COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

House of Representatives

Official Hansard

No. 5, 2016
Monday, 7 November 2016

FORTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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**SITTING DAYS—2016**

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FORTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

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

House of Representatives Office Holders

Speaker—Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn Smith MP
Deputy Speaker—Mr Mark Maclean Coulton MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell MP

Members of the Speaker's Panel—Hon. Sharon Leah Bird MP, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mr Andrew William Hastie MP, Mr Kevin John Hogan MP and Ms Maria Vamvakou MP

Leader of the House—Hon. Christopher Pyne MP
Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Darren Chester 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. Malcolm Bligh Turnbull MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP

Chief Government Whip—Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

Government Whips—Mr Albertus Johannes van Manen MP and Mr Rowan Eric Ramsey MP

The Nationals

Leader—Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard Joyce MP
Deputy Leader—Senator the Hon Fiona Nash
Chief Whip—Mr George Robert Christenson MP
Deputy Whip—Ms Michelle Leanne Landry 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 Joanne Catherine Ryan MP and Mr Graham Douglas Perrett MP

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives
## Members of the House of Representatives

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<td>Wilson, Mr Joshua Hamilton</td>
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<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
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<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
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<td>Wyatt, Hon. Kenneth George, AM</td>
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<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Women</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cabinet Secretary</strong></td>
<td>Editor the Hon Arthur Sinodinos AO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</strong></td>
<td>Editor the Honor Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Cabinet Secretary</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Scott Ryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Cyber Security</strong></td>
<td>Hon Dan Tahan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon James McGrath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation</strong></td>
<td>Hon Angus Taylor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources</strong></td>
<td>Hon Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Anne Ruston</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>Hon Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</strong></td>
<td>Hon Steve Ciobo MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for International Development and the Pacific</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</strong></td>
<td>Hon Keith Pitt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong> (Vice-President of the Executive Council) (Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Justice</strong></td>
<td>Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Revenue and Financial Services</strong></td>
<td>Hon Kelly O'Dwyer MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Small Business</strong></td>
<td>Hon Michael McCormack MP</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Finance</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>(Deputy Leader of Government in the Senate)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Special Minister of State</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Scott Ryan</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Regional Development</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Local Government and Territories</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>(Deputy Leader of the House)</strong></td>
<td>Hon Darren Chester MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Urban Infrastructure</strong></td>
<td>Hon Paul Fletcher MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Marise Payne</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence Industry</strong></td>
<td>Hon Christopher Pyne MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Hon Dan Tahan MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Resources and Northern Australia</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Matt Canavan</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Resources and Northern Australia</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Craig Laundy MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care</td>
<td>Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Rural Health</td>
<td>Hon Dr David Gillespie MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Communications</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Christian Porter MP</td>
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<td>Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Education and Training</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Preventing Family Violence</td>
<td>Terri Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader (Tasmania)</td>
<td>Senator Helen Polley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Education</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Women</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Schools</td>
<td>Andrew Giles MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Universities</td>
<td>Terri Butler MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Equality</td>
<td>Terri Butler MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
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<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Sport</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Competition and Productivity</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Charities and Not-for-Profits</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Digital Economy</td>
<td>Ed Husic MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Treasury</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Families and Social Services</td>
<td>Hon Jenny Macklin MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Cyber Security and Defence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education and Development</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Resources and Northern Australia</td>
<td>Hon Jason Clare MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing and Mental Health</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator Deborah O'Neil</td>
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The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 10:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

PETITIONS

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

Dairy Industry

This petition of certain citizens of Melbourne draws the attention of the House:

Lately dairy farmers in our country have been facing hardship. The reason being, is that farmers are being paid much less by the milk companies. Leading companies such as Murray Goulburn used to pay the farmers around $5.60 per kilogram of milk solids, yet recently this price has dropped to between $5.00 - $4.75. Also, Fonterra has dropped the price it is willing to pay from $5.60 to $5.00. This means our dairy farmers are losing more money than they are gaining, making them more in debt for each litre of milk they produce. The current milk prices make a bottle of water more expensive than a carton of milk. This is truly unjust. Dairy farmers have been providing us with milk for so very long and they work so hard to make quality products for us. In fact, most farmers start work at four o'clock in the morning and finish work at eight o'clock at night. It is unfair to decrease the amount that dairy farmers are being paid and something has to be done.

We therefore ask the House to: Raise the price that dairy farmers are being paid. The federal government should introduce a levy for every litre of milk sold so that farmers get more money back. This levy should be around 50 cents if not more. This way, dairy farmers will be able to slowly regain all the money that they have lost during this milk drop crisis.

from 15 citizens.

Dairy Industry

This petition of citizens of Melbourne draws the attention of the House:

Recently in the Dairy industry there have been some big issues of concerns. The farmers are being paid less money than the amount of money it takes to produce the milk. These Australian farmers need to be treated better. The amount they were being paid to make the milk before this dramatic pay drop was still extremely low. Murray Goulburn and other milk companies use to pay farmers $5.60/kg for milk solids how they are paying between $4.75 and $5.00. This pay drop needs to be answered. We need to be supporting Australian farmers otherwise if they can't afford to produce milk anymore, Australia will start running out of milk fast.

We therefore ask the House to: The federal government needs to get involved, a levy needs to be put on milk so Australian dairy farmers can once again be paid the full price of $5.60 for one litre of milk. Our farmers get up at 4am every morning, at the crack of dawn to milk cows so we can have milk every day, yet somehow even though they are doing all the work, all the big corporate companies like devondale are earning all the money. A fifty cents per litre levy on all dairy farmers should be introduced, with all this money and earnings to be given back to the farmers so that they can get back on their feet rather than further in debt.

from 11 citizens.
To the House of Representatives:

This petition on behalf of dairy farmers and milk producers, draws the attention of the House to the issue of Murray Goulburn’s significant price drop in the amount they pay to dairy farmers for the milk they provide them. We are requesting a change in this number as it is causing a significant impact on the farmers and producers that work hard to give Murray Goulburn a sufficient supply of milk. The change that has occurred has left farmers with nothing to support themselves or their families – literally. They get up each morning at 4am and work hard all day until late to farm milk for the companies they work for. They are dedicated and deserve far better treatment that what they are receiving right now. At the moment they are paying the producers 38c per litre of milk and receive 37c in return. This means they are being paid not even a cent for each litre of milk. Murray Goulburn has made these price cuts to make the prices for consumers more convenient and this is clearly unfair on the farmer’s end.

We therefore ask the House to take action on this issue and convince Murray Goulburn to raise the prices they pay to faithful farmers.

from 13 citizens.

To the House of Representatives I am writing this to the House of Representatives to address this issue. My concern is how the farmers aren't getting paid what they deserve. Fonterra and Murray Goulburn have both cut prices they pay farmers for dairy. These farmers have signed contracts to these businesses and now it's being turned around asking some farmers to pay the business their money back because they were overpaid. I do not see how this is fair. This issue has left dairy farmers with nothing. The farmers wake up everyday at 4am to milk the cows and then proceed to do many other jobs needed around the farm. For example feeding the calves and repairing the fences. At 3pm, it's time for the second milking. The farmer have to pay 38c to produce milk and only receive 37c per litre in return which means they aren't making any money.

We therefore ask the House of Representatives to convince Murray Goulburn and Fonterra to change the prices to pay farmers back to the way they were.

from 12 citizens.

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives this petition of concerned students of Year 8, St Columba's College Essendon, Victoria draws the attention of the House:

the plight of dairy farmers across Australia due to the retrospective price decrease of purchasing wholesale milk by dairy production companies, particularly Fonterra and Murray Goulburn. In our opinion, the price decrease has led to Dairy farmers suffering increased stress both financially and personally, in their attempts to maintain financial viability of what is often multi-generational family properties. In addition to this, the retrospective nature of the price decrease by Fonterra and Murray Goulburn has led numerous dairy farmers to find themselves in debt to these companies and has compounded the decreased income that they are burdened with.

We therefore ask the House to step into this market to assist negotiations between dairy farmers and production companies, to create a fair and equitable price of wholesale milk that is mutually beneficial, and secures the future income for dairy farmers.

from 1 citizen.
Human Rights

Our children deserve to know they are loved and accepted. All of them. We have the fourth highest suicide rate among comparable countries:

http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/2f762f95845417ae25706c00834efa8b4e69ec061accdca2570ce00785dc2

Further debate serves only to harass a vulnerable group in our community. The overwhelming majority of Australians support or at the very least tolerate this. Singling out a group to deny human rights is discrimination and against the Australian culture and the spirit of our laws. Same-sex couples already raise children in our society, the dwindling primary vote for our major parties reflects the gap between Australian's expectations and what our parliament does. We are all Australians. We are all people. Our society treats each other with respect and love. Our politicians should, too.

from 15 citizens.

Pensions

With the world economies continuing to build unsustainable debt to support current living standards we in Australia must reign in Government spending (other than spending for the purposes of economic expansionary spending initiatives). The Government employees and Politicians have $150bn held in the Future Fund to support future pensions, however another $750bn (approx) is needed to fully fund this expense. I have a relative that has recently retired from the public service on a pension of $2000 per week non-taxable, and he is undertaking part time work. This is unsustainable and I recommend the following be implemented asap: 1. Pensions as described should be taxed and not tax-free 2. Entitlements to be means-tested 3. Pensions should be reduced by 75% The above changes would result in a minimum saving in excess of $500bn which is desperately needed to pay down existing Government debt.

We therefore ask the House to review and vote on the above 3 points I have outlined for the benefit of all Australians and not just the few.

from 17 citizens.

Marriage

We believe it is past time for the marriage equality debate to end and legislation to be enacted.

We request that the House proceed with discussion and voting on one or both of the bills titled "Marriage Legislation Amendment Bill 2016", and encourage all parties to allow a free vote on the bill.

from 58 citizens.

Political Donations

Politicians are too often now pushing legislation purely for the benefit of the entities that donate to their party/campaign. This often leads to the detriment of most Australians and the benefit of the elite few who donate. Politicians are also bribed with gifts (scholarships for their children, flights and accommodation etc.) Further more politicians make around 6 times the average Australian wage and claim expenses from their over indulgences (e.g helicopter from Melbourne to Geelong.) The budget for politicians whims could better serve the public perhaps provide the public better transport options, for those who can't afford a helicopter.

Requesting that the house act to ban corporate/non private funding of political parties and implement a watchdog to ensure political agendas are not being pushed by private donators, this watchdog should also ensure that politicians are not receiving bribes in other forms aside from money and that politicians expenses are relevant, and reasonable.

from 15 citizens.
from 24 citizens.

**West Papua**

We have long been concerned about the denial of the West Papuans' right to self-determination, which was broadly acknowledged within the international community in the 1950s and 60s but crudely over-ridden by an agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands. The agreement was organised by the US government in 1962 to dilute Cold War tensions, but also to secure a majority interest in what was to become the Freeport gold-and copper mine in Timika (West Papua). We are also very concerned about the grave human rights abuses that have been committed by Indonesian police and military in West Papua. There are now 1.3 million missing West Papuans, and the living remainder are often tortured, beaten or harassed, displaced from their land, and subjected to discrimination. This is a tragedy right on Australia's doorstep, similar to the genocidal policies of the Indonesian administration in East Timor. The Pacific Coalition for West Papua was formed in July 2016 after West Papua's resistance and nation making endeavors were recognized by the Melanesian Spearhead Group and the Pacific Islands Forum.

We are calling on the house to support our neighbor, West Papua, by agreeing to support the motion put to the UN General Assembly by The Pacific Coalition for West Papua to relist West Papua on the UN Decolonization List, showing that Australia upholds core principles of justice and human rights for all.

from 597 citizens.

**Marriage**

There have been many attempts to gain momentum for amendments to the Marriage Act to recognise same gender couples. It seems quite obvious over the course of time that the elected representatives of the people are unable to bring the Parliament to a decision on this matter. This question is closely tied to the question of the social fabric of Australia, and as such is an emotive and divisive subject that makes it difficult for Representatives seeking re-election to be courageous in their approach to this important matter. In this case it seems quite appropriate to allow the Parliament to identify the Australian people's view on the subject, without the filter of of Party politics and individual representatives morals and beliefs.

We request the House of Representatives to progress the establishment of a Plebiscite into amendments to the Marriage Act to consider the question of same gender marriage to allow Parliament to identify the will of the majority of Australian individuals free from political manouvreing.

from 54 citizens.

**ePetitions**

The Federal Government made a commitment to support online petitions, however the platform developed to meet this commitment doesn't match the sophistication of digital platforms like We The People (US), Petitions.Gov.uk (UK), or E-Petitions (Canada). This is even though services like We The People are available in Open Source and a broad community of interested individuals exists in Australia who would contribute to the development of a solution.

We thereby ask the House to direct the Department of Parliamentary Services to work collaboratively with the broader community to implement a true Web 2.0 ePetitions platform, equivalent to the best of breed internationally and embedding best practice design principles such as from the Digital Transformation Office.

from 35 citizens.

Petitions received.
COMMITTEES

Petitions Committee

Report

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (10:01): I present the third report of the Petitions Committee for the 45th Parliament. The report I present today is unlike any previous report tabled by the Petitions Committee. It is unique because it contains the first electronic petitions to be lodged through the House of Representatives new e-petitions system. I am very pleased to see members of the public embracing the new system, ushering a new age of the democratic tradition of petitioning into the modern world.

The new system supports petitioners to draft terms that align with the House standing orders and explains the steps involved in petitioning. It is the committee's expectation that the number of petitions found to be out of order will diminish as this system of e-petitioning becomes far more popular.

The ease with which petitioners have been able to gather signatures electronically, using the House's e-petitions website, streamlines the process of petitioning the House, and, along with the existing paper petitioning process, it provides further ways for the public to petition the House.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Deaths by Drowning

Dr McVEIGH (Groom) (10:02): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that the number of drownings in Australia increased from 267 deaths in 2014-15 to 280 in 2015-16 as stated in the Royal Life Saving's National Drowning Report (September 2016), which shows:
   (a) a quarter of all drownings occurred in inland waterways such as rivers, creeks and dams;
   (b) almost one fifth of all deaths occurred in people age 25 to 35 years;
   (c) 86 per cent of all drowning deaths were males; and
   (d) there was a 30 per cent decrease in deaths of people age 0 to 4 years;
(2) acknowledges that every incidence of drowning has a wider impact including family, rescuers and communities;
(3) recognises that the Government released the Australian Water Safety Strategy in April 2016, which aims to reduce drowning deaths by 50 per cent by 2020;
(4) acknowledges that the Government is partnering with the peak water safety bodies such as Royal Life Saving (RLS), Surf Life Saving (SLS) and AUSTSWIM as well as Australian Water Safety Council Members and federal, state, territory and local governments, to work to prevent drowning;
(5) recognises that the Government is providing funding of $3.6 million in 2016-17 through the National Recreation Safety Program work towards the target of reducing drowning deaths; and
(6) congratulates RLS, SLS and other community groups for their work in educating people on the potential dangers of all our beaches and waterways.

I am honoured to move this motion, given the significance of the impact of drownings on communities right across our country, particularly regional communities—obviously, the people impacted directly, their families, friends, rescuers and others in the community who
may be touched upon by such tragedies, whether they are in fact fatal or even non-fatal outcomes.

In moving the motion I refer, as outlined in the motion itself, to the Australian Water Safety Strategy, released in April this year by the health minister, which aims to reduce drowning deaths by 50 per cent by the year 2020. The strategy, and other reports on which it is based, clearly outlines some of the causation factors and, of course, some of the key issues when we look at drowning statistics right across the country—for example, that almost one-fifth of all deaths occur in the age group from 25 to 35; the fact that a significant number of drownings—some 86 per cent—were males; and that, whilst we remain very concerned about the safety of, particularly, young people in the 0 to 4 age group, we note that there has been some decrease in recent statistics.

As I said, this impacts on each and every community right across our country, and I will refer briefly to my own community. The city of Toowoomba is Australia's second-largest inland city, behind Canberra. It is a beautiful place, perched on the Great Dividing Range. Many of our residents would say that it would be perfect if we had one more thing, more water—a beach, a river or even a lake. You would think that the absence of those sorts of natural assets would protect us from the tragedy of drowning, but we in the garden city—a significant regional community—are too often reminded that we are not immune to the vagaries of water and its fickle nature.

In the past two years, we have lost three young lives in our wider region. A two-year-old drowned in a tank of water whilst playing a harmless game of hide-and-seek; a 15-month-old fell into a partially drained pool and, despite the best efforts of paramedics, died later in hospital; and a two-year-old went missing from his rural property and, unfortunately, was later found in a dam. These are the real tragedies behind these statistics. Theirs were bright young lives taken before their time. These are the types of deaths that our government is hoping to prevent in future by partnering with peak bodies such as Surf Life Saving and AUSTSWIM, together with various state and local government authorities.

A few weekends ago in my city of Toowoomba, a lifesaver talked at East Creek Park about water safety with ABC presenter Belinda Sanders. She asked: 'Are we your target audience, rural people who simply go to the beach once a year and may not be surf aware?' The lifesaver spoke about a local program, Downs Little Lifeguards, which focuses on educating young people of our region to recognise potential dangers and the survival strategies that they might need in case of an emergency. He spoke about how much the children enjoyed their trips to places such as the Gold Coast and the need for them to get hands-on experience in identifying currents and rips. He also talked about the positive aspects of education and needing to also focus on regional areas, such as where I live.

I talked briefly about the impacts in the broader community. Recent studies have shown that, for children in the zero to 19-year age group, for every one drowning death, a further nine children are hospitalised. So it is not just the fatal but also the non-fatal that we need to consider in terms of impacts. The strategy to which I have referred has a range of priority areas and 11 goals for reducing deaths, which I encourage members to study.

We should always be most thankful for the efforts of water safety bodies, such as Royal Life Saving, Surf Life Saving, AUSTSWIM, members of the Australian Water Safety Council
and, of course, the various federal, state, territory and local government bodies that work together to prevent drowning deaths in our community.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr CONROY (Shortland) (10:08): I second the motion. I am pleased to make a contribution on the member for Groom’s motion, and I thank him for bringing it to the House. It is a very important issue that has a bipartisan commitment to solve. Sadly, in the last week, we have seen the drowning deaths of three young children, and I start by passing on my condolences to the families, friends, communities and emergency services involved in those tragic losses. At the recent launch of the Royal Life Saving National Drowning Report, the latest figures revealed that 280 people were drowned in waterways in Australia in the last financial year—an increase of five per cent on the previous year. Ninety-six of the 280 people who lost their lives were in New South Wales alone. The report also found that 86 per cent of drowning deaths were male, the highest percentage in the past 10 years—indicating an element of risk-taking, I think—and that most of the drowning deaths occur at beaches.

In the electorate of Shortland, we are fortunate to be surrounded by some of the finest beaches in Australia as well as Lake Munmorah, Budgewoi Lake and Lake Macquarie, the largest saltwater lake in the Southern Hemisphere. These natural bodies of water are in abundance, but the key message is that we must be vigilant while enjoying these magnificent natural wonders.

Those of us who represent coastal communities in this place know how fundamentally important surf lifesaving clubs are. They are an integral and important part of our community and the way we live. We as Australians are fortunate that so many of us live so close to the beach. Thankfully I have five exceptional surf lifesaving clubs in the electorate of Shortland—Redhead, Swansea-Belmont, Caves Beach, Catherine Hill Bay and The Lakes—which I gladly share with the member for Dobell. All these clubs have an outstanding record of keeping our beaches safe, and I pay tribute to the dedication and commitment of all the volunteers at those clubs. Our local community and communities all around Australia are a better and safer place because of the commitment and sacrifice of these generous people—including, I hazard to guess, members in inland electorates such as Groom—when they visit beaches and enjoy the protection that surf lifesavers provide.

Surf lifesaving clubs provide vigilance and service through their patrols, water safety training and awareness education, commencing with their Nippers program. These clubs are run by volunteers who take the time to provide patrols for our beaches and the necessary training for young Nippers and junior surf lifesavers so that people can feel safe at the beach. Like so many children growing up on the Central Coast, I was a Nipper. This training gave me a great awareness of beach safety and confidence in the water. I look forward to my two kids, if they are interested, becoming Nippers in due course as well and to helping out with that particular activity. As the Nipper season has commenced, I encourage more children to enjoy Nippers and to be active in and around the beach. I encourage my young constituents to join a local lifesaving club. Hopefully as more children who are introduced to water awareness around beaches, lakes, rivers and other waterways from a young age, we will see a reduction in the incidence of drowning deaths.

This, with greater CPR and emergency first aid training, can only assist with providing immediate care. This is very important for parents and family members as they often can be
the first person on the scene of an emergency. The Australian Water Safety Strategy encourages a collaborative approach that aims to reduce the number of drowning deaths by 50 per cent. This strategy identifies seven drowning prevention pillars: advocacy, research, collaboration, safe venues, workforce, policy and education. These pillars will play a key role in the commitment to drowning prevention in Australia, and I encourage this approach, with the collaboration of peak water safety bodies.

This parliament has a very important role in all seven pillars. I am a proud member of the Parliamentary Friends of Surf Life Saving, which plays a great role in raising awareness and support for our surf lifesaving clubs. I congratulate RLS, the Surf Life Saving society and other community groups for their work in educating Australians on the potential dangers of all our beaches and waterways. And I congratulate and thank all the volunteers who provide vigilance and service to their communities as surf lifesavers, both the volunteers at our surf lifesaving clubs and the paid staff employed by councils to do a great job during the working week. However, I do want to especially acknowledge the volunteers of the five surf lifesaving clubs in Shortland that dedicate a significant part of their time to our community so that we can all feel safe at the beach. Finally, I again extend my thoughts and condolences to the families, friends and communities who have been touched by the tragedy of drowning over the past year.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (10:13): I am pleased to rise in support of the motion moved by the member for Groom highlighting the incidence of drownings in our nation. The Royal Lifesaving national drowning report 2016 reports that in the 12 months between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016 there were 280 drownings in this country; 280 people lost their lives. And 63 of those deaths occurred at our beaches; 58 occurred in our rivers, creeks and streams; 53 occurred in oceans and harbour locations; and 45 occurred in swimming pools. That is a five per cent increase on the previous year, when 267 people lost their lives from drowning in Australia. Even though it is slightly below the long-run average, this is far, far too many people losing their lives.

What policies can we look at as legislators to try to reduce this total? We obviously need to ensure that more young children learn to swim. The issue we have—if we look at our housing policies in our cities—is that more and more children are growing up in high-rise apartments, where they are unlikely to have a backyard swimming pool. In my experience, growing up in Peakhurst, a middle-class suburb in the south of Sydney, many of our neighbours had a simple above-ground swimming pool. We got in them as kids and we learned to swim. That opportunity will be denied to thousands of young kids—because of the change in the housing policy of this nation—because more and more children are growing up in high-rise apartments.

The other issue we need to address is the high cost of swimming lessons. Look at the cost of running a swimming centre. I have several in my electorate. One is the indoor Menai Swimming Academy that I visited recently. The owners explained to me that their biggest cost of running the centre is their electricity. They have to continually filter the water. It has to go through the filtering systems once every 24 hours. They also have the cost of heating the water. I hate to harp on this but the owners looked at the increases projected in their electricity costs and, under previous policies, if we allow electricity costs to increase in this country he would be paying an extra $100,000 in electricity up to the year 2020.
I do not want to make this issue on drownings a partisan issue.

Mr Albanese: Well don't!

Mr CRAIG KELLY: I am raising the issue that electricity costs for swimming centres are very high. If we raise the cost of electricity in this country that burden is paid by those centres that pay the electricity bills, and that means higher costs for children having swimming lessons. We cannot ignore that fact. We cannot ignore the fact in this parliament that there are policies being put in by governments, both state and federal, that are increasing the costs of electricity. By doing so, we are increasing the costs of kids' swimming lessons. That is a fact. We have to admit that is a fact and that maybe we need to have greater subsidies for kids to have swimming lessons.

At least, let us talk about the facts. Let us not just brush them aside. I want to see more kids in this country getting the opportunity to have swimming lessons. If we have policies that increase the cost of electricity, we push the costs up and make it harder for kids. I would hope that members on the other side would join with me and say, 'We need to make greater access for kids to have swimming lessons.' But if we put up the price of electricity we are doing the opposite.

Mr Thistlethwaite interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kingsford Smith will cease interjecting.

Mr CRAIG KELLY: I want to see a policy where all kids in schools get the opportunity to have compulsory swimming lessons. That is what we should be pushing for. That is what we should be doing to give those children the opportunity to learn to swim. (Time expired)

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (10:18): I rise to speak on this very important motion on deaths by drowning. I am disappointed to hear that the member for Hughes has decided to bring politics into such a motion. We are talking about drownings. Only last week a family lost two children. It is an absolute disgrace that we bring in politics and try to bring some form of politicking to such a serious issue.

In my electorate of Hindmarsh the western boundary is the coast, the metropolitan beaches. They are very popular beaches, from Somerton right down to Semaphore, and include the beachside suburbs of Glenelg, Henley, Grange, West Beach and Tennyson. Every year, tragically, we hear of a drowning—sometimes more than one—at one of those beaches. A recent one I can recall was a group of people who were fishing off the rocks at Semaphore. A wave took them in and we lost a particular person—which was very tragic—towards the end of last summer. All of these beaches are patrolled by some wonderful Surf Life Saving clubs and their volunteers—people who give hours of their life towards saving other lives. Surf Life Saving clubs and, of course, Royal Life Saving carry out vital work to keep us all safe in the water. This is why it was a real pleasure on 15 September 2016 to join many of my colleagues here in this House, on both sides of this chamber, who were in attendance in a bipartisan, non-political way to receive the Royal Life Saving national drowning report 2016, which was compiled by Royal Life Saving.

As we heard earlier, the report found there were 280 deaths in Australian waterways between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016. This is an increase of 13 drowning deaths compared with the previous reporting period—13 too many. Importantly, however, while the number of people drowning has increased this past financial year, it remains lower than the 10-year
average, which, I suppose, is a good sign. Of those 280 people who drowned, 83 per cent were male. It is particularly welcoming to note that the number of children aged zero to four who drowned decreased by 30 per cent against the 10-year average. The report also shows us that drowning deaths occur throughout the year during all seasons, not just during the summer seasons and weekends but randomly throughout all days of the week and times of the day.

As I said, this was an important report. It showed us the significance of being vigilant at all times in and around water, whether you have a backyard pool or whether you are in a creek or a river. Research into drowning allows us to inform the public and relevant authorities about the size of the problem. You are able to track trends and progress over time, which allows us to try prevent drownings through evidence-based prevention strategies—that is what Royal Life Saving does. One example is the Australian Water Safety Strategy 2016-2020, which has identified a number of activities and initiatives which will play a key role in the achievement of the strategy's goals. These include advocacy, research, collaboration, the creation of safe venues—at the beach or by pools—workforce, policy and education. The strategy also resulted in the establishment of the Australian Water Safety Council. This body acts as a collective voice for Australia's leading water safety organisations. It is so important to put these strategies into place to ensure that we do absolutely everything that is possible to prevent a single drowning.

I would like to give a particular shout out to the clubs in my electorate. I have some great surf lifesaving clubs: Glenelg Surf Life Saving Club, Grange, Henley, Semaphore, Somerton and the West Beach Surf Life Saving Club. Only last week I was at Grange speaking with Stephen Byrne, the president, and seeing the good work that they are doing in the prevention of deaths and drownings. I saw the new premises they are currently building. We also have Surf Central in my electorate and the headquarters of Surf Life Saving SA at West Beach, which does enormously great work.

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (10:23): I still have my Herald learn-to-swim certificate on the wall down at Phillip Island. Many of us in this place received our Herald learn-to-swim certificate at primary school after being able to swim across the pool. But I will personalise this motion: I congratulate the member for Groom for putting this motion forward.

When Daniel Broadbent went under the pool cover and began to drown and then was found by his mother very quickly, we were blessed, because there was a passing ambulance—a passing ambulance—who came straight in, were unable to revive the boy but kept him breathing until they got him to hospital; 24 hours later we had Daniel back. That is my nephew. He now has his own children he is looking after. It was the same with my daughter swimming in a backyard pool. She was going down for the second time when Ryan McGill jumped in the water, took Emily and pulled her out. Soon she will have her own. We were blessed.

My electorate has the most fantastic beaches, from Williamsons Beach all the way past Wilsons Prom. But what people do not realise when they come to visit these beautiful spots is they are dangerous. They are extremely dangerous, especially if you are fishing off rocks. One rogue wave can take your life away and the lives of those who are fishing with you. We put a lot of effort into trying to let people know the dangers of the beautiful beaches that we have. They are world renowned beaches, from Phillip Island right through to Ninety Mile
Beach. They are amazing and they attract thousands of people. Many of those thousands of people are cared for by the lifesaving clubs in those areas.

There is not one member speaking on this who does not have a personal interest in the wellbeing of people when they are on beaches. It is not only what the sun can do to them but what the water can do to them, even to the point of people swimming at surf beaches where they are dumped unexpectedly. That is when our lifesavers come into play for people who are in danger.

But how often have you read 'Girl, 13, drowns while trying to save brother in rough surf at Williamsons Beach at Wonthaggi'? How many times this year will I read in my local papers or in the national headlines of someone dying on the beaches that are so special to us in our areas? We do everything we possibly can, and the government is giving $3.6 million towards campaigns to encourage people to understand the dangers of the surf, the beaches and the undertow at any time, so that people have the knowledge to know where the rip is, where they can swim and where the flags are. We say, 'Stay within the flags, stay within the flags, stay within the flags!' Right across this nation we say, 'Stay within the flags,' and people still swim outside the flags at uncontrolled beaches.

I recently visited the electorate around Cairns. Is that Warren Entsch's electorate?

Mr BROADBENT: Leichhardt.

Mr BROADBENT: In the early dawn, six o'clock in the morning, all of a sudden out of the trees and car parks came these young people—and I mean hundreds of them. They were on the beach very early in the morning, training to be surf lifesavers in that particular area at Palm Cove. The dedication of the parents, the children and the instructors and the encouragement that was given were absolutely incredible. It was incredible for me to be just walking and hearing the encouragement. They went for a long swim that I could not swim nowadays. They went for a run that I could not run nowadays. I watched these brilliant young people being encouraged by older people, of my age, who are still in place instructing younger people through the generations.

Our Nippers program right across Victoria, and probably the rest of Australia—do you have Nippers programs in your area?

Mr Wyat: Yes.

Mr BROADBENT: You have. Our Nippers program across the nation is just amazing. The children not only learn how to swim, how to look after other people and how to do first aid; they also get the experience of combining together within the club area. It is the holistic nature of the education that they receive. So I congratulate the government for its initiative and the member for Groom for moving this motion. I especially thank everybody who participates in my surf lifesaving clubs, all the way from Phillip Island right through to Ninety Mile Beach.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (10:28): Australians live by the water. Being in and around the water is part of our nation's culture and our identity. But regular exposure to water brings risks that can be fatal. Unfortunately, over the last year the number of fatalities around the water in Australia increased. We have actually gone backwards over the last year when it comes to preventing drownings in Australia. The Royal Life Saving report on national drownings revealed in September 2016 that the number of drownings in
Australia increased from 267 deaths in 2014-15 to 280 in 2015-16. For a nation like Australia, this simply is not good enough.

As acknowledged in this motion, a quarter of all drownings occurred in inland waterways such as rivers, creeks and dams; 86 per cent of all drowning deaths were males; and, indeed, every incidence of drowning has a wider impact on families, rescuers and communities. More broadly, the impact of drowning is greatest among children under five, in coastal and inland waterways, and among those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. Alcohol and/or drugs are known to be a factor in 34 per cent of drowning deaths, and males are four times as likely to drown as females.

In my electorate of Kingsford Smith, rock fishing has proven to be a particularly deadly pastime—17 rock fishermen have died in Sydney’s east over the last decade. This stretch of coastal waterway that I represent is the most dangerous in the country when it comes to rock fishing fatalities. In fact, I was walking along Maroubra Beach just last week, going out to the Malabar Headland, and there, emblazoned on the sign as you walk out to Malabar Headland, is the number 03—three rock fishing deaths had occurred right at that position over the course of the last 12 months.

Royal Life Saving estimates that 20 per cent of kids across Australia—approximately 3½ thousand—miss out on swimming lessons every year. Unfortunately this is a statistic that is getting worse. Teaching swimming and water safety to kids actually does work. It works. Analysis of drowning deaths in recent years indicates that children in the five- to 14-year age cohort are the least likely to drown of all the age cohorts, and many believe that is because they are the ones who are getting access to swimming lessons whilst they are at school. We know that teaching swimming and water safety actually works and prevents drowning deaths, particularly with kids, But we are finding in Australia, the anecdotal evidence in particular, that fewer and fewer kids are getting access to swimming lessons at school. Some schools are completely pulling out of providing swimming lessons for kids in Australia.

In some states, swimming lessons are not part of the school curriculum, and they definitely should be. These are essential skills that we need to teach our kids: how to be safe around water, how to enter and exit water, how to provide support for someone who may be in a drowning situation and, importantly, the basics of resuscitation and rescue. That is why, during the last election campaign, Labor announced that if we were elected we would provide additional funding to ensure that Australian kids were given access to swimming lessons from a young age. Our aim was to implement the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework to ensure that every child completes level 4 of the National Swimming and Water Safety Framework by the time that they complete primary school to ensure that they get that basic foundation in water safety skills for the future. We would have devoted $30 million to this program over the forward estimates.

Other speakers on the Liberal side have said that the government is devoting $3½ million to a project to increase the number of kids getting exposure to swimming lessons. It is not good enough. It is simply not enough. It is a drop in the ocean when it comes to the problem that we are facing and to the fact that, in Victoria, no kids in school get access to swimming lessons. We need a national approach. There is no national approach at the moment, and that is what Labor's policy was aimed at—ensuring that the federal government was working with
the states, providing them access to an equity fund that would ensure that all kids got access to swimming lessons. Only when we do this will we see a reduction in the number of drownings.

