak of the Ebola virus in, and its impact on, West Africa, in particular Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and beyond;

(2) recognises that the peacebuilding and development gains of the most affected countries concerned could be reversed in light of the Ebola outbreak, underlining that the outbreak is undermining the stability of the most affected countries concerned and, unless contained, may lead to further instances of civil unrest, social tensions and a deterioration of the political and security climate;

(3) determines that the unprecedented extent of the Ebola outbreak in Africa constitutes a threat to international peace and security;

(4) expresses concern about the particular impact of the Ebola outbreak on women;

(5) takes note of the:

(a) measures taken by United Nations Member States of the region, especially Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, as well as Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, in response to the Ebola outbreak, and recognises that the outbreak may exceed the capacity of the governments concerned to respond; and

(b) letter dated 29 August 2014 to the United Nations Secretary-General from the presidents of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, requesting a comprehensive response to the Ebola outbreak, including a coordinated international response to end the outbreak and to support the societies and economies affected by restrictions on trade and transportation during the outbreak;

(6) emphasises the:

(a) key role of United Nations Member States, including through the Global Health Security Agenda where applicable, to provide adequate public health services to detect, prevent, respond to and mitigate outbreaks of major infectious diseases through sustainable, well-functioning and responsive public health mechanisms; and
(b) control of outbreaks of major infectious diseases requires urgent action and greater national, regional and international collaboration, stressing the crucial and immediate need for a coordinated international response to the Ebola outbreak;

(7) expresses:

(a) deep appreciation to the first-line responders to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, including national and international health and humanitarian relief workers contributed by the Member States of diverse regions and non-governmental organisations such as Médecins sans Frontières and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; and

(b) appreciation of the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service for transporting humanitarian personnel and medical supplies and equipment, especially to remote locations in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, during the outbreak;

(8) takes note of the:

(a) WHO Ebola Response Roadmap of 28 August 2014 that aims to stop transmission of the Ebola virus disease worldwide, while managing the consequences of any further international spread; and

(b) 12 Mission Critical Actions, including infection control, community mobilisation and recovery, to resolve the Ebola outbreak; and

(9) notes the United Nations call that Member States:

(a) facilitate the delivery of assistance, including qualified, specialised and trained personnel to contain the outbreak to the affected countries and, expresses deep appreciation to the Government of Ghana for allowing the resumption of the air shuttle of United Nations Mission in Liberia from Monrovia to Accra, which will transport international health workers and other responders to areas affected by the Ebola outbreak in Liberia;

(b) provide urgent resources and assistance, including deployable medical capabilities such as field hospitals with qualified and sufficient expertise, staff and supplies, laboratory services, logistical, transport and construction support capabilities, airlift and other aviation support and aeromedical services and dedicated clinical services in Ebola treatment units and isolation units, to support the affected countries in intensifying preventive and response activities and strengthening national capacities in response to the Ebola outbreak, and to allot adequate capacity to prevent future outbreaks;

(c) mobilise and provide immediate technical expertise and additional medical capacity, including for rapid diagnosis and training of health workers at the national and international level, to the affected countries, and those providing assistance to the affected countries and to continue to exchange expertise, lessons learned and best practices;

(d) maximise synergies to respond effectively and immediately to the Ebola outbreak, provide essential resources, supplies and coordinated assistance to the affected countries and implementing partners, and encourage all relevant actors to cooperate closely with the Secretary-General on response assistance efforts; and

(e) commend the continued contribution and commitment of international health and humanitarian relief workers to respond urgently to the Ebola outbreak and seek all relevant actors to put in place the necessary repatriation and financial arrangements, including medical evacuation capacities and treatment and transport provisions, to facilitate their immediate and unhindered deployment to the affected countries.

(Notice given 21 October 2014.)

Time allotted—remaining private Members’ business time prior to 12 noon.

Speech time limits—

Ms King—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.
[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 8 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Items for Federation Chamber (11 am to 1.30 pm)

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

Notices

1 MRS MCNAMARA: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes that the Government is providing practical assistance to small business;
(2) recognises:
   (a) the allocation of $8 million in the 2014-15 budget to establish the Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman;
   (b) that the Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman will act as an advocate for small business, cut previous compliance burdens and reduce red-tape;
   (c) that the Government has a sustainable strategy in place to cut $1 billion in red tape every year for small business workplaces; and
   (d) that on Wednesday 19 March 2014, the Government introduced legislation and tabled documentation to repeal more than 10,000 pieces and over 50,000 pages of legislation and regulations, saving over $700 million in compliance costs across the economy; and
(3) commends the Government for providing real, practical assistance to small business, encouraging productivity in the Australian economy.

(Notice given on 15 July 2014; amended 11 August 2014.)

Time allotted—50 minutes.

Mrs McNamara—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes each.
[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 10 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

2 MR FERGUSON: To move:

That this House notes that:

(1) October has been designated Shoctober by the Cardiac Arrest Survival Foundation;
(2) Australian estimates of those dying from sudden cardiac arrest range from 23,000 to 33,000;
(3) prompt defibrillation increases the probability of survival from cardiac arrest;
(4) delayed use of defibrillators increases the probability that the victim will die;
(5) defibrillator deployment guidelines have been developed by the Automated External Defibrillator Deployment Registry after significant consultation;
(6) the commendable staff training and defibrillator placement by Sydney Trains;
(7) wider availability of defibrillators is desirable; and
(8) there have been calls that all Commonwealth funded constructions valued over $3 million should have defibrillators and conform to the new Defibrillation Guidelines 1410 (v 1.3).

(Notice given 3 September 2014.)

Time allotted—30 minutes.
Mr Ferguson—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]
The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

3 Mr E. T. Jones: To move:
That this House recognises:

(1) the importance of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) cadets organisations in building the responsible citizens of tomorrow;

(2) that cadets:
   (a) learn important life and work skills, team work, leadership, confidence and responsibility through participation in the Navy, Army and Air Force cadets organisations; and
   (b) assist local communities through volunteer engagement, community services and fund raising, which is fostered and encouraged through the ADF cadets organisations; and

(3) the important role that ADF cadets play in contributing to our Defence Force of the future and building a stronger Australia.

(Notice given 28 August 2014.)

Time allotted—30 minutes.
Mr E. T. Jones—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]
The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

4 Mr Watts: To move:
That this House:

(1) notes that:
   (a) in 2015, 40 years will have passed since the arrival of Vietnamese refugees in Australia at the end of the Vietnam War; and
   (b) during this time, the Vietnamese-Australian community has grown from approximately 700 Vietnam-born Australians to approximately 185,000 Vietnam-born Australians, and 220,000 Australians speaking Vietnamese at home;

(2) acknowledges the contribution of Vietnamese-Australians to our society in the past 40 years, with Vietnamese-Australians becoming leading figures in business, politics, the arts, and in our communities;

(3) notes that the Vietnamese Community in Australia, or VCA, is marking the 40th anniversary through a series of events, programs and exhibitions; and

(4) encourages all Australians to take part in the celebrations to learn more about the culture and heritage of Vietnamese-Australians.

(Notice given 21 October 2014.)

Time allotted—remaining private Members’ business time prior to 1.30 pm.
Mr Watts—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 8 x 5 mins]
The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.
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DOCUMENTS
Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:12): Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

CONDOLENCES

Whitlam, Hon. Edward Gough, AC, QC

The SPEAKER (15:12): I wish to inform the House that a condolence book will be placed in the marble foyer of Parliament House for visitors to sign and signify their respects for the memory of the Hon. Edward Gough Whitlam AC, QC, former Prime Minister. I have also made arrangements for pages of the condolence books to be made available for members in the foyer of my office. It will remain there for the duration of this sitting period and longer if required. I invite honourable members to sign the sheets at a time of convenience to them.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Health Care

The SPEAKER (15:13): I have received a letter from the honourable member for Ballarat proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Government attacking Australia’s universal healthcare system.

I call upon those members who approve of the proposed discussion to rise in their places.

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

Ms KING (Ballarat) (15:13): What an unedifying display it was in question time today to see the Prime Minister of this country who has introduced the most regressive policies when it comes to health actually not understand or know the detail of his policies, of the imposition of the GP tax when it comes to diagnostic imaging. In fact, the statements that the Prime Minister said in relation to diagnostic imaging are simply untrue. It is absolutely extraordinary when it comes to one of the government’s own budget measures, when it comes to health policy, that the Prime Minister through those budget measures will be making it harder for people who need to get a cancer diagnosis, adding hundreds and thousands of dollars of up-front costs for people having to access diagnostic imaging for their cancer diagnosis—hundreds of dollars out of pocket.

We were not making figures up or plucking them from the air; these were figures that have come from the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association. The impact of the government's budget when it comes to diagnostic imaging is more than $7. The government has not been telling the truth to the Australian public about its $7 GP tax when it comes to diagnostic imaging. That is because it is not just a $7 GP tax that represents a $5 rebate reduction per item, not per time, that you have to represent for diagnostic imaging. It may be a number of MBS items are actually charged during that time. So it is a $5 rebate reduction per item according to the advice of the Department of Health to the Australian Diagnostic Imaging
Association. It is also the abolition of the 10 per cent cut in rebates for general patients who were previously bulk-billed due to the abolition of the bulk-billing incentive.

The Prime Minister sought in question time to say, 'Oh, there's a low gap incentive that will cover that.' That is simply not true. The low gap incentive does not apply to anybody who is a general patient. So if you are general patient, not a concession card holder, and you currently go to diagnostic imaging and you do not have a lot of money, and the radiographer decides that you should be bulk-billed for that cancer diagnosis, something that is very expensive to undertake, then what happens is that you will have to pay up-front for a start and you will have to pay the additional cost that now will be borne by the radiographer because the government has got rid of the 10 per cent bulk-billing incentive.

The other thing that they have done is that they have abolished the general permissible gap which moderates the cost of high cost items from 1 January 2016. The figures are, frankly, pretty disturbing. For those high-end scans when you are talking about PET scans in particular, that can potentially be $1,000. That is $1,000 that you will have to pay up-front in order to get your PET scan. This is how absolutely appalling these measures are that this government has introduced. It is not telling the Australian public the truth about the impact of its decision to apply—I call it a GP tax because it is about raising revenue off the back of sick people; that is exactly what it is—what its co-payment, as it calls it, actually means for diagnostic imaging. It is a very serious issue. We already know that people often leave their scans, their access to be able to get their cancers diagnosed, too late in some circumstances. We know that many people—we want to be optimistic about our health—put off finding out what is wrong with them and that often means that they leave their scans too late for a cancer diagnosis. We do not want that to happen in this country. We do not want barriers to be put in place for people accessing the diagnostic imaging that they need in order to have a diagnosis of cancer; we want people to do that early because they know they have a higher chance of survival. So what this government is doing with its measure, frankly, is making it less likely that people will be able to access diagnostic imaging, make it even more expensive up-front for people to get that diagnosis and will leave them potentially hundreds of dollars out of pocket.

I comes, of course, in the overall attack that this government has had on our universal health insurance scheme. We celebrated yesterday the life of Gough Whitlam and we on this side of the House that 40 years ago, when Medibank was introduced in a historic joint sitting of parliament to get it through, that this mob on the other side fought it tooth and nail—not only fought it tooth and nail but at the first opportunity they had they got rid of it. It took to get in the Hawke and Keating governments to introduce our universal health insurance scheme that is Medicare, the scheme that has served this country well, with some of the best health outcomes in the developed world. It is a scheme that we all support.

What we saw at the time was the Liberal-National Party saying that they would work with every breath in their body to try and kill off Medicare. We know that has been their agenda. What we have seen with this first Abbott government budget is an appalling attack on our universal health care system; a $7 GP tax for every time you go to see a GP, making it harder for people to access in fact what is the most efficient and cheapest part of our health care system that is at the centre of Medicare.
But it is not only a tax when you go to the GP; it is an X-ray tax, a pathology tax, an MRI tax, a tax on PET scans, a tax on CAT scans—a tax every time you need to access a diagnosis for cancer. Or if your kid falls off the monkey bars, in a circumstance I am very familiar with, and breaks their arm. It is a tax on all of those services. It is also more than $50 billion worth of cuts to the public hospital system, which has serious implications for health and hospital reform over the next decade. There were historic agreements that were reached with states and territories to reform our public hospital system and make it better: make it more efficient to get access to emergency departments and to elective surgery—to actually get the states and territories to agree on an efficient price for funding activity in hospitals, driving really important health reform.

The new Abbott government has decided that it does not want to be in the business of public hospitals. It actually thinks that the states should do it. It actually wants to withdraw and go back behind the barriers to say, 'We don't want to participate in actually reforming our public hospital system.' I know many people in the community want the Commonwealth to be in the business of reforming our hospital system and should be in the business of making sure people have access to decent emergency department waiting times and elective surgery waiting times.

We have also seen the $1.3 billion cut to pharmaceuticals, a bill that is sitting before the Senate at the moment. It is $1.3 billion, changing in a very sneaky measure the safety net, making it harder and harder for concession card patients to actually meet that safety net, and making the cost of medicines unaffordable in this country. There is also the $368 billion for the national partnership agreements on prevention, funding states that were relying on this from this financial year to tackle obesity, smoking rates and alcohol abuse—activities happening in communities right the way across the country: in our workplaces, in our schools and throughout our community organisations.

But there has also been more than $600 million cut from our public dental programs, including $200 million this financial year alone—walking away from the national partnership agreements for adult public dental services. There has been a cut of $197 million from what we call the health flexible funds, which have been going largely to not-for-profit organisations—things like the Heart Foundation, the Cancer Council and AIDS councils—to run their activities. This is really important work to improve our health system in communities across this country.

This is what the Abbott government's first budget means for health, and it is an unprecedented attack on our universal health insurance scheme. We know that if it was not for Gough Whitlam introducing Medibank 40 years ago we would not have Medicare today. We know that if the Liberal-National parties had their way, then Medicare would never have existed and they want to kill it off today. From the measures they have introduced into this budget, it is obvious that they are attempting to destroy Medicare by stealth and we absolutely on this side of the House stand and condemn them. Medicare is not your plaything. Keep your hands off Medicare; keep our public health insurance scheme! Learn the lessons of your own history. The Australian public will not stand for it!

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (15:23): I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this debate and I thank colleagues who are very interested in an important debate. I want to correct a lot of what the shadow minister had to say, and I want
to inject some facts, strangely enough, into this debate. Much of what we heard from the previous speaker, the member for Ballarat, is Labor rhetoric and part of a scare campaign, and we saw the opposition misleading the public again in question time today.

It is worth having a sober look at the actual statistics and what the figures provide for in this budget, in black and white. The total expenditure goes up each and every year in this budget. The money we are spending on health and in hospitals goes up each year. The reality for this budget, quite opposite to that which was proposed by the member for Ballarat, is that we put more money into Medicare again this year. In fact, we will put about $19½ billion into Medicare this year. That has gone up by 42 per cent over the past five years. But if we do not take some action over the next 10 years, Medicare will go up by an amount that will mean we will spend $34 billion a year—so $20 billion this year, growing to $34 billion in 10 years' time. If Labor believe that is sustainable, then they should put that on the record. Certainly state Labor health ministers do not believe it is sustainable. Certainly it is the case that the two independent reports commissioned by both the Rudd and Gillard governments advised Labor that spending on health at its current rate each year was unsustainable.

And so what have we done in this budget? What we have said in relation to hospitals is that we will increase funding to hospitals by nine per cent this year, by nine per cent next year, by nine per cent the year after that and by 6½ per cent in year 4. Labor want to betray the 2½ per cent reduction from nine down to 6½ per cent growth as a cut, which is quite tricky, and politically the member for Ballarat may well get away with that. No doubt people listening to this debate today will think, 'On the member for Ballarat's contribution, the government's cutting funding to hospitals.' But we are increasing it by nine per cent each year over the next three years, and we have put it at 6½ per cent in year 4—6½ per cent when our economy is growing at five per cent, which I think is quite reasonable. It is a lot more than what is happening in some other developed nations around the world, including in New Zealand for example, and I believe that that is putting it on a sustainable path.

That is at the same time as the government is trying to pay down Labor's debt. We are borrowing money each and every month to pay down just the interest bill, let alone the capital of the debt that Labor ran up. Bear in mind that they were only in government for six years, but ran up debt approaching $667 billion. And anybody in the gallery today, listening to this broadcast at home, those who do their own household budgets know you can only spend more money than you earn each year for so long. You cannot continue to spend more than you earn; you can until you run out of savings, until the bank takes the house, but then the whole operation closes down. So, yes, we are trying to pay down Labor's debt and yet still increase spending each year, but by a more sustainable path. I think that is perfectly sustainable; I think that is perfectly reasonable.

The honourable member opposite, the member for Ballarat, talked about the introduction of Medibank and Medicare. It is quite interesting to reflect on some of the comments that were made by Labor when Labor was a strong party. The Bill Shorten of today is no Gough Whitlam of yesterday. That is the reality. The Leader of the Opposition is not a patch on former Labor leaders, including Gough Whitlam and Bob Hawke. I will tell you what Gough Whitlam had to say in relation to Medibank. I think it is very instructive. It was one of the guiding principles of Labor during the fifties, sixties and seventies. Gough Whitlam had this to say:
The government is determined … to give all Australians access to high quality health care at reasonable cost.

'At reasonable cost'. He never claimed that you could give everything to everybody for free, which is what this Labor opposition is pretending. Four out of five presentations to doctors today are for free; 80 per cent of those presentations are free. Now the taxpayer works hard and pays taxes so that we can provide those services for free to four out of five people.

Ms Burke: What is the Medicare levy then?

Mr DUTTON: The Medicare levy? 'The Medicare levy' comes from the former Speaker in this place. It was not even good enough to be put up by her good friend Julia Gillard, the former Prime Minister. Let me correct that: the former Speaker, the member for Chisholm, says that somehow the Medicare levy should cover what we spend on Medicare. Let me give her a basic lesson in economics: we raise with the Medicare levy about half of that we spend on Medicare each year. The problem is—the basic economic facts escape Labor—that the growth rate of Medicare is much greater than that which we collect on the Medicare levy, so over time Medicare becomes even more unsustainable. The basics need to be understood by the Labor Party opposite before they can make a proper contribution to this debate. Gough Whitlam got it right when he said that health care needed to be 'at reasonable cost'. He did not propose that 80 per cent of services, when you go to the doctor, should be for free.

So what have we said in relation to this budget?

Much the same as what Bob Hawke said: 'It's very difficult to suggest a co-payment … is going to create great hardship.' What did Bob Hawke suggest? Bob Hawke suggested and implemented a co-payment of $3.50 which incidentally, had it been indexed—

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith is not in her seat and not entitled to interject.

Mr DUTTON: over the course of the last years, would be about $6.40 today. What is the government proposing today? A co-payment of $7. But, importantly, we are retaining bulk-billing not for four out of five services but for those people who cannot afford a co-payment themselves. That retains the principle of universality, which is what this matter of public importance is supposed to be about; it was mentioned only once during the course of the shadow minister's contribution. But universality means that you can provide support to those to those who cannot afford health-care costs themselves. We do that. It is central to the principle of the plan we have on the table. We say people who have the ability to pay $7 should pay it so that we can keep Medicare sustainable. If you want to adopt Labor's proposal that everything is free for everyone, and we continue to rack up debt on the credit card, it will fall over.

Australians are not stupid. They saw through the Rudd and Gillard governments and they see through Bill Shorten and his opposition as well. At the next election we will look the Australian public in the eye and say that yes, we have had to take tough decisions during the course of the first 12 months of this government, and no doubt over the course of the next two years, to rectify some of the waste and deficit that Labor racked up; but at the same time we have sustained a Medicare system which will serve us for decades to come. I do not have any problem at all saying that to the Australian public. But at the next election the Leader of the Opposition and the Labor Party will have to say to the Australian public that they are not
prepared to make changes which will make Medicare sustainable. If we want to have that debate I am more than happy to have it.

If we had abolished bulk-billing altogether I would think the member for Ballarat might have a leg to stand on. If the member for Ballarat could stand up here and say, 'You have wiped out the ability to provide for those who are in most need', then she would have a fair debating point. But that is not what is on the table. The government has said we will take care of those who are most needy.

Where Labor's greatest hypocrisy lies in this particular debate is around pharmaceuticals. Labor says it is completely unreasonable to ask people who can pay a simple co-payment to pay it. But at the same time it was Labor that introduced a co-payment in the pharmaceutical system for those on concession cards. You would not know it from the contributions of those opposite. When the sickest, poorest Australian needs to fill a prescription at the pharmacist does Labor say that they can bulk-bill and have that prescription for free? No, they do not. They say to that person, 'You will pay $6.10 for the first script and every subsequent script, and the safety net does not cut in until you reach about 60 scripts.' So an equivalent co-payment in the medicine system is $360. Labor presided over that system all the way through the Hawke years, the Keating years and the Gillard years—or the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd trifecta disaster for this country. They sat on that policy and they charged the sickest and poorest; yet they come in here and suggest that a $7 co-payment to keep Medicare sustainable, while still protecting those who cannot afford the $7, is somehow unreasonable. They are completely wrong on this topic.

Do you know what else they do in the states? If you go around state-by-state, the Labor party charges co-payments in relation to dental and other emergency services. We will highlight that as the weeks and months go along. The Labor Party will have to explain at the next election why it stands for a Medicare which is unsustainable.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (15:33): The honourable minister said he wanted to inject a few facts into the debate. Here are a few facts the minister got wrong.

The first is that Medicare is not free. We pay for it. We pay for it through our Medicare levy. That includes those people who are concession card holders. I know the minister tries to deny the fact that concession card holders are also paying, but one of the facts he might like to go and find out for himself is how many of those concession card holders are also taking up private health insurance. They are being whacked twice by this GP tax, a fact the minister does not like to admit.

He also gets his facts wrong on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. He tries to convince people that it was the Labor government that introduced a co-payment for the PBS. I have news for the minister: there was this bloke called Menzies. The minister may not know our history very well but you would expect a Liberal Party minister to understand their own history a bit better than he does. It was Menzies who first introduced the co-payment into the PBS system. It was 1960 and it was a charge of five shillings.

Yesterday the House, and indeed the nation, mourned the passing of a great Australian. Today we on this side of the House recommitted ourselves to his vision for a better Australia—a better Australia that includes universal access to health care. As Gough Whitlam stood on the steps of Parliament House some 39 years ago, he issued a solemn injunction to all fair-
thinking Australians. He said to us, 'Maintain your rage.' Maintain your rage against all of those who seek to make Australia a place that is smaller than it is today—a place that is less equitable than it is today. There is much that we remain angry about. That sacred duty to maintain the rage now falls to each and every Labor member of parliament, because just as Labor was the party that introduced Medibank and Medicare, we are the last line of defence for those who would seek to destroy them.

Amidst the confusion, the chaos, the ineptitude, the false communication and the rotten handling of this terrible budget, we can define a consistent line of thought that joins this Prime Minister, this health minister and the policies of this rotten government to those Liberal elitists who sought to destroy Medibank 40 years ago—who sought to stop Medibank ever being introduced and then over the next four years pulled it apart, brick by brick. It was Billy Snedden who said in the debates during the historic joint sitting of parliament to introduce the Medibank legislation:

We will fight and we will continue to fight. We will destroy it.

Of all the promises that this government seeks to keep and all the faith that they tried to keep between 1974 and today, it is the promise to destroy Medicare brick by brick—and that is exactly what they are attempting to do. They are trying to destroy Medicare, just as they tried to stop it happening in 1974 and again in 1984.

I want to talk about the regions. When we contemplate the impact that these atrocious policies are going to have on regional Australia we are left wondering what it is that binds the MPs on the other side of the House to these mad policies. Let's contemplate the facts—as the member for Ballarat has done today—of the cost of diagnostic imaging for people living in regional Australia. It is $90 up front for an X-ray, $380 for a CAT scan and $160 for a mammogram. A PET scan could cost over $1,000 for people who are living in some of the poorest communities in the country. You have got to ask yourself why the people who pretend to represent those communities in regional Australia are binding themselves to these mad policies. If they were such good members as they pretend to be, they would be standing here today arguing against those policies and they would be crossing the floor when the legislation comes before the House because that is the right thing to do. (Time expired)

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (15:38): Those on the other side have an affliction with free stuff. I know that 30 years ago there was a leader of this country who wanted free health care. But do you know what? Not just Australia but the entire world has moved on. It was interesting for me in 1997 when I got my chance to meet the great man himself, Gough Whitlam. And, no, it was not out in Western Sydney, it was not in a public hospital. It was in Australia's finest private hospital, and he certainly had no problem with the fine system we have of public and private hospital provision. Let's be honest, we have a system where there is choice. I have no problem with both sides of this chamber exercising choice. But do not for one minute be so misguided as to think that the Medicare levy pays for Medicare. We have had two Labor spokespeople now say that the $10 million that we collect from the 1.5 per cent actually pays for Medicare. I suspect that I am now going to hear that a Labor government would be prepared to rule out, or otherwise, an increase to the Medicare levy to pay for Medicare—that's right, double it!

The Medicare levy costs us all around $500 a year, if you are earning about one hundred grand a year, and an extra $500 for every $10,000 that you earn on top of that. That can add
up over time—$50 for every $10,000 above that. That is what those higher income earners pay into the system. But that only pays for half of the cost of Medicare, which has gone from $9 billion to $18 billion over the last 10 years and will go up to $34 billion over the next 10 years. It is a challenge to bend the cost curve. Every economy in the world is working on bending that cost curve. But the poor unfortunate Labor Party is riveted, welded and stapled to this notion of free health care because their great leader said so in 1975. They are stuck with that notion. They are unable to review it and unable to reconstruct their thinking because it is all about the free stuff. Let's keep in mind that throughout the known world, and particularly here in a developed system like Australia's, people without financial means are bulk-billed and will continue to be. It will never be compulsory to charge a co-payment. That co-payment is still less than a Macca's meal deal—a quarter pounder mid-sized meal deal. The smartest, most talented and hardworking professionals in this community are worth $7 to spend some time with to look after your health. They are worthy of that payment. Do not take it from the doctors or the health planners on this side; talk to the doctors on your side.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr LAMING: What? There are no doctors on the opposite side? Where are the doctors on that side? They are not including you over there, Dr Gillespie. Give me Dr Leigh over there, one of the finest minds who under any other system of merit would be opposition Treasurer by now—but not in the Labor Party. That fine Dr Leigh said that we need a moderate co-payment:

… not enough to put a dent in your weekly budget, but enough to make you think twice before you call the doc.

Perfectly said, Dr Leigh. Come and join the doctors over here and let's have a world-class health system.

Now let's be honest, bulk-billing is still absolutely endemic—

Dr Leigh interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): The member for Fraser is interjecting outside of his place in this chamber. It is very disorderly to interject outside of your place in this chamber.

Mr LAMING: in diagnostic radiology and pathology. As long as those requests are on the same form in pathology, there is only the one co-payment charged. Two-thirds of all items under Medicare when you see a doctor are exempted from the co-payment. Any of the chronic disease items are co-payment exempt.

But let's go back to that Labor world. That was where they used to promise you the free stuff in the form of a super clinic—except they only built 33 of the 66 of them planned. And what were those buildings doing? Long before they could even find a GP to steal from the neighbouring general practice—because that is what they did—they turned all the lights on. That's right, in the member for Petrie's area there was no working super clinic; they just turned the lights on with a big cross outside! They delivered a super clinic, but what was undelivered was staff in it actually doing some work! Of course, we have the PBS co-payment. Right now, Australians pay around $6 to fill a script. But this lot will not pay the same amount to go and see the highest trade professionals in the health system. Who were the architects of the pharmaceutical co-payment? Labor. Who tried to dull the pharmaceutical co-
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payment without success? Labor. How much does it add up to over time over time? Sixty scripts at $6 adds up over a while, doesn't it? But oh no, we cannot have a $70 maximum capped out co-payment to see a doctor. The argument is so thin. The argument is riven with holes, like Swiss cheese.

Let's move to private health insurance. That's right, you are quite prepared to nickel and dime average Australians by making health insurance more expensive. Out go the ancillaries and home come the allied health professionals from the regional areas because there is no work anymore. How much does it cost a patient to insure the continuity of their health care? This is a Labor government welded to the past, welded to the ideas of Whitlam and not keeping up with the future of a sustainable Medicare.

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (15:44): The government are attacking the universality of health care in this country and they are doing it because it is in their DNA to attack the universality of health care in this country. Under Gough Whitlam, who passed away yesterday, Labor introduced universal health care after many years of policy development and broad consultation with people. I will tell you what Gough Whitlam said because there have been some unfortunates on the other side verballing him today. I will explain it in Gough's own words. He said in 1969:

We propose a universal health scheme, based on the needs and means of families.

That is what he said in 1969. In 1973 he said:

It is only our insurance program—because it is based on the payment of a percentage of taxable income—which can overcome this problem—

that is, the expensiveness of health care in Australia. He continued:

It is only our insurance program which will ensure that a low income earner will pay less than a middle income earner and that a middle income earner will pay less than a wealthy man. Australia will not have a just and equitable health insurance system until that principle is enshrined in its laws.

For all those people over there claiming that somehow health care is currently free and that people should pay for their health care, as previous speakers have said, people already make a payment for their health care. I can tell you that you do not need a price signal to value GPs. You do not need a price signal to value the medical assistance and advice that you get from a GP. You absolutely do not. It is an absolute fallacy.

At the end of the submission to the Commission of Audit that advocated for the co-payment—and we all remember the Commission of Audit—the author said, 'By the way, we should actually find out whether there is a problem of people going to the doctor when they do not need to.' Oh, do you think? Do you think you should find that out before you start putting in disincentives for sick people to get primary health care that might keep them out of hospital, keep them safe, keep them well and give them the opportunity for early treatment, because we all know that early treatment is the key?

Everyone on this side of the House understands those principles of universality. The minister claimed that universality was about low-income earners being able to get health care. Universality is about having a great health system for everyone, no matter how rich or how poor they are. It is not about a two-tiered health system where there is some safety net for poor people and rich people get great health treatment somewhere else. It is about universal
access to health care so it is whether you are sick that determines the health care you get not the size of your wallet and income. That is what universality means.

What is this government doing? This is in the great tradition of Liberals and Nationals past, who opposed the introduction of Medibank in the 1970s, who opposed the introduction of Medicare in the 1980s and who, under John Howard, attacked bulk-billing. I remember fighting a 'Save Medicare' campaign back then too. They cannot help themselves—they always want to lay into Medicare because they do not support it. They are just getting sneakier. John Howard learnt that you cannot openly attack Medicare in this country. He learnt that the hard way, so they have to get sneakier. Let us not let them get away with it. Let us talk about what the Prime Minister's budget is actually doing to health care in this country.

Tony Abbott, the Prime Minister, came to power promising that there would be no new taxes and no cuts to health. I remember in my by-election the Prime Minister coming to Brisbane and telling the voters in Griffith that there were no plans for a GP tax when his own Commission of Audit already had a submission, when his own candidate in Griffith had already welcomed the idea and when he knew full well—or he ought to have—that there was a very real prospect of a GP tax in the budget. And what did we get? We got a GP tax in the budget. We got a GP tax that will slug you every time you go to the doctor or get an x-ray or a blood test.

According to the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association, we have also got the situation where general patients will have to pay upfront a minimum of $90 for an x-ray, $380 for a CAT scan, $160 for a mammogram—and what do the Liberals and Nationals have against mammograms?—and $190 for an ultrasound. For a PET scan the upfront costs could hit $1,000. For a typical patient with thyroid cancer the upfront charges for the scans and tests would come to around $1,000. A woman with a lump in her breast would need to spend at least $280 upfront to have her cancer diagnosed. A person with lung cancer will have a minimum upfront payment of $320. Shame. (Time expired)

Mr Taylor (Hume) (15:49): As we pay our respects to Gough the legend, we look mournfully at those opposite. If only there were something—anything—of 'legend' about the current Labor offering and if only there were a glimmer of hope, we might be content. But, no. The former Labor government had absolutely no comprehension of how to manage money or how to provide services on a sustainable basis. Indeed, I do not think many of them on that side can even add up, excluding the member for Fraser, who has done some excellent work on the health system. They rack up debt every time they get into government and then it is our job to come in and clean up the mess.

This government will not stand by and watch Medicare collapse under its own weight. So let us look at some facts. Unfortunately in the speeches from the last couple of speakers from that side we did not see many of these facts. Let us look at the sustainability of the healthcare system under Labor. When we came into government, as they have already pointed out, the Commission of Audit pointed out the areas where we are spending most of our money. They turn out to be welfare and health. The two biggest numbers, which constitute about 40 per cent of our budget, are for welfare and health.

Here is where it gets hard. They are growing at a much faster rate than the economy. They are growing at about eight or nine per cent a year—almost 10 per cent per year—but the economy is growing at 4.5 per cent or five per cent in a good year. So if you keep going and
wait long enough, the whole economy will be health and welfare. It is simple mathematics. There will be nothing else left. That happens surprisingly quickly. Indeed, on these growth rates, out of control health spending will reach almost a quarter of the economy within 20 years. The member for Fraser is looking over here saying: 'Yes, I have done those numbers. They are right.' That means that almost one out of every four dollars would be spent on health. Who is going to pay for that?

The biggest numbers for the government are in Medicare. So let us put this in perspective. The total cost of the health system, federal and state, is about $140 billion. The Medicare levy we pay in our taxes is about $10 billion out of that $140 billion. Very little is paid for by the Medicare levy. We know that and we heard that from previous speakers. People know that over the last five or six years the Medicare expense in this country has gone up by 42 per cent.

The biggest increases are coming from chronic disease funding. If you take the MBS item numbers that cover chronic disease, they are rising at 25 per cent a year. In 2007, the beginning of the Labor government, those costs were $200 million. In 2014, those costs will be just over $1 billion—five times greater in only seven years. It does not matter how you look at it; that is not sustainable. It will not be a universal health system for the next generation if we do not deal with this now.

Of course, those opposite mistake 'universal' for 'free'. 'Universal' does not equal 'free'. So let's look at how free the healthcare system was under the previous Labor government. It turns out that during the time that Labor was in power, health care required large direct payments from individuals throughout the system. And I will give you some numbers here. Under the PBS, 17 per cent of the costs were paid for by individuals; other health practitioners, 55 per cent. These numbers are from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Dental was 67 per cent; aids and other appliances, 74 per cent; and non-PBS medications, 97 per cent. So in total almost 40 per cent of the costs across all of those various items were paid for by the individual. The health system is not free, and those opposite know it, they just want to pretend otherwise.

We know that the co-payment is reasonable. We are asking for a $7 contribution. We know that in New Zealand it is $17.50. And New Zealand has a much lauded health system—in fact, those opposite have often praised the New Zealand health system. We are not saying that it should be $16, as it is in some parts of Europe. We are saying that $7 is a reasonable payment for Australians to make.

Our country is paying $1 billion a year in interest. We are on our way to $3 billion. One group in this place says: 'If we've got a spending problem, just up the taxes.' We say: we want a sustainable health system, and the way to do that is to ensure that those who can pay do so.

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (15:54): I really do feel like it is groundhog day. One of the things I campaigned on in my first election campaign before I came into this place was to save Medicare. If you look at my Facebook page, you will see me with Gough Whitlam, and a balloon that reads 'Save Medicare'—to save our universal health system.

Unlike those opposite, we do not equate 'universal' with 'free'. We understand that universality is about access for all. If you want to go and look at numbers, maybe you should read what has just been announced in Senate estimates today; senior Treasury officials say the $7 co-payment will not help the healthcare system, as those opposite have been crying out.
Here we are again—16 years later—and yet another Liberal government is doing everything it can to destroy universal healthcare in this country.

Gough Whitlam and the Labor Party established universal healthcare in 1974. In the face of Liberal Party intransigence, it took a double-dissolution election and a joint sitting to establish—and thank goodness it did—what has become one of the greatest assets this country has ever had: universal access, Medicare. Yet, ever since the establishment of Medicare, the Liberal Party has done nothing but try to destroy it. Whenever there is a Liberal government, universal healthcare is at risk, and never more so than under this despicable Liberal government.

It is notable that, when responding to the passing of Gough Whitlam, the Abbott government's loudest cheerleader, the ever mean-spirited, Alan Jones, said:

The Abbott government is even today dealing with the costly consequences and culture of entitlement bequeathed by Whitlam's decisions to give free universal medical care and university education.

The central policy unit of the LNP, the Institute of Public Affairs, yesterday described the establishment of universal healthcare simply as 'regrettable'. That is the thing those opposite do not want to say: this is about the beginning of the end—the destruction of Medicare, the destruction of universality—despite the fact that maintaining universal access to affordable healthcare has been a linchpin in our society's ability to remain healthy and prosperous.

You do not need to just take our word for it; study after study after study demonstrates that Australia's healthcare system is one of the best, one of the most affordable, because of our access to primary healthcare. Prevention is better than cure. Prevention upfront, ensuring people get to the doctor in time; have a mammogram in time; do not leave it until it is too late. Then it is genuinely too costly not just to the individual but to our whole society. As sickening as these comments from these unelected representatives of the Liberal party are, they represent the ugly truth of the Abbott government's attitude towards the very notion of universal healthcare. Their policies prove their intent to try and kill it, once and for all.

We have not even managed to bury Gough and he is turning in his grave—he has not even got there yet—because of what this government is trying to do: a $7 tax on visiting the doctor, a $5 hike in the price of medicine; more than $50 billion cut from hospitals; and more than $4 million cut from dental programs. These measures spell the death of universal health care; just what the Abbott government is planning and hoping for.

The GP tax of course will apply to far more than just visiting the doctor. And the Abbott government's 10 to 15 per cent cut in the rebate paid to radiologists will dramatically increase the out-of-pocket cost for people needing scans. In fact, as we heard in question time today, the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association has said that we will have to pay a minimum of $90 upfront for an X-ray.

My son managed to destroy his thumb before grand final day, ending up in hospital—missing out on seeing his Swans beaten, which was probably a saving grace. We would have been up for $90; we would have been up for more for the plastic surgeon we had to see that day.

In my electorate there is a great organisation called Knitted Knockers, who are out there knitting prostheses to give away to women who have suffered breast cancer and had
mastectomies. They are appalled that there will not be help upfront. Women will be prevented from going to a doctor. This government stands condemned.

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (15:59): It gives me great pleasure today to speak against the member for Ballarat's outrageous matter of public importance. The member for Ballarat's statement could not be further from the truth. In fact, it is the Abbott government who are actually protecting Australia's healthcare system by ensuring that it will still be functioning when the next generation want to use it. I want to make sure that our healthcare system is still around when my granddaughter Evie is an adult and might need it. That is what we are doing over on this side of the House.

The coalition's budget measures for health are all about building a strong health system. We are laying the foundations for a stable system that can absorb the pressures caused by an ageing population, by chronic disease and by higher costs. Medicare, the PBS and public hospitals have really been feeling intense pressure from these factors, and the coalition government is supporting these agencies by working with them to create strong plans for a sustainable future in health care. Expenditure on these has grown faster than the economy. We are focused on delivering a stronger, more stable health system for the future, and only the coalition government can deliver this system.

In my electorate of Solomon, I was able to secure—along with the health minister—$110 million to build a brand-new hospital to cater for the growth of health service needs in Palmerston and Darwin. My good friend, the Northern Territory health minister, Robyn Lambley, and her team are doing a fantastic job, delivering on this project. They are taking the time to make sure that we get it right and to spend the money wisely, because we all know that health money is very precious. We want to make sure that we have a hospital that is being built to cater for the needs of the Darwin and Palmerston residents of the next 50 years.

This is how the people of Darwin and Palmerston know that the coalition is taking health care seriously. People in my electorate know that the adults are now in charge of something as precious as our public healthcare system.

Mr Perrett: It's the juveniles!

Mrs GRIGGS: The member for Moreton just needs to button his lips! Labor's blatant waste of taxpayer dollars in our healthcare system is absolutely outrageous. Let's put the facts on the table. They spent $463,000 to do a study on a fat tax—on junk food—when they had already ruled it out. They spent $236,000 on an informative Facebook page that actually gained a whopping 244 likes. I cannot do the figures but I think that is a very excessive amount of money for 244 likes. They also spent $650 million on the infamous GP superclinics, and we heard earlier that of the 66 promised clinics only 33 were delivered.

The previous Labor government were more interested in putting bureaucrats in front of paper than in putting the nurses and doctors in front of the patients. Instead of delivering on healthcare promises they stood around and talked about it. The Labor government, as we know, is big on promises and very bad on delivering them. This government, however, is it committed to ensuring that our precious health dollars are spent in the most efficient way possible, ensuring that every dollar is directed towards improving patient outcomes. We are ending the wasteful and inefficient spending in the health portfolio that occurred under Labor.
Mostly we hear of the opposition's objections to our plans for health care. We very rarely hear of any plans that they come up with to improve health care. We heard from the member for Lingiari; he was whingeing and moaning about the co-payment but, in actual fact, he voted for one. So Labor has left the coffers dry. We want to make sure that the money that is there can be spent—

Ms Burke interjecting—

Mr Stephen Jones interjecting—

Mrs GRIGGS: Mr Deputy Speaker, they should be told to stop interjecting! But anyway: Labor does not have a plan. All it does is want to spend, spend, spend and whinge, whinge, whinge. We all know that Labor cannot be trusted with money, we know they cannot be trusted with credit cards and we know they cannot be trusted with getting this country on track. That is why we are here. We have to clean up their mess time after time. We are doing it again and this rubbish about Medicare is just, as I said—rubbish. Medicare is not under threat—only from those opposite!

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (16:04): It may have been a good idea for the member for Solomon to have made some references to the needs of the Indigenous community that she represents in this place.

I would like to start by saying that one of the iconic reforms of the Whitlam government was the establishment of Medibank, a universal healthcare system that provides access to best-quality health care and medical services to all Australians, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Universal healthcare cover has since become the Australian way of life, a system of health care that is highly valued by our community because no-one in this country has ever had to worry about forgoing medical attention. Nor have they had to worry about becoming ill or dying because they cannot afford to go to the doctor. In fact, Australians, and in particular my constituents, have never had to be concerned about the size of their cheque books or wallets when it comes to health care.

That is why this MPI is very important, because it puts this government on notice that the opposition, together with the Australian people, will fight hard and will fight long to protect our universal healthcare system because we all believe that access to health care for all is a right and not a privilege.

Perhaps this government has not learnt from the Howard government's attempts to tamper with Medicare and bulk-billing in the past. Or perhaps they have learnt, as the member for Griffin said earlier on, that if you want to attack Australia's universal healthcare system you do not let the public know in advance. That is why they deceived the public in the lead-up to the last election by promising no cuts and no new taxes. My constituents are livid at the broken promises and are prepared to fight this government's attempts to change the universality of our healthcare system.

In the time that I have been the member for Calwell, the availability of bulk-billing and after-hours GP services, which are a lifeline for the health and wellbeing of my community, have always been a priority. The proposed $7 GP tax, the $5 hike in medicines, the $50-billion cut from the public hospitals, the $400-million cut from the dental programs and the shutting down of 61 Medicare Locals is going to have far reaching ramifications in my electorate. I am concerned about this because I have a very large multicultural community, an
ageing community and the general socio-economic status of my electorate is such that any additional cost will be a financial burden to the point where my constituents will be forced to make choices about going to the doctor—choices they have never had to make before.

So when the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association reports that the effects of scrapping the bulk-billing incentives on diagnostics will mean that patients will have to pay a minimum of $90 for an X-ray or $380 for a CAT scan or $190 for an ultrasound or a person with lung cancer will have a minimum upfront payment of $320, my community and I become very alarmed. I have an electorate where, statistically, people are more likely to become ill than those in wealthier electorates. We cannot afford a situation where people cannot afford to go to the doctor.

I am particularly concerned about the impact of the GP tax on mammograms. Women in my electorate face paying a minimum of $160 for a mammogram, and especially alarming is the prospect that a woman with a lump in her breast will have to spend at least $280 upfront to have her cancer diagnosed. I spend a lot of time advancing awareness about breast cancer in this place and I know how important preventative measures are because early detection is critical to survival rates. I not only know how important it is for a woman to have a mammogram but I also know how difficult it is for many women, especially those from non-English speaking backgrounds, to make that decision. We work hard to encourage those women, but I can tell you that the burden of cost will be a deterrent. One in nine women get breast cancer. When a woman gets breast cancer, a family and a community is affected. Increasing the costs of visits to GPs will be a deterrent and that is just not acceptable.

For those of us on this side of the chamber and for the Australian public at large, Australia’s universal health care system is to be treasured and maintained; it is not to be undermined.

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (16:09): How often do we see hypocrisy, hype and scaremongering in this House? Who was it that actually developed and delivered the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme? It was the coalition. It was the first vehicle for providing widespread dental care to a million people. Who got rid of it? The ALP. Who tried to make Medicare more sustainable by encouraging private insurance? The coalition did. Who attacked it? Labor did. All this hypocrisy is too much to bear. Who introduced the co-payment for the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme? It was Labor. Yet when we try to make something sustainable that is going to last for decades to come, they criticise it. They have no credibility at all. Just look at the money they wasted on super clinics—trophy buildings that pinch doctors from other medical centres. They have not really delivered much at all when you analyse what they are criticising.

As that famous woman who ran Britain for more than a decade said: pennies do not fall from heaven; they have to be earned here on earth. The same applies to the health budget. Governments do not create money. They are given it by taxpayers and they hold it in trust to be used wisely and efficiently. Primary industries, secondary industries, service industries and people that create wealth then pay a portion of it to the government. But we have this school of magic-pudding economics where the government pays for everything that just rears its ugly pudding head again and again.

Labor have a PhD in economics in the member for Fraser, a doctor. I think he needs to tend to the sick health economics being applied. The health budget is in terminal decline and
maybe not even the good doctor could cure the health economic ills. The opposition does not seem to realise that it is not the universality that is being threatened; it is the long-term sustainability. Bulk-billing occurred 237 million times last year. Four out of every five visits to GPs were bulk-billed. That is $12.8 billion, a huge increase. There has been a 45 per cent increase in five years or 122 per cent in 10 years. Do they really think that is a sustainable course? It is simple home economics. People who have had to make their own way in life and do their own books the realise that sort of increase is not sustainable. For those that do have a healthcare card or for children, the co-payment occurs only 10 times or to a maximum of $70 in a year. Do we really think the four out of five people in Australia cannot afford $70? My electorate has more pensioners than any other electorate except for Hinkler. The reality is that most people are able to afford $7. After 10 visits or $70, it reverts back to bulk-billing.

The other mistruth that gets peddled around here is that we have already paid for our Medicare services. The Medicare payment only covers half, let alone accounts for the increase. Is the opposition going to propose putting up the Medicare levy by 122 per cent? Or are they going to put up general taxation revenue by 122 per cent to make it pay? No, they are not; they are just going to go to the magic pudding and borrow more money and take it away from general revenue, which will mean there will be no money for schools or bridges or roads.

The opposition want to have it all but they do not want to pay for it. We just need a giant reality check by the opposition to make them realise that what we are doing is what a sensible economic manager would do, which is what they did with the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and introduce a co-payment. It sends a message both to the orderers of the tests as well as to the consumers—so it is not just for patients. There is a whole cohort of my colleagues that have not had to be responsible for the costs they incur for their patients. (Time expired)

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

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (16:14): I wish to make a personal explanation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Dr LEIGH: Yes.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please proceed.

Dr LEIGH: In question time today the Prime Minister suggested that, at the last election, I campaigned for higher costs for Australians to visit a doctor. This is patently false. No-one in this House campaigned at the last election for a GP tax and it is false for the Prime Minister to continue making that claim in question time.

BILLS

Export Finance and Insurance Corporation Amendment (Direct Lending and Other Measures) Bill 2014

Second Reading

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

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): I call the Minister for Small Business. I understand he is in continuation.

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley—Minister for Small Business) (16:15): Yes. It was a gripping presentation of this legislative proposal prior to question time and if I could continue in its introduction I would be most grateful.

Mr Fitzgibbon interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister has the call. The minister will proceed.

Mr BILLSON: I am being encouraged to go over it all again. It is great for your electorate, it is great for our nation, it is great for SMEs that are either current exporters or prospective exporters growing export markets and creating jobs and opportunities for our country. That is what this bill is about. It is also deregulatory, so we can do a better, more effective job and achieve deregulation outcomes, and that is what this is about.

I was explaining how the amendment to remove the word 'capital' from the definition of 'eligible export transactions' will see 'capital goods' replaced simply with the term 'goods'. Ninety-five per cent of goods exported from Australia are currently exempt or outside the reach of the direct support that EFIC is able to provide. This amendment deals with that by seeking to remove the word 'capital'. As a result of that amendment, it will be deregulatory in that it will reduce the time exporters face in not only doing paper work but also in multiple efforts to get the initial guarantee from EFIC and to go on to secure the funding facility from a bank that doubles the due-diligence processing time and requires two sets of documentation and legal fees. That is why this measure is not only good for enhancing the effectiveness of EFIC but is also a deregulatory measure. That will have a real benefit to Australian SMEs looking to secure export opportunities.

For example, consider the case of the South Australian family owned paint manufacturer Astec Paints. In recent years Astec Paints has been experiencing increased demand in Japan for its innovative paint products. The company's elastomeric paints, which are designed and manufactured in Adelaide, meet Japan's strict earthquake resistant building codes, giving them a competitive edge in the market. Thanks to the elimination of all tariffs on paint products under the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement, the company anticipates that strong demand and strong growth will be there for its products in the Japanese market and that this will continue.

To meet this demand, Astec required additional working capital to scale up its production to be able to secure that delicious opportunity that it had identified. Although Astec's bank was supportive of their growth plans, it was unable to assist without additional security. EFIC stepped in to provide a $600,000 export working capital guarantee to Astec's bank. This allowed the bank to provide the funds that Astec required. However, under the current arrangements Astec had to make two separate applications—one to EFIC and another to their bank. As a result, they had to pay two sets of lender fees and charges.

Another EFIC client, PCT Global, manufactures EnduroShield, an easy clean surface treatment. This product was recently used to coat the spire of the new World Trade Centre building in New York. PCT also produces home do-it-yourself kits, which it distributes domestically through Bunnings Warehouse. The DIY product was recently featured as one of
Time magazine's top 10 most compelling products. Building on this success, PCT secured a multimillion dollar supply agreement with Home Depot in the United States, the world's largest home improvement retailer. PCT needed additional working capital to expand production, but their bank was unable to provide further assistance. In response, EFIC worked with PCT's bank to provide a US$650,000 working capital guarantee facility. This enabled PCT to meet the increased demand for this business changing contract. However, without the benefits of the proposed deregulatory measures, PCT faced additional fees, interest charges and administrative costs to secure the guarantee facility and to secure the export opportunities and the growth and jobs dividend for our economy.

These are just a couple of examples of how these changes will assist Australian SMEs and why this is such an important amendment to EFIC's direct lending arrangements. However, to ensure that these changes do not bring EFIC into direct competition with private sector financiers, the government has decided to apply competitive neutrality principles. This also implements the recommendation on competitive neutrality in the 2012 Productivity Commission report on Australia's export credit arrangements. To achieve this, this bill provides for EFIC to pay a debt neutrality charge and a tax equivalent payment. This will allow EFIC to help commercially viable exporters overcome financial barriers without discouraging or displacing private sector participation in the market.

In conclusion, the amendments in this bill will be of particular benefit to small and medium sized businesses, the engine room of our economy, while at the same time aligning with and contributing to the government's commitment to reduce business compliance costs by $1 billion per annum. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Acts and Instruments (Framework Reform) Bill 2014

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Keenan.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (16:22): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am very pleased to introduce the Acts and Instruments (Framework Reform) Bill 2014 into the parliament. The bill seeks to improve the operation and clarity of legislative frameworks for Commonwealth acts and instruments. It is an important deregulatory measure that will create administrative efficiencies across government while enhancing the public accessibility of Commonwealth laws.

The key purpose of the bill is to reform the Legislative Instruments Act 2003.

The Legislative Instruments Act came into force in 2005 and provides a comprehensive regime for the registration, tabling, scrutiny and sunsetting—or automatic repeal—of Commonwealth legislative instruments.

It ensures that members of the public, businesses, regulatory agencies, lawyers and courts can easily access complete and authoritative legislative instruments and their explanatory
statements on the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments. This is an important mechanism for ensuring access to justice.