Mr O’DOW ( Flynn) (10:33): I am pleased to speak this morning on the important motion of the member for Groom. While enormous effort has been put in over the last few decades, drownings continue to be a leading cause of unexpected death in Australia—280 people drowned in the year 2015-16, and 32 were school-aged children under 14 years of age. Rivers, creeks, lakes and dams were second only to beaches for recorded drownings, with 58 drownings recorded in inland waterways. Many people forget that such dangers exist even in the dry interior of Australia. New South Wales and Queensland topped the list of the states with the most fatalities—New South Wales, 96; Queensland, 66; Victoria, 43; Western Australia, 37; South Australia, 13; Tasmania, nine; Northern Territory, 14; and the ACT, two.

Laurie Lawrence had a large impact on the way we approached child drownings. In 1988, Lawrence was the Olympic swimming coach when he launched the 'Kids Alive' drowning prevention campaign to combat the problems of accidental deaths by drowning for the under-five age group. He personally and passionately worked on the subject and made the campaign a huge success. Barely any Australian under the age of 30 who would not have known the 'Kids Alive—Do the Five' mantra:

1. Fence the pool
2. Shut the gate
3. Teach your kids to swim – it's great
4. Supervise – watch your mate and
5. Learn how to resuscitate

Unfortunately we still have these deaths.

There are dangers in the homes which families need to be vigilant about, especially with toddlers in the house. It only takes two inches—I'm showing my age—or 50 millimetres to drown a child. Buckets, toilets, sinks, wading pools and bath times always need to be supervised. Programs like this and many others across the country are critical to reducing the number of drowning deaths, and the government is committed to helping.

My brother-in-law Paul Jones drowned at the Gold Coast, aged 47. He was a big, strong swimmer and yet he was taken out by a strong rip and could not get back to shore. I was personally involved in a near drowning when I, with my brother Robert and our neighbour Tommy Murphy, went duck shooting—would you believe?—and we ended up in a terrible mess, having to drag Tommy unconscious from the lagoon. He was lucky to survive, because none of us had learnt to swim before this incident.

I feel it is important to mention this as we go into the rainy season: if there is a flood, please do not attempt to drive a car through it or walk through it or ride a horse through it. Use a boat.

I have the utmost respect for the lifesavers who give up their own time and risk their own lives to keep our beaches and people safe. In my electorate of Flynn, the lifesavers at Tannum Sands, Agnes Waters and Moore Park, like all other lifesavers, do a fantastic job in looking after your health, your children's health and the health of everyone who visits the beaches. Swimming between the flags is a must.
The federal government is providing funding of $3.6 million in 2016-17 through the National Recreation Boating Safety program, which aims to reduce the number of drowning deaths. The federal government also released the Australian Water Safety Strategy in April 2016, which aims to reduce drowning deaths by 50 per cent by 2020.

My condolences go to all of those people and families who have lost loved ones and friends through drownings.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (10:38): I commend the member for Groom for bringing this motion to the House today. I welcome the Australian Water Safety Strategy of 2016, as we work to reduce the number of drowning related deaths. Alarmingly, there has been an increase in the number of deaths that are recorded in Australia by drowning, as the Royal Life Saving Society's national drowning report indicates. It is clear that much more needs to be done to ensure that measures are in place to increase people's awareness of water safety and to stop these needless tragedies.

Last year, 280 people died by drowning. Just last week there was a salient reminder when two little sisters—toddlers—died in a backyard pool in Logan in Queensland. This is unbelievably tragic for all of those involved—family, the medical people, the paramedics. It is a tragedy beyond belief. But do you know that the majority of drownings actually occurs on public holidays? Drownings are often associated with alcohol or drugs or a combination of both; these causes account for about 34 per cent of all drownings. Surprisingly, inland waterways are major and silent killers of people, according to the Australian Water Safety Council.

We definitely need to do more in this space to educate people not only to ensure that they are aware of the dangers but also to understand that places such as rivers, lakes, dams, irrigation channels, water tanks and creeks are not the safest place to swim because they do not have waves. According to Royal Life Saving Society Australia, in 2009-10 there were 59 drowning deaths that occurred in rivers, creeks and streams; three of whom were children under the age of five. There were also 42 people who drowned in lakes, dams and lagoons; four of whom were under the age of five. The National Injury Surveillance Unit says that for every drowning death in children there are three hospitalisations from near drowning. For every five children admitted to hospital following immersion, one child will be left with a severe and lasting neurological impairment. Simply, the flat surface of an inland waterway provides a false sense of security, in addition to tranquil waterways, which are just as dangerous as the ocean.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse communities in particular comprise the largest group of drowning deaths. This poses a real need for more targeted education and assistance with our multicultural communities, helping them to not only understand but identify dangers and become more savvy when it comes to water safety. The dangers of drowning affect everybody, regardless of age, race, ability, gender and social status. Support from the government is invaluable and critical in achieving success when it comes to conducting research and the delivery of programs and services through the implementation of initiatives aimed at increasing skills associated with water safety. A combination of a growing interest in water safety and better training for our lifesavers and lifeguards is essential and something we should continually pursue.
I thank the Royal Life Saving Society Australia, Surf Life Saving Australia, AUSTSWIM, the Australian Water Safety Council and all the lifesavers and those who work to protect our communities from water-related tragedies and to keep water safety at the forefront for our community everyday. I will end with this: each year Royal Life Saving Society Australia offers a bronze medallion course here at Parliament House. I have availed myself of that, as have many other members in the past. I would encourage all members to not only participate in this debate but also show a real interest in water safety by registering to gain their bronze medallion and show that they care about water safety in Australia.

**Mr WALLACE** (Fisher) (10:43): I am pleased to rise to speak to this motion, which is very near and dear to my heart, as I am a long-term member of Surf Life Saving Queensland. In 2015-16, there were 3,660 rescues conducted by volunteer members of Surf Life Saving Queensland in Queensland waters. To put this in perspective, there were 810,855 preventative actions undertaken by members of Surf Life Saving Queensland. These rescues and preventative actions were undertaken by volunteers, by mums and dads and kids from the age of 14 up; 352,807 volunteer patrol hours were undertaken by members of Surf Life Saving Queensland. These members give up their weekends and their family time to protect members of the public who are swimming in our coastal regions.

These volunteers not only undertake aquatic rescues but have also undertaken almost 21,000 first aid treatments. The number of volunteers who are trained in first aid is almost 16,000. I pay tribute to all those men and women, including those on my own patrol group, ranging from the age of 14 to 65, who volunteer their time week after week. They do it not for money or any form of compensation other than their desire to help their fellow men and women. This is the sort of stuff people who join SLSQ hold near and dear to their hearts.

SLSQ began from humble beginnings. Their first official rescue was recorded on a Queensland beach in 1909. There are now 58 clubs, with more than 30,000 men, women and children, across this state. Since its inception, Surf Life Saving Queensland surf lifesavers and lifeguards have directly saved the lives of more than 135,000 people through in-water rescues, and they have educated in excess of 10 million people about surf and aquatic safety through targeted and grassroots community awareness programs.

Surf Life Saving Queensland is directly affiliated with and is a part of Surf Life Saving Australia and the International Life Saving Federation. As a not-for-profit, SLSQ relies heavily on community support and donations to continue its vital work both on and off Queensland beaches. Surf Life Saving Queensland is built on one fundamental principle, and that is to save lives. Its organisation encompasses several diverse arms: lifesaving and lifeguard services, community education, membership services, surf sports, fundraising, commercial training, and member training—all supporting that one overarching principle and purpose, and that is to save lives on Queensland beaches. Queensland's main coastline is extensive, and I pay tribute to the men, women and children who continue to protect Queenslanders and Australians all over the country from drowning in surf.

**Mr DREYFUS** (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (10:48): Every drowning death in Australia is a preventable tragedy that impacts loved ones and hurts communities. Australians, living in a country girt by sea, have long loved beaches, rivers and pools. We are a country drawn to the water, with a long history of success as swimmers and sailors and a deep appreciation of summer, salt water and fresh water. Names like Dawn
Fraser, Ian Thorpe and Jessica Watson hold special resonance in the Australian psyche—world-beaters who have made Australia proud in or on the water. We as a country are blessed with some of the best beaches, rivers and recreational facilities in the world, and we are rightly proud of our connection to the water. You can hear it in our language: Banjo Paterson poems set by rivers, Tim Winton books set by beaches and colloquialisms like 'not all oars in the water'. We know and love our island nation, and rightly so.

It is not hard to see why Australians are drawn to the water and subsequently why universal water safety is so important to the Australian community. Australia is an increasingly diverse country, and not everyone has the swimming ability to match their enthusiasm. In some tragic cases, some children do not have the supervision that they need. I am a keen swimmer myself and look forward to swimming in several open water races in my electorate this summer. But even strong swimmers know that rips and unexpected changes in the surf or the current can place any swimmer at risk.

I recall attending an event a few days after Australia Day 2015 which was organised by some of the dedicated volunteers of the Brighton Life Saving Club and supported by Surf Life Saving Australia, among others. These volunteers organised for a few dozen new Australians with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, mostly from Afghanistan and South Sudan, to travel from their homes in the city of greater Dandenong to the Brighton Life Saving Club to attend swimming and water safety classes. Many of these new Australians were my constituents and in talking to them I learned that many had never set foot in the water. This inspiring event introduced these Australians to the enjoyment of swimming under the supervision of trained lifesavers. This is an example of our great multicultural community working in hand with one of Melbourne's great lifesaving clubs to reduce the number of drownings among the Australian community, and it is an example that I would like to see replicated around the country. There are, tragically, many ways that Australians have drowned in the past year, but many of these deaths could have been prevented—in particular, boating deaths where lifejackets were not worn.

Life-saving clubs, AUSTSWIM and the Australian Water Safety Council do so much to reduce the number of drowning deaths and Labor congratulates these organisations on their tireless work. The sad fact is that 280 people drowned in 2015-16 and many Australians would be surprised that three-quarters of drowning incidents occurred during activities other than swimming. Less than half of drowning deaths were in the ocean, with 21 per cent of drownings in rivers, creeks and dams, 16 per cent from boating accidents and 14 per cent from falls into water. Tragically, 10 people drowned in baths in 2015-16.

We have come a long way over the past few decades when it comes to water safety. Secure fences are now standard features of backyard pools and children's water safety is taught near universally and early, but there are many other ways Australians have not moved with the times and with the research. Too many Australians still drink and swim, too many swim alone and too many Australians do not wear a lifejacket when boating. It is my hope than in just a few years these habits of some Australians will be gone and looked back on with the same disbelief with which we would now look at fenceless pools. Labor commends the work of Australia's peak water safety bodies: Royal Life Saving, Surf Life Saving, AUSTSWIM and the Australian Water Safety Council. Each of these bodies has our ongoing support to reduce the number of drownings in Australia. We are a nation that loves water and a nation of the
best swimmers in the world, but we can be a nation with the safest water culture as well. Labor supports any move by the government to make this happen.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell): The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next day of sitting.

Pensions and Benefits

Ms HUSAR (Lindsay) (10:53): I am proud to rise this morning to move the first motion in my name in this place. For the benefit of the House and those in my electorate who are affected by deeming rates I would like to read the motion into Hansard as part of my speech. I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) the Government is short changing Australian pensioners;

(b) despite interest rates falling from 2.25 per cent in February 2015 to 1.50 per cent today, the Government has failed to adjust deeming rates for Australian pensioners;

(c) currently a single pensioner's savings are deemed at 1.75 per cent on the first $49,200 and any amount over that is deemed at 3.25 per cent;

(d) deeming rates are supposed to reflect returns across a range of investment choices available in the market, but the Government is failing to act by lowering deeming rates; and

(e) Australian part-pensioners are doing it tough in a low interest rate environment and pensioners are crying out for some relief; and

(2) calls on the Prime Minister to immediately reduce deeming rates in line with falling interest rates, so that pensioners' assets are deemed fairly and Australian pensioners finally get some relief.

This is an issue that is seriously affecting pensioners in my electorate of Lindsay and right across the country. We currently have a situation where the assumed rate of return on investments made by pensioners is significantly out of step with the economic conditions that we see in Australia at the moment. As a result pensioners, effectively, are being ripped off because the government is assuming they are earning income—which, in many cases, they are not.

The government is using this non-existent income to determine the pensioner's benefits. It is a fact that interest rates in Australia are at a record low. This lowers the rate of return on safe investments across the board. Traditionally, pensioners have opted for low-risk financial products from well-established institutions so their hard earned money is protected in their later years. Generally, term deposits are preferred.

If you were to go onto the financial products ratings agency Canstar and search the thousands of term deposit products available to Australian investors, I would invite you to guess how many products were on offer at a return of 3.25 per cent or above. It is just one. Out of thousands upon thousands of products just one offers 3.25 per cent. It is with Big Sky. It has a four-year minimum term and interest is paid annually at 3.25 per cent. But too bad if you do not want to lock up your funds, for whatever reason, for 48 months or if you need to be paid more often than yearly. Anything less than a four-year term gets you a guaranteed rate of return less than the government's deeming rate, and for any product that pays monthly,
quarterly or six monthly, again, you are guaranteed a rate of less than the government's deeming rate.

As I am sure those on the opposite side are very well aware, this is an issue that causes significant distress to pensioners as they try to manage their financial affairs. It is simply not fair to assume that pensioners are earning income that they are not and then use this fake income to decide their benefits. It is a despicable situation this government is presiding over and it is causing undue stress and anxiety among our pensioners who have worked hard to get where they are.

To make it worse, I have heard from some of the more detached and apathetic commentators, in this space, that there are plenty of financial products out there that offer higher rates of return than term deposits. We might even hear that from those opposite today, seeing as they have managed to conjure up just two speakers on this motion. That is true: if you are in a position to take on more risk and invest over a longer period there are plenty of financial products for you. But following the global financial crisis there is good reason for pensioners to invest their hard earned money safely and securely. They simply cannot ride out a downturn without it having an immediate impact on their quality of life.

Why this government is forcing pensioners to invest their money in ways that take on more risk is beyond me, but it is not surprising. After all, this is a government that is hell-bent on cutting the energy supplement, meaning pensioner couples will be $500 a year worse off. And this is a government that wants to increase the pension age to 70. In all, these things show that when it comes to Australian pensioners Malcolm Turnbull and his Liberal government are completely out of touch.

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

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (10:57): I second the motion on deeming rates for Australian pensioners. It gave me great pleasure to see this private member's motion on the papers this morning and I thought it would be appropriate to come in and make a contribution. The reason I want to speak on this bill is that I grew up in a household in Queensland—a very humble household—and our sole source of revenue in the house was a widow's pension. My father passed away when I was eight years old. As a result, I can speak with some form of authority about what it is like to grow up in a household where your only income is a pension.

I will break down my contribution into two parts. One will be on pensioners. The member who moved the motion spoke predominantly about self-retired fundees, so the second part of my speech will shift to self-retired fundees and what the government's position is on it. This will help clarify the member moving the motion's understanding of the issue and the government's position.

Growing up in a household on a widow's pension I—along with many other children in the street—did not know we were poor. We thought it was completely natural that the shoes you wore were handed down from a sibling. We thought it was completely natural that the school uniform you got, that everyone in the school got, was from a second-hand shop or St Vincent de Paul. That is how we went about business in our family.

Never, at any stage, were we hungry and it never, at any stage, did we think we were poor. We thought every kid played cricket in the main street by knocking off a fence paling from Mr Dixon's place, down the road, and that became the bat. The cricket ball of choice was
either an avocado, if in season, or a mango we, again, had knocked off from a neighbour's place—one who would have been contributing to the game of cricket. So, they were very humble beginnings. It gives me great pleasure to be here in the House to share those humble beginnings with the House, because I know there are others from both sides of the House who have that genesis.

To speak more aptly to the private member's motion, when we move into the space of self-funded retirees, what the mover of the motion has not taken into consideration with the building of the revenue stream for self-funded retirees is the interest generated from their investments, plus the ability for them to draw down from their capital investment. The government does take that into consideration. We encourage Australians, particularly in the self-funded retirees space, that we do need to advertise and promote the mindset that that bucket of money needs to be drawn down on in the future—not all the time. My family is in exactly the same boat. When my mum's second husband passed away she sold the family home and that money is now invested. Part of that makes up part of her revenue and it is topped up by a part pension.

So the government does have compassion, does have an ability to make sure that those who are most vulnerable in our community are looked after. But as a nation we need to shift away from what has been described by other commentators as a welfare mentality, whereby the bucket of invested capital is seen to be an investment that is kept in perpetuity and then gifted to a sibling or to someone else. That is not the intention of superannuation—it is not the intention of large-scale capital investments that you have the capacity to draw down. I know from experience that there are those who have a fear of drawing down—some might be reasonable amounts of money and some might be quite humble amounts. They fear drawing down because they have assessed that next year the return on their investment will be less because they have drawn down some capital. That is where the government safety net comes in, because if you are on a part pension that will then go to a full pension as your assets are recalibrated and reassessed. The government will play a role in looking after that.

If the Australian Labor Party comes into this place and talks about the protection of and rights of pensioners, be careful when introducing carbon taxes. Be careful when introducing legislation that has direct costs on households across Australia. There are two ways that we can help pensioners. One is by putting more money in their pockets by reducing taxes and the second is to reduce the amount of expenditure they have in their household budgets.

Ms TEMPLEMAN (Macquarie) (11:03): In my electorate of Macquarie, the coalition made a great many promises during the last election, ranging from $310,000 for a local environment plan to $30,000 for an irrigation system for Knapsack Oval in Glenbrook. So far, the Turnbull government is yet to make good on any of these promises, and I, of course, will be pushing for them to do so. But today I ask: where were the Prime Minister's promises for Macquarie's pensioners, part pensioners and self-funded retirees? These are people who had a deal with the government that if, over their lifetime, they worked hard and saved what they could, there would be a pension to help make ends meet, if they needed it, at the end of their working life. They trusted they would be cared for in return for their economic and social contribution to our country. Sadly, this is a promise that the Prime Minister and the dysfunctional coalition government are failing to deliver.
What has this government and the previous Liberal government delivered for pensioners? In every single budget the Abbott and Turnbull governments have handed down they have tried to cut the pension; they are trying to abolish the pensioner education supplement; and they are increasing the pension age to 70. In 2014 they tried to change pension indexation, a change that would have left pensioners around $80 a week worse off within ten years. Most recently, they attempted to cut the clean energy supplement. They want to penalise migrant pensioners who go overseas to visit family and friends by cutting their pensions just six weeks after their departure.

As a result of the government's changes to the assets test, legislated with the help of the Greens, from 1 January 300,000 pensioners will have their entitlements cut, and just under 100,000 of those will lose the pension entirely. It is an appalling record, and that is why deeming rates are today so important. Unless you are retired and looking at your eligibility for a pension, part pension or seniors health card, deeming rates do not actually matter that much. But deeming rates are supposed to be a practical way for government to efficiently estimate the interest and dividend income earned by retirees on their assets, inclusive of term deposits, share portfolios, bank accounts and more.

Despite the fact that interest rates are currently at record lows of 1.5 per cent, the government has insisted on leaving deeming rates artificially high at 3.25 per cent; meaning that individuals applying for pensions are estimated to have an interest based income much higher than they actually do. The result will be that thousands and thousands of people will be excluded from accessing pensions and part pensions because this government—overseen by the Treasurer, the social services minister and the Prime Minister—will calculate that they earn more income than they actually do. It is very convenient for the government. They get to reduce the budget bottom line and shift costs from government to individuals, and these individuals have the least capacity to find alternate sources of income to meet their costs of living.

Let's get really practical here. The absolute highest rate an individual investing their money in the Commonwealth Bank's pensioner security account would receive is 2.25 per cent per annum. Even if you had a balance significantly over the threshold for pension eligibility at the highest interest rate, that rate is still lower than Minister Porter's deeming rate of 3.25 per cent. And that is the case with all of the big four. A single pensioner with a bank balance of $60,000 in such an account would have their earnings deemed at a rate 68 per cent higher than the interest they would actually be receiving. This will lead to people being excluded at the means-testing stage for having an income that is, thanks to deeming, too high.

This issue has been raised by the Blue Mountains branch of the Association of Independent Retirees and by many individuals, like Ron from Blaxland east, John from Richmond and Brenda and Arthur from Bligh Park in my electorate. These people do not want to be forced into higher, riskier investments in order to get a return that more closely matches the deeming rate. They want security; they want not to be getting more than they should; they want to be treated fairly and the current deeming rates do not do that.

Therefore, we call on the Prime Minister to immediately reduce deeming rates in line with falling interest rates so that pensioner assets will be deemed fairly and Australian pensioners will finally get some relief. All it takes is the stroke of a pen. We do not need to pass legislation; we just need this government to make the right decision.
Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (11:08): I would like to correct some of the comments made by the member for Macquarie. She gave the impression in her speech that that 3.25 per cent deeming rate cuts in if you have $60,000 in savings and it is done on the whole lot. That is simply not correct. For a couple, their first $81,600 is only deemed at 1.75 per cent. So the example that the member for Macquarie gave was of someone who had $60,000 in an account and she pretended that that was to be deemed at 3.25 per cent. If that $60,000 is with a couple and that is their savings, that will only be deemed at 1.75 per cent. If they are getting two-point-something per cent, as the member for Macquarie indicated, that is actually above the deeming rate. In her speech, I think the member for Macquarie misunderstood that for a couple their first $81,600 is deemed at 1.75 per cent not 3.25 per cent—a very important distinction. As the member for Macquarie pointed out, there are many accounts available out there in the marketplace for someone with $80,000. For a couple with $80,000 there is actually well above the deeming rate. For those fortunate enough to have more than $80,000 of investments we must remember the return on superannuation accounts. Let us look at the last three years. In 2013-14 the average return on superannuation funds in this country was 12.7 per cent. In 2014-15 it was 9.7 per cent. In the last year it has been down—it has only been 2.3 per cent. But if we look at the average of those last three years, it is an 8.2 per cent return on superannuation accounts averaged over the last three years, which is well above the deeming rate.

The member for Macquarie also talked about how she wants to give more to pensioners, and wouldn't it be wonderful if we could do this for pensioners? That is absolutely correct. Both sides of this parliament would love to be able to do more for pensioners. But the reality is that in this nation we pay for the pension by the money and income earned by the nation each year. We do not have some big savings deposit like they do in other countries, where the interest from that amount pays the ongoing pensions. It is the wealth created by people working today that pays pensions today. Is the wealth of those who earn wealth in this nation tomorrow that will pay the pensions tomorrow. I am sure the deeming rate raises issues for some people, but I say the greatest concern that pensioners should have is the risks of higher costs coming through. We have seen that with the closure of the Hazelwood power station. Estimates of increases in electricity costs—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr CRAIG KELLY: They laugh. I do not know if Hansard can record laughter. We have the prospect of pensioners in this country facing a 25 per cent increase in their electricity bills from the closure of Hazelwood, and what do we hear from the other side? Laughter. This is simply not good enough. At the moment, with the high cost of electricity in this country, pensioners are paying twice the price for electricity as they are in North America. There are many pensioners that go to sleep in winter in cold homes in Sydney, Melbourne, Victoria and other parts of this nation because they cannot afford to turn their electricity on. And yet we have policies that are going to push that price up by 25 per cent. What do we have from the other side? Instead of expressing some concern about that, they laugh and snigger. This is a disgrace. We need to do the best we can for our pensioners, and the most important thing—

(Time expired)

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (11:13): I would like to say a few words about this important motion. I would like to compliment the contributions from the members for Lindsay and Macquarie,
who clearly understand the importance of cost of living pressures, not only on full pensioners, but on part pensioners and of course on self-funded retirees. It does not matter where you look over the period of the Abbott-Turnbull government, there has been one common theme: a concerted attack on the living standards of pensioners and self-funded retirees, and a failure to recognise the importance of dignity in retirement for people who have worked hard all of their lives to make our country great.

Today I want to talk on behalf of the 17,000 full and part pensioners in my electorate that are being short-changed and attacked, year in, year out by the Liberals in this parliament. Of course Labor has historically been the party that has stood up for pensioners. We put in place the biggest single increase in the age pension in its history. We did that so that people on the single pension did not have to live in dire poverty. We put in place a scheme of compulsory superannuation, which has produced a savings pool of $2 trillion, because we understand the importance of a self-funded system, as well. What we understand, and those opposite do not understand, is the intersection between superannuation savings on one hand and the importance of being able to access the aged pension, either in full or in part, on the other.

What we have seen under the Liberal government has been an attack on the full age pension: an attempt to cut the indexation on the age pension by up to $80 a week over a decade—a massive attack on the living standards of many full pensioners as well as part pensioners with superannuation in savings. We have seen them attack indexation of the age pension and we have seen them attack pensioner concessions to the tune of $1.3 billion, and now they are seeking to short-change pensioners by failing to lower the deeming rate to reflect lower interest rates overall. The failure to do that shows how sneaky those opposite are. They want to crib away at the incomes of people who are on part pensions. That is why they want to make this sneaky, under-the-radar attempt to once again cut the income of full pensioners and part pensioners who have a modest level of savings. Remember this: in this low-interest-rate environment, income from a given level of savings is now far less than it was five years ago and a decade ago. Many people on what may appear to be substantial assets are receiving little income, and this government is out there ripping away the little income they are receiving from those assets. That is why the deeming rate is so important.

For a single age pensioner on a full pension of around $20,000 and with modest assets, failure to adjust the deeming rate means they could lose around $1,000 a year—$1,000 a year!—in pension income. Meanwhile, the government sits there and waves through massive tax avoidance by so-called respectable companies such as BHP. Under this government, millions of pensioners and part pensioners get their income cut while multinational companies get a tax cut. That is the priority of those opposite: attacking the incomes of those who have worked hard all of their lives by sneaky measures like this through their failure to adjust the deeming rates. That is why this motion today is so important.

Those opposite could not even martial a speakers list on something that is so important to the living standards of millions of Australians. They could not even get a speakers list together. There are a lot of people who are a lot worse off as a result of the refusal of the Minister for Social Services to adjust the deeming rate. This is not a mistake. He is not that stupid and he knows exactly what he is doing: by stealth, reducing the private income of people on some of the lowest incomes in our community. And this comes on top of the attempt to cut the base rate of the pension by $80. This is a government that is strong in
attacking the weak and very, very weak in supporting the sorts of measures that need to be
taken against multinational tax evaders and all of those who deserve to pay.

Mr KHALIL (Wills) (11:18): I am glad I have an opportunity to speak on this very
important motion. As the member for Lilley said, the government could not even muster
enough speakers to speak on this motion.

I am glad I have the opportunity, because of the importance of this motion to pensioners
around Australia. The government's attack on the living standards of pensioners has been an
issue which has come through the doors of my electorate office with alarming frequency since
my election as the member for Wills just a couple of months ago. Only last month I met with
two pensioners, Vic Guarino and Gino Iannazzo, from Australian Pensioners' Voice. They
formed in 2007 to represent the interests of Italian-Australian pensioners in my electorate. Of
course, pensioners from all backgrounds, multicultural backgrounds, face the same problems,
such as struggling to meet the costs of living, paying essential bills and receiving appropriate
health services. Gino and Vic highlighted the mammoth issue faced by those who live,
particularly, in the inner city, as well as other parts of Melbourne, where house prices have
increased exponentially over the past decade. As such, for them, paying council rates has been
very difficult on fixed incomes because, over the last decade, pensions and other fixed income
streams have not increased at the same pace as home values have. I have heard countless
similar stories from people who have worked hard all their lives who are now struggling in
the current climate amidst skyrocketing costs of living coupled with a low interest rate
environment.

Everyone should understand why pensioners crave the stability of cash interest. Retirees
inherently do not have a high appetite for risk; they cannot weather periods of market
volatility, and they do require a high level of liquidity of their assets. This is the simple reality
of living off a nest egg—a finite pool of money. The low returns on cash interest are tough
enough. As we know in reality, the rate of return on a term deposit from a major bank equates
to only a skerrick of profit after inflation and usually requires you to freeze your money for an
extended period.

My constituents know the impact of falling interest rates on the standard of living because
they can feel it every day; it has a direct bearing on their standard of living. Let me be clear
about this: these people are not at risk of taking fewer holidays or struggling to buy a new car
this year; they are talking about the difference between eating or going hungry, buying
medications or skipping prescriptions. These are not luxuries. We owe these people, who have
contributed so much to our nation, something better.

My constituents also know that the rate used to assess income from financial assets, which
determines how much pensioners receive, has not been adjusted by the federal government for
18 months. This means that pensioners already squeezed by low interest rates are also are
being hurt by the Turnbull government's failure to adjust deeming rates, as we have heard.
Deeming rates assume financial assets earn a certain rate of income, regardless of what the
actual earnings are. Currently, a single pensioner's savings are deemed at 1.75 per cent on the
first $49,200. Any amount over that is deemed at 3.25 per cent. It can be considered in no way
fair to assume some are earning income that they are not, and then use this fake income to
decide their benefits.
I know this issue is not limited to the people of Wills. We have heard in the chamber already this morning similar stories of pensioners been ripped off by illogical calculations being used in the determination of their pension amount. So I stand here and say loud and clear: the coalition is scalping pensioners through sham calculations. And I repeat here what I have said to many of my constituents already: this government is not looking after you; it is not looking after pensioners. The rates are supposed to reflect returns across a range of investment choices available in the market, but the Turnbull government is failing to act to lower them. That is simply not good enough. It is time for the Turnbull government to take action to reduce the pressure on pensioners by adjusting deeming rates. The government's inaction on deeming rates comes as thousands of pensioners brace themselves for the effect of the changes to the pension assets test that will commence on 1 January 2017. In 2015, the Liberal government, in partnership with the Greens in another unholy alliance to attack the livelihoods of Australia's pensioners, legislated new measures to tighten the assets test for the pension. From January 2017, the pension will reduce by $3 for every $1,000 in assets above the assets limit, increased from $1.50. Many experts think that this will create perverse disincentives for Australians to save for their retirement. This is one of the reasons that Labor wants to see a review into the pension means test. We believe that this review needs to examine the current interaction between the pension and superannuation systems, how the pension works and how the system might be improved to more effectively encourage super and other savings now and into the future.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell): The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next day of sitting.

Remembrance Day

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (11:24): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:
(a) 11 November is Remembrance Day;
(b) on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month Australians observe one minute's silence in memory of those who died or suffered in all wars and armed conflicts;
(c) 2016 marks the 98th anniversary of the Armistice which ended World War I; and
(d) on Remembrance Day we pay our respects and honour the memory of those who have served in our country's defence forces;
(2) encourages all Australians to attend a commemoration ceremony in their local community, and to pause for a minute of silence to remember those who have served in the Australian Defence Force and made the ultimate sacrifice;
(3) remembers:
(a) those who lost their lives serving their country; and
(b) all who came home, wounded, or bearing the hidden scars of war; and
(4) recognises that the return to life in Australia, the journey from battlefield to towns and suburbs, can be a difficult one for those who serve and for the people who love and care for them.

I am very pleased to move this motion, which recognises the importance of our national day of remembrance to honour the many service men and women who left their homes and loved
ones to fight for their country, and to remember the sacrifice of those who never returned and those who returned but whose service left them physiologically and psychologically wounded.

As members are aware, this year marks the 98th year since the Armistice was signed, ending World War I. At 5 am, German government representatives agreed to the Armistice, which would see their forces withdraw and surrender at 11 am on 11 November 1918. And so, at 11 am on 11 November, silence fell on the Western Front for the first time in four years. Over the course of the four years of World War I, more than 416,000 Australians volunteered for service, with 324,000 leaving their families behind to serve overseas. At the signing of the Armistice, more than 60,000 Australians had lost their lives, including 45,000 who died on the Western Front in France and Belgium and more than 8,000 who died in Gallipoli. At 11 am, we pause to remember these men and the sacrifice they made. We remember both those who died and those whose lives were irrevocably changed. We remember the bravery of our Anzacs—the determination and courage of those who fought at Gallipoli, Fromelles, Pozieres, Bullecourt, Ypres and more. We remember the acts of bravery and endurance of our men fighting in these conflicts. This year marks 100 years since a number of these important battles, including Fromelles and Pozieres.

After World War II, Armistice Day was renamed Remembrance Day as an opportunity to commemorate all those who have died for Australia in wars and conflicts. The 11th of November is an important day for all Australians to remember the 102,824 Australians who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defence of our country over the past century. We pause to remember the sacrifice by those who put their lives on the line. We pause to remember their families and friends who were left behind. We pause to remember those who left and never returned. We pause to remember those who came home but whose lives were forever changed. And we pause to offer our thanks for and acknowledgement of their sacrifice.

The contribution and sacrifice of Australians has been and continues to be significant, with the First World War, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and conflicts in East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq, amongst others. Indeed, we must remember the peacekeeping operations Australia has also contributed to. Remembrance Day gives us the opportunity to acknowledge and thank those who are currently serving both at home and overseas. It is a day to reflect on the sacrifice and courage of those current serving men and women who are deployed around the world. It is a day to reaffirm our commitment to support both our current and our ex-serving Defence personnel. I believe it is our duty to assist our veterans, who put their lives on hold to serve their country. To those whose lives are never the same again and to those who are no longer able to live their lives in the same way, we owe not only our gratitude but our unwavering support for them into the future.

Over the last two weeks, I was fortunate enough to join our Australian Defence Force parliamentary exchange program, which visited our operations in the Middle East. During my visit, I was reminded of the extent of the sacrifice made by our current serving Defence personnel. These men and women leave their friends, families and communities behind to serve our country. I was particularly struck by the professionalism of each and every person I met. It was a privilege to meet so many inspirational Defence Force members doing extraordinary things. The contribution they are making is incredibly valuable and they deserve our utmost respect and support. I have never been more proud to be an Australian
than when witnessing the high calibre of our Defence personnel in action over my time in the last two weeks.

So this Friday, at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, let us remember those who never made it home. Let us commit as a nation to support those whose service has left them in need of support. And let us recognise those Defence personnel who have served and continue to serve our country.

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

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

Mr LAUNDY (Reid—Assistant Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (11:29): I rise today to speak in support of this very important motion moved by the member opposite. I congratulate her on doing so. It is a year after the Centenary of Anzac, but the commemoration of Remembrance Day—and of all days related to battlefields around the world where Australians have served, fought and died—is, ultimately, extremely important. Remembrance Day harks back to the end of World War I and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. I often think about the impact that World War I must have had on an infant Australia, with some 250,000 people dead out of a population of around five million at the time, if my memory serves me correctly from last year's Centenary of Anzac celebrations. Those numbers are indeed chilling.

I was one day taking a drive on the back road from Gundagai to Wagga, which passes through towns like Wantabadgery, Nangus and Oura on its way. I have long been a believer, when I pass World War I and II tributes and memorials, in stopping to have a look. You are talking about country which would have been so sparsely populated in 1914. The beauty of marrying a local is listening to her father's tales of those days—her family goes back seven generations in the area—and it turns out that a large proportion of the New South Wales light horse came from that part of New South Wales.

I will never forget stopping at Wantabadgery and looking at a particular war memorial. On the plaque were around 95 names of young men in their teenage years to early 20s that had died serving this country, fighting for this country for the freedoms we enjoy, in that period from 1914 to 1918. Just think for a minute about the impact that would have on a local community, a town like Wantabadgery, which today has in the vicinity of 400 people in it. I do not know what it had in 1914, but losing 95 people out of it would have not just decimated the local town that day but also impacted on that town for future generations to come. The succession plans of local farming families were thrown out of whack, because those young men would have taken up the family farm and moved forward, would have married, would have had children and would have invested back in their families in that local community. All of that was decimated.

So, yes, the numbers are staggering, but, when you drill down to the impact it had on Australia in 1914, you are talking about five per cent of the population. If you extrapolate those numbers to today, with some 23 to 24 million people here, you are talking about 1 to 1½ million people in comparison. The numbers, when you move them forward some 101 years, are staggering.

In today's modern society, we take warfare as being so mechanical, happening at the end of bombs dropped from planes and tanks and what have you. In those days it was labour
intensive and it was deadly. It was frontline trench warfare. It was Gallipoli at the start and the Western Front from there. It has moved all the way around, unfortunately and sadly, to other theatres of war in the last 101 years.

But I agree with my friend the member for Kingston, Amanda Rishworth, when she said that this is an important time for politicians in their local community. I know that the Concord Repatriation General Hospital has its Remembrance Day ceremony later in the week. We still call it 'the Repat', although it was handed over to the state government in the early nineties. It is always a great time for the community to come together and for us as members of parliament to show our support, not only for the men and women in today's armed forces, whether they are here or serving abroad, but also for those who in the last 101 years have been prepared to place their lives on the line for the freedoms we enjoy in this country, of which there is no greater example than we as politicians getting to exercise democratic freedom in this magnificent place. Congratulations, Amanda.

Mr CREWThER (Dunkley) (11:34): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to pay my respects today to our many veterans—those who have served and those who currently serve, those still with us and those who have passed on, the many men and women who faced the stark horror of war and faced what to many of us are unthinkable challenges and suffering in the name of democracy and freedom. I thank the member for Kingston for moving this motion today. It is an important motion.

The member for Kingston and I, along with a number of other members, had the opportunity to go to Afghanistan and the UAE and to fly over Iraq and Syria over the last two weeks as part of a parliamentary delegation to the Middle East region hosted by Australian Defence Force personnel. We were able to gain a real insight into the work of the forces in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. We stayed at Camp Baird, named after Corporal Cameron Baird, posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross only last year. This incredible experience offered me the opportunity to literally stand shoulder to shoulder with our troops—while not in actual combat, at least in training and remembrance of the 44 Australians who made the ultimate sacrifice during our force's current presence in the region. We are fortunate today that we do not face a terrible worldwide conflict of the destructive nature of times past. Instead, our defence forces find themselves adapting to different forms of conflict, yet fighting for the same values that motivated our forces a century ago.

This week is the 98th anniversary of Armistice Day. The silencing of the guns on the Western Front has come to be associated with the commemoration of the price paid by our service men and women in the defence of our values and freedoms. The remembrance poppy, first known of the Flanders fields, is a symbol as old as Remembrance Day itself. The imagery of the fields covered in red reflects the many lost in those fields and has now been adopted internationally as a symbol of commemoration. The minute's silence acknowledges the sacrifices so many ordinary Australians have made, not only during World War I but throughout all armed conflicts. The men and women who gave their lives to enable us to live the lives we have today are owed an eternal debt, as are all those who sustained injuries that affected their lives once they returned but who are not always acknowledged.

Every one of us is connected somehow to those who have served our country. In Dunkley, both my father and grandfather were in the Australian Defence Force based on the Mornington Peninsula, meaning that for me Remembrance Day also has a very local
relevance. In this, I am like many of you who gather, whether for Remembrance Day ceremonies or in this parliamentary chamber, to pay respect to grandfathers, grandmothers, cousins, friends or perhaps complete strangers through the upcoming remembrance services.

In Dunkley, Frankston Memorial Park is the final resting place of over 200 ex-servicemen. I was able to acknowledge their service yesterday. Dunkley itself has contributed many young people to the defence of Australia and Australia’s interests and has a unique and rich military history. Sixteen soldiers from Frankston who were killed in action in World War I are listed on the honour roll at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, which I had the honour of visiting recently. There are many more recognised at the Frankston War Memorial, down the road in Beauty Park. Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve brings history right to our doorstep, having hosted a prisoner of war camp, military training and a military hospital.

Many of us can never truly comprehend the hardship and strain undergone by our defence forces. It was incredible to have an eye-opening experience in the UAE and Afghanistan over the last two weeks, to see our defence forces and what they do in person. We are incredibly proud of and grateful to those who have returned and those who did not, whether their scars are physical and can be seen or whether their wounds are not only of the flesh.

The homecoming from the battlefield to suburban life can be a challenge, in that the person who went off to war is not always the same person who returns home. We recognise that the transition for those who come home can be difficult for both them and their families and loved ones around them. In this, we see the valuable work of the RSL, the Department of Veterans’ Affairs and the numerous other support networks and organisations who aid our veterans and their families. As we come to Remembrance Day, we remember the saying:

“At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.
Lest we forget.

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (11:39): I thank the member for Kingston for moving this Remembrance Day motion, and I acknowledge her commitment to our Defence Force and veteran community, which I saw writ large during the past week while visiting our troops as part of their Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program to the Middle East. Her heart—and her considerable intellect—is in the job, and I know she is genuine about ensuring our country supports our defence personnel and veterans as best we can. God knows, they deserve it. I speak today as someone who has lost mates who died while serving, and also as the son of a Vietnam veteran and a grandson of a World War II veteran.

Remembrance Day is an important opportunity to remember those who have gone before us. As I mentioned, I have recently returned from the Middle East, including a visit to Afghanistan. It was a privilege to meet and talk to the men and women who are serving our country. At the joint task force headquarters I paused at the wall of remembrance, where there are the photos of over 40 Australians who have been killed in that area of operations since 2001, including the Territory’s own Scotty Palmer, who was killed in Afghanistan in June 2010. His family will be in my thoughts this coming Remembrance Day, as they always are.

This week the Territory will have great pride as one of our best known Vietnam vets, Frank Alcorta, is acknowledged for his role in the Battle of Long Tan. Frank was also instrumental in getting the national Vietnam Veterans Day commemorated on 18 August each year.
A ceremony at Government House tomorrow will see the long-betated acknowledgement
of the courage of those men of 6 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, during the Battle of
Long Tan. Frank was with Alpha Company, travelling in armoured personnel carriers
dispatched to assist Delta Company, when it suddenly found itself in the midst of a couple of
hundred Vietcong. He was the only man sitting on top of an APC—an armoured personnel
carrier. He rolled off the vehicle and, in an amazing act of bravery, charged the enemy.
Although mentioned in dispatches, his courage is finally being recognised with the Star of
Gallantry tomorrow. I send my heartfelt congratulations to Frank and the other members of A
Company who are in Canberra to receive well-deserved honours. An old boss of mine at the
School of Infantry, Glenn Willmann, was part of the company.

For years, many Territorians were unaware of this side of Frank Alcorta, but they knew of
his courage as a journalist who helped set up Rupert Murdoch’s Sunday Territorian in 1986,
and as a fighter for returned servicemen. In 2013, Frank received an OAM for his services to
veterans and their families as well as services to journalism. On the walls in my Parliament
House office is a famous photo taken in 1969 at the site of the Long Tan Battle, where a cross
was raised in dedication to the 18 Australians who fell there. That photo was taken by a
journalist, Don Hook, the father of Captain James Hook, himself a Territory journalist currently
based in the Middle East with the Australian Army. James is a Territorian who worked with
Frank Alcorta at the Sunday Territorian along with many others including NT News editor
Jim Bowditch, who served with Z Special Unit in World War II. Jim—a well-known leftie, as
Frank called him—was also a fighter for workers’ rights. In his lifetime, he was awarded a
Military Medal for bravery as well as two Walkley awards. These interwoven lives and
histories are part of what I love about the Northern Territory—the stories, the strength
of character, the people who have made the Top End. Frank Alcorta told me he believes very
strongly in the history of this great country, which, over the past 100 years, has largely been
shaped by the Anzac tradition and its associated values—in Frank’s words, by ‘mateship,
sacrifice, duty, love of country and a profound belief in freedom and democracy, which
makes us such an enviable society.’

On Remembrance Day we honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice. This week we are
also finally honouring the bravery of D Company and men like Frank Alcorta. The Sixth
Battalion is a very proud regiment. My father served in this battalion on the second tour in
Vietnam with the legendary George Chinn DCM. George’s daughter Francine is one of my
staff and George’s wife, Margaret, has just celebrated her 92nd birthday. We remember
George and all our fallen, particularly those who need our help. Lest we forget.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): Lest we forget. The time for this debate has
expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of
the day for a later hour this day.

BILLS

Dairy Produce Amendment (Milk Marketing Board) Bill 2016

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent) (11:44): As the member is not here and the
motion has not been moved, the notice shall be removed from the Notice Paper in accordance
with standing order 113.
Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Television and Radio Licence Fees) Bill 2016

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (11:45): The Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Television and Radio Licence Fees) Bill 2016 proposes to amend the television Licence Fees Act 1964 and the Radio Licence Fees Act 1964 to reduce the licence fees paid by commercial television and radio broadcasting licensees by 25 per cent. It is instructive to look at the history of licence fees and at how we have arrived at this point. Labor supports the passage of this bill and considers the proposed reduction in licence fees to be a sensible step towards improving the international competitiveness of Australia's media sector and promoting the production of local content. It is instructive to briefly revisit the history of broadcast licence fees to understand how things have changed in this area and why this bill before us is important.

As the Productivity Commission stated in its report of the inquiry into broadcasting, licence fees 'seek to recover some of the value inherent in commercial broadcasting licences from commercial broadcasters and provide a return to the public for their use of scarce radiofrequency spectrum'. Commercial television and commercial radio broadcasters are required to pay broadcasting licence fees, which are levied as a proportion of their gross earnings from televisual or broadcasting, as the case may be, advertisements or other material or matter during the return period. Under the Broadcasting Services Act, a person or entity providing a commercial broadcasting service on radio or television must hold a commercial radio or television broadcasting licence. Under the Radio Licence Fees Act and the Television Licence Fees Act, a licence fee is payable annually by the holder of a commercial radio broadcasting licence or a commercial television broadcasting licence respectively. The sector-specific licence fee levied on commercial broadcasters has formed part of the social compact that has been a central theme in how broadcasting policy and legislation has been approached in Australia. This compact provides broadcasters with privileged access to use the airwaves, the radiofrequency spectrum—the highly valuable, finite and public resource used to transmit programming. It also affords other marketing advantages that, in turn, provide commercial broadcasters with unique access to a mass market of television viewers and radio listeners across Australia.

Historically, this business model delivered strong revenue and profits in an environment that is less competitive than what we have today. In exchange for these privileges, broadcasters were required to pay licence fees and were also subject to regulation that aimed to promote a range of public interest objectives, such as promoting a sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity; encouraging fair and accurate coverage of matters of public interest and appropriate coverage of matters of local significance; respecting community standards concerning program material; and protecting children from exposure to program material that might be harmful to them. In 2014-15 the Australian Communications and Media Authority collected roughly $153.9 million in licence fees from the commercial television sector.
I would like to turn to the issue of competitive pressures in the sector. The rise of the internet as a channel to aggregate and distribute content has had a significant impact on the media landscape. The structure and economics of media are changing, and broadcasters are facing increasing competition from new breeds of content providers who do not use the broadcasting spectrum and are not subject to the same level of regulation. For example, over-the-top content providers such as Netflix, Google and Facebook do not pay tax in the same way as Australian media companies and are not subject to detailed Australian media regulation requiring investment, for example, in local content, talent or production staff.

As noted recently by Network 10 to a Senate inquiry, Australian media companies are now competing directly against the foreign internet companies that are exempt from local media regulation, do not pay television licence fees and pay minimal corporate tax, despite taking billions in advertising revenue in this market.

It was further noted by Ten:

PwC forecasts that by 2020 internet advertising will dominate the advertising sector, reaching $10 billion, or approximately 50 per cent of the sector. Unfortunately, local journalism and local production will not benefit from this growth, with an estimated 70 to 80 per cent of total Australian digital advertising revenue going overwhelmingly to two foreign technology companies, Google and Facebook …

The challenges facing the television sector were also highlighted by PwC, who forecast the share of total advertising revenue between 2013 and 2017 for the commercial television sector will fall from 29 to 27 per cent, while the internet share is forecast to rise.

Commercial Radio Australia has also emphasised that the reduction in licence fees is a welcome relief to Australian radio broadcasters who continue to carry regulatory obligations and costs well in excess of unregulated online competitors. The radio sector incurred roughly $24.83 million in licence fees across 273 licensees for the 2014-15 period. As noted by Commercial Radio Australia, it is important that pricing of spectrum licences for commercial free-to-air broadcasters be considered ‘in the broader context of heavy regulation, local and Australian music content requirements, advertising restrictions and mandatory tags required of radio broadcasters, as well as the key role of radio in emergency situations’.

I would now like to return to Labor’s support for a strong broadcasting sector. When Labor were in government we recognised the convergence driven challenges faced by commercial television broadcasters. Labor in government announced a rebate of 33 per cent for 2010 and 50 per cent for 2011. The 50 per cent reduction was extended to the end of 2013 by regulation and confirmed in legislation at the time. In announcing licence fee reductions in February 2010 then Minister Conroy conveyed that Labor were committed to reviewing the future role of licence fees in the face of significant change and also articulated the importance of a strong and vibrant broadcasting sector, saying

Broadcasters have a unique role in preserving our national culture and the commercial television sector invests hundreds of millions of dollars each year in the production of local content.

I think it is also instructive at this point to have a look at some of the comments made by then Minister Conroy on 21 February 2010 on the Insiders program. He was being asked by the host about how networks are struggling to meet their local content requirements. Then Minister Conroy said:

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What we're seeing around the world is firstly that there is a long-term structural decline in commercial TV's business model. That's acknowledged around the world.

In the UK in response to that a couple of years ago, they slashed licence fees. In Canada licence fees are around 1 per cent. So Australian commercial TVs are still paying the highest in the world even after this cut.

What we're seeing is the advent of IPTV that's coming on-stream as part of the national broadband network, but it's arriving on existing networks today. Enormous competition is coming to the commercial TV sector.

At the same time, the Government has taken from them an enormous amount of spectrum which we'll be auctioning in the next few years which will be of enormous benefit both in a straight-dollar return from the auction, but more importantly, the productivity-enhancing boost that will come from allowing this spectrum to be used far more efficiently than it has been used in the last few years.

I contend those comments stand true today.

Labor remain committed to preserving a strong and vibrant broadcasting sector and recognise the positive effect that a competitive sector has on local jobs and our sense of Australian identity. We also recognise the competitive pressures facing the sector and the need for meaningful and effective measures by government to ensure broadcasters can continue to invest in local content and production.

Reducing licence fees is a sensible step. This brings me to the reasons that Labor considers justify support of this bill. In light of revenue declines and the regulatory asymmetries that I have outlined, commercial broadcasters have argued that the licence fees they pay are excessive, particularly when compared to their overseas counterparts. International comparisons have shown that the licence fees imposed on Australian broadcasters are higher than comparable overseas jurisdictions. For example, licence fees in Australia are currently 4.5 per cent of revenue. This is compared to 0.41 per cent in the UK, 0.27 per cent in New Zealand and only 0.05 per cent in the United States.

This bill proposes to reduce the fee by a further 25 per cent, which would bring it down from 4.5 per cent of gross revenue to 3.375 per cent. This reduction has been estimated to reduce the financial burden on industry by $163 million over the forward estimates. I note the ongoing spectrum review, which now appears to be continuing into another year. This has been a source of ongoing concern for the broadcasting sector. There remains a lack of certainty about how the revised spectrum legislation will operate in practice and the arrangements for broadcast spectrum moving forward, particularly on matters of pricing. We urge the government to ensure the legislative package it ends up bringing before the parliament is cohesive and does provide certainty for stakeholders moving forward.

There is, of course, an argument that current licence fees reflect the value of public spectrum and other advantages enjoyed by commercial free-to-air broadcasters. I have no doubt this debate will continue for some time to come. Nonetheless, for the reasons that I have outlined, the current schedule of licence fees should be adjusted in a manner that is both sensible and proportionate. As you well know, Mr Deputy Speaker, the job of parliament is to promote the public interest and, given the centrality of the broadcasting sector to our system of democracy, any substantive decision impacting this sector will require careful consideration that is both informed by evidence and guided by the enduring policy objectives that we aim to promote. Labor is satisfied that the evidence supports the proposed measure
whilst preserving and indeed promoting the policy objects central to the Broadcasting Services Act through the provision of support for a sector that invests in local Australian content and jobs. For these reasons, Labor supports the passage of this bill.

Mr TEOBRIEN (Fairfax) (11:56): The context for the measures in the Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Television and Radio Licence Fees) Bill 2016 is change—change driven by the information revolution; change in communications technology; change that is having a dramatic impact on the competitiveness of traditional media platforms. This bill is part of a broader package of reforms that has as its aim the freeing up of our traditional platforms to better compete in a vastly changed environment dominated by the internet—a truly instant and global means of communication. This measure, the first in the package to be brought to the parliament, sees a 25 per cent reduction in the licence fees paid by commercial television and radio stations—fees that have long been based on a proportion of gross earnings. This measure, which was part of the 2015-16 budget, reflects the government's acceptance that those earnings have been under increasing threat as the reach of new technologies widens.

The onset of these challenges has been rapid, especially in light of the long period of stability that preceded it. For at least 120 years from 1803, when the first Australian newspaper was published, until the first radio transmission in 1923, access to news reporting was restricted to the printed word, and our timetable here in Australia was pretty much the same as was experienced by the rest of the world—based on the invention of the printing press in the 15th century. That is a very long time with just one platform. It was radio that began the phenomenon of instant accessibility, but even that took some time to develop, with the first live call of the Melbourne Cup not until 1925, and it was not until the 1930s that test cricket was broadcast. This was at a time when the total number of people listening could be measured in tens of thousands. In fact, the first issue of licences attracted just 1,400 listeners. Radio obviously grew exponentially, and then in the 1950s—in 1956, to be exact, the year of the Melbourne Olympics—we entered the television age. So the familiar format of the media businesses that have dominated our access to news and entertainment ever since came into play: print, radio and TV. These formats, through which most people have consumed their news, gossip, information and entertainment—whether it was the racing form, the TV guide or the footy results—were left unchanged until relatively recently.

While the internet came into play, at least in a technical sense, in 1989—and that is not quite 30 years ago—as with radio and television it has taken some years for the power of that transformative technology to take root and become a part of our lives. Over the past decade in particular, it has transformed the media landscape like no other development—some would argue, in fact, no other development in the history of humankind. With access to the internet increasingly via our handheld devices, established media formats that have so dominated our lives—print, radio and TV—will never again enjoy the dominance they have had to date. They are still in the mix, but each has been dramatically challenged for audiences and for revenue and thus for profitability and thereby just survival. News, entertainment and information have become so globalised and so accessible, so quickly, by this new suite of technologies that the business models of our traditional media platforms have been transformed. In fact, they have been turned on their heads.
In this era of change, adaptability is the only viable strategy. Newspapers are adapting by increasingly moving content online, and the printed version of newspapers is now under a far bigger threat even than that which was created by television. Fairfax has quite openly flagged that the weekday editions of *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, two of the oldest, best known titles in the country, will soon most likely go digital. Rupert Murdoch has said that News Corp is not in the business of printing words on dead trees, as it doubles its efforts on content creation. Even in my home region, the legendary *Sunshine Coast Daily* newspaper only recently stopped printing its Sunday edition. Radio is responding. It is streaming, as is television, but the threat to radio and TV is arguably as great as it is for newspapers.

The challenge for all is to keep their businesses as going concerns. For all the traditional platforms, this boils down to revenue. The globalised internet has brought globalised players and global business models that exploit the fact that, with this format, the internet, they no longer suffer that long-held challenge, that long-held trade-off that other media outlets have made over the years between richness and reach—richness of content and reach to audience. And, having broken that, the internet continues to grow and steal more and more market share and revenue from the traditional platforms. For the traditional media companies, making a buck has become harder and harder.

Morgan Stanley recently conducted a study and suggested that this financial year global internet businesses will achieve about 35 to 40 per cent of advertising revenue in Australia, around $4 billion to $5 billion of a $14 billion market. By 2020 the possibility is that their share—we are talking here about the likes of Google, Facebook and Instagram—could be over 50 per cent. Morgan Stanley is inevitably right. This takeover is gathering pace. The share of the internet based multinationals grew by 25 per cent last year, and clearly it is going to keep growing. Everything we have seen in this area over the past decade suggests that internet based media is almost a tsunami for the traditional platforms. The record, let alone the predictions, underscores that fact. In 2012, for example, online advertising revenue was the equivalent of total advertising revenue for both newspapers and magazines combined. In 2012, the ad revenue share of newspapers had declined from almost 40 per cent a decade ago to less than a quarter.

Radio and TV revenues have been more stable, but they know they are next, and their growth in revenue is in the process of stalling as the competition for advertising and audiences escalates. The prediction in the Morgan Stanley work was that TV will flatline and radio will maintain modest growth in revenues for a few more years and then decline. These forecasts do not constitute a viable business outlook, especially for companies in a sector that the market typically rewards for their future growth predictions, their future growth expectations. Something has to give if we are to continue to have a vibrant, homegrown traditional media sector that is built around an Australian, not a global, audience.

As members in this chamber are aware, the government is proposing a range of measures to assist our traditional media companies to deal with these extraordinary challenges. The measure in this bill, which significantly reduces licence fees, is one of a suite of measures, several of which will be dealt with in a subsequent bill. Calls from the industry for relief from licence fees have been growing over recent years, and they have a compelling case for reduction, at least at two levels. One is the need to free up more capital to remain competitive against those companies that are beyond the reach of our licence fee system. The other is on
the basis of a comparison of the level of these fees charged in other countries. The member for Greenway, who spoke prior to me, alluded to this. In Britain, for example, the fee paid is under 0.2 per cent. Our current maximum rate is 4.5 per cent for television, down from nine per cent in 2013, and our current maximum rate for radio is 3.25 per cent. You can see that the 25 per cent reduction enabled by this bill is both a significant one and a very much warranted one.

The reduction that this bill proposes is not the reduction to zero that the industry generally calls for. The responsibility of the government on this matter is not solely to the industry; we also have a responsibility to the taxpayer. This measure will have a bottom line budgetary impact of $163 million over the forward estimates. It would have been nice to have been more generous, but the state of the budget and the need for fiscal repair, given the debt and deficit legacy of the former Labor government, mean that this measure is the best the government believes can be accomplished at this time. This bill should not only assist the industry but also give it confidence that the government knows and understands the scale of the challenges it faces. We have indicated that we will continue to look at this issue in the context of broader reforms that the industry seeks, and those will be dealt with in another bill.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (12:07): Labor supports the Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Television and Radio Licence Fees) Bill 2016. Let us go through some of the context regarding the current state of Australia's media industry. Broadcasting, through radio or television, is regulated to some degree. The spectrum that broadcasting uses is a public resource, and it is sought after for a lot of purposes. The spectrum used to broadcast television and radio programs, if auctioned off today, would yield an enormous financial gain for the people of Australia.

Following the switch from analog to digital television in 2012-13, the ACMA was able to reallocate spectrum and conduct an auction of some of the newly available spectrum, which gives us a sense of the value of the spectrum that this bill contends with today. The resulting auction back in 2012 saw the spectrum yield $1.96 billion to the coffers of the Australian people.

Government's role is to ensure that regulation achieves a public interest within the operations of commercial and media market dynamics. It is important to strike the right balance and to take action where necessary. There is no doubt that there is a fundamental shift in our media landscape. The member for Fairfax has just spoken about it, and the shadow minister spoke about it in her address-in-reply. The challenges faced by Australia's media companies here and around the world are well known. The availability of news and information through online media has changed the structures of the industry and is creating significant disruption to existing business models.

It is often the case with disruption to industry—in this case, our traditional television broadcasters—that they do not see the changes coming or the consequences for their industries. Our media industry is in the midst of this disruption with the expansion of subscription, video on demand and over-the-top streaming services like Netflix, to name just one. Our media viewing and consumption habits are also changing. While TV remains the dominant source of news in Australian households, the number of consumers watching free to air commercial TV has fallen a massive 15 per cent since 2008 alone. This is due partly to the growth of subscription and on-demand services, such as Quickflix, Presto, Stan and Netflix,
according to a recent ACMA report, *Digital Australians: expectations about media content in a converging media environment*. It said that from 2011 watching free to air TV still represents the largest share of our TV consumption at around 59 per cent of average time spent watching TV or video content. Watching online content, such as catch-up TV or other free online video content, via a subscription service or a pay per view content now accounts for 16 per cent of time spent viewing TV.

In February 2016 Roy Morgan research reported that more than one in seven Australians now watch no commercial television or normal weekday television at all. That is twice the number in 2008. Seven years ago only 6.9 per cent of Australians over the age of 14 did not watch any commercial television on a normal weekday, and there was very little difference between age groups. Since then the proportion of Australians who do not watch any commercial television has doubled.

We can see from these statistics that consumption patterns are changing, and they are changing rapidly. While we may still sit down together to watch the evening news as a family, it is also increasingly the case that we access these news services via our mobile phones, a tablet or some other online device. With 11 million Facebook users and nine million YouTube users, over half of all Australians have reported using online and social media as a news source. We can see that we cannot stand still as regulators blind to the fact that as the environment is changing very rapidly around us so must the regulatory environment. It is worth noting that there are new streaming and audio providers, such as Apple Music, which was launched in 2015 to join audio apps such as Spotify and Pandora, which have also rapidly changed the way we consume audio media.

The tax avoidance practices of many of these multimedia broadcasting services do need to be investigated. Google, for example, makes around $2 billion in advertising revenue in Australia but avoids paying tax in Australia by shifting this revenue to an offshore entity through Singapore to Google Asia Pacific. Labor would like to see some more action from the Turnbull government to address this issue of multinational tax avoidance. The so-called digital information revolution is creating some winners and some losers, and many are focused merely on surviving. Our traditional media companies are in this category. The maelstrom is the only reason this House should consider the bill today, which implements a 25 per cent reduction in the annual licence fees payable by the commercial radio and television free to air broadcasters. This change in the environment is the only reason we should be considering this bill today. Television broadcasting licensing fees are levied on gross revenue, and this measure in the bill will reduce the levy from 4.5 per cent to 3.375 per cent. I understand that many within the industry would like to see the licensing fees go altogether, but I remind the House that these are the fees that the industry pays for access to valuable spectrum.

We should continue to engage with the industry over what reforms are necessary. There have been a number of proposals put by the industry, quite forcefully, about the need for changes in the regulatory environment, regulations that were set up in an entirely different environment. These matters are not before the House but they are a part of the context which the Labor opposition is considering when offering its support for the legislation before the House.
Ms MARINO (Forrest—Chief Government Whip) (12:15): As we in this place are all aware, the regional commercial broadcasting industry has certainly been making its case for change, for some time, in this House. The government’s Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Television and Radio Licence Fees) Bill 2016 amends the Television Licence Fees Act 1964 and the Radio Licence Fees Act 1964 to permanently reduce the licence fees payable by commercial television broadcasting licensees and commercial radio broadcasting licensees by 25 per cent.

This, as you know Mr Deputy Speaker Broadbent, is in response to those constant and persistent representations by commercial broadcasters and a genuine awareness of all of us in this House and in parliament that their environment has significantly changed. Commercial television broadcasting licensees and commercial radio broadcasting licensees are required, under the relevant acts, to pay broadcasting fees, which are levied on an annual basis as a sliding percentage of the licensees’ gross earnings for that particular year.

For television, the maximum rate of licence fees payable is 4.5 per cent of gross earnings applicable to licensees with revenues in excess of $100 million. The current rate of television licence fees were set following an amendment to the Television Licence Fees Act 1964 in 2013, which provided a permanent 50 per cent reduction in commercial television licence fees. In relation to radio, the maximum rate payable is 3.25 per cent of gross earnings applicable to licensees with revenues in excess of $11.5 million. There have been no changes to the rate of radio licence fees since 1991. What we do know is that there has been a massive change in the media landscape during the last few years. We have seen total disruption through the internet. This bill will permanently reduce the rate of broadcasting licensing fees by 25 per cent per annum, effective for licence fees payable from the 2015-16 financial year, giving effect to a measure contained in the 2016-17 budget.

This fee reduction recognises that the Australian media market has changed significantly—dramatically, in fact—since broadcasting licence fees were introduced. With the move to online and on-demand content fragmenting the market for media services and significantly increasing competition, commercial television broadcasters are the largest funders of Australian content and remain a key source of news for Australians, especially for those of us who live in rural and regional Australia.

The reduction in broadcasting licence fees contained in this bill will allow commercial broadcasters to more effectively meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive global environment and continue to be able to invest in high-quality content. The bill will also amend the Radio Licence Fees Act to permit regulations to be made for licence fee rebates, mirroring a provision already contained in the Television Licence Fees Act.

When I look at the regional broadcasters and I look at the south-west of Western Australia, where my electorate is, my regional broadcasters produce local news, news that is relevant to our audiences in our market. There is nothing like being a local person and turning on your local TV station and watching news about people and places that you actually know. They also constantly update their news services.

For us in rural and regional Australia they provide jobs in our regional communities, jobs for people like journalists, editors, camera operators, broadcast engineers, IT technicians, and sales and administration staff.
But even more significantly, they are often the wonderful starting point for a lot of our reporters who go on to greater things at a national level. It is the training ground for local reporters. They have great aspirations, but they need a starting point. Where do they start? In local and regional areas. They start in local media.

These regional broadcasters also provide incredible support for local regional communities. They engage with their communities. They are directly connected. They are at every local major event. We see them out on the ground—the regional broadcasters are going to cover it. You know they are going to be there. They pay licence fees to ACMA as well to comply with the code and captioning obligations. They also pay tax in Australia. Because of their affiliation agreements, they pay affiliation fees to networks as well.

They are engaged in an absolute battle, as we know. I think everybody in this House understands the battle that our regional broadcasters face, whether it is to simply exist or for the advertising dollars, with the likes of Foxtel and through all the internet services that are both local and global. These operators are in their licence areas. It is an extremely aggressive, competitive space. It is changing constantly and it has a multitude of players.

The government decision to reduce the fees recognises these facts. It recognises that the Australian media market has changed unbelievably since the broadcasting licence fees were first introduced. In the current media environment the move to online and on demand content is absolutely fragmenting the market for media services. It is increasing the competition for audiences and for the advertising dollars. I look at WIN TV, Prime and GWN7 in my part of the world, and Southern Cross TV. It is placing increasing pressure on our commercial broadcasters—these same broadcasters that are regulated and paying licence fees, whose main competitors, including online operators like Netflix and Apple, pay no licence fees. You only have to look around—YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Amazon Prime, Google Play, Presto, Apple iTunes, Foxtel Go, Quickflix. It is a matter of what is next. This is not the end—it is only the beginning of more and different services that are going to be provided.

These services do not provide my community with local news and they do not provide my community with regional employment in the south-west of Western Australia. My regional broadcasters cover things like local AFL footy finals and major sporting events, then we see this on our local news bulletins. They cover things like the local emergencies. During the Yarloop and Waroona bushfires my local regional stations were giving us updates all the time. We even see local ads. That is exactly what we want to see in our part of the world. We do not want to see an ad for a product or service that is in Perth or over east or wherever; we want to see what is available in our south-west. That is what our community broadcasters do. They even deliver community service announcements that are relevant to us where we live, where we work, where we retire and where we invest.

But there are more changes ahead. We only need to look at young people to see how their habits have changed. As the members in this House know, I do a lot of cybersafety presentations in schools and community groups. We have heard statistics quoted today about the change in people's habits. We know that there are fewer and fewer people reading physical newspapers. There is an increase in the number of people who want their information and news live, now, at the moment it is happening. And they are receiving their news online in various forms.
Of course, this has put significant pressure on our local community newspapers. In our small communities, what people, and even younger people, do read is the very small and often free local newspaper. There is one in a little place called Brunswick, which is known as the 'Moos paper', because it is very much a dairy community and it does get read. It is all about local people and local events, and it means something. That is the connection that is required, and that is what regional broadcasters provide—the connection with community.