In 2008, a statutory review of the Legislative Instruments Act was conducted by a committee comprising two senior members of the Commonwealth Public Service and the then Commonwealth Ombudsman. The committee consulted a broad range of stakeholders, with the release of an issues paper and over 60 responses to that paper. The committee also held extensive meetings with interested stakeholders.

The review found that the Legislative Instruments Act had been largely successful in improving public access and facilitating parliamentary scrutiny of legislative instruments. It also found that a number of improvements could be made to the scheme and released a number of recommendations.

Following the review, measures have been implemented to strengthen the legislative instruments framework.

There has been a significant amount of work to manage the sunsetting of legislative instruments across the Commonwealth. This has included the government's efforts over both Repeal Days this year to repeal over 10,000 spent and redundant legislative instruments from the statute books.

The sunsetting of older legislative instruments also presents a unique opportunity for the government to reduce red tape, deliver clearer and simpler laws, and align existing legislation with current government policy.

Technical enhancements have been made to the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments to ensure a high level of performance and useability and to support the sunsetting of legislative instruments.

Further, the Attorney-General's Department and the Office of Parliamentary Counsel have issued new guidance materials to help Commonwealth rule makers and agencies to manage their legislative instruments efficiently, effectively and in accordance with the law.

But there is still more work that we can do to enhance access to instruments and to improve the efficiency and operation of the scheme. Some of this work follows the recommendations of the review, and some of it comes from the experience gained by the passage of time with the scheme now in place for almost 10 years.

This bill seeks to simplify and consolidate legislative frameworks for the publication of Commonwealth acts and the registration of Commonwealth instruments into a single act. The bill will implement this change by renaming the Legislative Instruments Act the Legislation Act 2003 and repealing the Acts Publication Act 1905.

The current database of Commonwealth Acts and the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments, which are both accessed through ComLaw, will be integrated into a single register called the Federal Register of Legislation. Importantly, this Register will provide users with the ability to access other documents and information relevant to Commonwealth laws.

There are other types of instruments made by the Commonwealth that are not made as legislative instruments as they are not legislative in character. These instruments do not currently need to be published on the Federal Register. Historically, many of these
instruments were published in paper form only. Over time, there have been efforts to ensure that instruments are published electronically and able to be accessed by users online.

The problem is that instruments are published in many different places, including in various government gazettes, on agency websites or portals and in newspapers. This makes it difficult for users to find these instruments or to even be aware that they exist. It also places a burden on agencies to manage their stock of instruments and ensure that they have adequate infrastructure in place to support the publication of these instruments.

The bill helps to address this problem. It expands the scope of the legislative instruments framework to cover a new category of instruments, called notifiable instruments. This means that instruments which are not legislative in character can also be registered on the centrally managed and authoritative Federal Register of Legislation, which will allow them to be more readily publicised and accessed.

These amendments will align the processes for registration, compilations and authorised versions for acts and a broader range of instruments. The amendments will also enable the First Parliamentary Counsel to make minor editorial changes in preparing registered compilations of acts and instruments that do not change the effect of the legislation.

These amendments will produce administrative efficiencies across government.

Consistent with the government's deregulation agenda and efforts to promote clearer and simpler laws, the bill will enable bulk amendments or repeals arising from the thematic review of instruments to be made more quickly and simply. In consultation with the relevant rule makers, the Attorney-General will be able to advise the Governor-General to make a single instrument that would give effect to such a review across government portfolios.

The bill will help clarify and better define legislative instruments and legislative character to ensure that instruments are made in their appropriate form and able to be enforceable by registration as legislative instruments on the Register.

It will move certain content from the act to regulations to help consolidate detail that may be more suitably placed in delegated legislation and which may need to be updated regularly.

It will also allow the First Parliamentary Counsel to make rules about matters for the purpose of meeting his or her obligation to maintain a consistent, accurate and up-to-date Register.

This mechanism will facilitate a level of procedural detail that may not be appropriate for including in the act or the regulations. The rules will be a legislative instrument, which means that they will be subject to parliamentary oversight.

The bill also clarifies consultation requirements for the drafting of legislative instruments to ensure that the requirement of rule makers to undertake appropriate consultation applies equally to instruments that affect business and competition and those that do not.

Further, the bill will remove transitional mechanisms for dealing with instruments made before the Legislative Instruments scheme was introduced in 2005. It will amend numerous other acts to make clear in enabling legislation that certain instruments are legislative or notifiable instruments for the purpose of the Legislation Act and update references to repealed provisions of the Acts Interpretation Act 1901 and the repealed Statutory Rules Publication Act 1905 to relevant provisions in the Legislation Act.
Consequently, the bill repeals the Legislative Instruments (Transitional Provisions and Consequential Amendments) Act 2003, which will become redundant.

The bill will also amend other acts to convert gazettal or other publication requirements into requirements to register an instrument on the federal register where this would be appropriate or would reflect current practice.

Certain provisions on the statute book that provide an implied power to make an instrument will be updated to expressly confer a power to make an instrument. This will not change the effect of those provisions but will remove any doubt about whether such provisions are effective in conferring power.

The bill will repeal section 46B of the Acts Interpretation Act, which provides for non-legislative disallowable instruments and makes consequential amendments to laws that provide for these instruments. This will reduce the number of disallowable regimes for instruments, encourage a reduction in separate gazettal procedures and enhance the status of the federal register as a central repository and authoritative source of Commonwealth legislative instruments.

Finally, the bill will amend the Acts Interpretation Act to expand and simplify the provisions dealing with machinery of government changes.

The amendments will broaden the rules for interpreting references to ministers and departments in legislation, and for interpreting references to authorities in agreements entered into by or on behalf of the Commonwealth.

This will provide much legal certainty for the ongoing valid exercise of powers and functions immediately following machinery of government changes.

The bill will not alter the processes for the consideration of bills and legislative instruments by parliament. The measures in the bill will not substantially alter the way in which acts are handled under the existing publication regime.

This bill provides the opportunity for significant reforms to the legislative frameworks for Commonwealth acts and instruments. It will create administrative efficiencies across the government, helping to reduce 'beige tape' which can cause large impost on government agencies. It will also facilitate efforts to reduce red tape. More importantly, this bill will promote the principle of access to justice by enhancing the accessibility of Commonwealth laws. I, therefore, commend it to the House.

Debate adjourned.
This government is committed to supporting Australian businesses through cutting red tape and improving energy productivity to deliver positive outcomes for all Australians.

The Commercial Building Disclosure Program, supported by the Building Energy Efficiency Disclosure Act 2010, continues to represent one of the most cost-effective opportunities to reduce the use of energy in commercial buildings and improve productivity across the sector.

Since its commencement in November 2011, the CBD Program has transformed the commercial property market. Office buildings with better energy efficiency ratings consistently deliver greater returns for investors, and energy efficiency is now considered a normal part of commercial property transactions.

Commercial building and energy efficiency stakeholders have been actively engaged in the CBD Program and continue to support its important role in driving energy productivity across Australia's property sector.

The Building Energy Efficiency Disclosure Amendment Bill I bring before you today has been generated in response to requests from industry stakeholders since the inception of the CBD Program. It contains a number of improvements to the original act that will streamline the administration and reduce the regulatory burden on business.

The bill will enable building owners to respond to unsolicited offers—and uninvited requests to sell or lease office space—without having a Building Energy Efficiency Certificate in place.

The bill will allow businesses the ability to nominate a commencement date for a Building Energy Efficiency Certificate (BEEC) which is later than the date of issue. This will provide greater flexibility for businesses wishing to proactively maintain current BEECs for their property portfolios.

The bill will remove the need for new owners and lessors to reapply or pay the application fee for fresh exemptions if there is a valid one in place for a building, and it will allow transactions between wholly owned subsidiaries to be excluded from the disclosure obligations.

Finally, the bill will remove the requirement for pages of standard energy efficiency guidance text on the BEEC. Instead, building owners will be able to access live and interactive online information about improving energy efficiency for their individual office buildings.

All up, the bill will lead to an estimated $600,000 worth of reduction in regulatory burden on businesses. I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Corporations Legislation Amendment (Deregulatory and Other Measures) Bill 2014

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr McCormack.

Bill read a first time.
Second Reading

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (16:37): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Today, I introduce a bill that will streamline and repeal provisions in the Corporations Act 2001 and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001 to improve the operation of Australian businesses and government processes.

I am proud to introduce this bill today, on this the lead-up to the second repeal day and the introduction of legislation thereof, as it reinforces the government's commitment to reducing regulation on business. I cannot emphasise strongly enough how excessive and unnecessary regulation reduces productivity and investment, stifles job creation, creates uncertainty and damages investor confidence.

This bill reflects the paradigm shift that is currently underway in Australia's approach to regulation. Rather than introducing new standards, new rules and new compliance burdens as the default option, the government is taking the opportunity to identify regulation that can be done better, regulation that business has told us can be improved, regulation that can help Australian businesses provide the goods and services that the Australian people need.

This bill represents the whole-of-government approach to deregulation and a significant change in the culture of regulating businesses.

All of the amendments contained in the bill that I am introducing today have been carefully assessed to ensure that they are the most efficient way to regulate business, and that the benefits clearly outweigh the costs on business.

The amendments contained in this bill are collectively estimated to reduce business compliance costs by around $14 million per year.

Schedule 1 to this bill makes a number of amendments to the Corporations Act 2001 to reduce the costs and improve the efficiency of businesses operating in Australia.

Firstly, it seeks to strike a better balance between the interests of minority shareholders and shareholders as a whole.

Currently, directors of a company must arrange a general meeting, paid for by the company, at the request of shareholders with a total of five per cent of voting shares or 100 shareholders with voting rights.

In large corporations, 100 shareholders may represent a very small percentage of total shareholders. For large listed companies in particular, this often works out to be less than one per cent. Historically, resolutions proposed by 100 members have generally not come close to achieving the 50 per cent support needed for a successful vote at a general meeting.

The bill removes the ability for 100 shareholders with voting rights to call a general meeting. It is unacceptable that business and shareholders must continue to foot the bill for these general meetings.

The bill retains the right for shareholders with five per cent of voting rights to require a general meeting be called, ensuring that decisions of directors about the company remain subject to scrutiny.
Importantly, the bill does not alter the rights of 100 shareholders to put forward resolutions for the agenda of a general meeting or to circulate material to other shareholders. In this way, small shareholders can continue to have their voices heard but in a way that does not impose an unreasonable cost on the company or other shareholders.

Secondly, the bill improves the disclosure of executive remuneration information in Australia by ensuring that companies are only required to provide information that shareholders need, and by recognising that unlisted companies should not have to prepare a remuneration report.

Users of remuneration reports have indicated to government that the reports contained some information that was of limited or no use to shareholders or duplicated information found elsewhere in the annual report. This imposes costs on business for no benefit.

Currently, disclosing entities that are companies must provide information on the value and number of options that have lapsed in the current year, as well as the percentage value of remuneration that consists of options for all key management personnel.

Users of remuneration reports have indicated that information on the value of lapsed options is of limited use to shareholders. Information on the proportion of remuneration comprising of options can be deduced from information contained elsewhere in the company reports. Accordingly, these disclosures are not needed.

The bill removes the requirement for the remuneration report to include this information and will instead include the number of options granted to key management personnel that lapse during the financial year, and the year in which these options were granted.

Further, all disclosing entities that are companies are currently required to prepare a remuneration report, regardless of whether they are listed or unlisted.

The remuneration report is simply not relevant for unlisted disclosing entities. Unlike listed entities, they are not required to have their remuneration report adopted by shareholders through a non-binding resolution and are not subject to the 'two-strikes' test that allows shareholders concerned with executive remuneration to vote to 'spill' the board under certain circumstances.

Accordingly, this bill relieves unlisted disclosing entities from having to prepare a remuneration report.

Thirdly, the bill clarifies when entities, including companies, can change their year-end dates.

In 2010, amendments were made that were intended to make it easier for directors to change financial year-end dates. However, these amendments led to confusion about the situations in which this flexibility could be used.

The bill will put beyond doubt the conditions under which directors can determine that a financial year is to be shorter than 12 months by more than seven days.

Finally, schedule 1 to the bill removes the requirement for certain companies limited by guarantee to appoint an auditor.

Currently, all public companies are required to appoint an auditor even if they are not required to conduct a full audit of their financial reports.

This unnecessarily imposes a cost on business.
This change is expected to predominately benefit companies with a not-for-profit focus, including sports and recreation related organisations, community service organisations, education-related institutions and religious organisations. It will ensure that these organisations can focus on providing services for the community, rather than wasting money on needless red tape.

Schedule 2 to this bill amends the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001 to improve the efficiency of government processes, reflecting the government's commitment to seeking opportunities to improve efficiencies in all spheres.

It firstly improves the efficiency of the operation of the Takeovers Panel.

The Takeovers Panel is the primary forum for resolving disputes about a takeover bid until the bid period has ended.

The current application provisions of the ASIC Act can be interpreted to mean that the Takeovers Panel can only operate if members are physically located in Australia.

Panel members typically hold senior roles in banks, law firms and significant corporations, and may be required to travel to fulfil their professional obligations. As a result, panel members may be prevented from performing panel functions whilst they are outside of Australia, potentially reducing the efficiency with which applications to the panel can be dealt with.

The bill will allow panel members to perform panel functions while in Australia as well as overseas. However, it will not alter the substantive powers of the panel.

Making government bodies operate more efficiently will assist business and, in this case, facilitate the speedy resolution of disputes.

Schedule 2 of the bill also extends the remuneration setting responsibility of the Remuneration Tribunal.

Currently the Assistant Treasurer, as the responsible minister for these provisions, must determine the remuneration, terms and conditions of the chairs and members of the Financial Reporting Council, and the chairs of the Australian Accounting Standards Board and the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board.

The remuneration, terms and conditions of the members of the standards setting boards are currently determined by the Financial Reporting Council.

The Remuneration Tribunal, however, is an independent, specialist body responsible for the remuneration setting of other public offices.

The bill extends the remuneration-setting responsibility of the Remuneration Tribunal to include the Financial Reporting Council, the Australian Accounting Standards Board and the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board. This ensures that the relevant remuneration, terms and conditions are consistent across government and that less taxpayer-funded time is spent on inefficient government processes.

In conclusion, this is an important package of amendments, with benefits that will be felt right across the community.

The amendments contained in this bill are collectively estimated to reduce business compliance costs by around $14 million per year.
There was extensive public and targeted consultation on the measures contained in this bill to ensure that we got these amendments right.

This bill received strong support when released for consultation.

Full details of these measures are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

Finally, I can inform the House that the Legislation and Governance Forum for Corporations was consulted in relation to the amendments and has approved them as required under the Corporations Agreement.

Debate adjourned.

Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr McCormack.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (16:47): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The government is committed to cutting red tape costs by $1 billion a year to improve our nation's competitiveness, help to create more jobs and lower household costs. This is a critical step towards improving Australia's productivity.

'Red tape', which is an umbrella term for excessive and unnecessary regulation, reduces productivity and investment, stifles job creation, creates uncertainty and saps confidence. Red tape prevents business from getting on with the job, and places heavy demands on the community's time and resources that could better be spent elsewhere.

It goes without saying therefore that reducing red tape across the economy will create an enormous opportunity to increase Australia's productivity and competitiveness.

Deregulation—the process of eliminating red tape—needs a whole-of-government approach to tackling excessive or unnecessary regulations, no matter how big. The goal is long-term cultural change, from the bureaucracy to the ministry, for the betterment of the community.

We want to see a paradigm shift in Australia's approach to regulation, whereby new standards, rules and compliance burdens are never used as the default option, but are only introduced as a last resort and only after alternatives have been assessed and the cost of new regulation fully understood.

We also want a renewed focus on ensuring that existing regulation is as efficient as possible, and is only retained where the benefits clearly outweigh the costs.

The government's deregulation efforts are therefore focused on a number of key areas including actively reducing the volume of regulation.

Following on from the first repeal day, on 26 March 2014, the government has continued its commitment to repeal counterproductive, unnecessary and redundant legislation and regulations.
Our reforms to drive red tape reduction across government are also paying dividends in streamlining administration.

On 20 June 2014 the government announced administrative changes to the entry thresholds for the pay-as-you-go instalments system, reducing the number of taxpayers required to pay instalments. The thresholds, which had not been reviewed since 2001-02, were changed as follows:

- the business or investment income threshold increased from $2,000 to $4,000;
- the balance of assessment threshold increased from $500 to $1,000;
- the notional tax threshold increased from $250 to $500; and
- the requirement for entities registered for goods and services tax to remain in the system despite having a zero instalment rate was removed.

The Australian Taxation Office has estimated that this will remove more than 560,000 taxpayers from the PAYG instalments system and lead to annual savings of $67.3 million in compliance costs.

On 18 August 2014 the government announced its chosen model for transforming the existing Australian Small Business Commissioner into a Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman will be a Commonwealth-wide advocate for small businesses and family enterprises and contribute to the development of small business friendly Commonwealth laws and regulations.

The Ombudsman will also provide a concierge service to help small businesses resolve disputes fairly and efficiently.

On 21 August 2014 the government implemented changes to the SuperStream regulations to remove the requirement for employers to use a unique 'payment reference number' when making superannuation contributions.

Removing this provision allows employers and funds to retain existing payment processes and ensures balances are allocated to member accounts in a timely fashion. This has been estimated to lead to an annual saving of $3.8 million in compliance costs.

Today, as we introduce legislation ahead of the government's second repeal day—next Wednesday, 29 October—we are building on these initiatives to cut red tape.

This bill—one of a number of bills introduced today—forms part of our whole-of-government commitment to repeal counterproductive, unnecessary and redundant legislation and consequently removing associated regulations.

This bill amends various laws relating to taxation, superannuation and shareholdings in certain financial sector companies to implement a range of improvements to Australia's laws.

Schedule 1 to this bill will repeal the payslip reporting provisions in the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 that would have increased the regulatory burden on employers beyond that currently imposed under the Fair Work legislation.

There are existing requirements in the Fair Work Act 2009 and the Fair Work Regulations 2009 that require employers to include on payslips the amount of superannuation
contributions they are liable to make. This bill will not make any change to these existing requirements.

The current payslip reporting provisions in the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 require employers to include in employee payslips information prescribed by the regulations. Labor had intended that regulations be made so that employers had to report on payslips the amount of superannuation contributions and the date on which the employer expects to pay them. Labor never made these regulations.

Removing these provisions will reduce unnecessary duplication in the law and provide certainty to employers so they do not need to be preparing for costly upgrades to their payslip reporting software.

Schedule 2 to this bill simplifies the taxation laws by consolidating duplicated taxation administration provisions contained in various taxation acts into a single set of provisions in the Taxation Administration Act 1953.

Schedule 2 to this bill also repeals spent or redundant taxation laws, such as the older harsh penalty regimes, and moves longstanding regulations into the primary law. Tidying up our tax laws in line with good legislative practices is an important part of the care and maintenance of our tax system.

Schedule 3 to this bill amends the Financial Sector (Shareholdings) Act 1998 so that persons who do not hold a direct control interest in a financial sector company will no longer be deemed to have a stake in that financial sector company as a consequence of their associates' direct control interest.

Currently the law requires the associates of a person, such as a person's relatives, partner or related companies, who is seeking a shareholding in excess of 15 per cent to also seek approval from the Treasurer for the shareholding.

This is required irrespective of whether an associate has any actual shareholding or financial interest in the company in which the new shareholding is sought.

These associates are caught by the wide definition of associate under the Financial Sector (Shareholdings) Act 1998 which requires them to undertake this action for no policy benefit.

The changes in this bill remove an unnecessary burden for associates with no direct interest in the company without compromising the examination of a shareholder's controlling interest. Associates will no longer be caught in a technical trap that requires them to hold approval from the Treasurer under the Financial Sector (Shareholdings) Act 1998.

Schedule 4 to this bill addresses the fact that, currently, the definition of 'Australia' for taxation purposes is complex, overly detailed and expressed differently in different parts of the taxation laws, despite the fact that the laws are intended to achieve a simple and largely equivalent result.

Schedule 4 rewrites the definition of 'Australia' into a single location in the tax law for use across all the tax laws in a simple and coherent form.

This will involve amending various tax laws, taking another step towards achieving a single income tax assessment act for Australia.

In conclusion, these changes will improve the operation of tax law and remove unnecessary red tape from the superannuation law and shareholder regulatory framework.
Combined with our reforms that are driving regulators and the public service to cut red and green tape, these changes add up.

Removing even small grains of sand from an engine allows the whole machine to operate more efficiently.

In the same way, progressively removing individual pieces of unnecessary red tape and regulation, and making our laws simpler and shorter, plays an important role in helping Australia's economy become more efficient.

As we approach our second Repeal Day, we are building on the progress we have already made—right across government—to cut red and green tape.

Full details of these measures are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

I thank the House.

Debate adjourned.

Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (16:55): I move:

The question be put.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell) (16:56): The question is that the question be now put.

The House divided. [17:00]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Mitchell)

Ayes ....................83
Noes .....................52
Majority...............31

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Andrews, KL
Baldwin, RC
Billson, BF
Bishop, JI
Briggs, JE
Broad, AJ
Broadbent, RE
Brough, MT
Buchholz, S (teller)
Chester, D
Christensen, GR
Cirobo, SM
Cobb, JK
Coleman, DB
Coulton, M (teller)
Dutton, PC
Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gambaro, T
Gillespie, DA
Goodenough, IR
Griggs, NL
Hartley, L
Hawke, AG
Henderson, SM
Hendy, PW
Hogan, KJ
Howarth, LR
Hunt, GA
AYS
Hutchinson, ER
Jensen, DG
Joyce, BT
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Macfarlane, IE
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O'Dowd, KD
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Ramsey, RE
Robb, AJ
Roy, WB
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Southcott, AJ
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX
Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG

Irons, SJ
Jones, ET
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
McNamara, KJ
Nikolic, AA
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Randall, DJ
Ruddock, PM
Scott, FM
Smith, ADH
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Truss, WE
Turnbull, MB
Varvaris, N
Whiteley, BD
Williams, MP
Wood, JP

NOES
Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G
Burke, AS
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Fitzgibbon, JA
Gray, G
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
Leigh, AK
MacTiernan, AJGC
Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Perrett, GD
Ripoll, BF
Rowland, MA
Snowdon, WE
Thistlethwaite, MJ

Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burke, AE
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Elliot, MJ
Feeney, D
Giles, AJ
Hall, JG (teller)
Husic, EN
King, CF
Macklin, JL
McGowan, C
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Pilibhersek, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Swan, WM
Thomson, KJ
Question agreed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell) (17:11): The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

The House divided. [17:12]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Mitchell)

Ayes ................. 84
Noes .................. 52
Majority .............. 32

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S (teller)
Christensen, GR
Cob, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Griggs, NL
Hawke, AG
Hendy, PW
Howarth, LR
Hutchinson, ER
Jensen, DG
Joyce, BT
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
McNamara, KJ
Nikolic, AA
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Randall, DJ
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, FM
Smith, ADH
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Truss, WE

NOES

Vamvakinou, M
Wilkie, AD
Watts, TG
Zappia, A

Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Bishop, JI
Broad, AJ
Brough, MT
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coleman, DB
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Gambaro, T
Goodenough, IR
Hartsuyker, L
Henderson, SM
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ
Jones, ET
Katter, RC
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Macfarlane, IE
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O'Dowd, KD
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Ramsey, RE
Robb, AJ
Roy, WB
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Southcott, AJ
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
AYES

Turnbull, MB
Varvaris, N
Whiteley, BD
Williams, MP
Wood, JP

Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX
Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bird, SL
Bowen, CE
Brodtmann, G
Burke, AE
Burke, AS
Byrne, MC
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Champion, ND
Chesters, LM
Clare, JD
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM
Conroy, PM
Darby, M
Dreyfus, MA
Elliott, MJ
Ellisa, KM
Feeney, D
Fitzgibbon, JA
Giles, AJ
Gray, G
Hall, JG (teller)
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Jones, SP
King, CF
Leigh, AK
Macklin, IL
MacTiernan, AJGC
McGowan, C
Neumann, SK
O’Connor, BPJ
O’Neil, CE
Owens, J
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Ripoll, BF
Rishworth, AL
Rowland, MA
Ryan, JC (teller)
Snowdon, WE
Swan, WM
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Thomson, KJ
Vamvakinou, M
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

Question agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (17:15): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Migration Amendment (Character and General Visa Cancellation) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.
Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (17:16): I rise to speak in support of the Migration Amendment (Character and General Visa Cancellation) Bill 2014. This bill is designed to strengthen character and general visa cancellation provisions to ensure that noncitizens who commit crimes in Australia and pose a risk to the Australian community or represent an integrity concern are appropriately considered for visa refusal or cancellation. The proposed changes in this bill represent the first significant update of the visa cancellation provisions since the inception of the act and are necessary to ensure current constraints are rectified when it comes to administering the character requirements of the Migration Act.

We recognise that government must have the capacity to act quickly against noncitizens who pose a threat or seek to do harm in our country. These proposed changes are necessary to protect the public through enhancing the capacity to refuse or cancel a visa for a noncitizen seeking to enter or remain in Australia. It is imperative that we have an immigration system that is equipped to be able to easily identify people who seek to come to this country yet who fail the character test and in that respect pose a threat or risk to Australian citizens.

A number of changes contained in this bill arise from the review of the character and general visa cancellation framework—the review—conducted by the department of immigration in 2013. It is important to state that these changes will have no impact on the vast majority of those seeking to visit Australia. It is essential that we have a network that is able to efficiently process those seeking to visit Australia, while ensuring the system has the capacity to prevent people who fail the character test from entering or staying.

One area this bill seeks to address is a deficiency in the information sharing between the federal government and the states and territories. The bill provides greater power to the Commonwealth to obtain information from the states and territories, with more information about visa holders that will provide for a more rigorous assessment of visa applicants and broader grounds for not passing the character test.

The bill outlines amendments to the general visa cancellation provisions in sections 116 and 109 of the act, to enhance measures for dealing with noncitizens who present an integrity, identity or fraud risk; introduces lower thresholds for cancelling temporary visas, reflective of the lower tolerance for behaviour concerns in the temporary visa context; and introduces stronger ministerial decision-making powers in relation to the general visa cancellation provisions.

In order to quicken the process of visa cancellation, an effective reversal of the onus of proof has been put in place in respect of visa cancellations where a noncitizen is serving a full-time sentence of imprisonment and is found to objectively not pass the character test. It is important to note that the changes in section 501 relating to the character test and those in section 116 relating to the general visa cancellation provisions are discretionary, except the mandatory cancellation power which gives effect to the onus reversal that I have just described.

The minister or decision maker is not compelled to make a certain decision. However, these changes mean that there are more circumstances in which people are in the frame for their visa to be cancelled. This legislation provides an increase in the decision-making power of the minister and, as a result, gives greater authority to the minister. Accordingly, there is an expectation that this increased power will be exercised in a manner consistent with the intention of the legislation.
The bill seeks to expand the powers of the minister to require the head of an agency, state or territory to disclose to the minister personal information that is relevant to whether a person passes the character test and the possible refusal or cancellation of a visa under section 501. Currently the information-sharing capabilities between state and territory agencies and the minister are informal.

The bill also seeks to broaden the existing grounds for not passing the character test. Under the bill, the existing grounds would be broadened to include the following. Where there is a reasonable suspicion that a person has been or is a member of a group or organisation, or has had or has an association with a group or organisation or person, that has been or is involved in criminal conduct. Currently this test requires that a person actually be aware of the criminal conduct of the group or organisation. Where a noncitizen has been convicted of a crime or crimes and they have received sentences totalling 12 months rather than 24 months, regardless of how that total is reached, including serving these sentences concurrently. Currently a person fails the character test if the person has had one sentence of 12 months or a number of sentences totalling 24 months. Where there is a reasonable suspicion that the person has been or is involved in conduct constituting an offence of people smuggling or an offence of trafficking in persons as described in the Migration Act, or the crime of genocide, a crime against humanity, a war crime, a crime involving torture or slavery, or a crime that is otherwise of serious international concern, whether or not the person or another person has been convicted of an offence constituted by the conduct. Currently the test requires that a person has actually been convicted of such an offence. Circumstances where a person has, in Australia or in a foreign country, been charged or indicted for one or more of the crimes of genocide, a crime against humanity, a war crime, a crime involving torture or slavery, or a crime that is otherwise of serious international concern. This would ensure that such people come within the ambit of the character test, even if the penalty were less than 12 months imprisonment. Circumstances where a court, in Australia or in a foreign country, has convicted a person of one or more sexually based offences involving a child or proved such a charge against a person. This would ensure that such people come within the ambit of the character test even if the penalty were less than 12 months imprisonment where it is regarded that there is a risk a person will engage in criminal activity and the like as opposed to a significant risk. Circumstances where a person has an adverse ASIO assessment. Circumstances where an Interpol notice in relation to the person is in force, from which it is reasonable to infer that the person would present a risk to the Australian community or a segment of that community. Circumstances where a person is mentally unfit to plead but has been found to have committed an offence and as a result has been detained in a facility or an institution. This extends the current provision, which provides for a failure of the character test for persons who have been acquitted on the ground of insanity yet have been found to have committed an offence and detained in a facility.

The bill contains provisions which apply to the general visa cancellation powers under sections 109 and 116 of the act. These provisions seek to lower the threshold for the cancellation of temporary visas. Until now, this cohort has been considered against the same higher threshold tests that apply under the character test provisions in section 501 of the act which pertain to permanent visa holders. These provisions also clarify the current framework, which states that a minister may cancel a visa where a decision to grant the visa was based wholly or partly on a particular fact or circumstance that no longer exists or that never
existed. This part of the bill also seeks to clarify existing provisions that the minister may cancel a visa under section 116(1)(e) if the presence of its holder in Australia is or may be or would or might be a risk to the health, safety or good order of the Australian community, a segment of the Australian community or the health or safety of an individual or individuals. This makes clear that it is enough that an individual Australian, rather than a broader segment of the community, may be at risk. It also makes clear that potential risk as opposed to demonstrated risk is enough to activate the power.

The proposed legislation also inserts a new ground into section 116 for cancellation of a visa if the minister is not satisfied as to the visa holder's identity. These provisions also seek to insert a new ground into section 116 for cancellation of a visa if the minister is satisfied that incorrect information was given by or on behalf of the visa beholder as part of a relevant statutory process and that information was taken into account in the visa being granted.

The provisions also introduce personal ministerial powers such as they exist under the character test grounds to set aside and substitute decisions of delegates and tribunals and to cancel a visa personally on the grounds under section 109 or section 116 with or without natural justice where it is in the public interest to do so. This is to ensure that, where there is a real and immediate risk posed by a non-citizen, the government can act swiftly to remove that person before the risk is realised.

The bill seeks to insert a new mandatory ground for cancellation of a visa where a person does not pass the character test, because the person has a serious criminal record as newly defined in the act and is serving a full-time sentence in prison. Where this provision applies, an effective reversal of onus is put in place. That is, the visa will be mandatorily cancelled without notice, a cancellation notice will be provided after the fact, upon notification the non-citizen will be provided an opportunity to seek revocation of the decision and, where the decision is not revoked, the non-citizen will have access to merits review. These provisions will help expedite the process of cancelling a person's visa who fails the character test and ultimately expedite deportation upon release from prison. It will also ensure that, where such processes are not complete upon the expiration of the person's prison sentence, there is an ability to have the person placed in immigration detention rather than be released into the community.

The amendments contained within this bill are intended to provide the government with the capacity to protect the community from non-citizens who pose a risk or threat. The amendments will provide for the capacity to ensure a more rigorous system will be in place to act on those failing the character test and integrity standards the community would expect of non-citizens who wish to visit or live in Australia.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (17:26): I move:

That the question be now put.

Question agreed to.

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

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.
Third Reading

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (17:27): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

BUSINESS

Consideration of Legislation

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Social Services) (17:28): On behalf of the Leader of the House, I move:

That, in relation to proceedings on the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Seniors Supplement Cessation) Bill 2014, the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (2014 Budget Measures No. 4) Bill 2014 and the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Student Measures) Bill 2014, so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the following from occurring:

(1) the resumption of debate on the second readings of the bills being called on together;

(2) at the conclusion of the second reading debate, not including a Minister speaking in reply, or 75 minutes after the resumption of the second reading debate, whichever is the earlier, a Minister being called to sum up the second reading debate and then without delay one question being put on any amendments moved to motions for the second readings and one question being put on the second readings of the bills together;

(3) if the second readings of the bills have been agreed to, messages from the Governor-General recommending appropriations for the bills being announced together;

(4) the consideration in detail stages, if required, on the bills being taken together for a period not exceeding 30 minutes at which time any questions necessary to complete the detail stage being put;

(5) at the conclusion of the detail stage, one question being put on the third readings of the bills together; and

(6) any variation to this arrangement being made only by a motion moved by a Minister.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (17:29): We have another example now of the government curtailing and stifling debate within this parliament. We have significant legislation before us which has a very real impact on the lives of some of the more vulnerable Australians. The intention from the government is to crunch this through at the time where, to anyone's knowledge, there does not even appear to be a deal they have cut before the Senate.

So let's not pretend that this is the government rushing something through this House because they need to get it into law through the other place. What we are seeing right now is a government of stifling debate for one purpose and one purpose only, they do not want the case to be made. The reason the government is shutting down debate on this bill is they don't want there to be a debate in the people's house about the impact of this legislation. The reason that the government is shutting down this debate is because they do not want Labor members to have the opportunity to give the speeches that Liberal members are too scared to give—and that is to call this government out for the unfairness of the measures in the budget.
It is an exact extension of what we saw in question time—an exact extension where this
government knows that they have brought forward a budget where those of us who represent
electorates which are not at the wealthier end of Australian society have been hit in a way that
the electorates of the Prime Minister and the Treasurer have not. And that is not simply a
problem for members in this parliament who are members of the Labor Party. It is not simply
an issue for us. Yes, the person who is most affected in terms of electorates is the member for
Blaxland. The community second most affected is my own. But electorates within this
chamber—the member for Reid, sitting there at the back, his electorate is one of the ones—
have been harshly treated by this budget in a way that the electorates of the Prime Minister
and the Treasurer have not.

It is one thing for the government to want to come in here with something that is nothing
more than straight out and out unfairness, where they have not simply made a decision about
what you might call fiscal consolidation; they have made a decision that the poorer you are,
the more you will contribute to it. They have made an up-front decision that the burden here
will go to those who can least afford it. The poorer your electorate, the more your people are
hurt. The wealthier your electorate, the less the people are hurt. If there is a concept of class
war happening in this parliament, we know exactly where it is coming from—exactly where it
is coming from.

So it is no surprise that those opposite are doing what this government and this House
during this term had become addicted to doing, and that is shutting down debate, whether it is
moving that a member be no longer heard or moving that debate be brought to closure
altogether. Moving the closure of the debate in the first 11 months of the last parliament
happened once. In the first 11 months of this parliament it has happened on 48 occasions. Be
in no doubt, those opposite, as you move to shut down debate within this chamber on the
unfairness of the budget, you will not be able to shut down the debate that is happening out in
the community, because the community know exactly what this government is doing to them.
The community know the unfairness of a budget where the Prime Minister will only say: 'Oh,
look, we are trying to get things back to surplus. Oh, yes, it it's all about debt.' It is the same
debt they made unlimited the moment they came into office; the same deficit that they
doubled within a few months. What this is about is one very simple thing: taking more the
from people who can afford it less. That is what the budget does. You can look electorate by
electorate and the story is clear. The two people who are up to their necks in this budget are
representing the two electorates of the privileged where they hardly get touched, and that is
the electorates of the Prime Minister and the Treasurer.

The extraordinary thing that we heard today earlier in this chamber from the Prime
Minister is his unwillingness to admit that that is what they are doing. He wanted to maintain
an argument, 'Oh, but if you factor the carbon price into account, everything's different,'
without knowing that the carbon price was already factored in to every question that the
opposition asked today. There is no cover for the government in this. That is why they are
now resorting to the only potential cover they think they can find, and it is silence. It is to shut
down the debate in this House, even though they know they are not ready to hear it in the
other place.

They will have the numbers to shut down this debate in this House, and some of the people
representing electorates that deserve to have somebody stand up against this budget but who
sit on the other side I have no doubt will participate in voting for this debate to be silenced. Maybe that makes the situation a little bit easier when they return to their electorates, because no-one needs to ask about the speech that they did not get a chance to make. But be in no doubt: there is a debate throughout the community that the community understand what is happening. They understand the unfairness of this. They understand what these measures do and they will not be silenced. And we, when we are outside this chamber, will not be silenced. Within this chamber we will use every form of the House that is available to us. We will use it and we will use it relentlessly. But every time a motion like this is brought to the House and the debate in this chamber is silenced by a government that wants to make sure that counterviews are not heard, be in no doubt: the public know exactly what is going on. The public know how vulnerable people are being targeted. The public know what a cut in the pension looks like. The public know what cuts in family payments look like. The public know what putting your retirement age off looks like. The public know exactly what this government is doing and they and us will not be silenced.

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Social Services) (17:35): Contrary to the fantasy just concocted by the member for Watson, there is a very simple explanation to this, and it is that these matters have been debated before. The reality is that the substance of these three bills—and the one which you were happy to debate and deal with straight away when it was reintroduced—were exactly the substance of the two bills that have been debated at length in this place before. So this is a manic—

Mr Burke interjecting—

Mr ANDREWS: The member for Watson is too smart by half. He knows as well as anybody, having been the manager of business in this place, that this is in fact a mechanism in terms of actually moving with this legislation that has been debated. The two bills fully debated before in this place are now the four bills. If there were any substance whatsoever to what the member for Watson has just said, why was he prepared to come in here when the first of these four bills was introduced and move to have the debate and finish that debate then? You were happy to do that then without any further debate on the matter, but for these three matters, you do not. This is sheer hypocrisy. I move:

That the question be put.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): The question is that the question be put. The House divided. [17:41]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Craig Kelly)

Ayes .....................78
Nocs .....................52
Majority.................26

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Broad, AJ
Brough, MT
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM

Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S (teller)
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK

CHAMBER
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CHAMBER
Question agreed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly) (17:48): The question now is that the motion moved by the member for Menzies be agreed to.

The House divided. [17:49]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Kelly)

Ayes .................. 78
Noes .................. 52
Majority ............. 26

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Broad, AJ
Brough, MT
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coleman, DB
Entsch, WG
Gambaro, T
Goodenough, IR
Hartsuyker, L
Henderson, SM
Hogan, KJ
Hutchinson, ER
Jensen, DG
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O'Dowd, KD
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, FM
Smith, ADH

NOES

Owens, J
Plibersek, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Snowdon, WE
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakinou, M
Wilkie, AD

Perrett, GD
Ripoll, BF
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Swan, WM
Thomson, KJ
Watts, TG
Zappia, A
AYES

Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Truss, WE
Turnbull, MB
Varvaris, N
Whiteley, BD
Williams, MP
Wood, JP

Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX
Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G
Burke, AS
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Giles, AJ
Hall, JG (teller)
Husic, EN
King, CF
MacTiernan, AJGC
Mitchell, RG
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Pilcher, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Snowdon, WE
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vannakinou, M
Wilkie, AD

Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burke, AE
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Elliot, MJ
Fitzgibbon, JA
Gray, G
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
Macklin, JL
McGowan, C
Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Perrett, GD
Ripoll, BF
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Swan, WM
Thomson, KJ
Watts, TG
Zappia, A

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Seniors Supplement Cessation) Bill 2014
Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (2014 Budget Measures No. 4) Bill 2014
Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Student Measures) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (17:53): The bills before the House are one of the most savage attacks on the Australian safety net in living memory and, without a doubt, the most savage attack so far by this ruthless government on the Australian safety net since they have been elected. These bills are the classic Abbott playbook of double-dealing. It is sneaky and dishonest attempt to fundamentally recast the Australian social contract. This worthless government is attempting to stampede helter-skelter harsh and unprecedented cuts to Australia's family payments, income support and pension system. This is an unparliamentary assault on millions of Australians by this worthless government intent on ripping away money from low- and middle-income earners, young job seekers and senior Australians. And wrapped in this package of cuts and broken promises is the government's ruthless and dishonest attack on pensioners which, in some sort of attempt at peak absurdity, is now before both this chamber and the Senate.

Today Labor will vote against $11 billion worth of cuts. We will vote against these cuts because these changes, like the rest of the budget, undermine people's opportunities to be part of a living community. The changes in this bill take little account of the true need of millions of Australians. These changes further diminish the chance for dignity and for Australian's to participate equally in our country. These changes reduce people to a below-standard income when they have been overtaken by unemployment, illness, disability, veterans' service or indeed age. But the real shame of these changes is the loss of hope they provide people, and it is frightening.

There are people in this country who currently have no money to fall back on, and these changes hurt them; there are many people in this country with the stress of rent, and these changes hurt them; there are parents who, as we speak, cannot afford to give their kids some dollars each week for a birthday present for a friend's party, or for a school excursion, or for the right to participate in musical lessons or sports carnivals; and, even worse, there are children who know not to ask their parents for money because their parents cannot supply it, and these changes hurt their hope. This government is adding to the despair of a great many Australians and it should hang its head in shame.

Let's look at the changes they are making. They are abolishing family tax benefit B for families with children over the age of six years. Where did they say that before the last election? They are leaving young people with no income support for six months. Where did they say that before the election? They are shifting young people from Newstart allowance to the lower youth allowance, leaving them $2½ thousand a year worse off. They have abolished the senior supplement. In question time, we saw this pathetic excuse for a Prime Minister trying to pretend that abolishing the senior supplement was no big deal. It leaves seniors nearly $900 a year worse off. They have abolished the education entry payment; they are freezing family tax benefits for two years; they are reducing family tax benefit end-of-year supplements and ceasing indexation; they are applying an interest charge for certain student debts; and they are replacing student start-up scholarships with income contingent loans. Labor will vote against these measures and Labor will vote against the government's cuts to the pension.

Joe Hockey said there are many hard days in opposition. What he is right about is this: it is always a hard day every day we listen to this government lie about cutting pensions. It is
always hard for the true believers in this country to have a proper safety net when these people opposite and their worthless ministers say they are not touching the pension and that the pension goes up every six months. What a pack of disreputable twisters they are! We know, and they know, that the rate of indexation is being cut. No wonder the Tasmanian MP is leaving. Look what they are doing to Tasmania—no hope and no chance. Run away and run out of here—the electorate will still find you.

On the day before the 2013 election, Tony Abbott promised there would be no cuts to pensions and no changes to pensions. These bills are irrefutable proof that Tony Abbott's word is not worth the paper it is written on. The verdict is in, the evidence has been found and the smoking gun is here: this government has broken its promise on pensions. After lying to pensioners in order to get elected, the Prime Minister wants to cut seniors concessions; he wants to abolish the senior supplement; he wants to cut pensions; he wants to freeze superannuation; he wants to give Australia the world's oldest retirement age; and he wants to punish senior Australians with a petrol tax, a GP tax, new costs for pathology tests and new costs for diagnostic imaging. This chap who would be Prime Minister does not even know the changes that he is making—you know you are in trouble when you know less about the health system than the health minister! His own budget papers—the document that dare not speak its name—show that $450 million is coming out of the pockets of Australia's pensioners in the first four years alone. That is $450 million that will be taken off pensioners. I bet they are high-fiving each other over in the blue-carpet land. It is a good day's work done when they can do over the pensioners! Anyway, they think pensioners are leaners, don't they?

According to the Parliamentary Budget Office, the cut to the age pension will be almost $7 billion per year 10 years from now. This Australian Council of Social Services has estimated that Tony Abbott's pension cuts will cost pensioners $80 per week within 10 years. That is more than $4,000 ripped out of the pockets and purses of our most vulnerable Australians. What has happened to the once so-called small 'l' Liberal Party? There is nothing more extinct in Australia than a small 'l' Liberal. They should hand back the name 'Liberal' and instead be called the 'Radical Conservative Party of Australia', because that is what they are. They are the extreme right wing—the Tea Party. They are going to cut the age pension; they are going to cut carer payment recipients. Disability support pensioners and the veterans get a whack on the way through by this mob.

It is bad enough that we have a Treasurer who thinks that poor people do not drive cars, but it is even worse, in fact, that the Prime Minister thinks that they should have to pay for his broken promises—his unscrupulous desire to say and do anything to win power and then forget the promises he made. Today, Labor disagrees most sincerely with this government's propositions. Labor dissents from the vision of this country—the bleak and sterile vision—that those opposite would give Australia. We have fought these pension cuts. We have had a few victories—haven't we, member for Menzies?—and we will continue to fight them.

There was some trifle moment in the parliamentary debate when there was pause given yesterday to reflect that it was Gough Whitlam who first recognised the need to link pension levels to the growing standards and costs of living within the broader Australian community. Whitlam was right then, and Labor is right now. We will stand by Australians who have worked hard their whole life, paid taxes their whole life, made a contribution, built our
communities and raised their children. We will stand by these people. We will fight for their right to a secure and dignified retirement.

Let us be clear: the age pension is not a king's ransom or a windfall going to the so-called 'leaners' in Australian society. It is a most modest sum. I would like to see some of the people opposite live on it. Let us be clear: the pension is a post-retirement income support payment. It is not a family payment or a subsidy or a supplement that helps with other costs. For millions of Australian pensioners, it represents their entire household income. The mob opposite, with such rank disrespect for the political word and promises they made, would cut the indexation rate. Then, in the height of arrogance, they come to parliament every question time and lie about lying.

Gough Whitlam recognised this fundamental principle in the 1970s. He announced a commitment to maintain a pension rate at 25 per cent of average weekly earnings. Gough Whitlam's vision was for an Australia where all aged people can live in comfort and dignity. Whitlam recognised that the government have a responsibility to help pensioners keep up with the cost of living, but the government disagree. This recalcitrant, conservative and extreme right-wing mob only have one plan for Australia's retirees: to push pensioners below the poverty line. They think that pensioners do not drive cars. They think that pensioners should have to pay more for their medicines and to go to the GP. They think that pensioners should pay more for the diagnostic imaging which may well help prolong their lives. They think that pensioners do not deserve the modest concessions they receive. They certainly do not think that pensioners deserve the security and certainty of a fair pension.

After 12 long years of neglect under the previous conservative government, it took another Labor government in 2009 to increase this benchmark to 27.7 per cent of male total average weekly earnings and to introduce a new pensioner and beneficiary living cost index. We sit for every question time. When confronted with these facts, the Prime Minister constantly says, 'I'm doing pensioners a favour,' and he is cutting their indexation. I hope the Prime Minister keeps lying to himself and keeps misleading the parliament on what he is doing, because the Australian electorate can work him out. They knew 12 months ago that they had doubts about him. Twelve months on, those doubts have been confirmed.

We have inequality in our society and it is being compounded by the failure of the Abbott government to create opportunities for the overwhelming number of our lower income, fixed income and middle-income Australians. Now the government are undoing the good work we did and they are lying about it. This is the Prime Minister who is used to making excuses for lying. He actually said, 'Don't listen to what I say; make sure you get it in writing.' This is the letter he gave in writing to Australians. This is a letter to pensioners—

Mr Hunt interjecting—

Mr SHORTEN: Greg, do not say anything; you might learn something. This letter to pensioners is lying about pension cuts. It proves that what he writes is as worthless as what he says. I will repeat that: this letter to pensioners lies about the pension cuts and proves that what he writes is as worthless as what he promises in an election. One point two million dollars of taxpayer money for a letter is not worth the paper it is printed on. What an extraordinary display of contempt for Australian pensioners and Australian taxpayers from this slippery Prime Minister.
Let me say again for the people of Australia: the Abbott government are cutting the pension and now they are trying to gag debate on the future of the Australian safety net. They want to drop the guillotine on bills that threaten the decency and generosity of Australian society. We will oppose these pension cuts, where 3.7 million pensioners will be up to $80 a week worse off within 10 years. The Parliamentary Budget Office has confirmed this fact. Regarding the veterans' pension, the government make me frustrated beyond all belief when they talk about their love of the flag and their love of veterans. It only extends as far as a parade, a salute and an RSL function. When it comes to actually standing up for veterans, that is a different issue. These are patriots to the very superficial level that we see. A $65 million cut to war pensions is little service or recompense from this government.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs currently provides 140,000 service pensions and 84,000 war widow/widower pensions. All of these people will be up to $80 a week worse off within 10 years. Then look at the deeming rates. They are not content with going after the full pensioners; they have also had enough time in their busy diary to go after part-pensioners too. Part-pensioners face a double hit through reductions in their part-pensions because of the government's plan to reduce the deeming rates. As a result, if a pensioner has some shares or a small fixed term deposit in a bank, they will be punished by further reductions in their part pension.

We have the world's oldest retirement age. This, again, goes back to the out-of-touch nature of this arrogant government. Increasing the pension age—

*Mr Hunt interjecting—*

**Mr SHORTEN:** The member for Flinders. The worst sort of workplace injury he will ever suffer is a paper cut, yet he wants everyone else to work to 70. Increasing the pension age to 70 is an attack on the Australians who do the real heavy lifting. We on this side of the House know the real Australians who do the real work. Many of us have spent our working life representing tradespeople, labourers, cleaners, nurses and others who make a living with their skilled hands, strong minds and strong backs. Many Australians started work at 15, not playing in Liberal student politics until they had to finish.

It is disgraceful that this government wants to force Australians to work until they are 70. Look at the mob sitting opposite trying to interject pathetically. They want you to work until you are 70, but they have not thought about how to lift workers compensation beyond 65. The usual Liberal, no idea. I think Alicia Silverstone would play Greg Hunt in the movie of 'Clueless'!

At the same time, they are freezing superannuation, abolishing the low-income superannuation contribution, undermining the ability—

*Mr Hunt interjecting—*

**Mr SHORTEN:** I love this mob opposite. They will give a tax holiday to people who have over $2 million in their superannuation retirement, and they will introduce a new tax on 3½ million Australians who earn less than $37,000 a year. We could not have written this script. We could not have believed they would be so mean-spirited, but there they are at again.

We believe that Australia should have the world's best retirement savings system not the world's oldest retirement age. They do not know anything about pensioners' cost of living,
otherwise they would not have axed the $1.3 billion in funding for seniors concessions, money which assisted seniors and pensioners for electricity and water bills.

Look at Greg Hunt over there. He says he is a great man on bills. I tell you what, you have taken away—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): Order!

Mr SHORTEN: The member for Flinders—thank you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): I request that the opposition leader refer to members by their titles.

Mr SHORTEN: Okay. I was going to call him the Minister for the Environment, but no one would believe that, but I thank you for your direction. They have taken away from electricity and water bills, transport costs and council rates. All Australians will pay $7 extra every time they go to the doctor.

Mr Hunt interjecting—

Mr SHORTEN: Member for Flinders, we will talk about what you have done right up to the next election, don't you worry about that.

When we learn about this GP tax, we learn more about the hidden costs of this GP tax—and the more we learn, the worse it gets. This will probably be useful for our Prime Minister if someone could send this transcript to him—he did not have a clue about diagnostic imaging today. Medicare provides around 23 million diagnostic imaging and pathology services. The Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association estimates that the GP tax will reduce funding to these services by $188 million in 2015-16—it is a 10 per cent cut, Prime Minister—and rebates for general patients who were previously bulk-billed for pathology tests and imaging due to the abolition of the bulk-billing incentive from 1 July next year. The abolition of the greatest permissible gap safety net, a safety net which moderates the cost of high cost items, has gone too.

As a consequence of the GP tax, some patients will be forced to fork out hundreds if not thousands of dollars up-front to pay for MRI, X-rays, CAT scans and mammograms. This will apply to many cancer patients and to holders of low-income healthcare and pensioner concession cards. They are ripping out $1.3 billion of the pockets of Australians by increasing the cost of medicine.

Then there is the family tax benefit B changes. I thought these people opposite said that they were the great friends of families. Heaven forbid. Please, do not be our friends in future! Just stay right away! More than 700,000 single income and single parent families are going to lose their family tax benefit B over three years as a result of this savage mugging by the Abbott government just because their youngest child turned six. Because of Tony Abbott, a single income family on $65,000 with two children aged eight and 14 is going to lose over $6,000 per year by 2016. These payments help families struggling to make ends meet keep up with the cost of living. As John Howard said when he heard about this raid on family tax benefit B: 'Family tax benefit B are not welfare payments. They are just a recognition through the tax payment system of the undeniable fact, as all of us in the room have been parents know, that it costs money to have children.' I do not often agree with the former Prime Minister, but even a stopped clock can be right twice a day!
Then we look at their attack on young job seekers.

Mr Hunt: That's an original one.