The 2016-17 budget included a measure to permanently reduce the rate of broadcasting licence fees by 25 per cent a year, and this bill gives effect to that budget measure by amending the Television Licence Fees Act 1964, as I said earlier. These amendments will provide that commercial television and radio broadcasting licensees must pay a fee that is 75 per cent of the amount otherwise due to be paid in a given year. The bill also introduces a measure to address an anomaly between the two licence fee acts relating to the making of regulations.

The bill also amends the Radio Licence Fees Act 1964 to address inconsistencies and to provide flexibility in the future administration of the licence fee regime as it applies to commercial radio broadcasters. The measures contained in this bill will build on the government's media reforms contained in the Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Media Reform) Bill 2016, which will repeal redundant media control rules and enhance local content obligations on regional commercial television broadcasters.

We do know that the Australian public is best served by a strong and vibrant free-to-air commercial broadcasting sector. These reforms provide tax relief to assist Australian broadcasters so they can be better positioned to invest in Australian content and local jobs and to maintain their presence in rural and regional Australia. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CONROY (Shortland) (12:27): I rise to talk about the Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Television and Radio Licence Fees) Bill 2016. Labor is supporting the bill for the reasons ably outlined by my colleagues, the members for Greenway and Whitlam. I am pleased to make a contribution.

I would like to focus on regional broadcasting and one aspect of that—the appalling television reception that many of my constituents face. It is an issue that is constantly raised with me when I am out and about in the community. The key issue is that television reception in many parts of my electorate was substandard before the transfer to digital television, and it has become even worse since then. The main complaint is very regular cut-outs when they are watching television; another is that particular channels barely work or do not work at all; another is poor reception when it rains or when it is very hot. This is just not good enough.

I would like to put this in context. In the year 2016, many of my constituents are having major difficulty in watching television in their own homes. This is 2016; this is not 1966. To put this into further context: the southern part of my electorate is barely one hour's drive from the Sydney CBD; the northern border of Shortland is about a two-hour drive from Sydney. And yet many of my constituents—only one hour from Australia's largest and most international city—cannot get television reception. This is completely unacceptable.

Many of my constituents who are facing this problem are elderly and many live on their own. For these people television is a fundamentally important part of their everyday lives. The television is the main source of entertainment and news. It is how they connect with their
community and the outside world. It is actually an aspect of democracy that is little remarked upon. If the main source of news that people in my area rely on to make informed decisions about who they vote for in elections is not available, then this is a hindrance to them expressing their democratic rights. Imagine how distressed these people feel and the isolation they feel when the primary source of entertainment and news does not work properly. The fact is that elderly constituents of mine feel isolated, and this makes me incredibly angry as their member of parliament. It is not just my elderly constituents who face this problem; many young families have also contacted me with the same problem. Some in the big capital cities may respond, 'Well, this isn't a problem, because they get plenty of service through smart televisions, iPad apps and paid television.' Well, many of my constituents cannot afford pay television and many of my constituents suffer from appalling internet services and therefore cannot stream from online services. That is why, since being elected to parliament in 2013, I have campaigned very strongly on improved communications in my region, whether it is television reception, mobile phone coverage or the NBN.

Last year, I wrote to the then Minister for Communications, who is now the Prime Minister, and asked him to refer digital television reception problems to the Australian Communications and Media Authority for investigation so this issue could be raised with regional broadcasters. He did not act, yet this was not out of ignorance, because I am sure the Prime Minister knows about television reception issues in the Hunter region and I have photographic evidence that he does. This is a picture of him with the former member for Paterson, Bob Baldwin, just two weeks before he became Prime Minister. He was visiting Mr Baldwin to announce $800,000 to address digital television issues in his electorate. It is interesting that of the five Hunter electorates, all of whom have television reception issues, the only one the Prime Minister could be bothered to turn up to and to help address the issues in was the Liberal electorate held by Bob Baldwin. It was a desperate and ultimately futile attempt to try and keep him in that seat.

We know what needs to be done. The government and the minister are aware of these issues, particularly in regional Australia. They need to work with industry to plan how to best address these ongoing issues. They have committed funding previously and the need to do more, along with the broadcasters, to solve this problem. This bill is giving a licence fee cut to those broadcasters, and I call on all broadcasters, particularly the regional broadcasters, to really invest in the infrastructure so that constituents of mine, in the great seat of Shortland and the surrounding areas, have access to one of the fundamental rights in a modern, economically rich country, and that is television reception.

To conclude, I say to my constituents: I will continue to campaign for greater telecommunications services in my area, whether it is decent internet speeds, mobile phone reception or whether it is free-to-air television reception; I will not rest. We are one to two hours from Australia's largest city, we are the seventh largest city in our own right, we live in a well-developed economically prosperous nation and to be without these services is a disgrace.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (12:32): I support the passage of the Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Television and Radio Licence Fees) Bill 2016 through the parliament. Finally, the government will give some much needed assistance to our Australian free-to-air broadcasters. They invest heavily in local Australian content, they provide Australian jobs and
they serve as a training ground for Australian talent. As our world evolves, technology involves with it. The biggest competitors to our commercial broadcasters are now multinational content companies such as Netflix and Apple. These companies pay no licence fees. They do not invest in local content, and they produce little to no Australian jobs.

Even with this legislation, Australian licence fees will still be some of the highest in the world. In this new world, with the advancement of technology, licence fees are a thing of the past. This legislation is a step in the right direction, but it is a small step, and I think we should acknowledge that. While our free-to-air broadcasters bleed money, their biggest competitors internationally are profiting—companies like Google, Facebook and Netflix. They pay very little tax in Australia, and it is time this government got real about making these companies pay their fair share. A reasonable tax on these multinational corporations would go some way towards recouping the revenue cost from the abolition of licence fees.

Should the government decide to act on this issue, the revenue raised from making everyone play by the rules on a level playing field could be used to help the forgotten member of the broadcasting industry—community broadcasting. Community television and radio provide a valuable service to interest groups not catered to by commercial broadcasters. They contribute to the diversity of the broadcasting sector.

Adelaide Hills has a number of community broadcasters. I would just like to touch upon television before I talk about radio. Adelaide community television station Channel 44 has downsized significantly in recent years. The station not only provides colourful programming but it also fills a niche not served by mainstream television and is also a training ground for the aspiring television presenters of tomorrow. Where is the support of this valuable community resource?

In regional areas especially, community radio provides a colourful contrast to the major stations. Couple this with the fact that they are able to cater much more specifically to local areas, and you have a very valuable community resource that I believe is overlooked in urban areas. In my electorate alone we have a multitude of community radio stations: Hills Radio, in the Adelaide Hills; Happy FM, down Victor Harbour, in Fleurieu Peninsula; Fleurieu FM; Kix Radio, on Kangaroo Island; and Triple Z, in McLaren Vale. These are just some of the stations that entertain and inform in my region, and they are run by volunteers. I know of the value they bring to our community and, yet, in terms of content and community involvement, these community radio stations are still being ignored by government.

The cost of lost revenue in the legislation before us is $163 million over four years. Currently, community radio stations around Australia need just $8.8 million over the next four years to invest in infrastructure to help them to grow and adjust in the digital world—that is $2.2 million per year. That $2.2 million could continue to support over 1,000 fulltime jobs in Australia. That $2.2 million would allow 22,000 volunteers Australia-wide to provide worth in their communities. That $2.2 million could help students cut their teeth on community radio to gain valuable experience. I did that at 21 years of age. I thoroughly enjoyed my time in community radio and learnt so much. That $2.2 million could provide safety and security to our local communities, as community radio stations are often the first to broadcast emergency warnings. Also, they provide local sport content. Their range of programming is endless.
This is particularly relevant to my electorate of Mayo, which has been devastated by the recent storms in South Australia. Through community radio stations, SES warnings were broadcast out to people in my community. In regional areas, community radio provides such a valuable service that it cannot afford to be lost, especially when the cost required to support the industry is so little.

Community radio may be seen as the little brother to commercial stations. It is small but it is mighty. Over five million people in Australia listen to community radio each week. This number continues to grow. The services provided by community radio have their own distinct flavour, and this creates a great, diverse range of content for listeners. That diversity is at risk.

The government has shown willingness to help out our free-to-air broadcasters. It has shown no willingness to curtail the free ride of multinational online services and it has shown even less willingness to support our community based broadcasters. I support the legislation before the parliament, but my heart sinks when I think of the lack of commitment shown towards the community broadcasters, both television and radio. Community television and radio face the same challenges as the commercial stations, and they should be supported as we enter the digital age.

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Urban Infrastructure) (12:38): I would like to thank the members who have contributed to this debate on the Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Television and Radio Licence Fees) Bill 2016. This bill will give effect to a 25 per cent reduction in the licence fees payable by commercial television and radio broadcasters that was included in the 2016-17 budget. This fee reduction recognises that the Australian media market has changed significantly since licensees were first introduced in the mid-1950s, with the move to online and on-demand content fragmenting the market for media services, and increasing competition.

I encourage all members to consider the measures in this bill as a priority as they relate to fees payable by the broadcasters by 31 December this year. These fees represent a significant burden on commercial broadcasters at a time when they face increasing competition from new media operators who pay no licence fees. These fee cuts will reduce the regulatory burden on Australian commercial broadcasters and allow them to compete on a more level playing field. They will also help regional commercial broadcasters to continue to serve their local communities effectively. Delays in considering this legislation would only serve to exacerbate the financial difficulties already being experienced by the traditional radio and television broadcasters. I call on all members to support the bill.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Urban Infrastructure) (12:40): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.
MOTIONS

Turnbull Government

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (12:41): I seek leave to move:

That the House:

(1) notes that:
(a) the Senate is today sitting while it remains unclear which Senators were validly elected under the Constitution; and
(b) the Government has not revealed how long it has known there were questions over the validity of the composition of the Senate and why it has kept this information secret from the Australian people;
(2) therefore, calls on the Prime Minister to immediately attend the Chamber to provide a full and honest account of the Government's knowledge and involvement of the potential constitutional issues concerning the composition of the Senate;
(3) notes the chaos in the Senate has today extended to the House of Representatives, when for the first time a Government MP has seconded a private Members' motion which condemned the Government for "short changing Australian pensioners";
(4) congratulates the Member for Wright in joining the Minister for Revenue and the Minister for Justice in their willingness to condemn the Turnbull Government on the floor of the House; and
(5) condemns the Government for its failure to manage the Parliament where every week there is a new stumble in the House and we now know the Senate has been sitting with a cloud over whether its composition is valid under the Australian Constitution.

Leave not granted.

Mr BURKE: I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Member for Watson from moving the following motion forthwith—That the House:

(1) notes that:
(a) the Senate is today sitting while it remains unclear which Senators were validly elected under the Constitution; and
(b) the Government has not revealed how long it has known there were questions over the validity of the composition of the Senate and why it has kept this information secret from the Australian people;
(2) therefore, calls on the Prime Minister to immediately attend the Chamber to provide a full and honest account of the Government's knowledge and involvement of the potential constitutional issues concerning the composition of the Senate;
(3) notes the chaos in the Senate has today extended to the House of Representatives, when for the first time a Government MP has seconded a private Members' motion which condemned the Government for "short changing Australian pensioners";
(4) congratulates the Member for Wright in joining the Minister for Revenue and the Minister for Justice in their willingness to condemn the Turnbull Government on the floor of the House; and
(5) condemns the Government for its failure to manage the Parliament where every week there is a new stumble in the House and we now know the Senate has been sitting with a cloud over whether its composition is valid under the Australian Constitution.

This parliament is a shambles. This parliament is in chaos. In the Senate they do not know who should be there—
Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (12:44): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

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

The House divided. [12:49]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................. 73
Noes .................. 69
Majority ............... 4

AYES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Banks, J
Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S
Ciobo, SM
Coulton, M
Drum, DK
Entsch, WG
Falinski, J
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Henderson, SM
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Keenan, M
Landry, ML
Leeer, J
Littleproud, D
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, I S
O’Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Zimmerman, T

NOES

Albanese, AN

Aly, A
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (12:56): Is the motion moved by the Manager of Opposition Business seconded?

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (12:56): I second the motion. This government knows that short-changing pensioners—

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (12:56): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

The SPEAKER (12:56): The question is that the member be no longer heard.
The House divided. [12:57]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)
Ayes ...................... 73  
Noes ...................... 69  
Majority ................ 4

**AYES**

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**CHAMBER**
Question agreed to.

**The SPEAKER** (12:59): The question now is that the motion moved by the Manager of Opposition Business be agreed to.

**Mr PYNE** (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (12:59): I move:

That the question be now put.

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

The House divided. [13:00]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .....................73
Noes ......................69
Majority...............4

**AYES**

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Banks, J
Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S
Ciobo, SM
Coulton, M

**NOES**

Danby, M
Dreyfus, MA
Feeney, D
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Hammond, TJ
Hayes, CP
Husar, E
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Leigh, AK
Marles, RD
McGowan, C
Mitchell, RG
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Pilcher, TJ
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Snowdon, WE
Swan, WM
Templeman, SR
Vannakinou, M
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

Abbott, AJ
Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Bishop, JI
Broadbent, RE
Christensen, GR (teller)
Coleman, DB
Crewther, CJ
### AYES

Drum, DK
Entsch, WG
Falinski, J
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Henderson, SM
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Keenan, M
Landry, ML
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Zimmerman, T

Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hartsuyker, L
Hawke, AG
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
O’Dwyer, KM
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Robert, SR
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Turnbull, MB
Vasta, RX
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG

### NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
B Bowen, CE
Burke, AS
Butler, MC
Chalmers, JE
Chester, LM
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Dreyfus, MA
Feeney, D
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Hammond, TJ
Hayes, CP
Husar, E
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
King, MMH

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Brodmann, G
Burney, LJ
Butler, TM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dick, MD
Elliott, MJ
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georgana, S
Gosling, LJ
Hart, RA
Hay, JC
Husic, EM
Keay, JT
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Lamb, S
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (13:01): The question is that the motion moved by the Manager of Opposition Business be agreed to.

The House divided. [13:02]

(Ayes—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 66
Noes ...................... 73
Majority ................. 7

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burke, AS
Butler, MC
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Dreyfus, MA
Fenney, D
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Hammond, TJ
Hayes, CP
Haszard, E
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Leigh, AK
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Neumann, SK
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Pilcher, TJ
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Snowdon, WE
Swan, WM
Templeman, SR
Vamvakopoulos, M
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

Macklin, JL
McBride, EM
Mitchell, BK
Neumann, SK
O'Toole, C
Perrett, GD (teller)
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Watts, TG
Wilson, JH
AYES
O'Toole, C
Perrett, GD (teller)
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Snowdon, WE
Swan, WM
Templeman, SR
Vamvakinou, M
Wilson, JH

Owens, JA
Plibersek, TJ
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Stanley, AM
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
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Zappia, A

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Abbott, AJ
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Andrews, KL
Bishop, JI
Broadbent, RE
Christensen, GR (teller)
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Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hartley, L
Hawke, AG
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O'Brien, T
O'Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Robert, SR
Sukkar, MS
Teihan, DT
Turnbull, MB
Vasta, RX
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG

Question negatived.
BILLS

Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Amendment (Water) Bill 2016

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (13:10): The Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Amendment (Water) Bill 2016 amends the Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Act 2015 to establish a register of foreign ownership of water entitlements, essentially creating a national foreign-owned water register. The bill is enabling legislation to allow for the collection of information and publication of statistics about foreign holdings of registerable water entitlements and long-term contractual water rights. The purpose of the bill is to provide increased transparency on the level of foreign ownership of water entitlements across Australia. This will be a good thing if it is effectively executed.

To put that more simply, this bill adds the words 'and water' to a previous bill we dealt with in this place, which effectively represented the enabling legislation for a register of foreign land ownership in this country. This concept dates back to the period of the Gillard government, when, I think in 2012, Prime Minister Gillard announced the measure at a National Farmers Federation congress, the latest of which was held in Canberra not a fortnight ago. The Prime Minister of the day was acting on growing community concern about the level of foreign ownership of agricultural land in this country. These somewhat unfortunate concerns grow out of the changing source of investment in agricultural land in this country. Of course, we have always had heavy investment from more traditional sources—the UK, the USA, Canada and New Zealand. While Chinese investment still ranks a poor fifth to that of other countries, including the Netherlands, it is on the rise. Rightly or wrongly, that is causing some uneasiness in some sections of the Australian community. The Prime Minister of the day rightly sought to deal with those concerns and to build confidence in our foreign investment regime and in the way we screen investment propositions by adding to the transparency so that, as I often say, at the click of a mouse, Australians everywhere could see, in terms of our agricultural land, who was buying what, where and for how much. If we can introduce and establish more transparency in the system, people in Australia will hopefully feel more comfortable about foreign investment.

It has been said many times in this place that foreign investment generally has been important to the development of our nation-state. None of our key infrastructure, our iconic infrastructure projects—the Snowy water scheme, the Harbour Bridge, the Opera House, you name it—would have progressed without foreign sourced investment. That is also true in agriculture. In fact, it is becoming increasingly true in agriculture. I am very pleased that the member for Hume is sitting at the table, because it allows me an opportunity to acknowledge the work he did in his contribution to a very good—in fact, seminal—report called Greener pastures, in partnership with the ANZ Bank and Port Jackson Partners. That report indicated that, to reach our aspirations in this country in agriculture—in other words, to fill that huge and growing demand for high-quality food globally—Australian agriculture would need
$1,000 billion worth of investment. I did not misspeak: $1,000 billion of investment—‘billion’ with a ‘B’—to the year 2050. That is a lot of money.

As a country with a population of some 23 million people, and therefore a very narrow savings pool, by definition, much of that investment will by necessity come from foreign sources. I have to say that, generally speaking, there has been a level of bipartisanship in this House and the other place over the years. All of us are desperate for that foreign investment, and we need bipartisanship to make sure we draw upon it. We do need to be discerning and we do need to ensure that our Foreign Investment Review Board processes, including the screening thresholds, are robust and satisfy the broader community test, because that is critical to our national interest and therefore it is critical also to our agricultural interest.

Throughout the course of the 2013 election campaign, the then coalition opposition decided it would match the then Prime Minister's commitment to greater transparency in the form of a land register. This bill provides the enabling legislation for that to be extended to water resources that are attached to agricultural projects. This bill basically says, instead of land, it is land and water, so it is pretty simple amendment. The only problem is that the process behind this bill, or the architecture or the design of the register or registers, is flawed. It was the then Labor government's aspiration—something it was not able to fulfil in the short time between the announcement of the policy by Prime Minister Gillard and the 2013 election—to ensure that every Australian could very easily, by way of their desktop computer, determine who exactly is buying what, where and for how much.

Unfortunately, after a long wait, when this government finally produced its foreign land register a number of months ago, only then we learned that that is effectively a Clayton's register. For people who are not old enough to remember what 'Clayton's' means—I think the member for Eden-Monaro will probably remember—Clayton's refers to a drink you have when you are not having a drink. This register is a register you have when you are not having a register. It is very disappointing. In fact, this register tells us no more than what we already knew.

It is not just me saying that; shock jocks around the country, including Alan Jones and Ray Hadley, have been absolutely scathing of this register. They agree with me: the register tells us no more than what we already knew. Why is this so? The government tells us there are privacy problems with telling Australians exactly what they wanted to know, the sort of information we needed to provide to give public confidence. All we have really seen in this register is an aggregation, if you like, of landholdings in this country and what they represent in square metreage terms. We get a bit of a feel for how much of the continent is owned by others, but we get no feel, for example, of what it is worth, the value of the property. Everyone in this place would know that the most critical part of the equation here is not necessarily the land mass, as important as that might be to some people, but the value of the land concerned. Despite many myths, we are not a country of abundant water or land or soil resources; in fact, we are the driest inhabited continent on earth, and our soils, while very good in some parts, are very few and far between.

Alan Jones says:

We were promised a national agricultural land register. All we've got is a travesty … And we're told that this will show we've got nothing to worry about, because foreigners only own 13.6 per cent of agricultural land and Chinese outfits own less than 1 per cent of agricultural land.
He goes on to say:

Now if Scott Morrison and the government believe that this sort of bland whitewash will satisfy public concerns then they are kidding themselves.

So it is not just me. Shock jocks around the country have been belling the cat on this weak and meagre attempt to build public confidence in foreign investment in this country.

Why is this so? All we have had, as I said, from the government is an expression of concern about privacy. They told us that they were not allowed to do it. The public servants would not allow them to do it. This is not a fleeting promise we are talking about here; this is a promise that was made very convincingly during an election campaign and an issue on which the coalition parties made a lot of noise. But they expect to sneak this thing through now, underdone, and in turn expect everyone to be cheering it through both houses of parliament. Well, as I said, we will cheer this legislation through—this is enabling legislation—but we need to make the point that this is totally, hopelessly inadequate.

If you were a suspicious sort of person, given some of the musings we have heard from the Deputy Prime Minister in recent months, you might worry that this is a government that wants people to remain concerned about Chinese investment in agricultural land and sees that as a strategic and political advantage for it. 'Why would we want to educate the masses? Why wouldn't we just keep them in the dark? Why wouldn't we just fuel the xenophobic concern, which is more often than not steeped in misinformation?' It might be just a privacy issue, but I doubt it. Any government with wit, will and determination in the 21st century could surely deliver on what it promised prior to the election. If it is not capable of delivering on what it promised during that election campaign then it should get out of the way, quite frankly. It should get out of the way.

I think, when we are trying to weigh up whether it is privacy or political strategy, it would be worth reflecting back on Minister Joyce's earlier performances. One of Minister Joyce's first acts as agriculture minister was to drive a change in the threshold on foreign investment screenings. For the first time in this country, we now have a discriminatory scheme. We in this place have all had a bipartisan approach forever to ensuring that we have a non-discriminatory immigration system, and rightfully so. But now we have a discriminatory foreign investment system. If you are from the United States, New Zealand or Chile, you face a screening threshold of about $1,000 million, I think. But if—

Mr Broad interjecting—

Mr FITZGIBBON: Well, the member for Mallee suggested we bring it down. That is an interesting intervention from the member for Mallee. I look forward to his contribution on the backpackers tax next time we have an opportunity, because he has been saying constantly in this place that 19 per cent is okay, but I was in the member for Mallee's electorate last week, and what do you reckon the growers in Mallee were telling me over there? Not happy, son! Not happy! A big tidal wave coming your way! In fact, I think the member for Mallee was the author of the 19 per cent backpacker tax. He was thumping his chest and saying: 'The government was going to put on a 32.5 per cent backpacker tax’—his government—but don't worry. The member for Mallee's here. I'm going to make it 19. I won the war.' Well, the member for Mallee needs to visit the growers I shared a cup of tea with in his electorate last week and see how he is faring there, because I think he is in a little bit of trouble, and he might want to reflect next time before he claims credit for being the architect of a 19 per cent
backpackers tax which is going to leave the fruit and the grapes rotting on trees and vines in his electorate. That is what he needs to reflect on. He says that we should further lower the threshold for countries with which we have a free trade agreement—an interesting contribution he makes there. But, as I was saying before I was rudely interrupted by the member for Mallee—I really wanted to stay on track prior to his intervention. Now he supports Minister Joyce's idea that we will have one threshold for what I will call traditional source countries but, if they are Asian, no, no, no, no! If they are Asian, you have to have a lower threshold. He sits there and he defends that with a smile while he advocates going even lower.

I return to the point I was making. The member for Hume argues very strongly, in the Greener pastures report, that we need foreign investment. Where are the big global inflows likely to be coming from in the 21st century? Largely from Asia, I suspect. So we need the inflows, and we need to build public confidence that this is a good thing for the agriculture sector. Building public confidence will be critical. But when the member for New England—no less than the Deputy Prime Minister—and the member for Mallee and others are running around the country saying, 'We need lower thresholds for Asians,' all they do is unnecessarily fuel community concern.

Now we have these thresholds all over the place, so instead of building that confidence we now undermine public confidence. This bill further undermines it by failing to give the broader community what the coalition promised to give them in the lead-up to the 2016 election—that is, to match Labor's commitment to have a proper land registry which allows people, with the click of a mouse, to see who owns what where and what they are paying for it.

Can I send an important message to some of those out there who hold concerns. Again, Chinese investment in agricultural land still runs a poor fifth to investment from four other nation-states. It is growing, and that is a good thing, because we need the capital—that is the obvious point I made. I said we need to be discerning and we need to ensure that the national interest is always at the forefront of our decision-making. But there is no downside in this investment. There will be exceptions, which will be taken care of through the Foreign Investment Review Board process. But it is a little bit counterintuitive that people like the member for Mallee hail the preferential trade agreements with China, Korea and Japan as the most wonderful thing that has ever happened to the Australian economy and say that we are now on the level playing field. Why does he argue that these are a wonderful thing? Because he says that, by getting access—we will just put aside all the non-technical barriers, which he has not dealt with, for the moment—at the same tariff rate as our competitors or a zero tariff rate, we are now on a level playing field. That is true. That can only be a good thing. But what he is also arguing is that it opens the markets into those countries. It gives us an opportunity to sell product into those markets. But when a Chinese investor comes here and not only buys agricultural land but invests in water infrastructure, fencing infrastructure and innovation which lifts the productivity of that land, and also comes with a ready-made market into China because, as a Chinese national, he has that access, that is a bad thing! It is counterintuitive. He is contradicting himself. You cannot argue that opening markets into China is a good thing but then argue that a foreign investor bringing money to lift productivity in this country and to sell into Chinese markets is a bad thing. It does not add up.
I default, sadly, to the second conclusion of the two. Was it privacy? Were they really told that they could not do the register because someone in the Public Service told them it might breach privacy, or do they just want to keep the issue alive in the electorate? Do they want to promote and grow fear in the electorate with respect to foreign investment in agricultural land? Sadly I conclude that the second is the correct answer to this question, and they should hang their heads in shame.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Coulton): Order! The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Richmond Electorate: Suffolk Park

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (13:30): I rise to call on the New South Wales Premier, Mike Baird, and the New South Wales government to stop the sale of public land at Suffolk Park in my electorate of Richmond. The local community have only just become aware of the New South Wales government's plans to auction this important community park. There is massive local opposition to this sale, which the New South Wales government has listed for auction on Tuesday 29 November. This is a shameful deceit by a greedy Liberal-Nationals government. This is a government that will sell or privatise anything they can get their hands on. To make it worse, the community has just found out about this plan. On the site there are currently sports fields, including a soccer ground and cricket nets. It is also the home of the Suffolk Park Football Club, and there is a community garden and children's playground. This is a community space that is widely used.

The Suffolk Park Progress Association have started a petition, on change.org, which states:

If sold - we will lose the only multi-use open space for 4,000 Suffolk Park Residents.

It is the only open play area for the children of Suffolk Park and the only area for outdoor exercise, training & dog walking.

The Liberals and Nationals want to sell everything they can get their hands on, from electricity to hospitals to community land. This has to stop. I stand with the community in wanting to keep this land in public hands. I call on Premier Mike Baird and I call on the New South Wales government—those Liberals and Nationals in the state government—to act urgently and stop the sale of public land at Suffolk Park. This is community land. It is public land. The sale must be stopped.

Banks Electorate: All Saints Oatley West Soccer Club

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (13:31): On Sunday 16 October I attended the All Saints Oatley West Soccer Club presentation day at Oatley Park. It was good to attend the event at that very picturesque location and to present trophies to players who have worked hard throughout the season. Trophies were presented to Evan Fiamigos, Patrick Campbell, Joseph Liew and Benjamin Wappett. I congratulate all those players on their achievements. I would like to thank the Oatley West soccer club for holding this great event and for its very long history in our area. It was established in 1923 and re-established in 1960. So, for many decades it has played a very important role in the Georges River region.

I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate Mr Adrian Rees and Max Pentecost for receiving Clubman of the Year awards for their service to the club, and in particular Mr Denis
Wood, the club president, who is celebrating 50 years at the club, as well as John Klinker, the vice-president, who is celebrating 55 years. It was good to have a chat on the day with Alan Comrie, the club's secretary, about a wide range of issues that are of concern to Oatley West in terms of the Oatley Park environment and various other matters. I look forward to further discussions on those important issues.

Rodgers, Mr Barry

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:33): In his 1984 book *Gladiators of the Surf* author Barry Galton described Barry Rodgers in these terms:

In the surf he was the master and perfectionist. Some experts say no one has ever equalled his surf sense. Many say he was the greatest.

I pay tribute to Barry Rodgers, who passed away on 6 June after a battle with cancer. His ashes were scattered amongst the waves at his beloved Maroubra Beach on 30 October, surrounded by hundreds of his family and friends.

Barry was Australia's original Iron Man, winning the national title in 1967, '68 and '69. In all, he won six national surf lifesaving titles and 11 New South Wales titles. He represented Australia in tours of the USA, New Zealand and South Africa, the last two as captain. In 1999 he was inducted into the Sports Australia Hall of Fame and the Surf Life Saving Australia Hall of Fame. In 2000 he was named Sydney's Greatest Ever Surf Live Saver. But his greatest contribution, in my book, was in teaching kids surf safety and how to swim. I, like many in our community, was taught to swim by Barry Rodgers. He taught literally thousands of kids in a 25-metre indoor pool at Heffron Park that he and his brother hand dug with shovels in the 1960s. He loved the surf, he loved the beer and he loved being around people. He was generous of spirit. He taught swim coaching at St Catherine's for 40 years, where he was beloved by the girls. Maroubra and Australian surfing has lost a legend. Rest in peace, Barry.

Working Holiday Maker Program

Mr DRUM (Murray) (13:34): I take this opportunity to again talk about the issue that is the backpacker tax. This issue has passed this House with a resolution which has the support and the backing of the industry itself, whether horticulture, wine, table grapes or any other commodity that needs this critical labour force. But now we find a Labor Party in the Senate that wants to play games with this labour force. I spent my time in opposition in the state parliament, where we were always able to determine what we wanted to do to cause the government of the day a little bit of grief. We were always governed by one aspect, and that was, 'First do no harm to the community'—whether that be making a point on education or health or whatever. But you first start off in opposition with the concept of 'Do no harm'. The Labor Party, by playing games with the backpacker tax and dragging this issue out—

Dr Mike Kelly: It's your tax!

Mr DRUM: are going to harm the communities that are a part of it. They will ensure that 32c is the rate that is paid. They will ensure that backpackers stay away. The Labor Party and Bill Shorten playing these games is going to have a detrimental effect on a whole range of industries, and a lot of them are going to be in the Goulburn Valley region. And it is not just the horticulturalists; it is the packing industry, it is the transport industry, it is all the processed industries. The Labor Party needs to get its act together.

Dr Mike Kelly interjecting—

CHAMBER
Mr Taylor interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Coulton): I remind the minister and shadow minister at the table to maintain a bit of decorum.

Indi Electorate: Short Black Opera for Kids

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (13:36): Colleagues, I would like to tell you about a wonderful initiative called Short Black Opera for Kids. It is a program designed for Indigenous kids who love to sing, act, tell stories or all three. With the aim of inspiring confidence, leadership and excellence, Short Black Opera’s artistic director, the amazing Deborah Cheetham, works with local Indigenous students in grades 4 to 6 in regional workshops. I had the enormous pleasure on Friday, 28 October in Benalla, at our Benalla Performing Arts and Convention Centre, of hearing the results of her work. So today I would like to publicly acknowledge, honour and thank Anita, the organiser from Multicultural Arts Victoria, Ashley at BPACC and the 20 kids in years 4, 5 and 6 at Benalla P-12. I thank Louise, Lyn, Donna and June from Living Culture Together for the terrific job you did. I would particularly like to acknowledge and honour the work of Deborah Cheetham and her team—Toni on piano and singer Jacinta—for all the amazing work you did with those young people.

I say to colleagues: if you get a chance, see the Short Black Opera. They came to Benalla and worked with these young Indigenous people for a week, and the result was astounding. The kids worked with local Indigenous language and Italian and songs that they had made up and songs that they sang together. The BPACC was full, as families and the community really appreciated—(Time expired)

Wide Bay Electorate: United Synergies

Mr LLEW O’BRIEN (Wide Bay) (13:38): Last week I met with Christopher John and Karen Phillips from the United Synergies organisation, whose head office is based in my electorate of Wide Bay. United Synergies is a great organisation that helps young people, families and the wider community with child and family relationships, education support, employment, homelessness, mental health and support after suicide. In my maiden speech, I spoke of the alarming numbers of Australians dying by suicide, a number more than double our national road toll. Whilst we must do all we can to prevent suicide from occurring, we must also understand that those who are bereaved by suicide are also vulnerable and need specific care. As a former police officer, I have seen the very sad effects of suicide on families and others exposed to it. I have witnessed the immediate tragedy and crisis, as well as the suffering that continues during what are often extended coronial proceedings and beyond.

United Synergies runs the StandBy Response Service, which is a national, community based suicide postvention program that provides a coordinated response of support and assistance for people who have been bereaved through suicide. The service is a single point of contact, coordinating existing services to enable an immediate and ongoing response. I encourage anyone bereaved by suicide who needs help to get in contact with the StandBy Response Service and utilise this very valuable service.

Oxley Electorate: Sporting Clubs

Mr DICK (Oxley) (13:39): I rise to place on record my strong support for sporting clubs across the south-west of Brisbane and in the great electorate of Oxley. Today I acknowledge the efforts of hundreds of parents and volunteers who give up their time as coaches, as refs
and as fundraisers to enable thousands of kids to participate in sport. Like many members, I have had the privilege of attending presentation and awards days. Today, I recognise two great clubs in my electorate: the Jindalee Jags junior AFL club and the mighty Forest Lake Magpies Junior Rugby League Football Club. The Jags have been a stand-out club in our region since 1971 and are one of the few clubs to field girls teams in all ages groups, including a senior women's team. I am proud to advise the House that the club has more than doubled its size over the past four years. It was a privilege to stand alongside the club president, Corey Sells, and recognise the tremendous amount of hard work the players and the whole committee put in to make the club so successful. In particular, I was able to present the dual club person of the year awards to Nicky and Dee for their outstanding efforts throughout the season. As the proud patron of the Forest Lake Magpies, recently I was able to recognise and thank President Farren Dicker for showing how a great club is run. The Magpies continue to lead the way in junior Rugby League in Brisbane.

I will keep fighting for funding for both of these clubs and every other sporting club in Oxley over the next three years to make sure we keep supporting the sporting stars of today and the future. Go the Jags and the Magpies!

**Leichhardt Electorate: Tropical Journeys Great Barrier Reef Marathon Festival**

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (13:41): Yesterday in Port Douglas more than 1,900 people took part in the Tropical Journeys Great Barrier Reef Marathon Festival. This wonderful event is getting more popular every year, with registrations in 2016 up 40 per cent. Congratulations to all of the winners, from the 74-kilometre ultramarathon down to the 2.3-kilometre junior challenge. They included Christopher Vadas, Susan Crowe, Anthony Ralph, Mary Ryan, Jonathan Tindall, Liz Maguire, Dylan Stenson, Jess Trengove, Denis Coughlan, Clio Ozanne-Jaques, Addison Cobley and Pamella Waters. Congratulations also to everyone who got out there and had a go. It was all about having fun and enjoying the surroundings, even with the heat and the notorious Bump Track to contend with!

The event raised more than $55,000 for whale shark and manta ray research, a remarkable achievement. I would like to acknowledge Sam Cullen, Bruno Bennett and the team from Port Douglas Event Management, key sponsor Tropical Journeys, volunteer and event ambassadors, and research partners the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre and James Cook University for their significant efforts. The coalition government is supporting the expansion of the festival with $150,000 over three years for the Run for the Reef. This simultaneous event in Cairns, Townsville and Mackay, and also Singapore in the future, will raise awareness and raise funds for valuable reef research. *(Time expired)*

**Bass Electorate: Telecommunications**

Mr HART (Bass) (13:42): I rise today to tell you about the opening of the Blue Tier extension to the mountain bike trails in north-east Tasmania, trails which straddle the electorates of Bass and Lyons and will host a leg of the mountain bike Enduro World Series in April 2017. It is a credit to cooperation between Dorset and Break O'Day municipalities and successive governments Labor and Liberal that these world-class trails have been delivered, creating a different Tasmanian tourism experience. This trail event will bring thousands of riders, families and spectators to the area over several days and will be broadcast to the world.
While it was fantastic to attend the launch on 7 October, it was difficult to share the excitement of that event because of the absence of mobile phone and internet coverage in the area. The Weldborough and Derby areas rely entirely on basic phone lines and satellite internet for their communications services, with patchy mobile coverage at best from one operator. Whilst the organisers may enjoy specific improvements for the event, it is highly unlikely that the coalition government's Mobile Black Spot Program or National Broadband Network fixed wireless rollout will provide improved services to the wider area in time for the event next year. This means that participants and spectators will be unable to share their positive experiences of Tasmania with the world, let alone emergency calls. Adequate and competitive telco services are not just a luxury but a necessity, particularly in tourist hotspots and especially when celebrating world-class events like this.

**Brisbane Electorate: Ronald McDonald House**

Mr EVANS (Brisbane) (13:44): On the weekend I was privileged to represent the Prime Minister and the Minister for Health and Aged Care, Sussan Ley, at the opening of the country's newest and biggest Ronald McDonald House, in Brisbane. It was an honour to join His Excellency the Governor-General, Sir Peter Cosgrove, and Ronald McDonald House CEO, Christopher Macaulay, and chairman, Adam Dando. Ronald McDonald House provides a home away from home for seriously ill children and their families. It follows the simple idea that families should not be spending days, weeks or months sleeping in waiting rooms and hospital hallways while a sick child receives treatment. The stories of some of those sick kids are truly heartbreaking. I was very proud to represent a government that committed $5.3 million to this important project.

The project was kickstarted several years ago when the then LNP state government donated the land, which is perfectly located next to the Mater Lady Cilento medical precinct. The 70-room facility has basically been full since it opened, reflecting the huge community need for these facilities. The facility can be expanded by an extra 42 rooms if additional funds can be raised, and I will certainly be doing what I can, including encouraging our state colleagues in the Queensland government to consider making a funding commitment to this very worthy cause. In addition to this government's $5 million contribution, I would also like to thank other major donors, including the Ronald McDonald House charities, all of the South-East Queensland McDonald's licensees—including those I met on the weekend—and so many other corporate, community and individual donors.

**Tasmanian Headstone Project**

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (13:45): On Friday, we will commemorate the sacrifice of men and women who gave their lives in the service of this country. As a nation, I think that generally we do well in commemorating the men and women who serve in our armed forces, particularly those who die in service. We have been less successful when it comes to honouring those who return home. I would like to talk briefly about the Tasmanian Headstone Project, which aims to provide a headstone and a record of service on the unmarked graves of Tasmanian men and women who served their nation in conflicts overseas. They may have returned home from the battlefield, but many were victims of war, nonetheless.

Harry Quick is a former member of this place. He and Andrea Gerrard head a small but dedicated team—including very enthusiastic Work for the Dole participants—which manufactures headstones at Cornelian Bay cemetery in Hobart. With the support of local
suppliers, the Tasmanian Headstone Project has managed to keep the cost of each headstone down to about $500. There are believed to be around 275 unmarked graves throughout Tasmania, so the sum required to mark each grave is modest, at less than $150,000 all up. The team is scrambling to find funds from various sources, and I know there is broad support for this project from across the political spectrum, but the federal Department of Veterans Affairs has been less than helpful. One hundred and fifty thousand dollars is a small price to pay to ensure that the men and women who served their country are properly remembered. Lest we forget.

**Sharing Stories Foundation**

Mr **FALINSKI** (Mackellar) (13:47): I would like to recognise the tremendous work Liz Thompson from Palm Beach continues to do with the Sharing Stories Foundation. The foundation supports the maintenance and strengthening of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages. It implements innovative, community-based digital storytelling programs and works with senior cultural custodians to map song cycles and ancestral creation tracks on country. The foundation is also developing interactive digital platforms to hold language and culture for future generations. I am very proud to be part of a government that has allocated $100,000 to facilitate the group's language project. Liz tells me the money will be invaluable for recording important cultural stories in the traditional languages to which they belong. The foundation will work with participating communities to develop bilingual, interactive multi-touch storybooks, which will include animations, photography and interactive maps.

Liz proves that individuals can make a difference. We can use our expertise to think up new and creative ways to tackle particular issues in our community. Our role as a government is to provide the necessary framework and facilitate these private initiatives—essentially, getting out of the way so these projects can flourish. Once again, Liz and the Sharing Stories Foundation are a testament to the 'roll up your sleeves' approach and dynamism of the people of Mackellar. *(Time expired)*

**New South Wales: Hospitals**

Mr **STEPHEN JONES** (Whitlam) (13:49): The simple fact of the matter is this: Mike Baird has a plan to privatise hospitals in New South Wales, and Labor's Luke Foley has a plan to stop him. We do not have to wait until 2019, the next New South Wales election, to stop this terrible plan to privatise New South Wales hospitals, because this Saturday in three electorates in New South Wales—Orange, Wollongong and Bankstown—the people of New South Wales have the opportunity to cast their judgement on the Baird government's plans to privatise hospitals in New South Wales.

It has only been months since the last Liberal leader went to an election promising to do tremendous damage to health care in this country. While the Prime Minister is still smarting from the fact that Medicare was at the centre of the federal election campaign, it is quite clear that health care is going to be at the centre of the next state election campaign. At a rally in Shellharbour on the weekend, we saw thousands of people come out because they are still smarting from the fact that, at the last state election, the state member, Gareth Ward, and the Premier, Mike Baird, promised to invest $250 million into the Shellharbour Hospital. What they did not say was that it was a plan to privatise hospitals. It is a very clear message: no private hospitals.
Diabetes

Ms FLINT (Boothby) (13:50): Three weeks ago I had the pleasure of meeting a brave young man with type 1 diabetes, Hayden Supple. I am so grateful to Hayden for taking the time to see me to talk about the struggles and risks of living with his condition. With the support of his parents, Andrew and Rose, Hayden has been campaigning to raise awareness of type 1 diabetes for much of his young life. Hayden also mentioned to me the important investments by the coalition government of $54 million to subsidise continuous glucose monitoring technology and of $35 million for diabetes medical research. Developed in consultation with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and other professional bodies, these policies will help an estimated 4,000 sufferers and save families around $4,000 each year, whilst also paving the way towards finding a cure.

Hayden and his family have been tireless fundraisers and recently participated in the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's One Walk initiative. So far, the national event has involved 4,600 walkers, and there have been 11,000 individual donations. As at last week, the walk had raised over $700,000, and I encourage everyone to find an event, register to walk, and donate to this worthy cause. We must help the 122,000 sufferers of type 1 diabetes—especially as two-thirds of the people diagnosed annually are under the age of 25.

Herbert Electorate: Townsville 150th Anniversary

Ms O’TOOLE (Herbert) (13:52): On 15 and 16 October 2016, Townsville celebrated its 150th birthday with a truly spectacular T150 Defence Force Air Show and Townsville Bulletin Sky Show—the biggest day The Strand has ever seen. An estimated 80,000 people gathered at The Strand. In excess of 240 Townsville City Council staff, Queensland police and traffic management staff worked to make this event successful. Over 25 aircraft were on display. Five tonnes of fireworks, equal to two semitrailer loads, lit up the sky, which included 16,000 separate effects, which took seven pyrotechnic experts to coordinate.

The RAAF base was open to the public on Sunday, 16 October. This was an historic event that commenced with a formal parade along The Strand on Saturday morning. The RAAF base exercised their freedom of entry to the city of Townsville on Saturday, the 15th. The last time the RAAF base Townsville was granted freedom of entry to the city of Townsville was 27 September 1972. The freedom was exercised that same day. Townsville was also host to the US Pacific Fleet Band, who entertained the crowds. Congratulations to the Townsville City Council, the Townsville Bulletin, the Defence Force, the police force, the traffic management staff and the people of Herbert for what was a fantastic and historic family event.

Delabarre, Mr Martial, OAM

Mr GEE (Calare) (13:53): I wish to draw to the attention of the House that Gulgong RSL Sub-Branch was recently honoured by a visit from Martial Delabarre OAM and his wife, Catherine, who travelled to Gulgon all the way from France. I had the pleasure of attending a dinner at Gulgong RSL Club to welcome the Delabarres and learn of Martial's invaluable work in preserving the memory of those Australians who served in World War I, in particular at Fromelles.
Martial has devoted a large part of his life to the study and archaeological investigation of the Australian role in the battle of Fromelles on 19 and 20 July 1916. He grew up near the former battlefields and, during his visits to the site, would find and collect numerous artefacts from the freshly ploughed soil. He played a key role in the location and discovery of missing Australians at Fromelles and Pheasant Wood, which saw him awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia. Martial has also since been involved in the building of a new larger museum at Pheasant Wood to house the myriad of artefacts he has discovered.

I congratulate members of the Gulgong RSL Sub-Branch who assisted in Martial's visit to the Central West, including president David Henderson, senior vice president Peter Leotta, junior vice president Les Monks, secretary Doug Marsh, treasurer Craig Holden and welfare/pension officer Ken Atkinson. I also commend the support of Gulgong RSL Club including president Des Campbell, vice president Alan Rickwood and secretary and manager John Dolbel.

Lastly, I thank Martial Delabarre for his dedication to looking after our Australians who lie in France but will never be forgotten.

**Turnbull Government**

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:55): Since last we met in this place, the shadow minister for homelessness, Senator Cameron, and the member for Greenway, the shadow minister for communications, have been to my electorate to hear from people experiencing homelessness and those left without reliable internet because of the glacial rollout of the NBN. These issues may seem unrelated except for the fact that the government has made both worse, botching the NBN and removing $30 million from the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness in just three years. This includes last Friday's missed opportunity to give some certainty to the community organisation sector.

This government continues to reinforce the barriers that keep people in vulnerable positions. In Lalor, those barriers include the ability for community organisations to retain staff. We met with staff who have years of experience—workers who are efficient, informed and highly experienced in connecting homeless people to Centrelink services and getting them connected to the things they need. This government is bad at keeping people connected to their communities, to work and to the creation of jobs.

In Lalor we need jobs. The NBN will deliver jobs. Michelle Rowland met with local small businesses who wanted to walk to her about the lack of the NBN and what it means for them growing their business. This government is making it harder for those in Lalor—(Time expired)

**Singh, Dr Jiwan Steven**

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (13:56): I wish to recognise in parliament the work of respected local surgeon Dr Jiwan Steven Singh in developing surgical instruments for laparoscopic surgery, also known as keyhole surgery, which are affordable and suitable for use in developing countries, where access to fully equipped operating theatres is limited.

From his practice at the Woodvale Private Hospital for Women in my electorate, Dr Singh has founded a medical company called SurgiToolsMIS, which has pioneered the innovative concept of producing individually packaged, single-use, sterile devices for use by surgeons in developing countries. As the surgical products are disposable and supplied sterile, they have
the advantage of not requiring autoclaving after use. At a cost of approximately US$220, the surgical products are relatively accessible. Increased access to this form of minimally invasive surgery results in less pain, shorter recovery times and less physical disfigurement for patients than traditional surgery, where large abdominal incisions are conventionally made.

Dr Singh seeks government support to expand the availability of the innovative surgical products which he has pioneered to developing countries as part of Australia's foreign aid program for the benefit of humanity.

Jagajaga Electorate: Asylum Seekers

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (13:58): On the weekend we saw a powerful demonstration of love and compassion by the residents of Eltham in my electorate. Members of the group Welcome to Eltham peacefully showed their support for the resettlement of around 120 families from Syria, fleeing war and persecution. Locals tied handmade painted butterflies inspired by the native Eltham Copper Butterflies on trees around central Eltham.

I certainly join with the community in supporting the plan by St Vincent's Health and CatholicCare to help settle and support these Syrian refugees on the site of St Vincent's Care Services in Eltham Village. The conflict in Syria has claimed so many lives and more than 11 million people have been forced from their homes. Australia does have an obligation to do our part to resettle refugees displaced by the conflict in Syria. The refugees will be provided short- to medium-term rental accommodation in 60 newly renovated units on site. The accommodation to be used by the refugees was empty and unused and it had fallen into disrepair. No aged care residents will be displaced by this project. This is a powerful opportunity for our community to come together to improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in the world, who will be our newest Australians.

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

CONDOLENCES

Goodluck, Mr Bruce John

The SPEAKER (14:00): I inform the House of the death on Monday 24 October 2016 of Bruce John Goodluck, a member of this House for the division of Franklin from 1975 until 1993. As a mark of respect to the memory of Bruce Goodluck, I invite all present to rise in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The SPEAKER: I thank the House.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Day, Mr Bob, AO

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (14:01): My question is to the Minister representing the Special Minister of State. On 24 February 2014, the Department of Finance advised the Special Minister of State to reject former Senator Day's request to establish his taxpayer funded electorate office in a property he owned, saying:

Finance has concerns about how such a transaction might be perceived.

Why did the minister ignore this advice?
Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:01): I thank the member for his question. These matters have been addressed in a full statement by the Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, the Minister for Finance, the honourable Mathias Cormann, and I am happy to table that statement for the benefit of the House.

National Security

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (14:02): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on the government's efforts to counter the ongoing threat of people smuggling? Are there any impediments to keeping Australia's borders secure?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:02): I thank the honourable member for her question. A little over three years ago Australia's borders were porous. The Labor government had utterly failed in its fundamental duty to Australians to keep their nation secure. Despite the pleas from the coalition, the Rudd government and its successor the Gillard government abandoned John Howard's border protection policies and we saw 50,000 unauthorised arrivals on more than 800 boats, we saw over 8,000 children put into immigration detention by Labor governments and we saw, most tragically of all, 1,200 and more deaths at sea—that we know about. When Kevin Rudd came back as Prime Minister for his 100 days, he reopened the offshore facilities on Nauru and Manus. In July 2013 he said that nobody who seeks to come to Australia by boat shall ever be able to settle in Australia. He finally realised his policy had been a failure.

For three years the government has been getting on with the job of cleaning up Labor's mess. Under our Operation Sovereign Borders there has not been a successful boat arrival in more than 800 days. There have been no deaths at sea. Seventeen detention centres have been closed. We have restored security to our borders and restored the integrity in our immigration system, which is the very foundation of the most successful multicultural society in the world and enables us to operate one of the most generous humanitarian programs in the world, increasing over the next few years to 18,750 refugees every year—and that is in addition to the 12,000 in the special program from Syria and Iraq.

The threat is by no means over. Complacency is a great enemy and that seems to have beset the Labor Party. During the election, the Leader of the Opposition said he was on a unity ticket with us. Well, is he? We have presented legislation which will do no more than put into law that which both sides of politics have said has been our unity ticket. We call on the Leader of the Opposition to stand up to the Left in his party and support the bill—stand up for our border security and stand up against the people smugglers.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The members for Sydney and McMahon will cease interjecting.

Day, Mr Bob, AO

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:05): My question is to the Minister representing the Special Minister of State, and goes to items that are not covered in the document he just tabled. In May 2014 the Special Minister of State accepted Bob Day's advice that he had sold his interest in the taxpayer funded electorate office. But if the minister, his office or his department had checked publicly available land title records, they would have discovered that Senator Day still owned the property. Has the government conducted an investigation into why basic due diligence was not performed?
Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:06): I thank the member for his question. I refer the member to the motion moved by Senator Ryan in the other place, which makes note of the fact that in November of 2014 the Department of Finance undertook a title search which confirmed the property was formally transferred to Fullarton investments in September of 2014.

National Security

Mr HOGAN (Page) (14:06): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources. Will the Deputy Prime Minister update the House on the coalition government's commitment to strong border security policies, including our biosecurity policies, how are Pistol and Boo, and what are the consequences of adopting alternative approaches?

Mr JOYCE (New England—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (14:07): I thank the honourable member for his question. Obviously, being in an area where he has cattle himself and in a horticultural area, he is very aware of the requirements of biosecurity. It was very important that, on this side becoming the government, we had to refurbish the department with the money required to run biosecurity, because the Labor Party, the Greens and the Independents had decimated the budget. They had more than halved the agriculture department's budget. We had to find close to $200 million to put into the biosecurity section to give ourselves those stronger borders which are so vitally important.

It is vitally important because, as we know, if a disease such as foot-and-mouth were to come in, not only would it close down the cattle industry, the sheep and wool industry, the goat industry and pig industry; it would also put out of work the meat workers and transport union workers; it would be absolutely devastating to shearers; it would be cataclysmic in regional areas and it would reverberate through the cities as well.

It is not just foot-and-mouth. It is also screw flies, exotic wheat stem disease and rabies. We are trying to make sure that we keep these diseases out of our nation. The way we keep them out of our nation, of course, is to have a proper vetting process at the border. Unfortunately, at times some people decide to go around that vetting process and make their own arrangements. In the past this nation has had the experience of people literally arriving at the beaches. South of where the member for Page resides, they arrived at Scotts Head—literally walking off the boat and walking down the street. We had them arriving at Geraldton, where they basically walked onto the beach. They arrived at Bamaga dressed in suits and asked if they could catch a taxi to Sydney.

This was the bizarre position which Australia was placed in, and we had to do something about it. That is why we are asking for stronger border security. When we have stronger borders we have the capacity to be compassionate, like we will see tonight on Australian Story, where we welcomed refugees from Rwanda into my electorate in New England.

But we have test for the Labor Party. Are the Labor Party going to stand by the commitment that they gave to the Australian people at the last election that they were working on a unity ticket with us in such a way that we will have strong borders? Because when people come in in illegally, not only do they come in illegally but the diseases come in with them. We have to do something about that. If we want that ambiguity removed, if we want to
be decisive, if we want to see strong leadership, if we want to see in the proper sense that the person that Mr Shorten, the member for Maribyrnong, was before the election is still the same person after the election, then he has that chance. Rather than looking at the clock, you should look at your ticker.

**Day, Mr Bob, AO**

**Mr SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:10): My question is to the Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister satisfied that the government's handling of Bob Day's electorate office in 2014 was appropriate?

**Mr TURNBULL** (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:10): All of the facts and circumstances relating to former Senator Day's electorate office have been set out in comprehensive detail in the speech from Senator Cormann and, I would add, also in the speech from Senator Ryan, the Special Minister of State. The circumstances of 2014 are not matters that I have any personal knowledge of. They were matters handled by the then Special Minister of State, Senator Ronaldson. The important thing to recognise is that when the issues relating to Senator Day's office came to the knowledge of Senator Ryan, the facts were thoroughly investigated, advice was dutifully and diligently sought, and the actions that followed, including providing those conclusions to the President of the Senate, were carried out. I am satisfied that my government has conducted itself with respect to this matter with great diligence, integrity and thoroughness.

**Energy Security**

**Mr BANDT** (Melbourne) (14:12): My question is to the Minister for Environment and Energy. A number of eminent Australians, including the head of Australia's biggest power company, AGL; a former Governor-General; and a former head of Telstra, have today urged the government to facilitate the phased and controlled closure of coal-fired electricity. Now that Hazelwood, Australia's dirtiest power station, is to be closed, will the government agree to put into law a plan for the orderly retirement of coal-fired power stations so that workers, communities and clean energy investors can plan for the future? Or will you continue to leave our energy system to the chaos of the market, so that decisions about Australia's future energy security and the welfare of places like the Latrobe Valley are left to the boardrooms of Paris, Tokyo and Hong Kong?

**Mr FRYDENBERG** (Kooyong—Minister for the Environment and Energy) (14:12): I thank the member for Melbourne for his question, because it has been 690 days since I have even had a question from the Labor Party. The member for Melbourne mentioned a report. I did receive that report today and I thank Geoff Cousins and Professor Jacobs and that group of eminent Australians. But, I tell you, the hypocrisy of the Greens is amazing. Do you know what they did when 750 people lost their jobs at Hazelwood with the announcement last week? They put out a Facebook post. And what did they say? They said that this is great news. Shame on the Greens for celebrating the misery of the hardworking 750 Victorians who have now lost their jobs at Hazelwood.

We recognise that a lower-emissions future is a good thing. We also recognise that energy security is our No. 1 priority. Rather than being irresponsible, like those opposite, who have joined with the Greens most recently in the Senate to support a motion encouraging the closure of coal-fired power plants, we will do everything to ensure the stability of our system.
For the Greens it is all care and no responsibility. They do not care if we see a repeat of the blackout in South Australia. They do not care if there is gridlock on their roads. You do not care if Arrium loses its power or Olympic Dam loses its power or the Port Pirie smelter loses its power and people are put out of work. You do not care, because you only believe in ideology—the Greens only believe in ideology.

What is appalling is that now we have seen a return of Greens-Labor alliance. Those opposite are prepared to trade for blue-collar jobs in the regions for green votes in the city. They are prepared to trade blue-collar jobs in the regions for green votes in the city! We saw that in a motion and that motion was in the Senate on 13 October, which said that the Greens and the Labor Party—

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat. The member for Melbourne on a point of order.

Mr Bandt: There are 30 seconds to go—

The SPEAKER: No, on a point of order—

Mr Bandt: He might like to explain his plans for jobs in the valley—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. The minister has the call.

Mr FRYDENBERG: I have a quote here from their Senate motion. They want 'to support policy mechanisms to encourage the retirement of coal-fired power stations'. Only the coalition cares about energy security. Only the coalition cares about jobs in regional Australia and only the coalition will keep electricity prices affordable for all Australians.

National Security

Mr IRONS (Swan) (14:16): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Will the minister update the House on steps the government is taking to further strengthen Australia's border protection policies? Is the minister aware of a less successful approach?

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:16): I thank the honourable member for his question. He sits on the backbench committee and chairs that important committee, working with me and the assistant minister in making sure that we do whatever possible to keep our borders secure. If we do not keep our borders secure, we cannot keep our country safe.

In 2007 in the run up to that election, Mr Rudd, that then opposition leader, wanted to pretend to Australians that Labor was united—essentially in a unity ticket—with the then Howard government in the policies they would preside over if they won the 2007 election to make sure that the boats remain stopped. The rest, of course, is well known and well documented. As the Prime Minister pointed out before, when the Howard government left office in 2007, there were four people in detention and that included no children. Sadly, 1200 people lost their lives at sea—at least 1200 people—and people opposite, including the former shadow minister in this space, made a very impassioned speech at last year's Labor conference apologising on behalf of the Labor Party for that policy failing. Thousands of children went into detention at the same time and Labor opened up 17 detention centres.

Since we have been in government, we have been able to preside over success. We have re-implemented the policies that worked for the Howard government and we are in the process
of cleaning up Labor's mess. As the Prime Minister points out, we are at the same time stopping the boats and stopping the deaths at sea, closing the detention centres and getting the children out of detention. We are also able to bring in a record number of people through the Refugee and Humanitarian program. But Labor is making the same mistake now under this Leader of the Opposition that they made under Kevin Rudd's time as leader of the Labor Party—that is, they want to believe that this problem has gone away.

All Australians recognise this reality because they see the deaths at sea in the Mediterranean; they see what is happening in Europe and in Africa. They know that there are 14,000 people waiting in Indonesia to get onto boats tomorrow, and that is why this government is absolutely determined to do everything that we can to stop those people getting onto boats. We are going to introduce legislation and we are going to demand the support of the Labor Party because we want to send a clear and consistent message to people smugglers. That is something that was not possible when Kevin Rudd lost control of our borders and those people drowned, but it is possible now because this government has worked hard; we have stopped boats; we do want to get people off Manus and Nauru but we want to do it in a way—

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs is warned.

Mr DUTTON: that does not recreate new boat arrivals and new people filling those vacancies. The problem for Labor at the moment is that there are at least 26—those who heckle and scream out in this debate right now—who are opposed to Mr Shorten and are part of the reason that he cannot lead a united Labor Party. (Time expired)

Dr Aly interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Cowan is also warned.

Day, Mr Bob, AO

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:19): My question is to the Prime Minister. In light of the Prime Minister's refusal to endorse the coalition government's handling of Bob Day's electoral office in 2014, has the Prime Minister made any inquiries as to whether Senator Ronaldson advised the finance minister or the then Prime Minister that Senator Ronaldson was rejecting the department's advice in order to assist Bob Day?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:20): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his interest in the qualification of senators. I would just remind him that in the Minister for Finance's speech to the Senate earlier today he sets out in some detail the arrangements that Senator Ronaldson, as the then Special Minister of State, entered into with Senator Day, including on the express basis that Senator Day no longer had an interest in the property, that there would be no net cost to the Commonwealth and so forth. All of that is set out in the finance minister's speech, and further detail is set out in the Special Minister of State's speech in the Senate today.

Dealing with qualifications of senators, a matter more immediate and relevant is the qualifications of Senator Kimberley Kitching, personally nominated by the leader of the opposition—hand-picked.

Honourable members interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will resume his seat. The Leader of the House will cease interjecting. The Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order. Members on my right—the member for Mitchell.

Mr Burke: Yes, Mr Speaker. It is on direct relevance. The question did not have a preamble. The question did not—

Mr Pyne interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will cease interjecting.

Mr Burke: There are a series of rulings you have made where a question has used particular language and then the gates are wide open. This question was very specific, very tight, and, on that basis, where the Prime Minister has now gone is clearly beyond the direct relevance rule.

The SPEAKER: I have been listening very closely to the Prime Minister, and I respect what the Manager of Opposition Business said. I do have to say I was on the verge of ruling the question out of order—I really was—because it is asking the Prime Minister about a previous government. But, in the interests of allowing free-flowing debate, I allowed the question. I could have taken a stricter ruling at the time; I deliberately decided not to. The Prime Minister is addressing the substance of the question. I will keep listening to the Prime Minister. But certainly, from the subject matter of the Leader of the Opposition's question, at this point I am ruling that the Prime Minister is still in order.

Mr TURNBULL: So the Leader of the Opposition asked me what inquiries I have made. The real question today, given Senator Kitching has been sworn in in the other place, is: what inquiries has the Leader of the Opposition made? Has he inquired whether in fact the Director of Public Prosecutions is going to act on the reference to it by the Heydon royal commission that referred papers and an interim report to the DPP to consider whether Kimberley Kitching should be charged with and prosecuted for aiding and abetting the contraventions of each of Diana Asmar, David Eden, Darren Rowe, Nick Katsis, Saso Trajcevski-Uzunov and Lee Atkinson? Has he made an inquiry about the finding by Fair Work Commission vice-president Watson that she had been untruthful and unreliable in her evidence, that she had completed other people's tests? Has he inquired about those matters? Because that is in the here and now. Senator Kitching has been sworn in today. What assurance can the Leader of the Opposition give us that, with those allegations made, those concerns raised, that evidence given concerning now-senator Kitching—his hand-picked senator—he has inquired into and been satisfied that all of those findings are utterly without basis?

Iraq and Syria

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (14:24): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister please update the House on Australia's support to the international coalition to defeat ISIL in Mosul and Raqqa?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:24): I thank the member for Petrie for his question and I acknowledge his concern about the threat posed by terrorist organisations, like ISIL, which have attracted support from radicalised extremists from many countries, including Australia.

United States-backed fighters in Syria have launched an operation, Euphrates Rage, to seize ISIL's de facto capital of Raqqa, in Syria. This morning, US Defense Secretary Ash
Carter welcomed the commencement of this operation by the Syrian defence forces, an alliance of Kurdish and Arab armed groups, declaring that the operation 'marks the next step' in the international coalition campaign to defeat ISIL. The Australian government also welcomes the commencement of this campaign, which comes as the military operation to liberate Mosul in Iraq enters its fourth week. By taking Mosul and Raqqa away from ISIS control, the false narrative of ISIL's self-proclaimed Islamic caliphate will be destroyed. However, like the operation to liberate Mosul, we know that seizing Raqqa will be difficult and dangerous and will take time.

Australia continues to play a critical role in both Iraq and Syria as a significant contributor to the international counter-ISIL campaign. In Iraq, Australian Defence Force personnel are providing vital support to the Iraqi security forces throughout the Mosul offensive. Australian aircraft continue to conduct air strikes and provide enabling air support around Mosul; Australian special forces are advising and assisting the Iraqi counter-terrorism service, which is spearheading the Mosul offensive; and Australian forces are continuing their training of Iraqi security units as part of our building partner capacity mission. In Syria, Australian planes and personnel are conducting air operations against ISIL targets in eastern Syria, including in the vicinity of Raqqa.

Australia's military support in Iraq and Syria is in addition to the critical humanitarian assistance we are providing in response to the conflicts. Australia has committed humanitarian and stabilisation assistance in both the Iraq and Syria crises which now stands at over $500 million. This has contributed to providing support to millions of people fleeing the conflicts and the horrors and the depravity of ISIL.

Australia remains committed to the global effort to defeat ISIL and other terrorist organisations, and these are organisations that directly threaten our communities by radicalising and training potential terrorists from our country. We will continue our fight to keep our people safe.

**Day, Mr Bob, AO**

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:27): My question is to the Prime Minister. The Special Minister of State has today told the Senate that he informed the Prime Minister's office on 18 August this year that there was a potential issue under section 44 of the Constitution in relation to former Senator Day. On what date was the Prime Minister personally aware of this information?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:28): As the Special Minister of State observed in his document, shortly thereafter, and my recollection is that it was several days thereafter, he advised me that he had spoken to my chief of staff in those terms, and I will read what he says: 'I informed the office of the Prime Minister by telephone call to his chief of staff—this is on 18 August—that there was an issue with respect to the electorate office of Senator Day. There were potential issues about which I had contacted the Attorney-General. I was seeking advice, and if this matter was raised it was to be referred to me.' Senator Ryan goes on to say: 'I subsequently mentioned to the Prime Minister that I had a conversation with his chief of staff, outlined the terms of that conversation, and that matters relating to this were to be referred to me.' And that is consistent with my recollection too.
Building and Construction Industry

Mr FALINSKI (Mackellar) (14:29): My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer update the House on how ending lawlessness on our building sites will reduce costs and boost productivity in the building and construction industry? Is the Treasurer aware of any vested interests that continue to undermine the efficiency of this important sector of our national economy?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:29): I thank the member for Mackellar for his question. Those opposite seem as excited about the topic as we are. It is important that we restore the Australian Building and Construction Commission to improve productivity, improve growth and improve job prospects for those working in the construction industry because we know that the illegal and militant behaviour of unions on construction and building sites is costing Australians jobs, it is costing them better wages and it is costing this country the increased investment that supports the growth of our economy more broadly. We know that Master Builders Australia estimates that the increase in construction costs on schools or hospitals or other important taxpayer funded projects such as roads and so on increases the cost by some 30 per cent.

You would think that the CFMEU and others would at least put aside one particular type of site as being free of the sort of illegal and coercive behaviour that has been found by the Fair Work Commission. You would think that a project run by Common Ground in Brisbane—a project of 146 apartments funded by taxpayers to deal with long-term homelessness—would be exempted from the sort of thuggery that we have seen from the CFMEU, which the Leader of the Opposition describes as 'the side of the angels'.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith. The member for Sydney has already been warned.