Mr SHORTEN: Are you still here? Under Tony Abbott's budget, more than 100,000 young people under 30 who are looking for a job will be forced to wait six months before receiving any income support. Labor have said that the changes to Newstart are perhaps the single most heartless measure in a very ugly, brutal budget, sentencing young people to a potentially endless cycle of poverty when they should be getting a hand to find a job. It is just a blame-shifting, cost-shifting measure that puts the price of unemployment on to the unemployed and their families.

The human rights committee chaired by Liberal Senator Dean Smith agrees. They have concluded that Mr Abbott's proposed six-month Newstart waiting period for people under 30 'breaches the right to social security and the right to an adequate standard of living'. Labor have clearly and consistently called this policy for what it is. It is a vicious, victim-blaming measure that does nothing to address youth unemployment or the challenges of finding work at a time when youth unemployment has soared to 13.4 per cent, around double the national average. Now is not the time for the Abbott government to turn its back on young Australians.

We know in this place, the Prime Minister's literary propaganda aside, that reducing pensions and attacking the poor and vulnerable does not help this country grow. It is long overdue in this country that we have a debate that the link between a more equal society and economic growth is inextricable and it is true. This is a government who talk about growth yet they would create greater inequality in our society. You cannot have fair dinkum, sustainable growth unless you have measures which create more equality in our society. I say it again: if the Liberals want to go after the pensioners, the vulnerable and the families, they are going to have to come through Labor.

We say to the government today: you have drawn the battlelines for the next election. Labor have always pioneered advances in social services. We have always believed in the betterment of the people and we have been most interested in the great welfare of the middle-class, the lower income people, fixed income people and the most vulnerable in our society.

The current Liberal Party does not deserve the name 'Liberal'. At the next election Australians will be asked to choose between a party that protects the pension and a party that cuts it, between a party that stands up for families and a party that forgets them, between a movement that will always fight for them and a Prime Minister who lied to gain their vote at the last election.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): Order! The Leader of the Opposition knows he should not use those words. I request him to withdraw.

Mr SHORTEN: I withdraw, and the Prime Minister who passed himself off at the last election in return for your vote undertook to do one thing and he has broken that contract and done something else.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I requested the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw.

Mr SHORTEN: I did withdraw.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I apologise. I did not hear you.
Mr SHORTEN: But it has not changed what I just said in terms of this Prime Minister, who passed himself off at the last election as promising to do one thing and instead, after the election, did exactly the opposite. But that is okay, Prime Minister. We say to the Prime Minister about his unfair changes in this bill, not today, not tomorrow, not ever. Australians want to know that they are part of a society which values all of its citizens. Australians want a society which includes the homeless, includes the unemployed, includes the lonely and includes our older Australians. Australians do not want a government that would weaken and break the relationship between any of our individuals and communities in which they live. Australians do not want policies which add to the insecurity, add to the misery and add to the want of many Australians.

There is a clear choice and that is the contest. I promise the government that Labor is up for this fight. We will fight you changes. We will defeat your changes and at the next election there will be a reckoning between you and the Australian people.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (18:16): I rise today to speak about the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Student Measures) Bill 2014. This bill seeks to encourage students who have been inadvertently overpaid while on various government payments—including Austudy payment, fares allowance, youth allowance for full-time students and apprentices, and ABSTUDY living allowance—to enter into an arrangement to repay their debt and to act in a responsible manner. The way this bill seeks to encourage people to do the right thing is to make those who are repaying their debt, or have at least made an arrangement with the Department of Human Services to pay their debt, exempt for the imposition of interest on that debt.

This bill does not set out to apply interest to each and every cent owed to the government by students who have been overpaid. This bill applies to the small percentage of people who finish their studies and either stop making automatic repayments through the social security system or those who have made no attempt to meet their obligation under the act to repay overpayments in a timely fashion according to their ability to do so.

While discussing this bill with my staff I found that two of them had been affected by an overpayment at least once during their studies at university, but both repaid their debt by paying a small amount from their regular Centrelink payment. Surely this is not too much to expect and not too difficult to organise. Both staff members told me it took just one phone call to make the arrangement and it was a set-and-forget payment. The government took $10 per fortnight from their usual payment to repay the debt.

All this bill proposes is that students take responsibility for their obligations. We hear a lot about rights these days but with rights come responsibilities. In this country it is your responsibility to repay the government if you receive money from the taxpayers to which you were not entitled. Taxpayers are very generous to students in Australia. They pay for the majority of their tuition costs and only expect a modest repayment of just four per cent and then only when a student's income reaches more than $53,000 per year. As well as that, the taxpayer provides most students with a living allowance called Austudy, youth allowance or ABSTUDY which does not have to be paid back at all. If you are on the highest rate of Austudy payment as a single parent, that amounts to more than $14,000 per year. In return all the taxpayer asks is that students who are overpaid respect the support they are being given by the social security system and repay their debt.
I should like to point out to students that their bank will never be as generous when it comes to money they owe the bank, and that lesson is best learnt now by being a responsible member of the society that has supported them. For those few who continue to shirk their responsibility, their debt will be subject to an interest charge which is the same rate as applied to all debts owed to the Australian Taxation Office, the 90-day bank accepted bill rate plus an additional seven per cent, which is currently around 10 per cent. So I encourage students who have been overpaid to do the right thing—pick up the phone and make a payment arrangement and avoid any interest charges.

These moves were first proposed by the now opposition during their chaotic stint in government in the 2012-13 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook and the 2013-14 budget, but were removed when the budget passed in March 2014. Accordingly, we should expect the full co-operation of those opposite in supporting a slightly amended version of their own policy. However, given their current track record of rejecting common sense decisions, it would appear as though common sense is in short supply on the other side of the chamber, even though it was their proposal in the first place.

In order for students with Centrelink debts to have time to make a payment arrangement with the Department of Human Services, the application of interest to a debt will not start until 1 January 2015. The quicker this bill passes both houses and is signed into law, the more time students will have to make arrangements before interest is applied. I therefore call on the opposition to support this bill to ensure a quick passage for the sake of the students.

This bill also makes changes to the Student Start-up Scholarship by making the scholarship a repayable loan. The $1,025 loan is totally voluntary and is available twice a year at the start of each semester to help with the cost of books, stationery, laboratory fees and other equipment which students need to successfully complete their studies. This loan is similar to the old Student Financial Supplement Scheme except in one very big way. There is no requirement for a student to trade in 50 per cent of their Austudy payment in order to access these loans.

Those students on the Student Financial Support Scheme used to have to repay the full amount of their loan including 50 per cent of their Austudy money, and it had to be repaid at the same time as HECS-HELP was being repaid. So a student who has an outstanding HELP and SFSS debt and earns $1,025 a week has to repay six per cent of their income to cover their debt.

However, under this new scheme, no repayments for the student start-up loan will have to be made until after the student or former student has repaid the HELP debt in its entirety. In this case, courtesy of our taxpayers, the students are getting a pretty good deal—a low-interest, long-term loan in order to ensure students have their tuition heavily discounted, their educational needs met as well as a living allowance.

For the 2014-15 tax year, this financial year, if a student earns less than $53,345 per annum, they are not obligated to make any repayments on HELP or SFSS. Interestingly, after the member for Lilley became Treasurer, what was the income a student had to earn before beginning to repay their student debt? I will tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker: it was just $39,825 per annum. This government, the coalition government, is giving students an extra $13,520 in earnings before they have to begin to repay their debt. While the Labor Party continue to oppose their own advice on the restructuring of the higher education sector, they stand
damned by their own track record of being harder on students than the coalition government is.

In summary, the coalition has increased spending in the higher education sector in actual dollar terms. The coalition is the highest spending government on education in Australian history. With this bill, all we are seeking to do is make students responsible for their obligations to the taxpayers who generously support them and provide a level of support to students so that they can continue their studies to go on to become vital members of our society. I support this bill.

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (18:24): Well, here we are again to debate some of the government's harshest budget cuts—cuts that will leave millions of Australian families worse off; cuts that will leave many, many young people destitute; and cuts that will see the standard of living of Australian seniors attacked. This is not the first time that these matters have been debated in this House. Indeed, not one of the measures in these three bills has not been through the House before. You might ask, 'Well, why is this?' It is because, thanks to Labor, the government has not been able to get any of these cruel cuts through the Senate. Each of these measures has already been rejected by the parliament, and I can assure each and every Australian listening that we intend to do everything in our power to reject them again.

These three pieces of legislation are a direct attack on ordinary Australians, an attack on the fair go in this country. We should not allow this government to get away with it. It is not only the cruelty of this budget that has Australians so offside; what has also got people offside is the sheer incompetence of how the government has gone about it.

Just today, again we see the Minister for Social Services in The Guardian making a very frank admission that the government cannot get these cruel cuts through the parliament. Even so, here we are debating these savage measures, and the government is clearly determined tonight to ram them through, even though the government must know that it does not have the numbers in the Senate and it certainly must have heard from the Australian parliament that the Australian people think that these measures stink.

The minister told The Guardian today that he would consider any reasonable offer from the crossbench to salvage his cruel cuts—a frank admission from the minister himself that he is fresh out of ideas about how he is going to get this legislation through the parliament. I will be telling the minister loud and clear tonight that there is only one reasonable offer that will come from the Labor Party, and that is one I will offer him right now: he needs to dump this cruel budget, and dump it once and for all.

The first of these bills, the Social Services and Other Legislation (Seniors Supplement) Bill, seeks to abolish the seniors supplement. When before the last election did any of the Liberals or Nationals opposite tell the 300,000 seniors in this country that they were going to have their almost $900 a year supplement axed completely? When did they tell them this before the last election? Of course this measure also goes to 29,000 veterans. All of these people have worked hard all of their lives. They do not deserve to be punished by this government for their hard work. For many of these people, this payment is critical to help them with their bills and other rising cost-of-living pressures. Yet on 24 June this year this Prime Minister said that this payment was a cash splash. That is the disrespect and disregard that this Prime Minister has for senior Australians.
On other legislation, of course, the government is proposing to slash the indexation arrangements of the pension. This will see $23 billion—that is how much it is; it has been announced by the Treasurer that this is how much will come out of the pockets of pensioners by 2023. And it will see pensioners left $80 a week worse off within ten years of the change, according to the Australians Council of Social Services. This is despite the Prime Minister coming in here day after day denying that he is cutting the pension, denying that it is a broken promise—even though he said the day before the last election there would be no changes to the pension. No wonder pensioners are angry. And they are angry: it does not matter where I go around Australia, pensioners are angry—angry at having their very modest retirements cut. They also extraordinarily angry that the Prime minister stood there the day before the last election, looked them in the eye and said there would be no cuts, no changes to their pension.

Labor are out there campaigning against these cuts—and the Council on the Ageing are out there talking with pensioners and seniors across the country—and making sure that we do everything we possibly can to stop this cut to the pension. As the Leader of the Opposition mentioned just a few moments ago, we saw the Prime Minister stoop to an extraordinary low just last week, writing a misleading letter to Australia’s 2.3 million pensioners—and spending $1.2 million of taxpayers’ money for the privilege. Of course, he did not tell the truth in the letter. He did not tell pensioners that he is in fact going to cut the indexation of their pension.

The bills that we are debating tonight are a full-scale attack on the living standards of Australian families. In these bills we see the most extraordinary cuts to family benefits and parenting payments—and they are being slashed at the same time the government is proposing a new GP tax and a new fuel tax. These bills tonight contain billions of dollars of cuts to families. I will just go through a few of them. Nearly $2 billion will be cut from family tax benefits as a result of a freeze to the rates of family payments for two years. Nearly $2 billion is going to come out of the pockets of low- and middle-income families. According to the Department of Social Services, a freeze to the low-income free area for family tax benefit part A alone—just this one measure—will see 370,000 families around $750 a year worse off in 2016-17. So make sure when you are going to the ballot box at the next election, which will probably be in 2016, that you remind those families that you are taking $750 out of their pockets through that measure alone.

On top of that, another $2 billion is being taken out as a result of the decision to cut family tax benefit part B when the youngest child turns six. This measure alone is going to leave families around $3,000 a year worse off—$3,000 a year. That is what you are taking out of the pockets of these families. This is going to see so many families so much worse off. Unsurprisingly, we have heard very little about that from those opposite. It will be very interesting to see whether any one of those members opposite speaking on these bills tonight tries to defend these extraordinary cuts to families. The Department of Social Services revealed at Senate estimates that, if this legislation gets through the Senate, around 700,000 families will lose their family tax benefit part B when their youngest child turns six. So which one of you is going to front up to your single income, single parent families and tell them that they are going to lose $3,000 when their youngest child turns six? I can assure you that we will be fighting this all the way.

These bills will also see a billion dollars cut from end of year supplements. These bills will put more and more pressure on the lowest income families in this country. We have seen the
analysis from NATSEM which found that around 1.2 million families will be on average $3,000 a year worse off. In contrast, the top 20 per cent of households will have either no impact or a negligible positive impact. That is the attitude of this government—so arrogant and so out of touch. It does not care that millions of Australians are going to be worse off because of these savage cuts.

We saw today the analysis from NATSEM on the hardest hit electorates. For example, in the electorate of Watson and the electorate of Blaxland, both in Sydney, the average household is going to have to give up $990 each year; whereas, in the Prime Minister's electorate, families will only be worse off by $144 a year. This is no fluke; this is what this conservative government is all about—looking after those at the top end of town and whacking those who are not so well off. This analysis from NATSEM—described by the Prime Minister as 'Australia's most respected modelling outfit!'—shows that the hardest hit people in the country are those who are already doing it tough. They should be told by this government that, as a result of these bills, the poorest people in Australia must shoulder the burden of the Prime Minister's cuts. In contrast, Labor will stand up for low- and middle-income families who will be so savagely hit by the cuts in this legislation.

But perhaps, as I have said a number of times, the cruelest measures in these bills are the Prime Minister's brutal attacks on young job seekers. These bills will see young people under 30 who are looking for a job forced to wait six months before receiving any income support—and in some cases they will have to wait even longer. So the government is saying to young people, 'You are on your own.' If after six months without income support the young person has not found a job, the measure will require them to go on Work for the Dole. And if after their time on Work for the Dole they have still not found a job they will lose their payments for another six months. What do those opposite think these people are going to live on? Where are they going to get their food from? Who is going to pay the rent?

Every single Australian that you talk to understands how harsh these measures are and what it is going to mean when you push these hundreds of thousands of young people into poverty, crisis and homelessness. In fact, the budget actually includes money for emergency assistance, because the government knows that these young people will have absolutely nothing. I can make it very, very clear to the government that we will not be supporting this measure. It is cruel, it is harsh, and we will not support it at all.

The government are out there trying to suggest that there may be room for a compromise. They do not have it in the legislation, of course. Tonight we are debating the same proposal that has been around for the last six months. The government want to see young people with nothing to live on for six months. I want to make it very clear: there will be no compromise. We will not be providing any support for any compromise by the government that might suggest people should have nothing to live on for a month or some other period that the government might pull out of their hat.

Also as a result of this legislation the government want to push young people under 25 onto the lower Youth Allowance. Once again this is a huge cut—$2,500 a year. We will not support this punitive measure. How on earth does the government think these young people are going to survive on these considerably reduced levels of support? How is it fair to say to a young person, 'You're going to lose 20 per cent of your income support, whereas somebody on $200,000 will pay around 0.2 per cent through a reduction in their income. That is why
Australians understand that this budget is grossly unfair. They look at the reality of these bills—of who will pay the price. The price will be paid by the poorest Australians. It will be paid by those families who are doing it the toughest.

For months, Labor have been campaigning against this government's savage budget. We will continue to stand side by side with pensioners, with young people, with families. Our message to them is: we will continue to stand with you and we will vote against these savage cuts. We will continue to fight this cruel budget every day from now until the next election.

Debate interrupted.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Drought

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (18:39): On indulgence—I have the following additional information for the House: 4,957 applications have been received for farm household allowance, with 4,551 fully processed; 4,098 applications have been approved for farm household allowance to date, with 4,011 recipients currently receiving payment. According to estimates—which is the best we can do—3,500 recipients have transitioned from interim farm household allowance payments. Payments to farmers who had been in receipt of interim farm household allowance and had applied for farm household allowance continued without interruption until their applications had been assessed by Centrelink. Further specific inquiries on this should be directed to the department that actually administers this, which is the Department of Human Services.

BILLS

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Seniors Supplement Cessation) Bill 2014

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (2014 Budget Measures No. 4) Bill 2014

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Student Measures) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That these bills be now read a second time.

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (18:40): In addressing the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Senior Supplement Cessation) Bill 2014 and related bills, I will put in context why we are having this conversation and moving in these circles. In 2013, we went to the election with a four-pillar promise. We said we would axe the bad taxes—the carbon and mining taxes. We said we would stop the boats, that we would build the roads and the infrastructure of the 21st century, and that we would fix the budget mess. The carbon tax and the mining tax are gone. Tick. We have had one successful boat this year. We have announced $150 billion worth of roads and over $800 billion worth of approvals through the Department of the Environment to get this economy moving. The fourth pillar is to fix the budget mess, and that is taking a long time. And it will take a long time.

First of all, I will take up the point made by the member for Jagajaga and state emphatically: this is a lot of money. The savings we are trying to put through with these bills
is a lot of money. By my calculations, over the forward estimates it is about $8.7 billion. That is a tremendous amount of money. But then consider that social security is, at the moment, $146 billion per year. In the next four years we will be spending nearly $600 billion on social security payments. To put it in context, we are talking about $8 billion versus $600 billion—over half a trillion dollars. What we are trying to get through here is about 1.5 per cent of that.

We have an economy growing at around four per cent, but our social security and health costs are rising at nine per cent and over. We have real issues here. The thing that gets to me the most is that rather than discuss the numbers the opposition always want to argue about the words. Was it a budget emergency? They say it was not an emergency. I say: is it an emergency as you are going over the cliff, or is it an emergency as you are getting close to the cliff? I have a real issue with the way we talk about numbers in this place. People in the street, people at the Herbert Hotel, the Great Northern Hotel and the Shamrock Hotel do not know what a billion dollars is. People in my family do not know what a billion dollars is. It is almost impossible to get your head around that concept. So what business are we actually in?

The vast majority of people are paying things off for their whole lives. So the mere concept of paying off debt is hard to get across. Are we really in the debt collection business and the paying money back business? I do not think we got elected to pay back debt. I think we got elected by the people of Australia to fix the thing. I think that this government is here to fix stuff. I think that is what we have to try to get across here: that something is broken.

These bills are not just about the last six years. These bills go back a lot further than the last six years, because we have got structural issues in our budget and in the way we spend money which go back an awfully long time. I have a friend who is a stay-at-home mum. The family have five kids under 15. Her husband works and has a car supplied by the company. He earns 120 grand. She gets nearly $1,800 a fortnight in family tax benefit part A. That is just short of $47,000 net a year. No wonder she is a stay-at-home mum. That is a $70,000 job. That is what we are paying her to stay at home. That sort of stuff has to end. She said to me, 'We're paying enough tax.' I said, 'I don't think you're paying any. You're not paying any tax.' We have to look at the way the money is going out.

I have a real issue when it comes to the way that this has been portrayed by the other side. When you are in business, if you have a business that is struggling—and when I took over a business in Townsville, it was losing $150,000 a year and I was given the imprimatur to do whatever I had to do to get that business turned around—you do not just sit there and say, 'It's all too hard,' and just expect to keep on getting paid. What you have to do when things are tight is you have to look around and fight and scratch and punch and kick to get money in the door. That is what you have to do, and that is what we have to do to try and get this budget back into order. We have to fix the thing.

What Labor did, what the member for Lilley and the member for Rankin, his offsider, did was that they took the family car, kept it for six years and then gave it back to us, and it is dinged up, it has blown a head gasket, it has got bald tyres, it has got dings all over it and it has got a busted windscreen. We can keep on driving the thing until it stops completely—we can just keep on putting a little bit of petrol in all the time until it stops completely—or we can fix it. We can put new tyres on it, restructure it and get the windscreen fixed and then we will still have a good motor car. It is the same with the economy. It is the same with these bills here.
We have a very generous social security system. Like I said, nearly $600 billion over the next four years is going out in social security, and we are asking for $8 billion in savings to go through—1½ per cent. I do not think that is too bad. We are in the fixing business. Governments—and I am not just talking about the last six years; I am talking about governments before that too—have known that we have an ageing population for a long time. This government is the first one to really address it. This government is the first one to even really talk about it. We do generation papers and all that sort of stuff, but we do not do anything about it. This government has said, 'Jeez, you know.' The Leader of the Opposition, in his budget reply speech said that, when he was at school, there were 7.5 taxpaying workers per person over 65. Today there are five—and there are more people in the workforce today than at any other time in Australia's history. By 2050, there will be 2.5 taxpaying workers per person over 65. That is a lot of weight to carry.

The hullabaloo about raising the age pension age to 70 from their 67 was just ridiculous. When the pension came in in 1908-09, it was at age 65 and it was fully means-tested. For every 10 quid you had over 100 quid, in cash and assets, including your home, you lost a pound off your pension for the year. The average life expectancy of the Australian male in 1908-09 was 62, so you had been dead for three years before you even got the pension! If we applied that today, you would not get the age pension until you were 84 years old. That is the challenge we have got. Instead of having a very small number of the population actually get to pension age, to where they are completely and utterly unable to work, we have people on average living nearly 19 years over the age of 65. That is a massive challenge for us here, and if we do not address it now, if we just keep on going the way we are, it is never going to get back. We are never going to catch up, and it is never going to be sustainable.

The other thing I hate is: did we take this to an election? I submit that, by saying that we had to fix the budget, that we had real issues in the budget, that should have said enough. We are not taking out a system 8 in the Lotto each week to pay down the budget debt. We are trying to fix the thing. It is both sides. You have to look at your spending and you have to look at the way you bring money in. But I submit to the Labor Party, on the great Hawke and Keating thing, was the floating of the dollar taken to an election? No, it was not. Was HECS taken to an election? No, it was not. The member for Jagajaga, with pious righteousness and sanctimony, standing there and talking about single mums, was the one who stuck it to the single mums in the last parliament. Did she take it to an election? No, she did not. Was it a structural reform for the betterment of people? No, it was not. It was a grab to get back to surplus. That is what it was. I have not even spoken about the carbon tax—I think we have done that to death.

Mr Hunt: Hey!

Ms RISHWORTH: Greg's upset!

Mr EWEN JONES: About the fact that they did not take it to an election. We have finished with it. But they did not take it to an election. They give us a gobful about not taking things to an election, about explicitly ruling it out. But I have a warning, especially to those guys who were not here in the last parliament. In the last parliament, as part of the deal making that went on, the member for Denison was able to get the then Prime Minister Gillard to agree to savage cuts in pokies and all the sort of stuff that went around that. The member for Shortland and the then member for Robertson and other people were taken to their local
RSLs and sports clubs and so on, and they were belted. But the then member for Robertson stood up there and she stuck to the line. She did the right thing and she took her punishment well. I was talking to her one night and I said, 'The hard part about that is (a) it's state legislation and (b) you didn't take it to an election to do it.' She said, 'Oh, but it's so bad, Ewen. These people are killing themselves.' And then, when the then member for Fisher became the Speaker and they did not need Wilkie anymore, out it went, overnight. No-one was crossing the floor. It was no longer the greatest moral challenge of all time. They just did it.

So, when you go there, the changes to the age pension will not come in until after the next election. That gives the Labor Party enough time to come up with what they are going to do at the next election. That comes with enough time to sit down and say what they are going to do and how they are going to pay for it. That is the important thing here. We got brought in because they could not handle the chequebook. That is the reason we are on this side and they are on that side. It is not anything to do with social conscience. It is not anything to do with the budget or anything like that; it is because they cannot handle the money. We have to handle the money, and it is as simple as that. If we do not get this thing into order—if we do not ask people to do more for what they are getting—we will never get this thing back in line and we will turn into the archetypal Greece or Ireland because we are not getting it under control.

I have three children. I have a 21-year-old, my daughter is going to turn 20 at the end of this week and I have a 12-year-old. When I am old, grey and out of this place, I want to be able to say to them that I did my best, that we did not just pass it on to them to fix it up for us because we did not have enough ticker to actually front the thing. Previous parliaments have not addressed the basic structural issues around our budget. To the credit of the Treasurer, the Minister for Finance and the Prime Minister, we have actually looked at this thing and said, 'If we don't pull this thing into order, we're in all sorts of strife.'

So we are asking for an awful lot of money out of these bills. It is $8.7 billion, and that is going to hurt some people, but what is the option? Tell me what the option is and how you are going to pay for it. Tell me how we get these things done, because at the end of the day we are still spending $146 billion this year in social security payments. Social security payments are 35 per cent of the budget. It cannot keep on going the way it is. So I say to those members opposite: get on board, let's be serious about this and let's fix this thing, because that is the business we are in. We are fixing it so the next people who get this vehicle can actually do something. Every cent you pay back in debt is money you cannot spend on stuff you want to do. I thank the House.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (18:54): On 13 May this year, about five months ago, the Treasurer, the member for North Sydney, handed down the worst budget in living memory. It went down very badly indeed. It was a budget based on a confected budget emergency, and there is a booklet that seems to have gone missing—a blue booklet called 'Real solutions'. I never see any members of the government come into the chamber with that, yet I recall numerous occasions in the last parliament when they put it under their arm like a bible. It was the manual. It would get the country back on deck. But so much of what we have seen in the legislation and the budget which this government announced in May cannot possibly and is not found in the missing blue book. You know: the book the then Leader of the Opposition
used to hug so close to his chest. He put it in front of him like he had steak knives as well!—
'Buy this and vote for me.' It has gone missing entirely.

I am always amused by those opposite, including the member for Herbert, who criticise us on our side as if none of us have business experience at all. I ran a business for more than 20 years. It grew from the time I was about 26 years of age into a medium-size firm in the Brisbane CBD. I grew that business, so don't come in here and say none of us have any idea, as if somehow those in the government alone know what it is like to be in business. Many of us on this side of the chamber know because we ran businesses ourselves.

A budget that clearly the government thinks is about lifters or leaners is a budget of broken promises and really cruel cuts: $50 billion in health and hospitals, $30 billion in schools. It is a budget that abandoned needs based funding and Americanised our universities. They are on about liberating our students with debt and $100,000 university degrees. It is a budget that fundamentally attacked the universality of Medicare. That is what it is about. There were massive cuts to family support and pensions, slashing $534 million in PM&C's Indigenous portfolio alone, on top of that cutting legal aid funding for Indigenous people, Indigenous language programs and on and on. There were $653 million in cuts to the aged-care sector. On top of that we have the cuts to the dementia and severe behaviour supplement—a one-two punch to the head of the aged-care sector.