Mr MORRISON: We know from the Fair Work Commission that on this project some $545,000 in fines was put on the CFMEU for disrupting work on that site for seven days. On a site of that size you can estimate that the cost to the actual project was probably somewhere closer to $700,000. What we know is that the officials, it says in the statement by Fair Work, showed no contrition, they showed no remorse, but they agreed that they had engaged in coercion at the site and had disrupted work at the site for seven days in a bid to coerce the head contractor, Grocon, to sign an enterprise agreement.

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith is warned.

Mr MORRISON: Mr Miles, who is one of the union officials there on the site, used words to this effect—he said to the subbies on the site, 'You have got a long time left in this industry and we can influence your future jobs.' The subcontractor asked, 'What are the consequences to my business if I bring my boys on-site?' Mr Cradden, another official, replied, 'You want to know what the consequences are? You would be committing industrial suicide!' That is what we heard from CFMEU officials on a project that was trying to build housing, shelter, for homeless people, yet this Leader of the Opposition described that behaviour as being on the side of the angels. This is an opposition in the pocket of the CFMEU, with $6 million in donations which they continue to loll around in. (Time expired)
Ms Husar interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lindsay will cease interjecting.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:32): My question is to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has just confirmed that he was aware in August that Senator Day's election possibly contravened the Constitution. How can it be that since then, for every single day that the 45th Parliament has sat, the Prime Minister has been aware that the composition of the Senate was potentially illegitimate? Why did the Prime Minister decide to keep this information secret from the Australian people?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:33): We have yet another example of the sanctimonious humbug that we get time and time again from the Leader of the Opposition. What you have seen today as presented by the Special Minister of State and the finance minister in the Senate is an example of a government diligently investigating facts which came to its attention, seeking advice and then, when that advice was received, handing it on to the President of the Senate. The honourable member opposite may reflect on this: on Saturday 29 October he stood before the Labor state conference in Queensland and he denounced the government and he denounced me for relying on the vote of Senator Day. He denounced us for that. Yet, the day before, the Special Minister of State had handed to the President of the Senate a set of papers including legal advice from senior counsel which stated that there were good grounds for concluding that Senator Day's position in the Senate was ineligible.

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga is warned.

Mr TURNBULL: In other words, he was ineligible to stand at the election. That shows what humbug we get from the Leader of the Opposition. The fact is, as Senator Ryan and Senator Cormann have set out, that as the facts emerged concerning Senator Day's office, they then investigated, taking great care to do so diligently, seeking legal advice from the Australian Government Solicitor, seeking legal advice from senior counsel and then, when that advice was received, they provided it to the President of the Senate. The government has acted with the utmost integrity and with diligence, and that is set out. The honourable member opposite is filled with sanctimony, filled with humbug and filled with all of his claims of overreach, but what we have seen here is a government dealing with this matter diligently and with integrity. Yet what he has done is personally handpick for the Senate Kimberley Kitching, who was referred to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration to be charged with serious offences, who was found to be have been untruthful in her evidence to the Fair Work Commission. What steps has he taken to satisfy himself that Commissioner Heydon's conclusions were wrong or that Deputy President Watson's conclusions were wrong? If he has not done that, if he cannot stand up here and say Kimberley Kitching is blameless and without any offence, then he has put her into the Senate—(Time expired)

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:36): I would like to draw members' attention to the fact that the former member for Paterson, the Hon. Bob Baldwin, is with us with us in the gallery this afternoon.
Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Workplace Relations

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (14:36): My question is to the Minister for Defence Industry representing the Minister for Employment. Will the minister outline to the House the government's commitment to ensure that employer and employee organisations always act in the best interests of their members? What impediments stand in the way of achieving this outcome?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (14:37): I thank the member for Bonner for his question. He is right that it is critical to reform unions and other registered organisations in Australia. The coalition of course supports honest unions and honest union leaders. What we have seen in the Health Services Union, the CFMEU, the MUA and other unions confirms the need for a Registered Organisations Commission. So the question is: why is the Leader of the Opposition standing in the way of cleaning up the unions?

You would expect that the Leader of the Opposition would want to clean up the unions because of the symbiotic relationship between the ALP and the union movement, but in fact the opposite is true. He is the one standing in the way—he is the hurdle—for the passage of the Registered Organisations Commission legislation. There can be only one conclusion as to why that is the case. It is obviously because the Leader of the Opposition is the cat's paw of the union movement. The latest example of this is the elevation of Kimberley Kitching to the Australian Senate. This person was hand-picked by the Leader of the Opposition in a captain's call, over the objections of retiring Senator Conroy, over the objections of the member for Corio and over the objections of all the usual people who advise the Leader of the Opposition about the management of the Victorian party. So one has to ask: why would that be the case?

Kimberley Kitching was referred by the Heydon royal commission for prosecution to the Commonwealth DPP for impersonating union officials and filling out their safety tests to go on worksites. She in fact bragged about it and used to go to her superiors and say: '100 per cent again. Got 100 per cent for the test again.' She impersonated six union officials, including the head of the union, Diana Asmar, so they could pass their safety tests and go on worksites. Do you in the Labor Party condone that? Is that what the Labor Party think is reasonable behaviour? What if a worker on one of those worksites was hurt because one of those union leaders went onto the worksite and had not properly passed a safety test?

Yet that is the person Labor put into the Senate. So all the crocodile tears about workers' rights, the safety of workers and how the CFMEU stands up for those workers who have been injured or even lost their lives in workplaces stands for nothing because instead they put into the Senate someone who impersonated union officials, filled out their safety tests for them and potentially put workers in danger. The Labor Party stands condemned. I can tell you that there will be a lot more of this. (Time expired)

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I caution the member for Griffith right now.
Day, Mr Bob, AO

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:40): My question is to the Prime Minister. Since the Prime Minister refused to answer my last question I will ask again: how can it be that for every single day that the 45th Parliament has sat the Prime Minister has been aware that the composition of the Senate was potentially illegitimate? Why did the Prime Minister decide to keep this information secret from the Australian people?

Ms Husar interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lindsay is now warned.

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:41): The reality is simply this: as you know and as we all know, Senator Ryan became aware that there was an issue concerning the nature, the extent or the character of Senator Day’s interest in his office. He investigated that. He did so diligently. He sought advice. The idea that any member of the government—the Special Minister of State or any other—would have gone out and made allegations or conclusions until the facts had been thoroughly investigated and advice sought is absurd and reckless. The honourable member opposite knows full well that in a matter of this kind Senator Ryan acted absolutely appropriately. He let my office know and he let me know that he was investigating—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will resume his seat. The member for McMahon and the member for Sydney will not interject again. They have been warned.

Mr Pyne interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will cease interjecting.

MOTIONS

Prime Minister

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:42): I seek leave to move the following motion:

That the House:

(1) notes that:

(a) the Prime Minister was willing to trade guns for votes with Senator Leyonhjelm;

(b) the Prime Minister is willing to trade race hate protections to protect himself from his backbench;

(c) the Prime Minister has traded cash for votes with Senator Day; and

(d) today, in an extraordinary turn of events, it’s been revealed that the Prime Minister knew for more than two months that there was a potential issue under section 44 of the Constitution in relation to Senator Day and chose to bring the Parliament back and keep that information secret from the Australian people; and

(2) therefore, condemns the Prime Minister for:

(a) being willing to do absolutely anything to keep his job; and

(b) his weak leadership which is inflicting chaos on the Parliament and the country.

Leave not granted.

Mr SHORTEN: Oh, protection racket! I move:
That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Member for Maribyrnong from moving the following motion forthwith—That the House:

(1) notes that:
   (a) the Prime Minister was willing to trade guns for votes with Senator Leyonhjelm;
   (b) the Prime Minister is willing to trade race hate protections to protect himself from his backbench;
   (c) the Prime Minister has traded cash for votes with Senator Day; and
   (d) today, in an extraordinary turn of events, it’s been revealed that the Prime Minister knew for more than two months that there was a potential issue under section 44 of the Constitution in relation to Senator Day and chose to bring the Parliament back and keep that information secret from the Australian people; and

(2) therefore, condemns the Prime Minister for:
   (a) being willing to do absolutely anything to keep his job; and
   (b) his weak leadership which is inflicting chaos on the Parliament and the country.

Is there anything this Prime Minister will not trade to save his job?

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

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (14:44): What a classic case of overreach. I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lingiari is warned for that exchange. The question is that the Leader of the Opposition be no longer heard.

The House divided. [14:48]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................... 73
Noes .................... 69
Majority ............... 4

AYES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Banks, J
Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR (teller)
Coleman, DB
Crewther, CJ
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hartsuyker, L
Hawke, AG
Hogan, KJ
Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Bishop, JI
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coulton, M
Drum, DK
Entsch, WG
Falinski, J
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Henderson, SM
Howarth, LR
AYES

Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Zimmerman, T

Irons, SJ
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
O’Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Robert, SR
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Turnbull, MB
Wallace, AB
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burke, AS
Butler, MC
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Dreyfus, MA
Feeney, D
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Hammond, TJ
Hayes, CP
Husar, E
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Leigh, AK
Marles, RD
McGowan, C
Mitchell, RG
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G
Burney, LJ
Butler, TM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gosling, LJ
Hart, RA
Hill, JC
Husic, EN
Keay, JT
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Lamb, S
Macklin, JL
McBride, EM
Mitchell, BK
Neumann, SK
O’Toole, C
Perrett, GD (teller)
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Question agreed to.

**The SPEAKER** (14:50): Is the motion seconded?

**Mr BURKE** (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:50): I second it. They kept it secret because they wanted his vote. They rorted his office because they wanted his vote—

**The SPEAKER**: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Leader of the House has the call.

**Mr PYNE** (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (14:50): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

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

The House divided [14:51]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 73
Noes ...................... 69
Majority ............... 4

**AYES**

Abbott, AJ  Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ  Andrews, KL
Banks, J  Bishop, JI
Broad, AJ  Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S  Chester, D
Christensen, GR (teller)  Ciobo, SM
Coleman, DB  Coulton, M
Coulton, M  Drumm, DK
Dutton, PC  Entsch, WG
Evans, TM  Falinski, J
Fletcher, PW  Flint, NJ
Frydenberg, JA  Gee, AR
Gillespie, DA  Goodenough, IR
Hartsuyker, L  Hastie, AW
Hawke, AG  Henderson, SM
Hogan, KJ  Howarth, LR
Hunt, GA  Irons, SJ
Joyce, BT  Keenan, M
Kelly, C  Laming, A
Landry, ML  Laundy, C
Leeser, J  Ley, SP
Littleproud, D  Marino, NB
McCormack, MF  McVeigh, JJ
AYES

Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Zimmerman, T

Morton, B
O’Brien, T
O’Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Robert, SR
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Turnbull, MB
Wallace, AB
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burke, AS
Butler, MC
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Dreyfus, MA
Feeney, D
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Hammond, TJ
Hayes, CP
Husar, E
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Leigh, AK
Marles, RD
McGowan, C
Mitchell, RG
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Snowdon, WE
Swan, WM
Templeman, SR
Vamvakinou, M
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Brodmann, G
Burney, LJ
Butler, TM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gosling, LJ
Hart, RA
Hill, JC
Husic, EN
Keay, JT
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Lamb, S
Macklin, JL
McBride, EM
Mitchell, BK
Neumann, SK
O’Toole, C
Perrett, GD (teller)
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM
Swanson, MJ
Thistlthwaite, MJ
Watts, TG
Wilson, JH
Question agreed to.

**Mr PYNE** (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (14:52): I move:

That the question be now put.

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

The House divided. [14:53]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ......................73
Noes ......................69
Majority .................4

**AYES**

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Banks, J
Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR (teller)
Coleman, DB
Crewther, CJ
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hartsuyker, L
Hawke, AG
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sudmalis, AE
Taylor, AJ
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Zimmerman, T

**Noes**

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Bishop, JI
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coulton, M
Drum, DK
Entsch, WG
Falinski, J
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Henderson, SM
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
O’Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Robert, SR
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Turnbull, MB
Wallace, AB
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (14:56): The question now is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to.

The House divided. [14:56]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................66
Noes .................73
Majority ............7

AYES

Albanese, AN       Aly, A
Bandt, AP          Bird, SL
Bowen, CE          Brodman, G
Burke, AS          Burney, LJ
Butler, MC         Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE       Champion, ND
Chesters, LM       Claydon, SC
Collins, JM        Conroy, PM
Danby, M           Dick, MD
Dreyfus, MA        Elliot, MJ
Feeney, D          Fitzgibbon, JA
Freelander, MR     Georganas, S
Giles, AJ          Gosling, L
Hammond, TJ        Hart, RA
Hayes, CP          Hill, JC
Husar, E           Husic, EN
Jones, SP          Keay, JT
Kelly, MJ          Keogh, MJ
Khalil, P          King, CF
King, MMH          Lamb, S
Leigh, AK          Macklin, JL
Marles, RD         McBride, EM
McGowan, C         Mitchell, BK
Mitchell, RG       Neumann, SK
O’Connor, BPJ      O’Toole, C
Owens, JA          Perrett, GD (teller)
Pilberserk, TJ      Rishworth, AL
Rowland, MA        Ryan, JC (teller)
Sharkie, RCC       Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE        Stanley, AM
Swan, WM           Swanson, MJ
Templeman, SR      Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakisou, M      Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD         Wilson, JH
Zappia, A

NOES
### AYES

- Butler, MC
- Chalmers, JE
- Chesters, LM
- Collins, JM
- Danby, M
- Dreyfus, MA
- Feeney, D
- Freelander, MR
- Giles, AJ
- Hammond, TJ
- Hayes, CP
- Husar, E
- Jones, SP
- Kelly, MJ
- Khalil, P
- King, MMH
- Leigh, AK
- Marles, RD
- Mitchell, BK
- Neumann, SK
- O'Toole, C
- Perrett, GD (teller)
- Rishworth, AL
- Ryan, JC (teller)
- Snowdon, WE
- Swan, WM
- Templeman, SR
- Vamvakinou, M
- Wilson, JH

### NOES

- Abbott, AJ
- Andrews, KJ
- Banks, J
- Broad, AJ
- Buchholz, S
- Christensen, GR (teller)
- Coleman, DB
- Crewther, CJ
- Dutton, PC
- Evans, TM
- Fletcher, PW
- Frydenberg, JA
- Gillespie, DA
- Hartley, L
- Hawke, AG
- Hogan, KJ
- Hunt, GA
- Joyce, BT
- Kelly, C
- Landry, ML
- Leeson, J
- Alexander, JG
- Andrews, KL
- Bishop, JI
- Broadbent, RE
- Chester, D
- Ciobo, SM
- Coulton, M
- Drum, DK
- Entsch, WG
- Falinski, J
- Flint, NJ
- Gee, AR
- Goodenough, IR
- Hasting, AW
- Henderson, SM
- Howarth, LR
- Irons, SJ
- Keenan, M
- Laming, A
- Laundy, C
- Ley, SP
Ms BANKS (Chisholm) (15:01): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Will the minister update the House on steps the government has taken to remove dangerous criminal gang members from Australian society? What are the consequences of not taking action?

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (15:02): I thank the honourable member for her question. We have cancelled a record number of visas, including for bikies, many of whom are involved on building sites, working for the CFMEU. They are the hired muscle. Everyone of course has a story of a CFMEU union thug turning up on a building site and running riot, but I heard an amazing story the other day. At a huge unit construction site in the city, a motorbike screeches to a halt outside the gates, the rider wearing his CFMEU-emblazoned jacket and a Rebels bikie tattoo across his forehead. He hops off and walks towards the lady on the stop and go sign at the entrance of the building site. She is a bit nervous, naturally enough, but tries to make him out; she left home in a rush that morning and could not find her contact lenses. 'Julia!' the bikie says. She feels instant relief: it's Bill the bikie!

Julia is a part pensioner. She trusted her friend bikie Bill to find her this job after unexpectedly losing her last gig. It is two days a week, 150 grand a year—not a bad deal. The downside is that her CFMEU dues are $149,000 a year, which makes it a bit tight, but it helps to support her stay-at-home hubby. 'You're doing a great job here, Julia', says Bill, sincerely. She feels secure because her friend bikie Bill has her back. But bikie Bill barges forward and sees his target: the foreman. It is Kevin the carpenter—as Kevin humbly says, 'Carpenter by trade, but future global leader by nature'.

Anyway, Kevin is talking to a group of on-site workers—the cleaners. He is talking in Chinese, which is strange, because none of the workers in that group are Chinese. Bikie Bill
knows the group well, because he did the deal for the cleaners' EBA: 5c an hour, he got for them. It makes things a bit tight for their families, but the cleaners are content, because they know that the balance of the $100 an hour in the pay deal that was done for them will go to the CFMEU professional development fund, which has millions—and growing—and that the US Teamsters training program will be properly funded to educate the new generation of CFMEU leadership in extortion and hand-to-hand combat. The moral of this story is that Julia can have a—

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

Mr Albanese: Yes, on weirdness!

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will resume his seat.

Mr DUTTON: Julia could not trust bikie Bill. Kevin could not trust bikie Bill. The workers could not trust bikie Bill. And let me tell you, the Australian people do not trust this Leader of the Opposition.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat. Members on my left will cease interjecting, or they will be leaving the House rapidly. I will say one thing for the minister's answer: he managed to be inventive up until that last moment; that is why I have asked him to resume his seat.

Day, Mr Bob, AO

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:05): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Education and Training. I refer to reports that the grant to a trades training centre college linked to former senator Bob Day was equivalent to $92,000 for each of the 20 students enrolled in the program, despite the fact that an equivalent qualification could have been completed at TAFE for just $3,000 per student. Does the minister agree that this grant was excessive?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (15:06): I am aware that the South Australian government recently attended the North East Vocational Colleges student builder project, and they were very supportive of it—the South Australian Labor government. So let me provide some facts on this program. Firstly, because of course this is dealing with the issue of former Senator Day, the advice that I have is that the liquidation of Bob Day's building and construction company, Home Australia, will not have an impact on the North East Vocational Colleges student builder pilot. The second point is that the student builder pilot is being delivered currently and in accordance with the agreement. Thirdly, I am also advised that the senator has resigned as a member of the college board and I am advised that board members do not receive any payment, and I am also advised that the former senator does not have a financial interest in the North East Vocational College. So the advice we have is that it is being delivered on time and in accordance with the grant.

But, if our friends on the opposition benches want to talk about the way in which these matters should be handled, let me remind them of three names: Craig Thomson, who was given a ringing endorsement from the Leader of the Opposition; Eddie Obeid, who provides ski trips to his friends—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order.
Mr Burke: As would be easily predicted, it is on direct relevance, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: And I say to the minister before he resumes: he is entitled to compare and contrast. I think he—

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney has been warned and I would like her to be able to hear the answer to the question she has asked while she is in the chamber. I say to the minister: he is entitled to compare and contrast, and I think he has done that.

Mr HUNT: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and I accept, acknowledge and appreciate the advice. In that spirit—

The SPEAKER: It is not advice; it is a ruling.

Mr HUNT: let me note, in sum, that we have looked at this matter, and the advice that I have is crystal clear. All of the matters which were agreed as part of the project have been delivered and are being delivered. Those elements which were required to trigger the first round of payments were appropriately delivered. That is the advice, and that stands in contrast to what we saw from the other side, where they stood by as extraordinary wrongdoing was condoned, allowed and facilitated.

Tourism

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (15:09): My question is to the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment. What contribution does the construction industry make to Australia’s tourism industry? Is the minister aware of any threats to this contribution?

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff—Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment) (15:09): I thank the member for Corangamite for her question, because I know the member for Corangamite has a deep passion for Australia’s tourism industry. There are some 3,600 people in her electorate that are directly employed in Australia’s tourism industry and, of course, an array of others that benefit from the construction industry and the tourism industry succeeding in her electorate. I note that international visitor arrivals into her electorate are growing faster than domestic arrivals, up to 45 per cent compared to 42 per cent. Spending by international tourists is up by some 74 per cent in the last three years, so the total tourism spending in Geelong now represents some $541 million. There can be no doubt that the member for Corangamite has led the charge with respect to the growth of the tourism industry but also the construction industry—a clear-eyed vision about the benefits that can flow from regional Australia for Australia’s tourism industry.

I note, though, that she also asked a question in relation to threats to Australia and to our policy as a result of the contribution made by the construction and tourism industries. I have to say that it was revealing last week to see some of the commentary, and in particular a video that just demonstrates how beholden the Australian Labor Party is to Australia’s trade union movement. We saw just last week senior CFMEU officials, including the national president, Joe McDonald, and a WA assistant state secretary, Graham Pallot, and what were they saying? They were happy to say on video that they will put in Labor members of parliament who will support the scrapping of the ABCC, and if they do not—if those opposite do not support the scrapping of the ABCC—what did they say on video? They will replace them. That is what they said, and that is the threat that hangs over the head of every Labor member opposite: the threat of being replaced.
Unfortunately, we see examples of that happening. Just up there on the back benches is the member for Wills. He was, of course, imposed by the AWU. With all due respect to the member for Wills, the locals did not want him representing them. No; they would rather have former senator and long-time local Mehmet Tillem. But what did the AWU do? They imposed someone from the other side of Melbourne, with no connections whatsoever to the electorate, and thrust him in—shoehorned him into the seat. Why? I am sure, when they say the time has come for him to walk away from the ABCC, he will, just like every other member opposite, who know that their preselection is dependent upon doing the bidding of their union masters.

Mr Gosling interjecting—

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

The member for Solomon then left the chamber.

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

AUDITOR-GENERAL’S REPORTS

Report No. 23 of 2016-2017

The SPEAKER (15:13): I present the Auditor-General's Audit report No. 23 of 2016-17 entitled National Rental Affordability Scheme—administration of allocations and incentives: Department of Social Services.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (15:13): Documents are tabled in accordance with the list circulated to honourable members earlier today. Full details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (15:14): Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

Mr BUCHHOLZ: I do.

The SPEAKER: The member for Wright may proceed.

Mr BUCHHOLZ: Earlier today, the Manager of Opposition Business claimed that I seconded a motion and that, in doing this, I did not support the government's pension policy. Earlier today I did second a motion put by the honourable member for Lindsay in order to prevent the motion from lapsing, as Labor's seconder was either not present in the chamber or, to my knowledge, did not seek the call. I did this in order to allow the debate to occur. If I had not, the motion would have lapsed. If any member failed in their responsibility, it was the Labor seconder, who failed to either attend or seek the call. I made clear my support for the government's policy surrounding pensioners in my speech on the motion and I support the government's policy on pensioners, who I personally have great empathy for—particularly those on widow pensions.
BUSINESS

Days and Hours of Meeting

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (15:15): I present a chart showing the program of sittings for 2017. Copies of the program have been placed on the table. I ask leave of the House to move that the program be agreed to.

Leave granted.

Mr PYNE: I move:

That the program for 2017 be agreed to.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:15): I want to thank the Leader of the House for conceding defeat. If you wanted evidence that this government does not want the parliament to ever meet, it is in the sitting program that has just been distributed. This sitting program needs to be seen in the context of the standing orders changes that have already been made. Only a few weeks ago, the standing orders were changed to remove 2½ hours of government business from every week. That means, when you look at what they have now done, that effectively 2½ weeks of government business will disappear every year. I note that the program that we have just received is for 18 weeks of sittings. This is on the back of comments from the Leader of the House when he was the Manager of Opposition Business. In 2009, these were the words of the then Manager of Opposition Business, now Leader of the House:

The incompetent leader of government business in the House has yet again managed to restrict the number of weeks of sitting to 18 …

That is the number that he has now introduced, and he has introduced it on the back of having already cut 2½ hours per week of government business from the program.

We have seen the management of the parliament become an abject disaster. Today, only moments ago, a member of the government said that he seconded a motion but that no-one should infer from that that he agreed with it. I have to say, the faction of the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services is getting bigger. The Minister for Justice has joined it. Eight members of the government joined that faction when they left one Thursday afternoon. We have seen this government's weekly stuff-up moving one day earlier. It started in the first week, where it was a Thursday afternoon when they all rushed home, and we took control of the floor of the House. Then the minister for revenue and the Minister for Justice decided to condemn their own government in a vote—they did that on a Wednesday. When we were last here, it was on a Tuesday that they brought in the guns-for-votes issue. I arrived here this morning and thought, 'What are they going to offer us for Monday?' because the weekly stuff-up has been moving one day earlier each time. They gave us the member for Wright. They gave us the first member of parliament from the government benches to be willing to second a motion condemning his own side of politics.

If you cannot manage the parliament, you cannot run a government. The problem that the Leader of the House is grappling with is that he has now decided that he is not even going to try to fix it, that the easiest thing is just to not have a parliament—that way no-one will notice. So what we see is government business time disappearing, being cut back and, at the exact same time, moving to a number of sitting weeks which is the exact number that the Leader of the House used to describe as incompetence. When he was on this side of the House, what he
is doing right now in terms of the number of sitting weeks was the Leader of the House's argument for claiming there was incompetence. He said:
The government manage the schedule of business, and we are prepared to let them keep on being incompetent. We will turn up—

That was a commitment they made in opposition. They did not keep that commitment when they came to government! The idea of turning up is something they let go of very early. He said:
We will keep showing them up for the failures that they are.
Well, they have shown someone to be the failures, but it is not quite turning out the way that those opposite want.

What those opposite have done and what the Leader of the House has done is to have a situation since this last election where the Senate, we now realise, should not have even been meeting. There was a cloud over who could vote and who could not, and they kept it secret. They kept it secret for one really simple reason: to get Bob Day's vote. They gave money to Bob Day's companies to get Bob Day's vote, and then they also rorted the location of his election office to get Bob Day's vote. They want the parliament to be some ridiculous deal that they handle in this way.

We are in a situation where we have got used to the fact that, week after week, there have been discussions of chaos and incompetence. This week, for the first time, we are also having questions asked about corruption. When those questions get asked, I am not surprised that those opposite, every time they are asked a question, want to pivot to a different issue. I am not surprised that those opposite, every chance they get, want to cut down the amount of time that this parliament sits. I am not surprised that those opposite want to make sure that the number of weeks that they used to view as an outrage is now the number of weeks they will deliver. Those opposite have discovered that, although they thought they did not need an agenda and that they would just be able to administer everything, they cannot even get that right.

These are not mistakes where people say: 'That is just run-of-the-mill. These things happen all the time.' Labor had a minority parliament, and none of these things ever happened to us when we were in a minority. They claim to have a working majority. They claim to be a well-oiled campaign machine. They claim to be an election-winning machine, yet what happens when they get here? They become the first government to lose control of the floor of the parliament in more than 50 years. They become the first government to vote to condemn itself. They become the first government to have their own members jumping to attention when there is a motion condemning them, saying, 'Please, can I be the seconder?' and then, after question time, jumping up and down saying, 'I might have seconded it, but no-one should presume that I agree with it.'

We have now gotten used to the concept that at the end of question time no-one should leave the chamber, because you never know what is going to happen. There have been lots of times in governments of both sides when there have been leadership contests at different points and you have seen it backgrounded out, but there has only been one time in the history of this country that it has played out on the floor of the parliament between the Prime Minister and the one on the same side who wishes he was still Prime Minister!
Those opposite are running a shambles. They have a Senate meeting right now and nobody knows who is meant to get a vote and who is not meant to get a vote! They have a House of Representatives here where every time we come back to Canberra they come up with a new and creative way to show their incompetence! In question time today the government was asked: 'Why didn't you tell the Australian people the Senate was meeting and yet there was a constitutional cloud over who was allowed to vote? Why did you keep something like that a secret?' We did not know until question time today when it was that the Prime Minister found out, but then in answer to questions that we asked it became clear that he knew that there was a fair chance that people who were going to turn up to vote in that chamber were doing so without the authority of the Australian Constitution. He kept it a secret and he did not pair those votes!

This is the short of shambles that happen every time this parliament meets. The only response from the Leader of the House is not to say, 'We will fix the problem,' it is not to say, 'We will get people to turn up for work on time and we will make sure they don't take early marks,' and it is not to say, 'We will make sure people pay attention to what they are voting on or at the very least pay attention to what they are seconding'. The response from the Leader of the House is to say, 'Maybe we'll just have parliament sit less.' It does not matter to him that during those weeks that parliament is sitting government business has been cleared out. Why has it been cleared out? Because they cannot guarantee that their own members will be here. They brought the finishing all the way back to 8 pm and even then they have said, 'By the time you get to 8 pm, when the question is put that the House do now adjourn no-one is allowed to vote on it.' No-one is allowed to vote, because even after bringing the finishing time all the way back to 8 pm they cannot guarantee their own members will turn up.

There was another path. The other option would have been for the Leader of the House to be true to his word, for the Leader of the House to back in the principles that he had when he was in opposition when he was saying how often the parliament should meet. He could have told his own members part of being a member of parliament is, when parliament is on, you have to be here and vote not just take off without letting your whip know. That could have been one of the things that he would do. He could have said, 'When people ask is there any seconder and it is a motion condemning the government, government members probably should not leap to their feet.' He could have given the advice to his own side to say, 'When there is a Labor amendment being put, you're meant to vote no.' But all of that was too complicated for his side of politics. So what he has decided is that, given they do not have an agenda anyway, the easiest thing is to give everybody an early mark, cancel the votes and bring the parliament back as rarely as possible. The hypocrisy embedded in all of this is absolutely breathtaking!

We cannot change the program that is in front of us, but we can make sure that the message is sent loudly and clearly that of what the Leader of the House used to believe there is nothing left. *(Time expired)*

Question agreed to.
COMMITTEES

Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Coulton) (15:26): I have received advice from the Chief Government Whip nominating members to be members of certain committees.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (15:26): by leave—I move:

That:

(1) Mr Falinski be discharged from the Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport and that, in his place, Mrs Wicks be appointed a member of the committee;

(2) Mr O'Dowd be discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties and that, in his place, Mr Alexander be appointed a member of the committee;

(3) Mrs Wicks be discharged from the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training and that, in her place, Mr O'Dowd be appointed a member of the committee;

Question agreed to.

Economics Committee

Report

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (15:27): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Economics I present the committee’s second report on the review of the Reserve Bank of Australia’s annual report 2015, together with the minutes of proceedings.

Report made a parliamentary paper in accordance with standing order 39(e).

Mr COLEMAN: by leave—On 6 September 2016 the Reserve Bank decided to leave the cash rate unchanged at 1.5 per cent, after reducing official interest rates by 25 basis points to 1.5 per cent on 4 August 2016. In making this decision, the governor said that holding the stance of monetary policy at this meeting would be consistent with sustainable growth in the economy and achieving the inflation target over time, after cutting the cash rate at both the May and August meetings.

At the public hearing on 22 September of this year, the governor stated that the Australian economy is continuing to transition out of the mining boom, with growth in the non-mining sectors of the economy being supported by flexibility in the exchange rate and an accommodative monetary policy. The RBA forecasts that year-ending GDP growth will be around 2½ to 3½ per cent over the year to December 2016, increasing to around three to four per cent by December 2018. The governor remarked that growth in the economy has been better than expected, due in part to an expansion in resources exports in recent months. The unemployment rate has remained around half a per cent lower than a year ago, and the RBA suggests that employment growth will continue at a modest pace with little change in the unemployment rate. Inflation remains very low, with the CPI expected to rise by half a percentage point to 1¼ per cent by December 2016, and to 1½ to 2½ by June 2017.

While the Australian dollar has appreciated by around 10 per cent against the US dollar, and was 8 per cent higher on a trade-weighted index basis than its low point in September 2015, the Australian dollar remains 20 per cent lower against the US dollar and about 12 per cent lower on a trade-weighted index basis than its peak in the middle of 2014. The RBA has noted that, at its current level, the Australian dollar is supporting demand for local goods and
services, with more Australians choosing to holiday domestically and more international students choosing to study in Australia.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank and congratulate the new Governor of the Reserve Bank, Dr Philip Lowe, and also thank other representatives of the RBA for appearing at the hearing on 22 September 2016. Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing governor, Mr Glenn Stevens, on his 10 years of tremendous service to the Reserve Bank. I commend the report to the House.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (15:30): by leave—This report details the Economics Committee's deliberations in respect of biannual public hearings with the Reserve Bank of Australia governor, and it is an important element of the RBA's accountability framework. On behalf of the Labor members of the committee, I join with the government in congratulating Dr Philip Lowe on his appointment as the Reserve Bank governor and the smooth transition that he has made into this new role. He has big shoes to fill in the wake of the position being vacated by former governor Glenn Stevens. I think that Dr Lowe is slowly demonstrating that he is going to be a steady hand with management of monetary policy in the Australian economy, with an eye to the future. We look forward to working with him over the coming years.

The hearings with the Reserve Bank governor and the two deputy-governors canvassed many issues, including the seventh statement on the conduct of monetary policy. There was a lengthy discussion regarding the cash rate and its stickiness, in respect of the major banks passing on in full interest-rate deductions or reductions in the cash rate. There was discussion regarding the exchange rate, the soft conditions in the labour market and also the patchiness of the Australian housing market, in particular the steam that we have seen in the market in Sydney and Melbourne. Interestingly, the Reserve Bank governor pointed out the concern that, like many parents, he has about whether or not his children will be able to afford to buy a home in the future, particularly in the community that they have grown up in. He expressed the view that this was an issue of supply and something that policy settings should be aimed at and levered towards, in terms of generating more supply of housing into the future.

The governor also made some interesting observations with respect to infrastructure, and his view that there is a great opportunity for governments in Australia at the moment to take advantage of lower interest rates to invest in the future and build productive infrastructure. He said, 'Someone in the economy has to be prepared to use the low interest rates. Government can do that, or it can facilitate the private sector to do that on infrastructure. As the G20 has repeatedly emphasised, it is creating an environment in which the private sector wants to take advantage of low interest rates.' That is the view of the Reserve Bank governor, implying that we are not getting enough investment in infrastructure in Australia and that government should be looking to take advantage of low interest rates to build productive infrastructure that will increase the productivity of our nation and spur growth into the future. These are comments that, I must say, many of the Labor members on the committee agree with.