So we have here legislation before the chamber which we will oppose and which again is about cuts, so many of which were never mentioned in that famous—or infamous—blue book they carried around everywhere. We will stand up on this side of the chamber for families, for fairness, for veterans, for older Australians, for those in the country in the cities and for those people from all over the country, from the Torres Strait to Tasmania. We will stand up for Labor values. We will. We would support sensible budget saves and we have done so. In fact, in the last few weeks we have demonstrated that. But we will not support savage cuts to family income.

Those cuts impact on electorates around the country, many held by Labor. Independent modelling produced by the University of Canberra's National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling revealed that families and residents in my electorate of Blair are worse off by about $406 per year as a consequence of the budget. I admit that Blair sits in about the middle of the electorate table, but the NATSEM modelling reveals that 15 of the 16 hardest hit electorates in Australia are held by the Australian Labor Party, those on this side of the chamber.

We fought the measures in the bills we are debating today when this stuff came before the house in a couple of omnibus bills. We fought these measures in the public, we fought in the Senate and we won. We won the argument with the public and saw the government backflip on this issue. We saw the government split bills, introducing four new bills to the House, and we supported responsible saves of about $2.7 billion which we told the government we would support back in May after the budget. But, in their arrogance—in fact, in their ignorance—they did not have the grace and humility to negotiate and talk to the opposition about this issue.

Mr Ewen Jones: You don't listen.
Mr NEUMANN: Not listening is exactly what this government is about—not listening to the public and eventually compelled to undertake what I said back in early October. But we will not support cuts of the order of about $8 billion to $10 billion which this government is proposing in the splitting of various bills, because what they are about here is pension indexation changes, kicking families off family tax benefit B when their youngest child turns six, freezing family tax benefit payments, and forcing job seekers to live without any income support income for up to six months. Imagine a 28-year-old carpenter in Raceview in Blair living with his partner and they have two kids. He loses his job and she is a stay-at-home mum. They are in a position where he loses his job and he is off without any income. What is he going to do? Where is he going to go? It goes to show how callous and harsh this government is.

Australians must really wonder what this government is all about when they look at what it has done. I heard the member for Herbert talk about the budget. He went on and on about the budget. The pre-election fiscal outlook demonstrated the figures, not that trumped up MYEFO we saw at the end of last year, and then the budget reveals where things were up to. What this government did when they got in was they virtually doubled the deficit. What they did was change the economic assumptions; gave $9 billion to the Reserve Bank; forewent all those revenue measures that we put in, which they had opposed; and got rid of the carbon pricing mechanism, which was bringing in billions of dollars as well. So what they have done is then decide they going to spend across the forward estimates about $22 billion in a Paid Parental Leave scheme to actually pay millionaires up to $50,000 to have children. This is what they are doing. Claiming there is a budget crisis is not consistent with the actions of this government. It is not. We had a AAA credit rating and we had low interest rates. This country was not in a budget crisis when the coalition came to power. That is the reality. What this government is doing is taking people off that income support that they really and truly need.

A recent Melbourne Institute report found that while 23 per cent of working age people received welfare payments in 2001, this had dropped to 18.5 per cent by 2011. But if you listened to the member for Herbert you would think there was a massive explosion of people on welfare in the country compared to what it was a decade or so ago. It is not true. It does not work out that way at all. The reality is very different. The government cannot find economists anywhere to support their hysterical claims about a budget emergency and out-of-control welfare spending. AMP Capital Chief Economist Shane Oliver said this:

Australia is not facing a budget or public debt crisis right now. Our budget deficit and net public debt are low by OECD standards. Our bond yields are low and foreign investors are happily buying our bonds.

That was from The Sydney Morning Herald, 1 July 2014. Saul Eslake, chief economist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, compared Australia’s budgetary position with that of the UK in 2010, which he had described as ‘a crisis’. He said that to apply similar terms to Australia:

… was to abuse the English language.

So we had some Orwellian language from those opposite in relation to this issue. Even when members opposite come to visit my electorate of Blair they cannot get the record straight. We had Senator Barry O’Sullivan debating me before the Ipswich Chamber of Commerce forgetting his talking points and admitting there was no budget crisis, which was reported very well and accurately, I might add, by The Queensland Times, who had pictures of him
looking in despair about the whole issue. It did not go down very well with the business community in Ipswich, can I tell you. He clearly lost the argument in relation to that.

The government should be forced to abandon the legislation that is before the chamber, but they will not. They are not deterred by their commitment to cut pensions and slash support for low-income families. They are simply not. But I think, as I mentioned before, the situation in relation to young people being forced to go without any financial support for six months if they were young job seekers is one of the cruellest things I have ever seen. The Prime Minister has now reintroduced these cruel cuts which we defeated previously.

What they are trying to do as well in the legislation before the chamber is end the seniors supplement from 20 September 2014. This is a $999.4 million cut in support of 300,000 older Australians. These are people who currently get the seniors supplement available to Commonwealth seniors health card and DVA gold card holders. It is paid annually currently at a single rate of $886.60 for singles and $668.20 for each member of a couple. In my electorate the latest figures I can discover is that there are 953 Commonwealth seniors health card holders. That is nearly 1,000 people in my electorate alone. That is replicated everywhere. I would love those people opposite to go and do their listening posts in street stalls and see the old people as they going to their shopping centres—going into Woolworths and Coles and IgA et cetera—and say to them: 'Look, I am just reducing your capacity to buy that bread, butter and cheese. I am taking away your income.' Those types of supplements, as many older people in my electorate have told me, help them to meet their rates bills, electricity bills and other necessities. Some people have told me that that is the money they use for a bit of recreation as well. These are people who have worked hard all their lives and those opposite are supposed to be on the side of those who put away and save and who want to do the best in terms of financial dignity and respect in retirement.

But as people walked into those polling booths on 7 September 2013 they had not an inkling, those nearly 1000 voters in Blair, that my LNP opponent was going to, if she won, sit opposite and get rid of their seniors supplement. They had not an inkling because my opponent in that election did not tell them. They did not tell I guarantee that none of the people over there told any of the electors who were going into vote on election day that that was going to happen. There was not a peep from the then Leader of the Opposition nor the shadow Treasurer, the member for North Sydney, that they would do it.

In fact, I had a look at this. I do not even remember any election ads from the coalition about this. In fact, there was something in the coalition's election policy. I had a bit of a look. It is mentioned. It is listed as a benefit in the coalition's election policy in relation to this issue—the holding of a Commonwealth seniors health card. The policy document of the coalition simply states that holders receive payment of the senior supplement. Unfortunately, these holders did not learn anything about this until after the election. It was missing; there was not anything in the coalition's policies about the supplement not being available in the event of an Abbott government—not mentioned at all. We oppose this. We do not believe the Prime Minister should punish those Australians who have worked hard all of their lives to prepare their retirements.

And with the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Student Measures) Bill 2014, I cannot see any empirical evidence as to why students should suffer in the way they are doing. We are seeing the application of interest rates on certain debts in relation to student
assistance payments, interest being charged at 90-day bank accepted bill rates plus seven per cent interest. I cannot understand why they are doing this. There is no evidence that this needs to be done. There is the replacement of the existing Start-up Student Scholarship with new income contingent student loans; there is no evidence that this will work. There has been no review that I can see, and no real legitimate policy reason given for that. In the circumstances, we oppose this. (Time expired)

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Social Services) (19:08): I will sum up the three bills seriatim, beginning with the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Seniors Supplement Cessation) Bill. This bill will reintroduce the senior supplement budget measure, which was originally introduced in an earlier budget bill. From 20 September 2014 the measure will cease payment of the senior supplement for holders of the Commonwealth seniors health card or the Veterans' Affairs gold card. However, other benefits will remain available to cardholders, such as discounts on medicines under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. In conjunction with this change to the seniors supplement, the bill will ensure that cardholders who formerly received the clean energy supplement in association with their card will receive the renamed energy supplement maintained at current levels through the permanent removal of indexation.

Secondly, the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Student Measures) Bill will reintroduce two measures relating to student entitlements that were originally announced by the previous government. The Senate removed the two measures from the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 in March 2014. The first measure will allow for an interest charge to be applied to debts incurred by recipients of certain student payments, but only if the debtor does not have or is not honouring an acceptable repayment arrangement. The aim of this measure is to encourage debtors to repay their debt in a timely fashion where they have the financial capacity to do so. The second measure in the bill replaces the current Student Start-up Scholarship with an income contingent loan, the student start-up loan. The student start-up loan is to help students with the costs of study, including the purchase of textbooks, computers and internet access. The loans will be available on a voluntary basis. They will be repayable under similar arrangements to the Higher Education Loan Program debts, and only after those HELP debts have been repaid. Both measures will be implemented from 1 January 2015.

Thirdly, the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (2014 Budget Measures No. 4) Bill 2014 reintroduces several of the 2014 budget measures that were previously introduced in other budget bills. Our welfare system must be fair, but it must also be sustainable. The budget measures introduced by this bill help us to make our welfare system strong for the future. The amendments include changes to make payments more sustainable by maintaining certain rates, free areas and thresholds at current levels for up to three years. There are refinements to the family payment system to improve targeting to families most in need of support, and several changes to working aid and student payments that will target assistance towards supporting the most vulnerable Australians while encouraging those who are able to work or study to do so. I commend the bills to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta) (19:11): The time allotted for the debate having expired, the question is that the bills be now read a second time.
The House divided. [19:15]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Vasta)

Ayes ..................... 80
Noes ..................... 52
Majority ............... 28

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S (teller)
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Frydenberg, IA
Gillespie, DA
Griggs, NL
Hawke, AG
Hendy, PW
Howarth, LR
Hutchinson, ER
Jensen, DG
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
McNamara, KJ
Nikolic, AA
Passin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE
Robb, AJ
Roy, WB
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Whiteley, BD
Williams, MP
Wood, JP

AYES

Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Bishop, JI
Broad, AJ
Brough, MT
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coleman, DB
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Gambaro, T
Goodenough, IR
Hartsuyker, L
Henderson, SM
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ
Jones, ET
Kelly, C
Laundy, C
Macfarlane, IE
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O’Dowd, KD
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, FM
Smith, ADH
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Turnbull, MB
Varvaris, N
Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG

NOES

Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burke, AE
Butler, MC

NOES

Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G
Burke, AS
Butler, TM

CHAMBER
Question agreed to.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (19:23): (In division) Mr Deputy Speaker, on a point of order—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am on the record as getting advice from the clerks because, at the moment, there is not a precedent that they have been able to ascertain for having the member in the chamber even though the doors had been locked. I am getting that advice and, when I do get that advice, I will let the chamber know.

Ms BURKE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the precedent that I am referring to is at footnote 378 on page 279 of Practice.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I make the ruling that the member for Capricornia's vote will not be counted, and that is where the decision ends.

Ms BURKE: So that is in order?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Capricornia was given bad advice but she did not sit in a member's seat. Member for Watson, the precedent that you are talking about is when a member is sitting in their seat and they disregard a ruling from the chair and move to the back of the chamber. This is a different situation and the member for Capricornia's vote will not be counted.

Ms BURKE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order. My understanding is that the member for Capricornia pushed in after the direction had been given that the doors be locked. At that point she pushed her way into the chamber. That is of a similar gravity to someone moving to the back because it is still occurring after the call has been given for the doors to be locked and the tellers to be appointed. The principle under which that precedent exists applies in the exact same way: someone moved to the back of the chamber in a disorderly fashion.
The member for Capricornia should not be able to be counted out of the ballot as though she had not broken any rules; she did.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Capricornia actually got through the doors and she had the opportunity to sit down in her seat. She was advised not to; that was her prerogative, and she stayed at the back of the chamber. That is where she opted to stay. She should have actually sat down in her seat, because any other members would have done the same thing. She did not do that; she stayed at the back of the chamber. Her vote is not counted, therefore. Her vote will be recorded as having not voted at all. I thank the member for Watson for trying to clarify that.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The SPEAKER** (19:32): Order! It being after 7.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

**Mr ANDREWS** (Menzies—Minister for Social Services) (19:32): Madam Speaker, I require that the question be put immediately without debate.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question is that the House do now adjourn.

The House divided. [19:34]

(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes ......................51  
Noes ......................81  
Majority.................30

**AYES**

Bandt, AP  
Bowen, CE  
Burke, AE  
Butler, MC  
Byrne, AM  
Chesters, LM  
Claydon, SC  
Conroy, PM  
Dreyfus, MA  
Ellis, KM  
Giles, AJ  
Hall, JG (teller)  
Husic, EN  
King, CF  
Macklin, JL  
McGowan, C  
Neumann, SK  
O'Neil, CE  
Perrett, GD  
Ripoll, BF  
Rowland, MA  
Shorten, WR  
Swan, WM  
Thomson, KJ  
Watts, TG  
Zappia, A

**AYE TELLERS**

Bird, SL  
Brodman, G  
Burke, AS  
Butler, TM  
Chalmers, JE  
Clare, JD  
Collins, JM  
Danby, M  
Elliot, MJ  
Fitzgibbon, JA  
Gray, G  
Hayes, CP  
Jones, SP  
Leigh, AK  
MacTiernan, AJGC  
Mitchell, RG  
O'Connor, BPJ  
Owens, J  
Plibersek, TJ  
Rishworth, AL  
Ryan, JC (teller)  
Snowdon, WE  
Thistlethwaite, MJ  
Vamvakonis, M  
Wilkie, AD
Question negatived.

The SPEAKER (19:33): (In division) Could members take their seats very quickly because we are being a trifle disorderly.

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

The SPEAKER: Are you seeking to be disorderly even more?

Mr Burke: I have a point of order, Madam Speaker.
The SPEAKER: Yes, the Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr Burke: Before you took the chair, there was a question about people moving within the chamber while the doors were locked. We have now had a situation where the government members realised they were voting the way they did not intend and, after the doors were locked, every member of parliament changed their position. What is the ruling on the disorderly nature of people moving within the chamber after the doors are locked, given that government members have been given an opportunity to correct their mistake when every one of them was going to vote for the House to adjourn immediately?

The SPEAKER: It seems to me that everybody has been a trifle disorderly, but there is no penalty on this occasion.

BILLS

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Seniors Supplement Cessation) Bill 2014

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (2014 Budget Measures No. 4) Bill 2014

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Student Measures) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Bills read a second time.

Messages from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

The SPEAKER (19:43): There being no detailed stage required, in that case, pursuant to the resolution agreed to earlier, the House will now proceed to the third readings of the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Seniors Supplement Cessation) Bill 2014 and two related bills. The question is that these bills be now read a third time.

The House divided. [19:48]

(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes ......................83
Noes ......................51
Majority ..................32

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S (teller)
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Griggs, NL

Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Bishop, JI
Broad, AJ
Brough, MT
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coleman, DB
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Gambaro, T
Goodenough, IR
Hartsuyker, L
AYES

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

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

NOES

Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burke, AE
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Giles, AJ
Hall, JG (teller)
Husic, EN
King, CF
Macklin, JL
McGowan, C
Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Perrett, GD
Ripoll, BF
Rowland, MA

Bird, SL
Brodie-Mann, G
Burke, AS
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Elliot, MJ
Fitzgibbon, JA
Gray, G
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
Leigh, AK
MacTiernan, AJGC
Mitchell, RG
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Phibbs, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC
Shorten, WR    Snowdon, WE
Swan, WM     Thistlethwaite, MJ
Thomson, KJ  Vanvakinou, M
Watts, TG    Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

Question agreed to.
Bills read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Social Services) (19:53): I move:
That the House do now adjourn.

Reproductive Health

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (19:53): Last week it was widely reported that an
Australian company, Virtus Health, has joined Silicon Valley giants Facebook and Apple in
offering women employees the option of subsidised egg freezing in order to facilitate delayed
motherhood. For this particular company, which specialises in IVF, it is undoubtedly a cost-
effective employee benefit option and it has no doubt garnered a degree of publicity as an
Australian first.

But I wanted to rise tonight to sound a note of caution about the idea of social freezing
becoming a workplace trend. There are all manner of implications for young women in the
workforce when employers provide this costly service as a form of workplace entitlement. As
we all know, employee entitlements tend to reflect workplace ethos and culture. It would be
naive to think that this option is offered up as a benign choice and employees would not feel a
certain pressure to comply with the notion of deferring children.

At the outset, I want to stress that a woman's reproductive health decisions are uniquely her
own. But for the majority of women, raising children will be part of their life's story, and that
is a good thing. It is fundamental to our society and it is crucial for our economic future,
especially as the population ages.

But I fear that the whole concept of boss-sponsored delayed motherhood implies a very
definite preferment for women who prioritise their job above their family. It also implies that
freezing your eggs is a perfectly workable and viable alternative that will provide young
women with the flexible option of taking up motherhood at a time that better suits them.

The truth is, as Dr Gino Pecoraro, obstetrician and obstetrics and gynaecology
spokesperson for the Australian Medical Association says:
On the whole we're very good at freezing eggs, but we're not so great at thawing them.
In fact, the chance of a live birth, even from eggs harvested from a woman 38 or younger, is
between two to 12 per cent per egg, and IVF is not the easy solution that some of the
headlines seem to suggest.

The chance of a live birth per started IVF treatment cycle in the 30-34 age group is roughly
25 per cent, and only 6.6 per cent for women aged 40-44. For women aged over 45, the
success rate is just 1.2 per cent. We need to be honest about these figures and what they mean,
because many young women only see the headline that Apple is paying $20,000 to freeze employees eggs, and assume that it just works: that assisted reproductive technology will allow them to beat their body clock.

The reality is, for many women it will not. There is a finite window on when conceiving and carrying a pregnancy can be successful for a woman. And the cruel reality is it is a much smaller time frame than that for a man who wants to be a father.

This is a complex issue—worthy of much more time than I have in this debate—but I wish to touch on some workplace implications. It is generally agreed that more needs to be done to increase female work participation but the answer to increasing it is not freezing eggs and delaying motherhood, because there is no perfect time to have children. There will always be financial obligations and there will always be financial wish lists without the added pressure of workplace expectations;

But I believe that delaying motherhood can potentially mean that future financial burdens are even greater. Starting a family later also means returning to the workforce at an older age, when it is potentially harder to secure employment. This could well lead to financial difficulties supporting the child or children.

As a society we ought to be looking at ways to recognise and accommodate the demands of motherhood, rather than avoiding them. Asking women to delay childbirth and to even offer them a financial incentive to freeze their eggs is not the answer to increased female participation in the workforce. Let's look at flexible work hours, telecommuting, home office arrangements, better maternity leave provisions and flexible leave arrangements. But more importantly: let's change our attitude to women with families; recognise just how hard it is to balance work and family commitments; and celebrate the unique contribution that women can and do make to the workplace.

When a hip and trendy employer sends the message that it is optimal to work through your child-bearing years, we should question it. Yes, it may be optimal for the company. It may indeed be the best choice for some women. But for the majority of women who do want a family, it can lead to something far worse than a pay gap or a career temporarily put on hold: the pain and regret of being unable to have a longed-for child.

**Ebola**

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (19:57): 'The most severe acute health emergency seen in modern times' is what the World Health Organization has said. 'The Ebola outbreak in Africa constitutes a threat to international peace and security' is what the UN Security Council has said. 'We are witnessing a humanitarian and public health crisis of the highest order' is what our own AMA president Brian Owler has said. There are so many experts around the world telling us that we have a limited window of opportunity to act to contain Ebola in West Africa or this crisis will go beyond anything we have the capacity to respond to.

Ebola has already killed 4½ thousand people and infected around 10,000 people in West Africa. The Centres for Disease Control estimate that, by the beginning of next year, 1.4 million people may be affected if we do not get this virus under control. On 1 October, the United Nations said that if we do not get Ebola under control within 60 days it was likely to be impossible to get under control.
We have been told by our government that our responsibility is here in the region and that we are prepared to help in the region. We have had information suggesting that the government was preparing to perhaps deploy in our region should it become necessary. Peter Dutton, the health minister, said just a few days ago that 'Australia had the capacity and the capability to rapidly deploy forces out of Darwin into our near neighbours.' On Monday, the Prime Minister visited Port Moresby and said to the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea that Australia could support a regional outbreak should it become necessary.

Unfortunately, today in Senate estimates we heard wildly different accounts of whether this is in fact the case. We have heard differing accounts from the Chief Medical Officer, from the Department of Health and from the Department of Defence. This afternoon, the health minister was caught out by the ABC for saying that the government was funding the Red Cross to fight Ebola in West Africa—even though they are not. The government's chaotic response to this serious health crisis is absolutely extraordinary.

House adjourned at 20:00

NOTICES

Mr Morrison: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the Australian Citizenship Act 2007 and other legislation, and for related purposes.
Wednesday, 22 October 2014

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott) took the chair at 09:00.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Live Animal Exports

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (09:30): Australia can sometimes be a cruel and selfish country. Too many people are happy with, or at least prepared to turn a blind eye to, the government's asylum seeker policy. Some people actually think the government's May budget was fair, and, frankly, how many more episodes of animal cruelty are needed before the government shuts down the live export trade? To that end at least the previous government did improve things a little by introducing the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System. Even after ESCAS has been running for over two years there has not been a single charge laid against any exporter despite the repeated revelations of systemic cruelty in the live export industry. Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce claims that ESCAS has been an incredible success. Minister, it is not an incredible success when the atrocities keep happening, nor is it an incredible success when cruelty is inflicted again and again on Australian animals and no-one is held to account.

This is the reason why, in January, I travelled to Darwin at the invitation of the live export industry and accepted an offer to travel on a cattle ship to Indonesia. Of course the industry quickly reneged on the invitation and came up with every excuse under the sun as to why it could not go. Clearly this is an industry with something to hide. This is also why, in February this year, I introduced the Live Animal Export Prohibition (Ending Cruelty) Bill 2014, which would put an end to live animal exports from 2017 and would put in place improved animal welfare safety safeguards in the interim. This is my fourth legislative attempt to end the cruelty, and it is a terrible shame that the government did not care enough to list the bill for debate.

Live exports are systemically cruel, not in Australia's economic self-interest and lack popular support. It is being left to organisations like Animals Australia to keep bringing the atrocities to people's attention, even though it is in the government's power to remedy things virtually immediately. Instead the government chooses to do nothing to end the cruelty, preferring instead to celebrate every growth in this vile trade. Such inaction is actually not in the government's best interest because it will continue to face broad public condemnation so long as the cruelty continues, nor is inaction in the industry's best interest because it will not survive over the longer term unless it is seen to be operating ethically. Inaction certainly, and most importantly, is not in the animals' best interest because, after all they are the ones who are suffering terribly.

Citizenship

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (09:32): It was my great privilege on the weekend before last to welcome 51 new Australians in my electorate of McPherson on behalf of our nation. I hosted a morning tea and a citizenship ceremony at one of our local schools, Merrimac State School, and it was, as these occasions always are, inspiring to see the enthusiasm and the pride of these new Australians as they shared this very special day with their friends and families. These 51 new Australians, from children through to seniors, came from 19 different...
nations including the United Kingdom, Canada, Portugal and India. They each took the citizenship pledge after having passed the citizenship test that is part of the process. It is interesting to note that the latest summary of citizenship testing shows that, last year, 98.3 per cent of those undertaking the citizenship test passed it, and the number of people taking up citizenship is increasing with more than 123,000 taking the pledge in 2012-13.

One of the nicest aspects of citizenship ceremonies is the opportunity for all of those who are present, whether they are already citizens, or even if they are not, to participate in the affirmation. It gives family and friends the chance to express their civic pride and their commitment to Australia. It is always entered into with great enjoyment and with a sense of pride and passion. It is a reminder that citizenship confers both rights and responsibilities, and that we all play a role in shaping our nation and creating the types of communities that we want for the future.

As I said at the outset, I find citizenship ceremonies incredibly inspiring. They are a reminder that Australia is, and always has been, a welcoming nation. We welcome over 190,000 new permanent residents every year to share our values and our way of life. I do believe that, now we have regained control of our borders and stopped the flood of illegal arrivals that occurred under the previous government, the Australian people can have even greater confidence in and support for our orderly immigration program—and that is a very positive thing.

On the Gold Coast, we, of course, welcome visitors on a daily basis as tourism is the lifeblood of our city, but we also benefit from fantastic local communities made up of people from many nations. According to the 2011 census, around 30 per cent of McPherson residents were born overseas. I want to take this opportunity in the national parliament to welcome the 51 newest citizens to call the southern Gold Coast home. It was a delight to meet them and an honour to be able to officiate at their very special occasion. I thank them once again for their commitment and wish them a very happy, healthy and prosperous future in our great nation.

Budget

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide) (09:35): Recently, the Australian Workplace Innovation and Social Research Centre at the very good University of Adelaide undertook research on the impacts of the Abbott government's 2014 budget on my fine state of South Australia. Unsurprisingly, the results were not positive. This report highlights a $1.6 billion hit to the South Australian economy just from the federal budget cuts alone, with up to 7,000 fewer jobs created by 2017-18 in our state. It also identifies that the top 10 areas to be hit hardest by the Abbott government budget are all in the northern suburbs, an area which, of course, is already facing significant challenges in the coming years with the closure of Holden. What is worse, these impacts will of course be felt the most by those on low incomes. Of the top areas impacted by this budget, two are in the electorate of Adelaide, which I am so proud to represent. One is the Adelaide CBD and the other is in the north of the Adelaide electorate, in the suburbs of Enfield and Blair Athol.

Spending much time, as I do, in these areas in the north of the electorate, I know that there are many, many low- and middle-income Australian families that will now be finding it even harder to make ends meet. Many send their children to local schools and many were excited and looking forward to a better and fairer school funding system. Now, not only has that needs based funding model been dashed but South Australian schools are set to face the
biggest funding cut in our history. Many residents in this area are also pensioners. They were pensioners who were ensured that their pensions would not be cut, but, of course, we see that that too is yet another broken promise. Many are high school students who were looking forward to attending university. I know from direct discussions with them that many would be the first in their families to attend university and now question whether or not they can afford to take on that bigger burden. All of these people are going to be bearing the brunt of this budget and all of these people were promised the exact opposite just over a year ago by those who sit opposite.

I attend regular Saturday morning street-corner meetings where I go out and talk directly to the community that I represent. In the last two weekends, I have been in the suburbs of Kilburn, Prospect and Blair Athol. The Abbott government may like to think that community outrage, betrayal and anxiety about their budget has subsided; they like to think that everyone will just give up and move on; but, on the weekend—even almost half a year after the budget was handed down—these harsh measures were still the No. 1 issue that was raised, because the damage that they are doing is real and because it is having a significant impact on average Australians. I stand here today to say that we will keep fighting these unfair budget measures, which hurt those who can least afford it, because they should not have to pay the price for the Prime Minister's dishonesty.

McTavish, Mr Ken

Mr WILSON (O'Connor) (09:38): I take this opportunity today to honour one of the stalwarts of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder community: Lorna Mitchell nee Bell. Lorna was born in Kunanalling in July 1913 and went to school in Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie. She married Rex Mitchell in 1934 and, when he passed away in 1985, Lorna continued to support Rex's well-known contribution to football. She began presenting the Mitchell Medal at the Goldfields Football League's best and fairest competition awards.

Lorna was instrumental in establishing and working with countless community groups, including the Goldfields Repertory Club, the Goldfields Women's Health Care Centre and the Goldfields Child Care Centre and was involved with the Police and Aboriginal Community Relations Committee, Goldfields aged welfare and the Red Cross. She also helped to establish a financial advisory referral association—FARA—for families in need.

In 1969 she was the first woman elected to the Kalgoorlie Town Council, and later became deputy mayor. Mrs Mitchell received an Order of Australia medal in 1996 and was a recipient of the British Empire Medal. She was also the first administrator of the spring festival when it began in 1985. On 9 October 2014, just four days before the 29th spring festival, Lorna passed away at the incredible age of 102. Unfortunately, Lorna did not get to see the biggest spring festival to date, with over 10,000 spectators coming through the gate and raising $5,000 for the Royal Flying Doctor Service through the generous donations.

The Goldfields Spring Festival was established to provide a platform for the public to celebrate all that is spring in the Goldfields. This annual community event is now coordinated by the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry, along with the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and The Kalgoorlie Miner—all proud partners of this family-oriented event. After 25 years the Goldfields Spring Festival is one institution that has stood the test of time. Stallholders come from all over the state to participate in the festival, along with varying acts of entertainment throughout the day. This year I was able to bring my wife, Tanya, and
our four children to Kalgoorlie to attend the Goldfields Spring Festival. It was a great day where the kids were able to have their faces painted, watch talent quests and spend the day looking at the wonderful stalls and displays. As a moving tribute to Lorna, from now on the Goldfields Spring Festival will be named the Lorna Mitchell Goldfields Spring Festival.

Many people live a long life but not all continue to contribute to their community throughout their entire lives, as Lorna did. Congratulations to the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry on honouring a deserving woman and on producing a spring festival the whole community can be proud of.

Asylum Seekers

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (09:41): The Very Rev. John Roundhill, Dean of St Paul's Anglican Cathedral; Rev. Gordon Bannon, Uniting Church minister; Dylan LeClerc, Pentecostal pastor; Michelle Rankin, Eaglehawk community worker; Jonathan Cornford, community member; school chaplains Tracey Wolsley, Carl Rusbridge, Anthea Taylor; and David Fagg, community worker—all Christian leaders, were arrested yesterday in my electorate after staging a peaceful protest, a sit-in, at the office of parliamentarian, Senator Bridget McKenzie.

Their protest was a silent protest about the plight of asylum seeker children who are still behind what they are saying are bars. They are part of the 'Love makes a way' asylum seeker movement. They were handcuffed and taken into custody during a protest aimed at raising awareness about children held in detention. The group felt the need to stage this sit-in because they had been unable to meet with the senator. To have to go to those extremes to raise what they believe is a moral issue—and I agree with them—then to be arrested and to expect to be charged for trespass, I believe is quite extreme. The group argue that they believe that this is a moral issue, and they wish to draw the attention of the parliament to their concerns for the safety and wellbeing of children in detention.

St Paul's Anglican Cathedral Dean, the Very Rev. John Roundhill, said that the group were concerned and believed it was necessary to protest. They have been speaking quite continuously, not just with myself but with a number of community leaders, about the need for our country to ensure that the rights and wellbeing of those in our care in detention are being respected. The Bendigo sit-in sees a small group of local church leaders, both ordained ministers and lay people, standing up and voicing their opinion about why they believe that asylum seeker children and their families in detention should be released into the community. This was a peaceful action. I want to say to these protesters from my community that your protest has been noticed and that I encourage you to continue to be a strong voice on these issues. This is your right as Australians to be able to continue to protest. It is the role of your elected representatives not only to speak for you and listen to you but also to meet with you on your issues. (Time expired)

Macquarie Electorate: 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (09:44): I rise today to congratulate the organisers of and participants in the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur on their remarkable efforts at last Saturday's walkathon. The 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer is an annual home-grown Macarthur movement that raises funds to support the treatment, care and comfort of children and adults dealing with cancer. Each year hundreds of Macarthur residents descend on the
Campbelltown Stadium to walk laps for 24 hours. However, there is much more to the event than just walking. It is jam-packed full of activities that raise funds, support cancer patients, acknowledge carers, remember loved ones and raise cancer awareness.

This year a group of dedicated dawn-breaking walkers, led by Mark Wallington, began walking at 5:30 in the morning from Camden Palliative Unit to the stadium, to raise additional money for the cause. Local Macarthur residents Ken and Liz Stonestreet officially kicked off the event at the stadium. The Stonestreets are a married couple. They have participated in and helped to organise the walkathon. Both have suffered from cancer—breast cancer, to be precise. Liz defeated breast cancer six years ago, and whilst there is only a one-in-1,258 chance of men getting breast cancer, Ken Stonestreet was told in August this year that he had the illness. Ken's touching opening ceremony speech sent a powerful message that breast cancer affects men as well as women, and it can often be very aggressive in men. So no matter if you are a man or a woman if you feel a bump get it checked.

Ken also spoke about how the funds raised by the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer have enabled him to access high-quality treatment in Macarthur, instead of having to travel to Sydney, which has been a great deal of help to him and his wife, Liz. Every dollar raised by the event stays in Macarthur, and the funds play a vital role in providing services and equipment to the Macarthur Cancer Therapy Centre, the oncology ward and the paediatric ambulatory care unit at Campbelltown Hospital, and the palliative care unit and associated outreach service at Camden Hospital. Chairman of the event, Campbelltown Councillor Fred Borg, said that all the participants are still collecting and banking donations. Money raised at this year's event and that raised over the past 10 years is well on its way to cracking the $3 million mark.

Extraordinary fundraising efforts like this do not happen without an equally extraordinary organising team. I congratulate this year's organising committee: chairperson Councillor Fred Borg; deputy chairperson and secretary Sue McGaritty; treasurer Rebecca Purcell; teams coordinator Dave Eckford; hospital representative Dr Stephen Della-Fiorentina; and all the other 20 committee members who work hard throughout the year to pull off this amazing event. I also congratulate the 81 teams that officially registered this year, as well as the hundreds of individuals who were not in a team but turned out on the day to show their support. The Heavenly Angels and the Youngies really touched my heart. It is because of these generous organisers, sponsors and participants that the Macarthur region is very lucky to have access to world-class cancer treatment facilities staffed by talented and caring health professionals.

**Family Day Care**

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (09:47): Another day, another broken promise from the Abbott government, this time impacting quite dramatically on family day care. Family day care is an absolutely essential community service to provide backup for working families to get that balance between working life and personalised care, frequently in the home and frequently out of typical work hours. I have had some experience with family day care over the years. I respect the quality that is provided by family day care—the professionalism of those who are working in services such as the Bramble Bay Family Day Care Service, at Sandgate, and the Wesley Mission Family Day Care, at Chermside.
All of this is now under threat. A little over a year ago Tony Abbott promised no cuts to education — of course, he promised a lot of things. In his first budget, however, $1 billion in funding has been cut out of early childcare services alone. Of that $1 billion, $157 million will be slashed from family day care funding by changing the eligibility for the community support program. So if there happens to be a service in a particular area, and there are two services that may cover a similar geographic area, these cuts will mean that one service will no longer be eligible at all under the new rules for funding. So, in the case of my area, you could possibly see one service simply knocked out in its entirety. That is before you get to the impact of these cuts on the individual services. So in that case there will be no second chances. One could be completely knocked out.

We estimate that over 80 per cent of family day care services will have a funding cut. In Queensland alone, it will be 110 family day care services. This is very important for those areas that do not have the typical long day care services that many areas have come to accept. These 110 family day care services provide care for approximately 30,000 kids.

As a result of all of that, we are going to see less funding, which means less professional help, less professional tutoring and less professional backup to those family day care providers in the home. We simply do not know how much, but it will mean people will be losing their jobs in the services. Frequently these will be people who have been providing these services for years — people who are highly respected, people who are highly trained, people who have an enormous capacity to contribute to the quality of care.

This has been a very nasty budget and we are now beginning to see its full impact across a range of services in our local communities. On this occasion it is going to smash elements of family day care which are absolutely essential to working families getting the care they need, particularly out of hours, for their kids when they go to work.

**Mental Health**

*Mrs Sudmalis* (Gilmore) (09:50): There is no more powerful image that comes to mind when thinking about the issue of mental health than the one I relate here of an aged widow diagnosed with schizophrenia and manic depression, now termed bipolar disorder, lying on a tiled floor, minutes from death from self-administered injury. After the paramedics depart, the clean-up begins: the bathroom, the razor, the bedroom, the stairs — and the lives of the family.

Mental health disorders should never end with this picture. It is time for each and every one of us to stop talking about mental health and act on the recommendations of the findings and the reports that are so prolific at this time. It is the elephant in the room that will affect one in five Australians this year. The New South Wales Mental Health Commission report establishes that with early intervention when a problem first develops, sometimes in young children, effective outcomes achieved.

There are around one million adults living with depression across Australia. Even more shockingly, there are almost 200,000 young people living with this terrible condition in 2014. One in four Australians suffer from some form of anxiety. Despite this, anxiety is still stigmatised in our community. I know that services like Headspace in Nowra are working hard every day to try and address some of these stigmas and the consequences that come with them. The results that I see coming from our local Headspace are very, very impressive.
It is no secret that one of my biggest wishes for our region would be for the Illawarra-Shoalhaven Medicare Local, as it has been known, to extend funds to establish a Headspace service further down the coast in Ulladulla. While Headspace has a fantastic outreach program, regularly visiting local schools and youth groups, there is only so much a Nowra based mental health service can do when it comes to servicing the youth of Milton, Ulladulla, Sussex Inlet and all of the small towns and villages in between.

I welcome the announcement by Minister for Health Peter Dutton that the government is considering merging the 17 Medicare Locals across New South Wales into nine Primary Health Networks, as the proposed Primary Health Network covering my electorate will extend quite far. However, this means that larger resources and a better regional vision need to be put in place. I and other mental health facilitators, workers and providers will be putting in a maximum effort to ensure that mental health services are not limited to the large town centres. In many regional areas we have very qualified professionals ready, willing and able to give their expertise locally rather than having travel as part of the budget allocation. Mental health is a significant issue for my electorate.

We have passionate advocates like Jon Strang, Wendi Hobbs, Dean Naylor-Clarke, Donna Corbyn, Maria Mitchell and countless others assisting as carers and mentors. One of my passions is to make sure that access to good mental health services in regional areas of New South Wales like Gilmore are just as accessible for someone living in Ulladulla or Jamberoo as they are for a city resident and that young people, veterans and victims of domestic violence all get the very essential mental health care and guidance they need so their families never see the image that I spoke of earlier.

Higher Education

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (09:53): Since the New South Wales Liberal government came into office, in their first budget in 2012 they indicated over 800 jobs would be cut from TAFE New South Wales. Since then, in preparation for their miscalled Smart and Skilled reform package for vocational education and training, more than 1,200 jobs at TAFE have now been lost. South Western Sydney Institute of TAFE has suffered some of the worst cuts in the state. By the end of this term, more than 100 teachers and close to 100 administrative and support staff will have been made redundant. Of these, 15 head teachers are from adult basic education, and 19 teachers teach foundation skills—also known as adult education skills. Additionally, over half the 16 outreach teacher jobs based in south-west Sydney will be cut. These numbers do not include the hundreds of casual teachers who have been engaged by TAFE. The student association is due to close. Library services are already being downgraded. As a result of these savage cuts, Miller TAFE was forced to close down its highly successful metal fabrication section, forcing students now to travel to Granville or Campbelltown campuses. Staff at SWSi were also recently notified of the early closure of their engineering classes. This is cutting face-to-face time, for these various classes, reducing the time available for students to learn. This highly uncertain environment is creating extraordinarily low morale throughout TAFE, resulting in more teachers seeking redundancy than required.

Sadly, this is not the end of the cuts. The New South Wales government will maintain their path of changes, downgrading TAFE.
We are losing the ability to provide vital training and vocational education for young people. Education and training is a vital investment for government if we are to safeguard our children's futures and provide for the future of our nation in a highly competitive world.

Those opposite have already shown their colours. They have been prepared to cut $80 billion out of schools and hospitals. They should understand the value of education. Investment in education is crucial for young people in finding employment opportunities. The current economic climate, with rising unemployment, calls for more, not less, to be invested in education. Yet what the New South Wales government is doing is mimicking the Abbott government.

**Braddon Electorate: Illicit Drugs**

*Mr WHITELEY (Braddon) (09:57):* The north-west coast, west coast and King Island, which make up the seat of Braddon, are best known for their produce, both agricultural and industrial, and also for their stunning landscapes. It was humbling for me in my first speech to highlight this, when I said:

… Braddon is right up there with the most unique and beautiful parts of our country. We are makers. We are makers of whiskey, underground mining equipment, magnificent cheese, truffles, leatherwood honey, the freshest and best of vegetables, the biggest and highest-jumping salmon, octopus, quality milk products sought by a growing Asian population—and the list goes on and on. Braddon—

I said—

charmingly punches well above its weight.

This week, however, national media attention has been focused on our region—and on my electorate, particularly—for all the wrong reasons. On Tuesday evening, the ABC television programs *Four Corners* and later *Lateline* aired feature investigations into the use of methamphetamine—in regional Australia. Sadly, the focus of these programs was the north-west coast of Tasmania. This is the second time in recent months that mainland media has singled out the north-west coast of Tasmania but in all cities—major metropolitan cities and regional cities alike.

I am acutely aware of the scourge of drugs. Like other members of parliament from around the country, I am in regular contact with parents, educators and employers who have in some way been affected by drugs. They tell me of lost opportunities—of children who have failed to finish their schooling, setting themselves up for a lifetime on the dole; of colleagues who have ruined their careers and social relationships; and, most worryingly, of parents who are setting a disastrous example to their children that is no less destructive than child abuse.

Of all the illegal drugs accessed on the street today, ice is the most terrifying. Physically, the drug can result in young people looking like old men and women within months, while mentally it can lead users to commit horrific crimes based on delusion.

Scrupulously, criminal organisations, including bikie gangs, after saturating the city markets for this drug, have moved into the regional areas with low crime rates and, therefore, a low police presence. It is quite easy from here to join the dots.

Like other regional areas facing this problem throughout Australia, the north-west coast community is banding together, and I will be facilitating a forum in Smithton on 31 October to address this particular issue.
But I want to make this particularly clear. We know there is a problem and we know that
we must come together to try to solve the problem. But ice is no more an issue in Tasmania,
particularly on the north-west of Tasmania, than it is for Victoria or New South Wales. This is
both a community problem and a national problem. At a crucial time in the history of
Tasmania, a time when there is renewed confidence, it is disappointing that mainland media
have focused on one part of the country and have presented an image that leaves a very deep
and unfortunate perception footprint in the minds of people across Australia and potentially
overseas.

Petition: Renewable Energy Target

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (10:00): On behalf of my community I
present a petition signed by 313 members of the community calling on the Abbott government
not to abandon the renewable energy target and to continue to ensure that Australia promotes
investment in renewable energy.

Overwhelmingly, scientific evidence demonstrates that climate change is occurring. If we
are going to reduce its impact, we must reduce our reliance on predominantly fossil fuel based
energy. Based on the advice we are receiving from climate scientists we have a moral
obligation to promote policies that encourage a transition to a cleaner energy mix in Australia.

I have two young children and, like any parent, I want to pass on a better Australia to them.
But I cannot in good conscience promote policies that do not promote renewable energy use
in Australia. Based on what we know, we have an obligation to future generations to act now,
to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. The renewable energy target was fulfilling that
obligation. The renewable energy target has facilitated $20 billion in new investment in large-
scale renewable energy and billions of dollars in investment in small household solar panels
and solar hot water. That investment is growing. In 2012 the renewable energy industry
employed 24,000 Australians. These are high-skilled, high-wage jobs of the future—jobs that
we need to be promoting within Australia.

Other nations are investing heavily in renewable energy, in particular our closest trading
partner, China. They are on a path to future economic development. The jobs of the future are
going to be in the transition from an industrial based society to a clean energy society.
Australia must ensure that we do not miss this opportunity.
The renewable energy target is a policy mix that ensures that we make that transition in a
clean and effective manner.

A recent report by ROAM Consulting, prepared for the Clean Energy Council, also
indicated that if the renewable energy target is abandoned then households will pay $50 more
for their electricity in 2020 if the RET is dumped. That is because fewer renewables will
mean a need for more gas and the price of gas over the next decade is set to triple. Also,
cutting the RET will mean less competition and less competition means higher prices. So we
are calling on the Abbott government to ensure that we maintain the renewable energy target
for the future of Australia, to ensure that we make that transition to a clean energy future. The
message of our community is: do not dump the renewable energy target.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Porter): Before moving on, has the member for
Kingsford Smith had the petition approved by the committee?

Mr THISTLETHWAITE: No, Mr Deputy Speaker.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The document will be forwarded to the Standing Committee on Petitions for its consideration. It will be accepted subject to confirmation by the committee that it conforms to the standing orders.

Page Electorate: Grafton Jacaranda Festival 2014

Mr HOGAN (Page) (10:03): It is a great pleasure for me to talk today about an event which is very synonymous with our community. I had a phone call at about 7.30 this morning from a colleague of mine Mr Isaac Day, with whom I worked previously in Casino. He told me that he was coming here today with McAuley Catholic College, in Grafton. Some of them are here right now. To all of you from McAuley Catholic College: it is great to see you and, indeed, your teachers here in Parliament House today.

Even better than that, what I am talking about this morning is the Jacaranda Festival and every student of McAuley Catholic College and their teachers well know about the Jacaranda Festival. It is a great celebration in our community.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not know whether you have been to Grafton. But it is one of the most beautiful cities in Australia, synonymous with the Jacaranda tree. They are now in flower, so we have the festival every year at this time. In fact, this year marks the 80th year of the festival. So it is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, festivals—certainly the oldest folk festival in the country.

This year’s president is Monique Morrisey. The secretary is Lainie Edwards. I want to acknowledge a few people who are contesting some of the things. We have the Jacaranda Queen and we have the Junior Jacaranda candidates. They are Bonita Reynolds, Tiahna Woodward, Bernadette White, Olivia Alford, Erica Tillman and Megan Tillman. The Junior Jacaranda Queen director is Karen Hackett.

The Jacaranda Queen candidates this year are Emily Causley, Rachael Mackenzie, Stephanie Elliot and Madeline McDonald. Last year’s Jacaranda Queen was Cerene Lowe, and she did me the honour of opening my private office in Grafton earlier this year.

The sponsors are very important to an event like this. They are Summerland Credit Union, Flight Centre, the Clarence Valley Council, Blanchard’s, Westlawn, Sweet Treats & Gifts, Grafton Shoppingworld, Newcastle Permanent, Harveys jewellers, McKimms Real Estate, Gateway Lifestyle, Ruby Connection and Two Tails winery.

It all starts this Friday night. We have the Jacaranda ball on Friday night. I will certainly be attending that. I will be missing some of the events for Jacaranda week, next week—as parliament is sitting—but will certainly be there next Saturday when we have the float parade. It is a big day on Saturday the 1st, and hopefully I will be seeing many of you there on that day.

I hope you have enjoyed your tour of Parliament House today. I will leave here with you and we might have a photo out the front. Teachers, it is great to see you and Isaac, it is especially good to see you.

Afghanistan

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (10:06): I welcome the students. I am from the Labor Party! So is she. It is my delight today to talk about Afghanistan. Australia is rightly proud of what we have done in Afghanistan over 13 years. We have provided security, we have mentored
and trained the Afghanistan National Army and we have built schools and other infrastructure, such as maternal-health clinics. This important work continues in partnership with the Afghan government and our international partners.

Around 26,000 members of our Defence Force have served in Afghanistan. It was an honour to visit many of them in Uruzgan province and, as a minister, to work with Defence and the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that those who have served, and those who are currently serving, receive the best possible support and acknowledgement.

An essential part of nation building in Afghanistan is the multi-lateral effort to bring about human security and a stable democracy. Millions of Afghans have recently voted in the presidential elections. These elections are a crucial part of establishing democratic process and the rule of law. Australia and the United States have both been proud to fund international election observers to ensure that the task of building Afghanistan's democracy does not finish with the 2014 presidential election. The election was targeted by elements of the Taliban, making it a difficult process but, of course, a free and fair democratic process is a never-ending project.

The 100 per cent audit and recount was unprecedented in its scope and allowed the political solution to be found for what so far has been a relatively peaceful transfer of power. I note that the new President, Dr Ashraf Ghani, has now been inaugurated and we wish him and the Afghan people well in their journey.

The Asia Foundation is an international non-government organisation based in San Francisco that answered the call to provide an election observer mission to Afghanistan and I am proud to say that many Australians who are very familiar with this House were leading the way.

Mr Andy Campbell from Yass, New South Wales, was Mission Director. Andy has over 20 years democracy experience in the Middle East, South Asia and the South Pacific and has been intimately involved in all five Afghan elections.

Deputy Mission Director and election observer coordinator was Mr Peter Yates, a ministerial adviser to the previous Labor government. Patrick Gorman, who many in this House will know, was a long-serving adviser to former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and was an observer with the mission, as was the Deputy Mayor of Fremantle in Western Australia, Mr Josh Wilson. Josh was also the Chief of Staff to Melissa Parke in her role as Minister for International Development.

Another observer was one of my own staff, Mr Luke Gosling OAM. Certainly the people of Darwin and Palmerston know Luke and I am glad that he has returned safely to us in the Northern Territory. Luke worked in Kandahar, Afghanistan, about 10 years ago and I am pleased that he has been able to make a further contribution to nation building in Afghanistan with this mission. I commend their work to the House.

Australia has shed blood, sweat and tears in Afghanistan since 2001. I want to acknowledge the ongoing work of our Australian Defence Force personnel and our public servants in the roles they continue to play.

**Hindmarsh Electorate: Education**

**Mr WILLIAMS** (Hindmarsh) (10:09): I rise today to commend the work of secondary schools in Hindmarsh, as hundreds of year 12 students prepare for their final exams in the
coming week. I would like to acknowledge the tremendous work of school teachers, parents, students and the school community generally. I congratulate all the year 12 students in Hindmarsh on their 13 years of education and wish them the best of luck.

Hindmarsh is home to a large number of talented students, and today I want to acknowledge students from St Michael’s College in Henley Beach in my electorate. I was privileged to recently attend St Michael’s year 12 awards and leadership assembly to celebrate the achievements of a number of students who have excelled and to recognise their hard work and dedication in their final year of school. Thank you to St Michael’s College principal, John Foley, and his staff for the invitation and for their hospitality.

After the award ceremony, over the morning tea, I enjoyed talking to a number of the college community, including the chair of the school board, parents and students, as well as school captains Hannah Schwarz and Michael Ucci. Congratulations to both Hannah and Michael on their speeches in the award ceremony as well as their awards and achievements during their years at St Michael’s.

Awards presented during the ceremony ranged from academic excellence to sporting achievements, and from school service and commitment to all-round recognition. I was very impressed with the achievements of all the award winners as they were read out during the ceremony, and I take this opportunity to congratulate the following high achievers: Lucy Tweed, Jessica Joseph, Michael Ucci, John Stevens, Hannah Schwarz, Daniel Drew, Lydia Hlawncue, Murtaza Hussaini, Ashleigh Behrends, Emma Burridge, Jack Hynes, Brittany Jessup, Joshua Lindsay, Jack Loades, Sonya Lorenzoni, Joshua Mori, Olivia Parker, Scarlett Parker, Keeley Pearce and Annalise Turner.

I would also like to make a special mention of Ella Kearsley, who was the inaugural recipient of the Hindmarsh Shield Award. The Hindmarsh Shield Award is presented in the spirit of Sir John Hindmarsh whom the electorate was named after and who was the Governor of South Australia from 1836 to 1838. The award acknowledges the valuable contribution of a student, recognising excellence with leadership, community service, sporting or the musical domain. When presented with her award it was very clear that Ella was a very worthy winner. Throughout her time at St Michael’s Ella had shown a positive contribution to the school and to the local community. With a strong sense of community Ella was at the front line when volunteers were called on, rising to any challenge. Ella has a no-fuss attitude and is always willing to lend a hand, whenever and wherever required, and it a strong and solid work ethic.

I enjoyed talking to Ella’s family afterwards, and it was lovely to learn that her family had arranged for her grandmother to make a special visit to Adelaide to attend the ceremony. It was great also to hear that Ella’s brother had previously received the Australian Defence Forces award, so congratulations to the entire Kearsley family. Congratulations also to all year 12 recipients and best of luck.

**People with Disability**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (10:12): Wheeling and Able is a charitable not-for-profit organisation which organises holiday accommodation in units that are fully accessible for people with disability. There are two particular units, one in Forster and one in Corlette. This is an outstanding organisation that creates an opportunity for people with
disability to experience what it is like to have a holiday, and for them and their families to have accommodation that is set up ready for them and that caters for all their needs.

This weekend, on Friday night, Go Wheeling is holding its annual event, which is a basketball competition for able-bodied people in wheelchairs. Liesl Tesch is the ambassador and, as everyone would know, Liesel is a disabled basketballer who played for Australia and has been very successful in the Australian wheelchair basketball team. Friday night's event is a wheelchair basketball event that is about encouraging able-bodied people to compete. As I mentioned, it is on Friday night and is a two-hour event between six o'clock and eight o'clock, and it will be held at The Forum at Newcastle University on the Callaghan Campus. The competition is set up with four teams of five players. It is a round-robin competition and, at the end, one of those teams will be the Go Wheeling champion. This is a fund-raising event and also an awareness-raising event to show that wheelchair basketball is a fantastic event and a very interesting event to watch.