There was also an interesting discussion of the role of the big banks, in particular the big four, in recent times: their interest-rate practices, their return on equity, and their practices with respect to credit cards and insurance. The governor was quite critical of some of the bonuses and incentive-based cultures in some of the Australian banks, which he said needed to return to being a strong service profession rather than a marketing business. In our view,
this added further weight to the need for a royal commission into the banking sector in Australia.

The final point I would like to make is about the census. The Reserve Bank governor, after a question from me, did admit that there was a concern about the stuff-up with the census this year and the fact that the data that we will get from this year's census will never be as good as that from previous censuses. It is something that is a concern for government because so many policies and so much planning by governments and the private sector relate to the data that comes from the census. The Reserve Bank governor said: 'I think it is a concern for us all, isn't it? Many areas of government and in the private sector rely on these data to allocate resources and make decisions. It is a concern for all of us.' That is the view of the Reserve Bank governor about this government's approach to the census, and I think that says it all. Recently in estimates, on 19 October, it was admitted by David Kalisch from the ABS that the mess-up with the census over this past year has already cost the government $20 million to try and fix it, and possibly $10 million more. So we are going to get the weakest set of data that we have ever had from a census, and it has cost the Australian taxpayer close to $30 million. It says it all about this government and its management of our economy.

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (15:35): I move:

That the House take note of the report.

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

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (15:35): I move:

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

Question agreed to.

Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

Report

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (15:35): On the behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties I present the committee's report, incorporating dissenting reports, entitled Report 163: Paris Agreement/Kyoto Protocol—Doha Amendment.

Report made a parliamentary paper in accordance with standing order 39(e).

Mr ROBERT: by leave—Today I present the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties report 163, which contains the committee's review of the Paris Agreement and the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol. The committee considers the two treaty actions together as Australia's obligations under both are closely related.

The Paris Agreement and the Kyoto Protocol are part of the ongoing implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which came into force in 1994. The Kyoto Protocol 'operationalised' the convention. The Paris Agreement builds on the convention and broadens the coverage of international climate action beyond the industrialised countries.

The Paris Agreement has received overwhelming support both internationally and here in Australia. The world has acted swiftly. The agreement was adopted in December 2015 and
has already received the approval of the 55 countries covering 55 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions required to bring it into force. It came into force last Friday, 4 November 2016. The speed with which this has occurred is unprecedented in the recent history of international agreements.

We found that in Australia the agreement has been welcomed as a positive step forward. It supports collective action on an issue that is of global concern. The agreement provides an inclusive common framework, sets clear goals and establishes a realistic process and pathway to move forward. The agreement aims to strengthen the global response to climate change by setting a global goal to hold the increase in global average temperatures to well below two degrees Celsius and to attempt to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees. In support of this aim, Australia has committed to reducing emissions by 26 to 28 per cent below 2005 levels of greenhouse emissions by 2030.

Some raised questions regarding the ability of Australia's current climate change policy framework to meet this commitment. The NIA makes it clear that we will. Witnesses also emphasised the need for a stable, scalable framework with general political support so that we can provide confidence to stakeholders going forward. Alignment across the states would certainly help in this regard. The Committee sees the intended review of Australia's climate change policy framework in 2017 as an early opportunity to address some of these concerns as we start preparing the groundwork for Australia's future targets.

Despite the concerns, a range of opportunities were identified for Australia as the world transitions to a lower-carbon economy. Australia has considerable expertise in responding to extreme weather events and this will be in demand. We have a rich supply of the mineral resources required for the manufacture and development of renewable technology. And, of course, we have abundant renewable power sources with our sun, wind and hydro power.

The transition to a lower-carbon economy that we are facing will require careful planning if all Australians are to reap these benefits. This planning will be required across the states as well. Australia is both a user and exporter of carbon intensive commodities and we have to find practical solutions to the social and economic challenges facing us.

Australia has an excellent track record in meeting its obligations in similar situations. We met our targets and commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, one of only a few nations to do so, and we will meet our targets under the second commitment period for that treaty and exceed them.

The next conference of the parties to the convention is being held in Marrakech this week. At that meeting decisions will be made regarding the implementation of the Paris Agreement, including the development of its rulebook and the provision of climate finance to developing countries to help them adapt. Australia has committed to providing at least $1 billion over five years from our existing aid budget for this purpose.

It is important that Australia can come to the table in Marrakech this week with clear evidence of its commitment to and support of the Paris Agreement. We need to have a say in the development of the implementation framework, especially when a billion dollars of Australian taxpayers' money is being made available.
The committee therefore supports Australia's ratification of the two treaty actions in this report and recommends to the government that binding treaty action be taken. On behalf of the committee, I commend the report to the House.

Mr JOSH WILSON (Fremantle) (15:40): by leave—I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to this report, which, as the member for Fadden described, covers the Paris climate agreement and the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol. I acknowledge the work of the chair, the member for Fadden, the deputy chair, Senator Don Farrell from the other place, and the input of all the committee members who participated. I also thank the JSCOT secretariat for their support and professionalism, as always.

The Labor members of the committee endorse the key recommendations of this report, which support binding treaty action in relation to the Paris Agreement and the Doha Amendment. Paris represents a momentous achievement in drawing together both developed and developing nations for the first time under a framework with a clear objective: to keep global warming substantially below two degrees, and to reach net zero global emissions in the second half of the century.

This is a massive and desperate effort that we are engaged in. It is disappointing that the Labor members of the committee cannot be wholehearted in our approach to the report—in fact, we would probably struggle to be half-hearted—in our endorsement of the position the Australian government has chosen to take within the structure of the Paris Agreement. While Labor members of the committee support ratification, it is disappointing that the treaty actions covered by this report can only be described as weak, poorly founded, and not supported by an adequate policy and program framework for implementation.

I am sorry to think that some on the other side might be half-hearted about the Paris Agreement too, but for different reasons. The truth is no rational person should look at our approach with grudging satisfaction that it is so weak and so unlikely to be effective. We will all bear the costs that come with squibbing this opportunity.

On this issue there should be broad consensus. There should be a shared commitment to real action. In the period from 2007 to 2013 Australia was a leading nation in pursuing emission reductions on the basis of economy-wide reform. We did that through a price on carbon as a prelude to applying an emissions trading scheme; a renewable energy target; and support in both funding and finance for clean energy and energy efficiency projects. We are very conscious on this side that Australia began its contribution to addressing the global challenge of dangerous climate change when Prime Minister Rudd ratified the Kyoto Protocol in December 2007.

Sadly, much of that reform and progress has been undone since 2013. Australia is the only national jurisdiction to have implemented and then removed a market approach to decarbonising the economy. There is currently no commitment to a renewable energy target or to policy that supports large scale renewable energy investment beyond 2020, and the government has sought to remove or defund the Australian Renewable Energy Agency and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. Through this policy and program neglect, Australia has plummeted from its position in 2013 as the 11th most attractive renewable energy investment jurisdiction to its current position of 39th, and carbon emissions have risen.
The evidence before the committee in submissions and public hearings showed that Australia's nationally determined contribution was set without any rigorous analysis of what would constitute our highest possible ambition or what was needed to keep global warming below two degrees. Appearing before the committee in Sydney, Professor Lesley Hughes of the Climate Council of Australia said:

Like many in the climate change area, I do not think that Australia's targets are nearly strong enough. The original Climate Change Authority report recommended a 45-to-65 per cent reduction, not the 26-to-28 per cent that we currently have as a target. There was a dissenting climate authority report put out a couple of weeks ago indicating that that level of ambition is inadequate to even meet the target of keeping temperatures below two degrees.

Dr Luke Kemp, who appeared before the committee in Canberra, referred us to a paper from Climate Action Tracker, titled 'Australia set to overshoot its 2030 target by large margin'. That report states:

… Australia's commitment is not in line with most interpretations of a "fair" approach to reach a 2—

degrees C—pathway: if most other countries followed the Australian approach, global warming would exceed 3-4—degrees C. The Labor members of the committee believe that Australia should increase its emission reduction target and its NDC as soon as possible. I note that the policy Labor took to the election was for a 45 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030, complemented by a 50 per cent renewable energy target.

It should be a concern to everyone in this place and more widely that Australia does not have a sufficient or effective legislative, policy, and program framework in place to deliver on its Paris Agreement commitments. Indeed, Mr Brad Archer, First Assistant Secretary within the International Climate Change and Energy Innovation Division of the Department of the Environment and Energy, said:

The projections we have produced to date do indicate emissions rising for some period, but the important proviso there is that those projections do not take into account the suite of government policies that are in place. The government will, as I understand it, release updated projections before the end of this year.

And, in relation to whether there could be any confidence that existing government policies could deliver on Australia's NDC, Mr Archer observed:

I think the confidence stems from the fact that the government can implement policy. It is not locked into the settings that are in place today. The time it has decided to undertake that review is next year.

In other words, it is possible that we could meet our relatively weak target, but only if significant policy changes are made.

And that goes to the heart of the problem: our nationally determined commitment is as yet a soft one and unfortunately our existing policies will not deliver on that commitment. What is more, our existing policies have not been prepared with a view to delivering a just transition, a fact that the ACTU made clear during the committee process. I will conclude by returning to the elephant in the room, which is the question of an economy wide framework for emission reduction. As Professor Tim Stephens, who appeared before the committee in Sydney, said:
... with the repeal of the Clean Energy Future legislation we currently do not have any overarching legislation that says Australia is aiming for these cuts by a certain time. So, we have no legal apparatus to give effect to our Paris commitments.

And, as Dr Luke Kemp said, in answer to a question about what should be done to fix that gap:

To me it is quite obvious: you abide by every single economic textbook that has been published and you would price carbon; you would price the externality. I don't think that is politically acceptable or feasible right now. But there is a big gap between what economics and academia would suggest and what is politically feasible.

There is no good reason for there to be such a big gap. It is our job in this place to respond to the science; to follow the evidence; to answer the call that comes from the broader community and the investment community alike.

There simply has to be a different mindset; a change away from recalcitrance and wilful blindness; a change away from the strange determination to do only the bare minimum. We should be more confident, more proactive and optimistic than that in this country. Australia should implement a proper market mechanism to achieve an appropriately ambitious emission reduction target. And Australia should get back on the path to being a 'renewable energy superpower'—that is our destiny—and it is the title of the latest report from Beyond Zero Emissions, and I would like to finish by quoting from that report:

A global transition to renewable energy is an unavoidable condition to ensure a safe climate in the future. It is in the interest of the planet. It is in the interest of Australians today, and of generations to come. The dimming fossil energy past can be let go with confidence because the renewable energy future is bright.

It is good and it is right that Australia will ratify the Paris Agreement. It is a shame that our participation through treaty action in this global cause has been set so weakly on this occasion—with no rigour and very little courage. That is not in keeping with our recent history; and it is not in keeping with our national character.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (15:49): I move:

That the House take note of the report.

Debate adjourned.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (15:49): I move:

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

Question agreed to.

Intelligence and Security Committee

Report

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (15:50): On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, I present the following reports: (1) Review of the re-listing of six terrorist organisations under the Criminal Code: Abu Sayyaf Group, Al-Qa’ida, Al-Qa’ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb, Jabhat al-Nusra, Jamiat ul-Ansar, Jemaah Islamiyah; (2) Review of the declaration of Islamic State as a terrorist organisation under the Australian Citizenship Act 2007; and (3) Advisory report on the Criminal Code Amendment (High Risk Terrorist Offenders) Bill 2016 and addendum.
Mr SUKKAR: by leave—I am pleased to present the committee's Advisory report on the Criminal Code Amendment (High Risk Terrorist Offenders) Bill 2016.

The bill provides for the continued detention of high-risk terrorist offenders who, following an application by the Attorney-General, are found by a state or territory Supreme Court to present an unacceptable risk to the community at the end of their prison sentence.

In the course of the inquiry, the committee received 18 submissions, five supplementary submissions and conducted a private and a public hearing with a range of witnesses.

The committee carefully considered the evidence it received and in a strong endorsement of the proposed bill, concluded that the continuing detention order regime will form an important part of Australia's multifaceted response to the terrorist threat.

In this bipartisan report, the committee has recommended that the bill be passed by the parliament and made 23 additional recommendations aimed at amending the scope of the bill's application, clarifying operation of the regime and strengthening the reporting and oversight mechanisms.

Specifically, the committee considered that the scope of offences should be limited to terrorism-related offences, and has recommended most notably that offences for treason be excluded from the regime. The committee understands that no person has been convicted of a treason offence under Australian law since the Second World War.

The committee has also recommended extending the time available to the Attorney-General to make an application for a continuing detention order from six months to 12 months prior to the end of an offender's sentence. This will provide all parties more time to prepare for the respective court proceedings.

The committee has made a series of recommendations intended to provide greater clarity as to the intended operation of the bill. These include amendments to either the bill or the explanatory memorandum to:

- provide greater clarity to the definition of 'relevant expert' in the bill, and the process for the court to determine the admissibility of each expert's evidence,
- make explicit that the offender is to be provided in a timely manner with information to be relied on in an application for a continuing detention order,
- clarify the interaction with parole and bail provisions,
- clarify what is proposed by a 'rehearing' as set out in the bill, and
- clarify the process for initiating the periodic review of a continuing detention order.

The committee has also recommended a 10-year sunset clause be placed on the legislation, with reviews by the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor and this committee to occur five and six years following the passage of the bill, respectively.

The committee was asked by the Attorney-General to look at the interaction between this proposed continuing detention order regime and the existing control order regime.

The committee in this respect has recommended that the Criminal Code be amended to make it explicit that a control order can be applied for and obtained while an individual is in prison, but that the controls imposed by that order would not apply until that person is
released. Further consideration of the interaction between these two regimes, and any proposed improvements, will occur during the mandatory reviews of the control order regime by the independent monitor and the PJCIS to be completed in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

The committee's report recognises that considerable work will be required following the passage of the bill to implement the regime, with many operational aspects yet to be fully developed. This includes the risk assessment tools that will be used to assess offenders, conditions of detention and rehabilitation programs.

The government has therefore established an implementation working group to progress these matters. The committee has recommended that the Attorney-General report back to the committee with a clear development and implementation plan prior to the bill's debate, and that a timetable for implementation of any outstanding matters being considered by the implementation working group be provided to the committee by 30 June 2017.

Subject to these recommendations, the committee strongly supports the bill's passage through the parliament.

I would like to thank all members of the committee for their hard work and commitment in achieving this bipartisan outcome in very tight time frames. I would also like to recognise the dedication of the committee secretariat in their efforts in progressing this review in such a timely way.

The second and third reports that I am tabling today fulfil the committee's statutory obligations to review the listing and re-listing of terrorist organisations under the Criminal Code, and the declaration of terrorist organisations under the Citizenship Act.

For each of the six Criminal Code re-listings—which include some of the world's most notorious organisations, including al-Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra and Jemaah Islamiyah—the committee was satisfied that appropriate processes have been followed and that the relevant organisations continue to meet the criteria to be defined as terrorist organisations.

The declaration of Islamic State as a terrorist organisation under the Australian Citizenship Act 2007 was the first of its kind to be reviewed by this committee. The effect of the declaration is that a person aged 14 years or older who is a national or citizen of another country loses their Australian citizenship if they engage in certain conduct on behalf of Islamic State.

The committee was satisfied that appropriate processes had been followed and agreed that Islamic State is a terrorist organisation that is opposed to Australia, Australia's interests, values, democratic beliefs, rights and liberties, so that if a person were to fight for or be in the service of Islamic State that person would be acting inconsistently with their allegiance to Australia.

I am presenting these reports at a time of sustained threat to the security of our community from people who seek to do us harm and achieve their insidious goals through violent means. The legislation reviewed in these reports demonstrates the need for continued vigilance and the importance of updating Australia's counterterrorism framework to protect the Australian community.

I commend these reports to the House.
COMMITTEES
Membership

Mr COULTON (Parkes—Deputy Speaker) (15:57): I have received advice from the Chief Opposition Whip nominating members to be members of certain committees.

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills) (15:58): by leave—I move:

That:

(1) Mr Conroy be discharged from the Standing Committee on Economics and that, in his place, Ms M. M. H. King be appointed a member of the committee; and

(2) Ms M. M. H. King be discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia and that, in her place, Ms O'Toole be appointed a member of the committee.

Question agreed to.

BILLS
Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Amendment (Water) Bill 2016
Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (15:59): Before I was interrupted by members’ statements and then question time, I was posing the question: why? Why has the government failed to deliver on its election promise to establish a transparent register which would provide the Australian community with the information they deserve and require? And I was prosecuting the case that it was more likely to be motivated by the desire to keep concern in the community alive and well rather than by incompetence.

I point out that Fairfax reported today that only a month on from the release of the register Chinese investment in Australian agricultural land has doubled. The Australian Taxation Office conceded that in fact the register, as it has been designed by this government, mainly relies on self-regulation. We know that the land register is already a failure, so based on the fact that the water register is only a replication of the land register we can expect that the water register will also be a failure.

This does not just go to aspirations—it goes to incompetence and it goes to the need for this government to learn that it must proceed on evidence-based policy; it must do its research and check the facts before leaping to populist policies. The list is very long on this front. There is no greater example than the one I mentioned earlier, the backpacker tax. It was proposed without any thought, consideration or consultation and certainly no modelling on the economy-wide effects, including the second round effects. There was no analysis before the decision was made to relocate the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority from Canberra, the national capital, to Minister Joyce's electorate. It was very damaging to the agriculture sector. Belatedly there has been a cost-benefit analysis but the minister will not release it. Then there is the abolition of the Inspector-General of Biosecurity. The Deputy Prime Minister was going on about biosecurity in question time today. Soon after his election he attempted to abolish the position of the Inspector-General of Biosecurity. Then
of course there is drought policy. The government's response to the most recent drought was a complete failure. It was so bad that Minister Joyce stood here in question time and embellished the effectiveness of the drought policy only, of course, to change his *Hansard* and then when he was caught out he sacked his departmental head. This is the way this government does policy, so we should not be surprised to see this particular policy before the House failing before it even begins.

In this debate there has been a lot about the inflow of financial capital, and I appreciate the opportunity the government has given me to take a bit of licence, a bit of an indulgence, to talk of another inflow from foreign sources which is also very important to our country, and that is the inflow of human capital. In September the Armenian community in Australia celebrated a very significant anniversary—it is 25 years since the Eurasian nation state secured its independence from the Soviet Union. Over that period Armenia's development has been rapid and impressive. Already it is punching above its weight. Modern Armenia is enjoying great success despite its difficult history. The Armenian genocide and seven decades of Soviet rule would be enough to break the spirit of any culture or community, but Armenians are resilient and tough. They are also smart, sophisticated and enterprising. They hold a deep commitment to the wellbeing of their fellow man. Today I pay tribute to them and celebrate their anniversary with them. I honour all Australians of Armenian descent. The contributions of Australian Armenians to our country have been significant. I think of our own Joe Hockey—not of my political party but a significant achiever and contributor. I think of Greg Soghomonian, chair of the Armenian National Committee of Australia, who has been recognised for his leadership in diaspora communities. To mark the 25th anniversary Mr Soghomonian was awarded the Medal of Gratitude by the President of the republic at an awards ceremony in Yerevan, Armenia's capital. I have been a keen student of Armenia and its past. I have come to the conclusion our community of nation spends too much time playing word games, arguing about whether what the Armenian people suffered in 1915 was or was not genocide. Rather, we should collectively spend more time recognising that between 1915 and 1923 hundreds of thousands of Armenians had their lives cut short for no other reason than their ethnicity. The best and most effective way to heal those wounds—the wounds still carried today by Armenians and others—is to recognise and acknowledge both the events of the past and the motivations behind them. Only then will the global community collectively be able to offer the Armenians sufficient empathy and only then will the international community be able to genuinely claim an unqualified determination to identify and eradicate genocide in every corner of the globe.

The world is a better place for the emergence of a young Armenian nation with such a rich history and culture. Today I celebrate their anniversary with them and congratulate them—including all those living here in Australia who are making such a great contribution. I thank the House for its indulgence.

**Mr BROAD** (Mallee) (16:05): I rise to talk about the Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Amendment (Water) Bill 2016. This was an amendment put forward by the Greens and it is one of the few occasions in here where I have actually commended Adam Bandt for putting forward an amendment because I think this one does have value. Transparency creates good policy. We have lots of discussion around who owns our agricultural land, which is a discussion that we should have as Australians, as we have
discussions around who owns our water entitlements. I think transparency does lead to good policy and ultimately this is a very good amendment and I am happy to speak on behalf of it. Water is wealth—it is earning potential. I grew up on an irrigation farm and I now represent a community that has the Murray River alongside it. Lots of water is extracted out of the Murray River and is turned into wonderful wealth, so you can see just how important water is. I am often in aircraft, and you can see what the countryside looks like where there is irrigation and what the country looks like where there is no water.

I want to reflect a little bit on the journey that has brought us to this point in water policy. When water was first extracted from the Murray-Darling Basin system close to 100 years ago there was a great vision of turning an area that was running very light stocking rates into a prosperous area. Of course, when they assigned that land they assigned a water allocation to the land. That served us pretty well for a very long time, but there was a view that if we decoupled—if we removed that water asset from that land—it would create some greater reform in the irrigation communities. Of course that was quite controversial. There are some who say that that should never have happened.

I want to reflect a little on the intention of that reform. The intention was to allow greater diversification of crops. It was to allow water to flow to the highest value productive use. We have seen across my patch some significant diversification of products that would never have been available had we not decoupled water from land. We grow 25 per cent of Australia's carrots in the electorate of Mallee. We now grow nearly $1 billion worth of almonds in my patch. These things probably would never have taken place had we not decoupled water from land.

The intention of the reform was never to take water out of production; it was to simply allow the water to move between production systems. I fear that there have been some negative consequences of that reform. I have talked about the positive consequences but negative consequences took place as the Labor Party began to implement the buybacks of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. I was instrumental in those discussions when I was President of the Victorian Farmers Federation. Both sides of the parliament have been quite pleased to work on a cap—a maximum of 1,500 gigalitres—that will be purchased out of consumptive use.

The market has matured. It has taken a little while for people to get their head around managing water—managing a water portfolio as an asset external to the land that they also own as an asset. This has led at times to lessons. People who were purchasing water thought they had it and then lost it through carryover when the Hume Dam spilled. It has led to a little bit of uncertainty. I think that is now starting to find a bit more equilibrium as people work through what is New South Wales entitlement, what is Victorian entitlement, what is high security and what is low security. It is not simple; it is quite complex. I have grown up around water management and irrigation management all my life and I have represented farmers, but even I do not profess to know all there is to know about water management.

That led to the development of water brokers. In my opinion water brokers have a very key role to play as people develop their water portfolio, as they assist those who go through the marketplace. I might add that reform does need to take place with water brokers. I believe trust funds need to be set up like in real estate. When you are transferring water—even a temporary sale from one user to another—there are quite substantial amounts of money. There
is no legislative framework that requires a water broker to hold those funds in trust. That potentially puts at risk the money in that transaction process if a water broker folds. That is a reform I think still needs to continue to move forward.

There has been the challenge between the sale of permanent entitlements and temporary sales. Of course there is the risk of speculators entering the market and playing a role in undermining the intention of the original water reform. The intention of decoupling water was so that you could take water from one consumptive use to another. The intention was never that you would develop a network of middle people who own water without having a productive use for that water and who would say: ‘This is a package of water that is simply going to be speculated. I'm going to sell it in temporary sales to the highest bidder each year.’

It is my great ambition that we move towards a process where we eliminate speculators from the marketplace. Essentially water is not just a financial package; water is a physical product and, under the stewardship of the Australian people, you can take an entitlement and you can grow something with it. The principle makes sense that, if water is not used to grow grass for dairy cows this year because it is drier, it will move upstream to go to horticulture. People generally endorse the principle that you can make more money growing cotton than growing lambs this year so you move the water from one to the other. But I think we should be very uneasy with the concept of a person sitting in an office in Collins Street having a portfolio of water when they do not actually own a farm or have a use for it and are just speculating on the market. That was also not the intention of the reforms of decoupling. This legislation goes to the heart of that. It is saying that an investor who is offshore should be declared within the marketplace. If they are going to be a substantial water holder, they should have some transparency around that. That was never the great intention of decoupling of water. It was originally linked to land, but in this day and age this is the way the marketplace has moved.

I also think there needs to be some more reform around those who do hold water and do not have a consumptive use for it. One reform is that if you are going to carry water—to carryover water is to keep water in a dam and not use it in that given year—and you are not a consumptive user of it then you should take a 15 per cent surcharge on that, because you are essentially removing the opportunity for someone else to store water in that catchment and use that water for consumptive use. That 15 per cent surcharge—essentially a loss of 15 per cent—if you choose to carry that over incentivises you to make sure that the water you hold goes into the productive market. Water is not to be held for you to play the market with; water is to be made available for us as a country to grow our products so we can then export and create jobs for Australians.

Another thing needs to happen. An extraction point needs to be listed. That is a way of eliminating speculators from the market. If you hold a water entitlement, you have to nominate where the extraction point is going to be. That limits your ability to be a speculator, and it favours those who are going to use water in producing products.

I think there do need to be some changes in our carryover laws. This is more a state legislation, because each state has different regulations around carryover. At the moment, for example, Dartmouth is about 75 per cent full and Hume is full and spilling, and it does burden me that we are seeing people who quite frugally use their water and hold some water back in carryover losing that carryover because the trigger for the carryover is the Hume spilling, as
opposed to Dartmouth spilling. I think there would be merit—in particular, for those who have carryover as a result of frugal water management on their own farm—in having that carryover linked to Dartmouth as opposed to Hume.

It is a little bit different if you are someone who has just purchased carryover water as a risk management strategy. I think, if you are someone who, on your own farm, has said, 'Well, I've got 100 megalitres of water. I'm going to be very frugal with my water management. I'm going to use 60 megalitres of water. I have been able to do that by putting better technology on and by managing my practices. Therefore, I have kept 40 megalitres back in the catchment,'—to then be penalised in a year like this, where Hume has spilled and they have actually lost it. It sends the wrong signal. What we want to send as the signal is that, if you manage your water very well and you can still produce the crops that you can produce, then you should be able to be rewarded for that.

I also believe that there is justifiable concern about environmental groups who want to go and buy consumptive water and hold that for an environmental flow. We, as a government, in conjunction with the opposition, have found a middle ground of a 1,500 gigalitres cap of water that can flow for the environment. That is important. Some of the people who are the most passionate about river health are the irrigators who live on the river. They live and breathe it. They want to have a long-term, safe and healthy environment for their children to be brought up in those communities.

In doing that, we have agreed on a 1,500 gigalitre cap. It concerns me that there are environmental groups who are out there buying water that is traditionally used for growing food. They are choosing to hold that back and have their own environmental flows. I think that then becomes very hard for the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to manage, because they have got other groups, such as the Nature Conservancy and other groups, who want to try their own space in water management. I think that does not lead to good management. Ultimately, good management leads to better fish stocks, better river health, better trees and better wetlands. The water of anyone who is a private water holder and who intends to use their water for the environment should be included in the 1,500 gigalitre cap. It certainly should not be water above that.

I commend the Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Amendment (Water) Bill 2016. Transparency creates good policy. I believe that common sense is what people are looking for. People believe in healthy rivers, they believe in healthy environments and they want to use the water for its main intended use, which was to look after the health of the river and to look after the economic opportunities for their families that are growing food and for the country as a whole. They think transparency would be a very good thing, and I think this legislation goes a long way to delivering that.

It is very easy to work out the value of water. If you can have clear legislation that shows how many megalitres are held by foreign owners, you can very quickly, on the back of an envelope or with a calculator, work out what that translates to dollars, which has been one of the criticisms about foreign ownership of agricultural land, because land is not so clearly defined. Always being mindful of the intention of the decoupling of water years ago, which was about moving water to its highest value use, which was about ensuring that we keep water for production so that Australians can feed themselves, so that Australians can export
the food and so Australians can have jobs. I think, with some good, sound and reasoned discussion, we can deliver confidence in water management in this country.

Ms SWANSON (Paterson) (16:20): I rise to speak in support of the Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Amendment (Water) Bill 2016. I speak in support of this bill even though it is manifestly inadequate. This bill amends the government's Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Act 2015, which was also manifestly inadequate. Before the election, Labor proposed a foreign ownership register that would allow every Australian to see who had purchased what agricultural land, when, and for how much. The coalition said that they would match this promise. They did not. As the member for Mallee has just pointed out, transparency creates good policy—indeed it does. Labor's plan would have ensured transparency of foreign ownership of Australian land, and in doing so it would have helped build community confidence in foreign investment in agriculture.

Labor's plan would have created a searchable database in which any Australian who wanted to could have checked who was buying what, when and for how much with the simple click of a mouse. The government's register does not do that. The government register provides only an overview and a data trend about overall levels of foreign ownership. It is clearly not the level of detail that we proposed. It does not provide the important details that Australians want to know—the details that such a register should provide.

The national Agricultural Land Register has been described by my colleague the member for Hunter as the 'Clayton's register': the register you have when you are not having a register. I do, wholeheartedly, agree. Given a primary purpose of the register is about allaying some of the concerns in the community about ownership of agricultural land and, thereby, building public confidence in foreign investment and in agricultural land, it clearly fails. It does the opposite. It is manifestly inadequate.

What does the register tell us? Well, it tells us that 13.6 per cent of our farmland is owned by foreign investors. But even that seems to be untrue. The Sydney Morning Herald today reports that the amount of agricultural land owned by Chinese interests has soared to above three million hectares, more than double the 1.46 million declared by the Australian Taxation Office last month. While some recent significant sales were not done by the cut-off date of 30 June, a compilation of reported land sales, endorsed by agribusiness experts, suggests that even at that date Chinese investors held about two million hectares of land—not the 1.46 million the register says. And it has been broadly criticised by many of these agribusiness experts, who are saying that clearly the numbers coming out of the ATO are just not correct. Surely this calls into question the accuracy of the register as it currently stands?

And it gets worse. The register relies heavily on self-regulation, so the Australian people have to rely on overseas companies to register their interests. And if they do not? They can be slapped with a penalty of—wait for it—$9,000. If they fail to do so, $9,000 is the penalty. I am sure if you were paying $45 million for a property, the threat of a $9,000 penalty is hardly going to make you shake in your boots.

That Sydney Morning Herald story today highlights another shortcoming of this register. It does not tell us what it means by 'farmland'. In this register 'farmland' can be an area that is highly productive and critical to our food security, or 'farmland' can be a dry part in the middle of the country with a few head of cattle running on it. There is no discernment between the two: an acre is an acre, no matter where it is, no matter what it produces. We
really need more detail about this, and this register does not give us that detail or allay any fears.

The problem for many people in Australia is not foreign investment, and in particular Chinese investment, which is on the rise. The problem for many people in Australia is they do not have a full understanding, a full visibility, a full transparency of what is going on. That is what causes them to be so fearful and suspicious. They do not know the who, what, when and for how much—something a register of foreign ownership should provide.

We do need foreign investment. No-one is arguing that point. We know that it is incredibly important to us. If we are going to fulfil our aspirations in Australian agriculture to capitalise on the opportunities in Asia, we need foreign investment in agriculture and agribusiness. Foreign investment has many agreed benefits for Australia. It provides additional and important capital for economic growth. It creates employment opportunities for Australians. It improves consumer choice, promotes healthy competition and increases Australia’s capacity to compete in global markets. It also increases competitiveness and productivity by introducing new technology. It provides new infrastructure, enabling access to global supply chains and markets. It enhances our skills base, and enables us to sustain higher growth. If we are going to expect the community to support foreign investment in agriculture and land, and in agribusiness, then we need to guarantee that they can have confidence in the system of registration of ownership. We need to provide them with that information and certainty.

The government has hidden behind privacy in this debate. The government has said it cannot release that information based on the privacy and confidentiality of those foreign investors. But at the same time it has said that this information is publicly available by other means, such as through state land titles offices. People could find out this information if they have the time, the wherewithal and the resources to go looking for it and if they know what they are actually looking for and where to look. Surely it is not a privacy argument. Surely the purpose of a register is to collect that information, which is already publicly available, and put it in the one place? Put it in the one register and make it easily accessible for all Australians to have a look if they are interested. But rather than do that, this government fuels community fear of foreign ownership and capitalises on that fear.

The reasons often given for concerns about foreign ownership of agricultural land are food security and national security. The basis for this fear around food security is perfectly reasonable. We live in a big, dry country and farming it can be difficult. We live in a world with an increasing need for protein, and for food in general. I understand that Australians are rightly concerned about food security and food affordability into the future. People want to be certain that we, as a government, are protecting all Australians now and into the future. We need to be able to feed ourselves and we need to be confident that we have this capacity. Currently, we export two-thirds of everything we grow in this country, so we certainly have the capacity to feed ourselves and many more worldwide. But we cannot ignore the genuine fears of Australians that we might lose that capacity and so we must be vigilant and informed about who owns our food-producing land.

The Chinese, the Americans, the English bring money to lift our productivity, to diversify our agricultural interests and bring us ready-made markets in growing countries. And all of that is a good thing for Australia. We have the Foreign Investment Review Board that is tasked with making sure all these investments are in the national interest. Investments are
reviewed on a case by case basis, maximising investment flow while protecting Australia's interests and providing assurance to the community.

In my electorate of Paterson, part of the New South Wales Hunter Valley, we have substantial coalmines that sit side by side with our substantial agricultural interests. The foreign investment in those coalmines is 10 times the foreign investment in agriculture in Australia. Those international coal companies have not undermined the sovereignty of our government in any way; they have not threatened our national interest. What they have done is created lots of jobs and lots of wealth in the Hunter region and beyond. The foreign investment of coalmining has brought employment and wealth we would not have had otherwise. It is important that we have a diversified economy and a diversified agricultural sector, but it is also important we understand the source of that diversity.