It works in a fundraising capacity where sponsors sponsor a wheelchair and gold coin donations are paid by spectators and supporters. There will be a raffle on the night. On the whole, it will be a fantastic event. Anything that creates opportunity for people with disability to enjoy a holiday, to be able to get out there and experience what everybody else in the community experiences is to be commended. I would like to congratulate Wheeling & Able for the fine work that they do in the community and for making this possible.

Same-Sex Relationships

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (10:15): I rise today to highlight a very important campaign called The New Norm. This awareness campaign is designed to educate people on the lack of support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex—LGBTI—students in high schools. It is disturbing to hear that 82 per cent of LGBTI students feel as though they are not being supported in their school and that 42 per cent feel as though their school is actively homophobic. Also, with only 12 per cent of schools around Australia teaching their students that homophobia is wrong, students are at serious risk of being bullied or bullying themselves. The New Norm aims to empower students, teachers, parents and the general public to take action in creating a school environment that is more inclusive for LGBTI teenagers. As the Chair of the Parliamentary Friendship Group for LGBTI Australians, I would like to congratulate the founder of The New Norm, Brett Hatfield on this initiative.

I have previously spoken in this place about the devastating impact of discrimination on the mental health of young LGBTI people, which was highlighted in a report titled Growing up queer, released in February. Brett's campaign is spreading a key message in order to create the new norm that sexual preference and gender identity do not define an individual. They are simply one of many aspects of them. I also note that The New Norm is working closely with the Safe Schools Coalition in Victoria, run by the Foundation for Young Australians.

The Safe Schools Coalition Australia is a national program, which supports gender diversity, intersex and sexual diversity in Australian schools, and it is funded by the Australian government. It is the first national coalition of schools bringing together school staff, students and families to create a safer and more inclusive learning environment. The Safe Schools Coalition Australia is now working with our parliamentary friendship group, aiming to get MPs and senators to encourage schools in their region to sign up for this program. I am very excited about my collaboration with these two campaigns, helping to get
the message out there that young LGBTI Australians need our acceptance, our understanding and most importantly our support; and that homophobia and transphobia are absolutely unacceptable in our schools and certainly unacceptable in our society.

Colleagues, you can find out more at www.thenewnorm.org. To show your support for this campaign you can have your photo taken, with a sign saying that you, too, are part of The New Norm. I encourage all my colleagues and members of this place to actively come on board and be part of this campaign, showing acceptance for this important part of our community.

**Vocational Education and Training**

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (10:18): I start by absolutely endorsing and associating myself with the comments of the member for Leichhardt in complete opposition to homophobia in the community. That was a very worthwhile contribution to this place.

I want to talk about an issue facing many of our electorates which relates to particularly unscrupulous and, I would say unconscionable, behaviour by some private training providers in our communities. In recent media reports, we have heard numerous examples of this. In May, *The Daily Telegraph* reported on incentives such as iPads, laptops and shopping vouchers being used to target disadvantaged communities in western Sydney. They talked about $200 spotters fees being paid to people to sign up to courses costing up to $25,000. The ABC radio reported in September on childcare centres and employers who were blacklisting particular training organisations because of the quality of the graduates they were providing. Courses could cost up to $4,500 and yet they reflected that some of the graduates had not even picked up a baby. So they could not have confidence in the courses.

ABC radio, again in October this year, reported on courses where unemployed people—particularly people with high needs, people with low skill levels, people with an ESL background and people with literacy difficulties—were being signed up to courses that were completely inappropriate for them, with spruikers hanging out and particularly targeting marginal people. These spruikers often talked about, and advertised, zero up-front fees without mentioning the debt that would be taken on.

There were more reports along the same line by the journalist John Ross in the *Australian* and by *A Current Affair*, talking about the concerns that people like the Automobile Chamber of Commerce has about some of these practices.

In the vocational sector all participants have one common interest, and that is quality. It does not matter whether you are a funding provider, an RTO a student or an employer, the benefits of quality training are shared by us all but the damage is also shared by us all. It is an extremely diverse sector. It has many providers. Nearly two million people in any year undertake training with over 4,000 providers in over 22,000 locations.

It is important to note that the backbone of our system is our public TAFE institutions. It is critical—as they set the benchmark in the sector for price, course delivery and quality—that they are sustained and supported. We have seen them under significant attack by Liberal state governments in Victoria in particular, but also more recently in New South Wales and Queensland.

I want to acknowledge that the federal minister has increased financial support to the national regulator ASQA. It should be a strong cop on the beat and I would encourage the
federal government to continue that support to have regulation, control and protection of the most vulnerable people in our community in place in the vocational sector.

Moore Electorate: Infrastructure

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (10:21): Local governments in my region are seeking to engage with the federal government on key infrastructure projects and strategic cooperation initiatives. The Cities of Joondalup, Stirling, and Wanneroo, led by Mayor Troy Pickard, Mayor Tracey Roberts, and Mayor Giovanni Italiano respectively, are organising a joint federal lobbying delegation visit to Canberra, aptly named the Tri-Cities Alliance, to meet with government ministers and Western Australian members and senators between 25 and 27 November 2014.

Delegations of local governments to Canberra at a regional level are an effective method of strategically positioning regions. This is particularly relevant as these cities combined represent an estimated population of 570,000 currently, growing to a projected population of 750,000 residents by 2031.

On that note, I am pleased to inform the chamber that the Mitchell Freeway extension project in my electorate, from Burns Beach Road to Hester Avenue, a distance of approximately six kilometres, was approved under the Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, last month—in September. Federal approval brings the long awaited project a step closer and is an example of federal, state and local tiers of government working together to achieve outcomes for the community.

I commend the Western Australian government for allocating approximately $315 million in state funding for the freeway extension in the state budget. The project is scheduled to commence in 2015 and be completed by late 2017. The extension also involves extending Neerabup Road from Connolly Drive to Wanneroo Road, in order to provide a direct connection with the realigned section of Flynn Drive, which is currently under construction and nearing completion. There are also plans by the City of Wanneroo, within the same timeframe, to widen Connolly Drive to a dual carriageway from Neerabup Road to Lukin Drive to ease traffic congestion.

When complete in late 2017, the upgrade to the road network will significantly improve transport linkages between the northern coastal suburbs and employment opportunities in the emerging Neerabup Industrial Area, as well as the Joondalup regional city centre, with a transport corridor all the way down to the capital city of Perth and beyond. The City of Wanneroo is seeking state and federal funding to widen Wanneroo Road to a dual carriageway between Joondalup Drive and Menchetti Road. It would make practical sense, from a construction and logistics point of view, to complete the widening of Wanneroo Road in conjunction with the extension of Neerabup Road and the Mitchell Freeway extension.

Filipino Australians

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (10:25): Today I want to sing the praises of a young woman from the electorate of Chifley, because that is what she does in spectacular fashion. Marlisa Punzalan is a singer of extraordinary talent—so much so that she literally overcame the odds on national television on Monday night to win Channel 7’s The X Factor 2014 talent competition. When you see what she has achieved, and bear in mind that she is still a 15-year-old schoolgirl from Glendenning, you will appreciate her capacity to inspire her peers and all
young people across Australia—especially the ones who want to break free from their inhibitions and, as in her case, acute shyness. There is no doubt that they can break free from this. Marlisa Punzalan, who has excited many—regardless of background—by the prospect of all of the great things that lie ahead of her, is representative of a new generation of Filipino Australians, many of whom I am proud to represent in this place. Her success prompts me to reflect on generations of Filipino Australians before her.

I was at an event on the weekend that reminded me of this—the Sydney Australian-Filipino Seniors Inc annual celebrations, where every year they reflect on another year of achievement. This group has been going strong for 27 years, where some groups struggle to last 27 months. They are headed up by president Virginia Atienzo, and many of the other past presidents and committee members were there. I think the key to SAFSI's success reflects great traits in individual Filipinos, particularly their love of family and their eagerness to work as a group for the betterment of many other families, neighbours and the community at large. On Sunday when I cast an eye around a packed auditorium of about 400 people—young and old—you could recognise people who were not just active in SAFSI, but were contributing actively within other groups. I mentioned a number of those people on the day, but I wanted to take the opportunity to single out Woodcroft's Chris Pilao.

Chris's contributions span a variety of local activities. For instance, he and fellow resident and friend Lucas Cayanan have been members of the organising committee that puts together the annual Woodcroft Festival. This year it celebrated 10 years of the festival. A veteran himself, Chris spearheads the Australian-Philippine Services League, representing veterans of various areas of conflict, including Korea, Fiji, Lebanon, Vietnam, Mindanao—former service personnel of the armed force of the Philippines in the ADF and their descendants. APSL has reached its own terrific milestone with 10 years of continued service this year. Chris can be rightly proud of the part he has played in this group's achievements. A quietly-spoken, modest man who achieves much, Chris also became the first Filipino Australian to be elected as a director of the Rooty Hill RSL, one of the largest in the country. Be it Chris Pilao or Marlisa Punzalan, I see much in the ethics, spirit and devotion of Filipino Australians that makes me very proud, and makes many other Australians very proud. Congratulations on your great success.

Chiapello, Mr Rod

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (10:28): Saturday was McHappy Day, and I had the pleasure of joining some local residents, community groups and McDonald's staff to fundraise for Ronald McDonald House. Now in its 24th year, McHappy Day has raised more than $28 million for Ronald McDonald House charities, thanks to the generosity of people in communities all over Australia. This has enabled the organisation to continue to provide much-needed funds, services and programs for seriously ill children and their families. I would like to thank everyone who was involved with McHappy Day from around the Petrie electorate for their contribution. I had the chance to meet many different people—people from the local Clontarf Beach scout groups and young people who were helping to collect and running a local car wash. It was great to meet them and their leaders. Thank you for your contribution.

I would especially like to mention the owner of McDonalds Bracken Ridge, Mr Rod Chiapello. Rod is a community champion. Many people regard multinational corporations as self-serving and only in it for the profits, but Rod Chiapello is the prime example of a local
operator from a multinational corporation who is all about community. He supports many charities and people in the local community, not just Ronald McDonald House but schools, chaplaincy groups and a whole range of people.

As Brent Sweeney from the Bracken Ridge Baptist Church so rightly puts it:
Rod Chiapello is well known as a man of service throughout our local community.
If you asked any local who the most generous person in our area was, they would likely respond 'Rod from McDonalds'.
He never waits to be asked for help, but rather he looks for any opportunity to give something. If there is a community organisation with an event on, Rod is there.
He seems to run his entire business on the premise that giving is better than receiving.
Brent is absolutely right: that is the way Rod runs his business.

It is people like Rod Chiapello who brighten our communities. They work hard to support their families and they work even harder to support their employees, community organisations, schools and people in difficult circumstances who they may not have met and may never meet. On behalf of the Petrie electorate and those in the Bracken Ridge community, I congratulate Mr Rod Chiapello. Thank you, Rod, for your altruistic service.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 10:31.
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Illegal Logging
(Question No. 212)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 14 July 2014:

(1) Are Australian companies still importing illegally logged timber from Indonesia despite the enactment of the Illegal Logging Prohibition Bill 2012.

(2) Is he aware of new research published in the journal Nature Climate Change showing a greater rate of deforestation of primary forests in Indonesia in the past 12 years.

(3) What steps is the Government taking to ensure that Australian laws are being enforced to combat illegal logging imports.

Mr Joyce: The Minister for Agriculture has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

(1) The Australian Government has not received any allegations of Australian companies importing illegally logged timber from Indonesia since the Illegal Logging Prohibition Act 2012 came into force in November 2012.

(2) Yes. The report raises some important issues about deforestation in Indonesia. This is obviously a matter for the Indonesian Government to manage. However, it is important to recognise that some forest clearing is sanctioned by the Indonesian government for economic development purposes.

The Australian Government continues to support the sustainable management of south-east Asian tropical rainforests. In support of this, the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, will host an Asia-Pacific Rainforest Summit on 12 November 2014. The summit will bring together ministers from forest nations and donor countries, corporate leaders and senior officials from key non-government organisations. They will focus on practical actions to reduce forest loss, while recognising the legitimate development aspirations of rainforest nations and communities.


Any allegations of Australian companies trading in illegally logged timber or timber products will be treated seriously. On referral to the government, any allegations will undergo preliminary inquiry to ascertain the facts and to determine if they need to be further investigated. Matters will proceed to a formal investigation if they are found to potentially breach the legislation. This will be carried out in accordance with the Australian Government Investigation Standards. Ultimately, a matter may be referred to the Australian Federal Police if it is a serious crime or requires criminal investigation.

Penalties for a breach of the legislation are ultimately at the discretion of a court. However, the maximum penalties that can be applied for a breach are:

- five years imprisonment, and/or
- AUD$85,000 for an individual, and/or
- AUD$425,000 for a corporation or body corporate.

The Illegal Logging Prohibition Amendment Regulation 2013 is scheduled to come into effect on 30 November 2014. The Regulation requires importers and domestic processors to carry out 'due diligence' to manage the risk that the timber they are dealing with has been illegally logged. The Government is working to ensure that affected businesses are aware of the new requirements and have the necessary information to help them understand and comply with the Regulation.

Carbon Price: Electricity Prices  
(Question No. 257)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 26 August 2014:

(1) What increase in electricity bills does he claim the carbon price was responsible for.
(2) Is he aware that four New South Wales power network companies, Ausgrid, Endeavour Energy, Essential Energy and TransGrid, have submitted proposals to the Australian Energy Regulator to increase their prices?
(3) Is it a fact that he said that reduced electricity costs due to abolition of the carbon price would be passed on to consumers in full; if so, what action will he take to ensure that these companies reduce their electricity prices.

Mr Hunt: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Modelling by the Australian Treasury suggests that, on average, retail electricity prices should be around 9 per cent lower in 2014-15 than they would otherwise have been with a $25.40 tax on carbon. Similarly, retail natural gas prices should be, on average, around 7 per cent lower in 2014-15 than they would have been under a carbon tax. The repeal of the carbon tax should therefore allow an average household to spend around $200 less on electricity per year and $70 less on natural gas per year.

Energy retailers have confirmed carbon tax savings for household and business electricity and gas customers. In NSW, electricity prices are up to 10 per cent lower and gas prices almost 8 per cent lower than they otherwise would have been with the carbon tax in 2014-15. These are real savings confirmed in electricity and gas bills.

I am aware that several network businesses have submitted applications to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) to have their revenue allowance determined for the regulatory control period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2019, as they are required to do under the National Electricity Rules. The AER will assess network businesses' forecasts of revenue required to cover efficient costs and an appropriate return and make a determination.

The Government has made it clear that it expects that cost savings on electricity bills reflecting the amount of the carbon tax should flow through promptly to consumers. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is monitoring prices in key sectors and will enforce reasonably expected price reductions.

The ACCC has new powers to take action against businesses that engage in carbon tax-related price exploitation or that make false or misleading claims about the effect of the carbon tax repeal on prices. These new provisions will complement the existing provisions of the Competition and Consumer Act that prohibit anti-competitive or misleading and deceptive conduct as well as false or misleading representations.

There are obligations on electricity and gas suppliers to ensure that all cost savings from the carbon tax repeal are passed through. Companies that supply electricity, natural gas and SGGs are required to pass on all cost savings associated with the repeal of the carbon tax. In addition, electricity and natural gas retailers are required to inform customers about the cost savings that they are passing on. This is happening and the carbon tax savings are confirmed on electricity and gas bills.

Speech and Media Training  
(Question No. 307)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance, in writing, on 1 September 2014:

In respect of speech and/or media training since 7 September 2013,
(a) what total sum has the Minister's department spent, and
(b) what is the breakdown for such training for the
   (i) Minister,
   (ii) Minister's staff, and where applicable, each
   (iii) junior Minister (including Assistant Minister's),
   (iv) junior (and Assistant) Minister's staff,
   (v) Parliamentary Secretary, and
   (vi) Parliamentary Secretary's staff and
(c) what services were provided, and by whom.

Mr Hockey: The Minister for Finance has supplied the following answer to the honourable member's question:

(a) Nil.
(b) Not applicable.
(c) Not applicable.

Speech and Media Training
(Question No. 313)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 1 September 2014:

In respect of speech and/or media training since 7 September 2013,

(a) what total sum has the Minister's department spent, and
(b) what is the breakdown for such training for the
   (i) Minister,
   (ii) Minister's staff, and where applicable, each
   (iii) junior Minister (including Assistant Ministers),
   (iv) junior (and Assistant) Minister's staff,
   (v) Parliamentary Secretary, and
   (vi) Parliamentary Secretary's staff and
(c) what services were provided, and by whom.

Mr Andrews: The answer to the honourable Member's question is as follows:

(a) $450.
(b) The breakdown for the training is as follows:
   (i) nil;
   (ii) nil;
   (iii) nil;
   (iv) nil;
   (v) nil; and
   (vi) nil.
(c) Three seminars on how media organisations are interacting through social media, by media expert and La Trobe University lecturer, Amanda Crane.
Department of Agriculture: Drinks Cabinet for Ministers
(Question No. 336)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 3 September 2014:

Since 7 September 2013, has the Minister's department paid for or stocked the 'drinks cabinet' for (a) the Minister, and where applicable, each (b) junior Minister (including Assistant Ministers), and (c) Parliamentary Secretary; if so, at what cost.

Mr Joyce: The Minister for Agriculture has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The Department of Agriculture does not provide alcoholic beverages to its Minister's or Parliamentary Secretary's offices.

Department of the Environment: Drinks Cabinet for Ministers
(Question No. 344)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 3 September 2014:

Since 7 September 2013, has the Minister's department paid for or stocked the 'drinks cabinet' for (a) the Minister, and where applicable, each (b) junior Minister (including Assistant Ministers), and (c) Parliamentary Secretary; if so, at what cost.

Mr Hunt: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Department has not paid for any alcoholic drinks for the Minister or Parliamentary Secretary Birmingham during the period 7 September 2013 to 30 September 2014.

Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development: Hospitality Expenses
(Question No. 348)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 3 September 2014:

In respect of hospitality since 7 September 2013, has the Minister's Department paid for any function to introduce to the Department (a) the Minister, (b) the Minister's staff, and where applicable, each (c) junior Minister (including Assistant Ministers), (d) junior (and Assistant) Minister's staff, (e) Parliamentary Secretary, and (f) Parliamentary Secretary's staff; if so, at what cost.

Mr Truss: the answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) Yes
(b) Yes
(c) Nil
(d) Yes
(e) Nil
(f) Nil

Total Cost - $226.19

Department of Agriculture: Secondments
(Question No. 372)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 3 September 2014:
Since 7 September 2013, (a) how many departmental officials have been seconded to the (i) Minister's office, and where applicable, each (ii) junior Minister's office (including Assistant Ministers), and (iii) Parliamentary Secretary's office, (b) for how long, and (c) at what level.

Mr Joyce: The Minister for Agriculture has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

**Minister Joyce's Office**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>End</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acting Chief of Staff</td>
<td>18-Sep-13</td>
<td>15-Nov-13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acting Media Advisor</td>
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<td>28-Oct-13</td>
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<td>28-Oct-13</td>
<td>06-Dec-13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Adviser</td>
<td>18-Sep-13</td>
<td>10-Dec-13</td>
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<td>23-Sep-13</td>
<td>13-Dec-13</td>
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<tr>
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<td>23-Sep-13</td>
<td>13-Dec-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting Adviser</td>
<td>23-Sep-13</td>
<td>29-Nov-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting office manager</td>
<td>23-Sep-13</td>
<td>13-Dec-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting receptionist</td>
<td>18-Sep-13</td>
<td>10-Dec-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting Senior Adviser</td>
<td>10-Feb-14</td>
<td>02-May-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acting Adviser</td>
<td>31-Mar-14</td>
<td>13-Jun-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acting Senior Adviser</td>
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<td>25-Jul-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acting Adviser</td>
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**Parliamentary Secretary Colbeck's Office**

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<th>Staff Member</th>
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<tr>
<td>Acting Advisor</td>
<td>01-Oct-13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acting Receptionist</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting Receptionist</td>
<td>07-Oct-13</td>
<td>28-Nov-13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Media Monitoring and Clipping Services**

(Question No. 389)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance, in writing, on 3 September 2014:

In respect of media monitoring and clipping services in the financial periods since 7 September 2013, (a) what sum has been spent on such services engaged by (i) the Minister's office, and where applicable, each (ii) junior Minister (including Assistant Ministers), and (iii) Parliamentary Secretary, and (b) what was the (i) name, and (ii) postal address, of each media monitoring company engaged by each of these offices.

Mr Hockey: The Minister for Finance has supplied the following answer to the honourable member's question:

Media monitoring services for Finance portfolio ministers' offices are provided by the department of Finance and included in the scope of the department's contract at no additional cost.

**Port Hastings: Development**

(Question No. 406)

Mr Burke asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 04 September 2014:
Have environmental impact studies been undertaken by the Government into the proposed expansion of the Port of Hastings, Victoria; if so, can he provide them; if not, what environmental assessments and approvals would the Government be required to undertake and provide to allow the expansion to proceed.

**Mr Hunt:** The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Australian Government has a role in regulating proposals that are likely to result in significant impacts to matters protected under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). This means that the Port of Hastings development will require assessment and approval under the EPBC Act if it is likely to result in significant impacts to matters such as listed threatened species and communities, migratory species, Commonwealth marine environments and wetlands of international importance.

It will be important that any assessment of the potential expansion of the Port of Hastings be based on robust scientific information. Any information provided in support of an EPBC assessment must be both relevant to the proposed action and accurately reflect the current environmental status of the Port of Hastings site. I have discussed these requirements with the Victorian Government, in particular the need for a comprehensive environmental assessment, consistent with the requirements of national environment law.

**Airports**

*Question No. 411*

**Mr Katter** asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 22 September 2014:

1. Is it a fact that the following public airports: (a) Blackall, (b) Moranbah, (c) Blackwater, (d) Dysart, (e) Middlemount, (f) Jericho, and (g) Clermont, are or will be restricted or closed unless special arrangements are in place; if so, (i) how does this assist pilots needing to use these airports to make unexpected landings, and (ii) will he consider lifting these restrictions.

2. Is he aware that foreign owned mining companies are restricting access to regional public airports; if so, what is he doing to rectify this situation.

**Mr Truss:** the answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

1. The Government is unaware of any proposals that would change access to these airports or lead to their closure.

2. See above. Some of the listed airports are not publicly owned (Moranbah, Blackwater, Dysart and Middlemount). Access to each of these airports is a matter for the airport owner/operator.

**Commonwealth Grants**

*Question No. 423*

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, in writing, on 22 September 2014:

In 2013-14, how many Commonwealth grants were approved by the Minister's department, and at what total cost, and of these, how many recipients have (a) signed funding agreements, and at what total cost, and (b) received payment, and at what total cost.

**Mr Pyne:** The Minister for Employment has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

Department of Employment grants are published on the department's website.
Commonwealth Grants
(Question No. 426)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 22 September 2014:

In 2013-14, how many Commonwealth grants were approved by the Minister's department, and at what total cost, and of these, how many recipients have:

(a) signed funding agreements and at what total cost; and
(b) received payment, and at what total cost.

Mr Andrews: The answer to the honourable Member's question is as follows:
Nil Commonwealth grants were approved by the Minister's department in 2013-14.

Department of Human Services: Overseas Travel
(Question No. 444)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 22 September 2014:

In respect of departmental staff overseas travel since 7 September 2013:

(a) What was the total cost?
(b) What is the breakdown of this cost? i.e., airfares, accommodation, hospitality, official passports and minor incidentals; and
(c) What was the travel for?

Mr Andrews: The answer to the honourable Member's question is as follows:
(a) During the period 7 September 2013 to 22 September 2014 staff of the Department of Human Services undertook 17 international trips at a total expenditure of $125,886 (including fees).
(b) The breakdown of the total expenditure is:
   • $89,535 for airfares (includes booking and Whole of Australian Government fees);
   • $19,617 for accommodation;
   • $15,058 for meals, incidentals and other travel-related entitlements; and
   • $1,676 for official passports and supporting documentation.
(c) The international travel was undertaken for departmental purposes for example; meetings, conferences, emergency management deployment and APS development programs.

Department of Human Services: Corporate Credit Cards
(Question No. 463)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 22 September 2014:

Since 7 September 2013, how many corporate credit cards have been issued to departmental staff, and what is the total cost of all transactions made on them.

Mr Andrews: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
The Department of Human Services issued 1,322 corporate credit cards from 7 September 2013 until 31 August 2014. This includes replacing expired, lost or stolen cards as well as issuing new cards to new staff where their position requires a corporate card.

The total cost of all transactions on the issued cards for this period was $9,472,755.84.
Department of the Environment: Corporate Credit Cards
(Question No. 466)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 22 September 2014:

Since 7 September 2013, how many corporate credit cards have been issued to departmental staff, and what is the total cost of all transactions made on them.

Mr Hunt: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Department of the Environment
From 7 September 2103 until 30 September 2014:
- 107 credit cards have been issued to departmental staff
- $570,118 of transactions were made on these cards

Director National Parks
From 7 September 2103 until 30 August 2014:
- 6 credit cards have been issued to departmental staff
- $22,022 of transactions were made on these cards

Department of Immigration and Border Protection: Corporate Credit Cards
(Question No. 467)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, in writing, on 22 September 2014:

Since 7 September 2013, how many corporate credit cards have been issued to departmental staff, and what is the total cost of all transactions made on them.

Mr Morrison: The answer to the honourable member’s question is:

The Department currently uses two credit cards, Mastercard for general business expenditure and Diners for travel related expenditure.

As at 7 September 2014, the department had 5909 cards issued to staff. The total expenditure from 1 July 2013 – 30 June 2014 was $45.6 million and from 1 July 2014 to 7 September 2014 was $7.7 million.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Card Type</th>
<th>Number of active cards as at September 2014</th>
<th>Total Expenditure 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 $ million</th>
<th>Total Expenditure 1 July 2014 to 7 September 2014 $ million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBA Purchase Card</td>
<td>1132</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diners Travel Card</td>
<td>4777</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5909</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
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