There are some things we do know about foreign ownership of agricultural land. We do know that the proportion of overseas ownership is increasing. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the proportion of overseas ownership of agricultural land in 2013 was 12.4 per cent. This register reports it as 13.6 per cent, and today the story from The Sydney Morning Herald suggests it is even higher. It is clearly a movable feast. We know that the biggest investors are the United Kingdom, the United States and the Netherlands, as well as China. But it is still the case that we do not know the detail about who these investors are, what land they own, when they bought the land and how much they paid for it. And it seems the government would repeat that failing with the proposed water register.

This bill amends the Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land to establish a Register of Foreign Ownership of Water Entitlements. It provides for the collection of information, and publication of statistics, about foreign holdings of registrable water entitlements and long-term contractual water rights. It provides for increased transparency on the levels of foreign ownership of water entitlements across Australia. But it fails to guarantee increased transparency over the detail of who owns what in terms of water entitlements and how much they paid for it. That is the critical detail that Australians really need and want to know.

Our agricultural land and our water resources are arguably our nation's most valuable natural assets. It is vital we have a good understanding of foreign investment levels in land and water, and it is vital that those investments are subject to appropriate consideration and scrutiny. This register must be clear about the extent and value of foreign investment in water access entitlements and trends in foreign investment in water access entitlements, but it also must deliver on the detail. If the water register, as an extension of the land register, does not include sufficient detail about who owns what and how much they paid, then it will be nothing but a Clayton's register, like the agricultural land register. Water resources are a necessary input for most sectors of the economy. Agriculture consumes the greatest proportion of water resources and is expected to account for the highest proportion of water access entitlements on the register. There is also significant water use by the mining, manufacturing and energy sectors and of course households.

The nature of water rights is complex, as the member for Mallee pointed out, and it differs across Australia. Water rights can have different characteristics and can be tied to land or not. The largest natural water systems in the country are the Murray-Darling Basin, the Great Artesian Basin and the Lake Eyre Basin. The Murray-Darling Basin is home to more than two
million people and includes 53,000 farm businesses. It is vital we have an understanding of who has rights to our most valuable water sources. It is proposed that the water register captures: details of the foreign investor; whether the foreign investor is a government; the nationality of the investor; the type and level of foreign investment and interest; the official water access entitlement number; the type of water covered by the entitlement; and the volume of the entitlement. Unlike the agricultural land register, the water register will capture all industry sectors, not just agricultural uses. This is also important.

I mentioned previously that the Hunter Valley has the coexistence of agriculture and coalmines, and so the allocation of water resources becomes particularly important. Coalminers in the Hunter Valley and elsewhere throughout the state of New South Wales are facing stricter limits on their groundwater extractions, under new rules imposed by the New South Wales government. These rules are recognition of the value of water to industry but, importantly, a recognition of the concern the community has over how competing interests are reconciled in relation to water. It is a most precious resource.

It is important that Australians have an understanding of who owns, or has access to, our water resources. Given the legitimate concern over foreign ownership of land and, by necessity, water, the government must ensure its water register is more transparent than its land register. The Clayton’s land register has not given confidence to the Australian people about foreign ownership of agricultural land, and a Clayton’s water register will not give confidence to the Australian people about foreign ownership of our other vitally important natural resource, our water. I implore this government to do a better job with the water resources register than it has done with the land register.

Mr DRUM (Murray) (16:35): I am delighted to be able to contribute to the debate on the Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Amendment (Water) Bill 2016. The whole concept of a water register has enormous importance in my electorate of Murray as it would give so many landholders and irrigators the confidence and the knowledge that they need. There are many purported myths out there floating around. They either have merit or they do not have merit, but what we need is the knowledge. At the moment, that knowledge does not exist. Continually in the debate around water—which is the most contentiously debated issue in my electorate—a whole range of propositions are put forward and we do not know whether they are partially true, totally false or somewhere in between. We understand it is difficult and we understand it was much simpler when water was tied to land, which it was prior to around 2002, when we decoupled water from land. That opened up the opportunity for many irrigators, many primary producers, to on-sell their water and either move into dry farming, dry production, or sell their water, repay debt—which the millennium drought was very good at racking up—and then use what at that stage was low-cost temporary water to run their agricultural production.

So that is a backdrop to what we now have. We now have areas, such as the Goulburn-Murray irrigation district, which are operating with much less water than there was initially for that particular region.

The rains that have fallen in this particular year are, in effect, going to mask a range of the issues that are very pertinent to the irrigators of the Murray. But the rains have not fixed the issue that has become a real problem, which is that, in the traditionally strong areas of agriculture around the Goulburn Valley—namely, dairy and horticulture—the input costs
associated with water are becoming prohibitive and really are having a significant blocking effect on further development and investment.

So it is critical to bring out into the open some of the myths and theories that are put out there and the fear associated with the question of who actually does own the water within the region. The transparency associated with this bill is going to be critical. People would suggest that the Chicago fire brigade owns a whole heap of water that is in the Victorian Goulburn-Murray system. We always hear stories that Eddie McGuire owns a heap of water. But, whether that is true or not true, we do not know the quantity, we do not know the extent and we do not know the value of that water.

There are quite a lot of farmers who retire from the land, sell the land, and move into town but hang onto the right to their water and use that water to trade each year as their retirement package or their pension. Under the rules at the moment, they have every right to do that. But the extent of that is the issue that is really driving so much of the angst within the industry. Again, this bill has the capacity to take away much of that angst by bringing all of those ownership issues and the quantity of the ownership out into the open. I think that is also what we need to know.

There is a very strong view that we should go back to having only those involved in primary production owning water. That is also not as easy and as clear as it might sound, because we do have a whole raft of smaller landholders who use a certain amount of water for primary production but also have ownership of much larger quantities of water than they could ever use on their properties, and those quantities of water are primarily used for trading purposes in each year.

So there is a range of complexities associated with bringing down hard and fast rules on what people should and should not be able to do with water. There is a whole range of opinions as to trading water outside of the region. We are waiting for the Murray-Darling Basin Plan to be completed and for the consequences of the plan to be felt once and for all and to see how a completed plan is actually going to work for productive agriculture. And there is an opinion that, until that is completed, we should have a temporary ban on water leaving each region. That is a good idea—unless you are looking to retire out of agriculture, retire your debt and move into retirement with the biggest cheque and profit you can get for your assets, which is every person's right. Then, to limit those sales to within your district is going to diminish your returns on a lifetime of work. So, again, these views have merit, but they also have negative effects for a group of people.

There is also a view that people can buy or sell in any given year but people should not be able to buy and sell in any given year, thus moving into the brokerage space where people become speculators with their water. In a given year, many farmers might decide that they are running a bit short and so need to purchase a bit of temporary water, and many of them then do so. Many of them with strong holdings of permanent, secure water realise that, due to some good rains, they are in a position to sell some water. But should we put a ban on those people who are buying and selling water in the same year? That is effectively moving them into that brokerage or trading space, and all that does is to tend to move the price of water up as it becomes a heavily traded commodity. Also, many people buy water at the start of the year so that they have a secure amount of water for their production and then, at the end of the
year, if there is opportunity, they may also get rid of some of that water rather than keeping it in carryover. So, again, it is not easy or simple.

But there is also another view that, if you are going to be a water-holder, then you should pay all of the associated charges and costs that go with being a primary producer. At this stage, obviously, if you are a trader, then you do not pay the delivery shares because the delivery shares are locked into your particular farm and the number of outlets through which you bring that water into your farm. But there are other costs. So there is a view that, if people own massive amounts of water simply to make a profit from, then, to put things back on an even playing field, they should pay all the other associated charges that those who are involved in primary production pay. There is some real merit in that.

It is also worth mentioning the impacts of water; we cannot allow water to just go to the highest productive use. At the moment, almonds are the highest productive use. We already know that up around the Robinvale region there is, literally, 40 to 50 kilometres of almond plantations, which you will see as you drive along the area. They are a very profitable commodity at the moment, but the level of employment associated with an acre or a hectare is absolutely minimal. If you want to do a comparison of horticulture or dairy against almonds, you will find that for a similar amount of water, you are likely to have 38 people employed in horticulture. For a similar unit of water you are likely to have about 18 to 19 people employed in dairy, and for a similar unit of water in almonds you are likely to have one person employed.

If we are going to let water just go to the highest use, at the moment you would have all of Victoria covered in almond trees and hardly anybody employed in the production. And all that it is going to take, if we play this out, is for California, in a couple of years, to work out how to produce almonds at a cheaper price. Then, all of a sudden, our industry is taken from underneath us and, in the meantime, we would have absolutely fractured our horticulture and dairy industries because were naive enough to think that letting water go to the highest productive use was a good measure. So, we need to be very mindful of the rest of our communities, the rest of our society, and how important it is that we have an overarching view of the best use of water in our areas.

There is no doubt that the Murray-Darling Basin Plan was necessary to stop the then Labor government from buying water indiscriminately out of the market and returning that water indiscriminately back to the environment. We understand that the Murray-Darling Basin Plan was necessary to put together a plan that was going to give the environment the water that it needed. But, again, we know that there are many in the Labor Party who wanted much more than the 2,750 gigalitres. There were many within the Greens who wanted over 7,000 gigalitres—nearly all of the water in the Murray-Darling Basin to be devoted to the environment. We understand that the balance has, in many people's view, including my own, tipped way too far in favour of the environment. We need to look at ways we can look after our primary producers. We need to look at ways that this 450 gigalitres of 'upwater', which is pencilled in the agreement, can head towards South Australia. We need to look at ways to make everybody understand the social and economic impact that it is going to have on the Goulburn-Murray region. If that water was ever to leave the region, it would have such a negative impact that it does not even bear thinking about.
But, more importantly than all of that, we need to make sure that this bill finds its way through the parliament so that when we are having these debates in the future, we know who it is that owns the water, and we know the comparison between their landholdings and their water holdings. Then, we can see very clearly that they are using the vast majority of their water for productive use, or they are using the vast majority of their water for trading. We know that the more people we have purely in the market for trading, the more it forces the price of water up, which will have another detrimental effect on your standard primary producer.

So, our biggest challenge in the regions at the moment is to become more competitive on a world market. We produce this amazing quality produce. It does not matter what it is; we produce some of the best produce in the world. But we need to be able to do it at a globally competitive price, and one of the biggest input costs in the Goulburn Valley and Murray electorate is the cost of water. If we have people in there who are jacking the price of water up, simply from their trying to trade their way to wealth, then we need to look at bringing that situation out into the open. This bill, with the owner registry, is going to do that. So I welcome this bill. I wish it a speedy passage through both houses. (Time expired)

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (16:50): I rise to support the passage of the Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Amendment (Water) Bill 2016. In the recent election campaign in July this year, the Nick Xenophon Team ran on a ticket of increased government transparency and support for Australian made. The Australian people expect more transparency, and this bill, I believe, makes some inroads on that policy theme.

The debate on the sale of our national water interests naturally involves the debate on foreign investment in Australian agriculture as a whole. I am not opposed to foreign investment in our country but I am opposed to 'selling the farm' to the highest bidder when it means that much of our prime agricultural land will end up in the hands of international interests. And I do not apologise when I say that the best investment in Australia is that which comes from Australians. The government must balance the need for investment with the national need for sovereignty and security.

The Nick Xenophon Team policy on foreign investment is clear; we believe the Foreign Investment Review Board should lower their threshold so that any sale over $5 million is scrutinised. And I look to the New Zealand framework, which ensures any sale of land over five hectares is scrutinised to consider the benefit to the nation. It is an approach that we should aim for. New Zealand considers a number of set criteria for the national interest, taking into account whether a proposed sale will result in the creation of new job opportunities in New Zealand, and whether the sale will increase New Zealand exports or will add to market competition. I believe that they have it right and we should follow in a similar framework. Our government regularly looks to New Zealand for public policy approaches, and I would encourage it to look at New Zealand's foreign investment policy for review.

While the foreign ownership of land register is a great initiative, the statistics the government released earlier this year were, in my opinion, less than satisfactory. The Australian public now knows that 13.6 per cent of our farmland is owned by international interests, but where is the detail? What is the dollar value of that land? Where is the detail on the total number of farms owned? Where is the easy public access? Where are the region-
specific statistics? We have taken the first steps towards greater public access, but it is limited. We could provide, and we should provide, much greater transparency.

The introduction of a water register allows the government to kill two birds, effectively, with one stone: learn from the mistakes with the rollout of the land register, fix the anomalies and make sure that the water register is sufficiently transparent from the beginning. The Australian people expect and deserve this kind of transparency. They deserve to know the details of foreign ownership in Australian land and water.

I am proud to say that my amazing electorate of Mayo is home to a significant volume of highly arable agricultural farmland. We have dairy farmers, cherry growers, apple growers, winemakers and everything in between. There are so many jobs to be found in food production, and it is my hope that South Australia will transition from being the 'automotive manufacturing state' to the 'agricultural and food production state'. But, if these farms are not in Australian hands, how can we guarantee that they will create Australian jobs?

Every week I speak with constituents in my electorate who are concerned at how much land is being sold to foreign investors. There is a genuine concern among regular Australians that we will lose our food security. My colleague Senator Nick Xenophon has spoken about Australia being able to feed the world. I agree with him. But we cannot feed the world if we cannot first feed ourselves, and without being in control of our own food security, and our water, we are at risk of not being able to feed our own country. In recent years, we have been so focused on a mining boom that I fear we will be missing out on the benefits of the great dining boom.

Once the land is sold overseas, there is no government ability to control how our land is used and where food produced on the land is sent. Henry Kissinger once said, 'Who controls the food supply controls the people.' In my opinion, whoever controls the country's water controls the country. In this country, our water is everything. We are lucky in Australia to have some highly valuable agricultural land, but we have many regions that do not have water, and water is the source that determines that value and opportunity. It is our lifeblood.

We need a strategic approach to foreign investment, rather than the inconsistent approach we have now. We should not be increasing the profits of overseas businesses just to water our crops. With more information we can have a more informed decision-making process. A register such as this is a good start, but we need to do more, and how we can do more, and how we can do this much better, is through greater transparency for the Australian community. Our community deserves to know.

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (16:56): It gives me great pleasure to speak on this particular bill, because it is a very important bill—as all bills are here, but this goes to the heart of our ability as a nation to grow our products and produce food on the land. To do that, we need water. Therefore, the Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Amendment (Water) Bill 2016 goes to the heart of those things.

Labor for a long time has supported an agricultural land register and also a register of water rights. When I was in this place last time, from 2010 to 2013, there was a group that was very vocal on this issue. We formed a caucus committee to speak to the minister at the time and to do some research, and it was agreed then that Labor would come up with a bill for an
agricultural land registry and also a water rights registry. Of course, the election was then called, and Labor was not able to implement its bill.

At the last election, both parties went to the electorate promising that there would be a water rights registry and, of course, the foreign ownership of agricultural land registry as well. Disappointingly, though, the current register that exists is very secretive. The public does not have access to that register. As we heard the member for Mayo say earlier, if someone wishes to look up the particular ownership and to find who is buying, who is selling and at what time they are buying and selling, unfortunately there is no way of doing that. Therefore, as we heard the shadow minister say earlier, it is the Clayton's register, the register you have when you do not have a register. So, in developing this particular amendment for a water rights register, it would be very important that we open up the doors and the blinds that are covering the information that is required to give the Australian public the confidence that is required to know that the registers of water rights and agricultural land rights are informative and can tell people the time that rights are being bought and sold, who is buying and who is selling these products.

We need to build public confidence on this issue so that people have no fear of our system. It is an important system, because if you have a look at what was taking place during the years when we had the drought—so it is not that long ago, and no doubt there will be more droughts in this nation in years to come—you find that at that time there were people buying water rights all around the country—international companies and people that had absolutely no relationship to agriculture. It was all on speculative decisions made to make money.

It could be an extremely dangerous situation, when you think that people who are speculating in these water rights are purchasing them on behalf of clients and maybe manipulating the market. But what is even scarier—and you may say it is something that is very extreme—is that, if we allow them to take control and manipulate that price, what is stopping them from going back to the people who are growing our food and saying, in a drought year or a year when there is an extreme shortage of water, 'If you want the water, we've got the water for you, but we want to buy your product at a certain price'? When people are in need, when people are desperate, these sorts of deals do take place. If, under this bill, you had a registry for water rights that was open and transparent, you would be able to see who is buying and who is purchasing, and if there are any dangers to our nation and any detriment to our agriculture, our industries et cetera.

This bill, as I said, fails to give the Australian public confidence on who owns what, when they owned it, when they transferred it and for what purposes. Water rights and water registration are really important. In the state of South Australia, anyone is free to go to the land titles office and see when a particular property was bought and sold, by whom, and who has the mortgage on it. If we had the same system here, you would be able to see if there are any detrimental effects towards a particular industry—maybe agriculture—or any other areas where it would be detrimental to our nation.

Labor will be supporting this bill. But, as I said, it is a bill that does not go far enough. The bill is supposed to allow for the collection of information and the publication of statistics about foreign holdings of registerable water entitlements and long-term contractual water rights. Australia is a world leader in the regulation and trade of water entitlements. It is recognised around the world. Since about 2004, governments here have progressively had
water entitlements from land titles to encourage a greater market for water to develop. Australian water markets are well established, relatively large and greater than $30 billion in size—that is a lot of money—and on average over 1.5 billion cubic metres of liquid is traded annually. They are supported by a robust regulatory framework. We want it to be more robust. We want infrastructure and market mechanisms that facilitate efficient water trade.

In *The Sydney Morning Herald* today was an article about how the land register is not keeping up with what is actually happening. The article stated that the amount of land that was foreign owned was far higher than what had been reported. I understand it may take some time for reporting of the purchase of a particular acquisition of land et cetera to reach the registry, but certainly that story this morning reflected that we are not on the mark when it comes to this. For example, the article states:
The amount of agricultural land owned by Chinese interests has soared above 3 million hectares—way above the amount that had been reported. Further:
The ATO said it did not comment on individual land holdings and acknowledged its register relied heavily on self-registration, with penalties up to $9000 … When you are spending $50 million, $100 million or $20 million, $9,000 is absolutely a joke. There is no incentive for you to register, because the onus is on the person that is buying the land. Another article about international investors, published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* a couple of years ago, states:

International investors are circling Australia's water market, looking to snap up hundreds of millions of dollars worth of our most precious national resource, with almost no government limit on how much they can buy.

As I said earlier, we are in a unique position in Australia, where we have vast lands that grow everything, from grapes to wheat—you name it. Water entitlements are extremely important for our agricultural industries. If we allow control of that water in the hands of those who do not have the same interests as we do and who are basically speculating to make money on a particular entitlement, then we are going down the wrong track. I think our future here in Australia, with the collapse of manufacturing around the nation, is in value-adding to our agribusinesses. It is ensuring that we open up markets overseas, and we do export quite a bit.

It is not to say that I am against foreign investors or people investing in Australia. It has always been a very important part of our economy. But I think we have a right as a nation to be able to access who owns what, who is buying what, who is selling what and on what scale people are purchasing, whether it be water rights or whether it be agricultural land—ensuring that we are in control of our destiny. I am not saying that lightly. What I am saying is that we need to ensure that what takes place in this nation does so because we have determined it, not because a foreign company is looking at making some money very quickly for their investors or shoring up what their needs are before our needs. I am all for investment. Bring it in if it is to the benefit of this nation, if it is to the benefit of creating jobs—that is fine. How do we do that? By monitoring a register. But this register basically has a curtain over it and we cannot see who is buying and who is selling. The way this is set up, if there are trends et cetera it will be very difficult to identify those things.

Basically, this bill only fuels the xenophobia that perhaps is out there, by making it sound like we are hiding something. We should open it up. Open it up and allow everyone—allow
members of parliament and journalists—to see who is behind the buying and selling of our precious land and water rights here in Australia. It was not that long ago, when we had a drought here, that we saw people investing in our water rights in an area where at the same time people who were slugging it out on the land were suffering because of the drought. We had people and companies investing and trying to make money by speculating on water rights. So I would encourage the government to ensure that we take away that veil and open up the curtains to allow people to see exactly what is taking place, and not creating more xenophobia by keeping that veil on there and not letting us know who is buying and selling, at what price, and when and where.

Mr PASIN (Barker) (17:08): I rise in support of the Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Amendment (Water) Bill 2016. Well I might, because it was Mark Twain who said, 'Whiskey is for drinking, but water is for fighting over.' I have heard that code many a time. As the member for Barker and, effectively, the member for the River Murray, in South Australia, I understand the passion that comes along with water entitlements.

I grew up in south-east of South Australia. It is a little known fact that there is more irrigated horticulture in the south-east of South Australia than in all of the South Australian river communities, from the river Murray. So across the electorate, you could say, including in an area of the Mallee in Barker, which one would think would be reasonably parched, we see irrigated horticulture and agriculture. It was Neil Craig, then coach of the Crows, who said, 'If you cannot measure it, you cannot manage it,' and that is exactly what this bill seeks to do. If we are to manage foreign investment in this country in the interests of our nation—in the national interest—we need to know exactly the extent, nature and scope of that investment.

Over the course of what is now close to four years of government, what you have seen is measures by our government towards the establishment of, initially, a land register, or a register of foreign ownership of Australian land, and, now, taking the quite sensible extension of that concept through this bill, to a register of foreign ownership of water entitlements in the country. Those opposite are suggesting that we have not gone far enough, and that may well be right. There is always more work to do. I see this bill as part of a continuum as we work towards a really deep and conscious understanding in this country of land and water entitlements, particularly when we relate it to agricultural endeavour.

To those opposite, I say that you had a long time between 2007 and 2013 to embark upon these proposals, but we saw nothing. To those opposite who might criticise us in terms of this bill not going far enough, I say that it is most certainly a step in the right direction. I need to acknowledge that those opposite are supporting the government on this bill.

You have heard me say this before, and I said recently in the party room, my formative years were spent on our farming property moving, in summertime, heavy irrigation pipes across onion crops. I would suggest that they were some of the best and the worst times of my life. The work was hard and back-breaking, but I saw what irrigated agriculture can do. My family had the opportunities borne of their water entitlement and water infrastructure that they would not have had otherwise.

All who have contributed to this debate have quite appropriately identified how important water entitlements are. This is a nation that is known as the driest continent on earth. We need to make the most of our water entitlements. Getting back to the spirit of this bill, we need to
know exactly who has an interest in this asset—that is, water entitlements across the nation. It needs to be managed in the national interest and this bill is most certainly a step in that direction.

I remind you that Mark Twain said, 'Whiskey is for drinking, but water is for fighting over.' We need to know exactly who and what entities have interests in Australian irrigation entitlements so that this nation and this parliament can manage those assets, because if you cannot measure it you cannot manage it. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (17:13): I represent most of North Queensland. If North Queensland were a separate country we would be the wettest continent on earth. Australia is not short of water, but the water is in the north-east quadrant of Australia. Easily the most important person in Australian history is Edward Theodore. Most people in this room would not even know who he was. If you think I am exaggerating, Paul Keating was asked who his heroes were and without hesitation he said JT Lang and Ted Theodore. Malcolm Fraser was asked who his heroes were and without any hesitation he said the American Franklin Roosevelt and the Australian Edward Theodore. And a humble, humble person like me—I have on my walls, naturally, the great Jack McEwen and Edward Theodore. When Jamie Packer came into my office he looked up and said, 'My grandfather's closest friend'.

So, why did he go into federal politics? He was the youngest ever Australian state treasurer, the youngest ever Australian premier, the youngest ever federal Treasurer, the youngest ever acting Prime Minister. Why did he go into federal politics? It was because he could see that he did not have the money or the resources to develop the water resources of his homeland, which was North Queensland—my homeland. We have these magnificent water resources. When we all die and go up to heaven and the good Lord says, 'Well, I gave you all this water, what were you doing with it?' we will say, 'Oh, we didn't want to use it, because we didn't know what could happen—it could cause ecological disasters'. Well, I think there is a story in there somewhere about a bloke who had six talents and a bloke who had three talents and a bloke who had one talent, who said, 'I hid the one talent under a rock, because I thought someone might thieve it'.

So, this is what we are doing with it. There are 300 million megalitres in Australia. Just remember that figure: 300 million megalitres. Of those, 220 million megalitres are in north-east Queensland. For reasons best known to themselves, the government decided that Fitzroy in Western Australia is not going to be developed. The Ord, for reasons best known to the government, has been given—it was not bought—to the Chinese, along with the Port of Darwin, which was sold; we got something out of that, but nothing out of the Ord. The only river in that other quadrant is the Daly, and yes, it should be developed. The Alligator Rivers run into a national park, so forget about the rest of Western Australia. That brings us back to North Queensland. The only place you can develop water resources in Australia is North Queensland. A fifth of Australia is in the Murray-Darling. The honourable member from South Australia represents one of the most productive areas of the Murray-Darling in South Australia. And we are told that some 60 per cent of Australia's agricultural production comes off the Murray-Darling, almost all of it from agriculture.

If they can produce, from six million megalitres of water, $50 million worth of agricultural production, what can they produce from 222 million megalitres? If we take only 10 per cent of that—22 million—it is three times the Murray-Darling production. It is a staggering figure
of well over $100 million, even if we took only 10 per cent of North Queensland’s water. We are now taking 0.6 per cent. Out of 222 million, about 1.2 million is being used. The rest of it rips and tears its way out to the sea. There are two great quotes when talking about water in Australia. We must remember that the greatest figure in water in modern Australia was Ernie Bridge, a very good friend of mine. Like me, he decided that the party system was never going to deliver to the north of Western Australia and got out of it. But before he got out, like me, he was a long-serving state minister. Ernie Bridge said: ‘All we are asking is that the great rivers of Australia, on their pathway to the sea, pay a small tribute to those people living along their banks’, a beautiful statement from one of the great Australians—a First Australian, by the way, and the first First Australian to become a minister, and he was a very prominent and successful minister, for the best part of a decade. The ‘Bridging Scheme’, as I call it, is a sort of Bradfield Scheme in Western Australia which has been cut off because the water has been given to the Chinese, so we Australians cannot ever use it now. Another quote from Ernie is very relevant to what the last speaker, the member for Barker, was saying. Ernie Bridge never gave a speech where I did not hear him quote the Bankers Trust report to their shareholders. He said that Bankers Trust, in their report to their shareholders, said, as always: ‘Our greatest asset is our water entitlements. The wonderful thing about water entitlements is that they grow in value every year and you do not have to use them.’ What a dreadful statement; what an appalling statement!

But the previous speaker was quite right in what he was saying. This is all about turning the water resources of Australia into a roulette wheel, like our stock market—a roulette wheel that does not actually produce any good for anyone on the planet and most certainly does not produce any wealth for Australians, except for those playing the roulette wheel, of course, or the stock market. In Queensland, after 26 years, since the demise of the Bjelke-Petersen government in 1990—the much maligned government that was building a major dam every single year for some 15 years in Queensland—there has not been a single dam built in Queensland, not even a weir. There are town water supplies, but that is all.

Water in Queensland is under the Water Resources Commission. What touched off the debacle on the Murray-Darling was the allocation by Queensland of a massive resource which became Cubbie Station. Some 200,000 megalitres of Murray-Darling water was allocated to just one person. It was the water resources officer who handled the proposal that went to the government. That water resources person then left the department and became part of the Murray-Darling set-up and was speaking for Cubbie Station from then on. This is not a very happy event. I am not using the word ‘impropriety’; good luck to them, if they can get away with it. But a water resources officer proposes to the government an absolutely outrageous proposal that one single person gets 24,000 hectares of irrigated land. It was sold to the Chinese for $125 million and the station property was bought for $3 million. It cost about $20 million to do the development on it and it was sold for $125 million.

What I am saying, the same as the last speaker to this debate, is that water entitlements are solid gold. You do not give them out to foreign corporations. You do not give them out to big absentee landlords. You give them out to the people. In Queensland, the water resources department and minister had a choice: they could give the waters of the Flinders River to two giant absentee corporations or they could give them to the people of the area. Humble little Hughenden put up a proposal for some 60 farms—60 families making a living in a town
which had almost 4,000 people in it before I became the local member. Because of the removal of the railways by the government and the removal of the wool industry by the deregulation in this place of the industry, the population has dropped to about 1,000 people. It is a little town that is dying. They asked for an allocation of water so that they could have 60 farms, create 100 jobs and have a quartering works with another 100 jobs. What a wonderful thing to happen. Did the government give them the water? No. The minute the application went into the government, the department or the minister—or somebody—immediately allocated the water to two big corporations down the bottom of the river that already have entitlements and are not using them.

As the previous speaker so rightly said, these people want the entitlements. They do not want to do the work to produce anything of value from the entitlements to overcome the annual protein drought problem that we have every year in northern Australia because it does not rain for nine months of the year. They do not want to overcome the problem that we are at only half our carrying capacity in northern Queensland—we should have nine million head of cattle; we only have five million head. We only turn off one in six instead of what we should be turning off, like the rest of Australia: one in three. They do not care about any of those things. They could not care less about the prickly acacia tree, which has taken over nearly one-tenth of the surface area of North Queensland. Are they looking after their rich cronies? Of course they are. The water is allocated to two corporations. The shareholders are amongst the richest people in this country.

The minister's name will be remembered in ignominy for the rest of his days. The minute he got the application from Hughenden, he immediately gave the land out to exactly the sorts of people that the previous speaker was referring to—people who want to own water entitlements. These people have got a $150 million golden handshake. This bill is saying that we should have a register. I do not say we should have a register. I say this place should stand on its own two feet.

Let me go back to the wool industry for a moment. A very great Australian in all the history books, an Australian called Doug Anthony, led a wonderful party call the Country Party, which has now become a disgrace. Thank goodness it has changed its name, because I would be ashamed to be associated with it. Doug Anthony introduced the wool scheme and it drove the price of wool up 300 per cent. Every single year for the next 20 years, we had a nice little growth in wool production. We had a hiccup, but Paul Keating saw his opportunity—the great deregulator saw his opportunity to swoop and to prove to Australia that he was 'Mr Tough Guy', removing all this featherbedding of the farmers. And he did. Within three years of deregulation, the price of wool had dropped to one-third of what it was. We know that phenomenon. I was told by a bloke that the electorate of the honourable member at the table, Mallee, which takes in Swan Hill, had 600 dairy farmers and now it has six. It is thanks to your party that it has however many it has. I can assure you it will be one-tenth of what it had before your deregulation of that industry.

Let me return to wool. When Doug Anthony introduced that scheme, the price of wool shot up 300 per cent. It was our biggest export item, bigger than coal, and therefore all Australians were rich and prosperous, as they were in 1990. We were amongst the 10 wealthiest nations on earth. I got a bit curious because I thought there must have been some other nations that got a benefit out of this too. If the world price of wool was pushed up by us, other nations
should have got a benefit. The next biggest producer was Uruguay—and surprise, surprise! Uruguay, with this tiny little population, had a huge production of wool, so they should have been the richest people on earth. But they are not; they are amongst the 15 poorest nations on earth. How could this be? The price of wool went up 300 per cent and they were the second biggest wool-producing nation on earth—how could this be? I got curious and I found out that 72 per cent of Uruguay was not owned by Uruguayans. It was owned by Americans, and that was the productive part. So they did not own their country. They did not get any benefit from the land because they did not own it.

If we do not own the water, we will get no benefit. Let me go back to the Ord for a moment, because what you are now looking at is a situation where they will transfer price for product overseas. Under the free trade agreement, they can bring their workers in to work the Ord. So what benefit is there for Australia? We do not just need—

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (17:28): I rise to speak to the Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Amendment (Water) Bill 2016. Even though we know that Labor is supporting the bill, I rise to speak about it today because it gives me a chance to talk about water. Water is a big issue in Victoria—and I see nodding from those opposite. Whether you are in an electorate like Bendigo or you drive north to the Murray, all our farmers and all our towns can do is talk to you about water and the cost of water. Whilst the government has made a big show and done a lot of grandstanding about how great this bill is, let us just be clear about what this bill does and what it does not do. It does not tackle the big issues that communities in regional Australia, and particularly in Victoria, are calling for—that is, a review of water and water pricing.

This bill is the enabling legislation to allow for the collection of information and the publication of statistics about foreign holdings of registrable water entitlements and long-term contractual water rights. All it does is tell us about who owns water. All it does is tell us about the foreign holdings of registrable water. It is tinkering at the edges. That is the best way to describe this legislation. It demonstrates how this government are not serious about tackling the real challenges in the regions. Instead, they tinker at the edges, they gloss over things and they go back to their stakeholders and say, 'Great news: we have done something significant.' But the stakeholders are not convinced, and they are right.

I recently had the opportunity to meet with a number of dairy farmers in northern parts of Victoria and learn firsthand how close they came this season. As you know, it has been raining in Victoria. We welcome the rain, but what I learnt when I was talking to these dairy farmers just north of Shepparton was how close they came—how they were literally saved by the rain. The price of water in our part of the world did skyrocket last year. They were paying up to $300 per megalitre of water. It has since dropped down to $62. They said the saving grace was the fact that it started raining. With what has happened with milk prices, with what has happened with Murray-Goulburn, they said that, if it had not started raining, many of them would have put their farms up for sale. I met with 11 dairy farmers and they all said the same thing: if it had not started raining, if the price of water had not dropped, then, because of what was happening to milk prices, they would have put their farms up for sale. Where would we be today if that had happened?

Water is an issue which we need to have a robust debate about. We need to start debating and looking at the water market. We need to do more than just establish a register of foreign
ownership of water entitlements and publish the data on it. We need to actually look at the
competition aspects of the water market. I have serious concerns that many people are
speculating in the water market and that they trade on drought. I think it is a manipulation of
what is going on not just in the dairy industry but across the board.

We have great, integrated businesses like Kagome. They produce tomatoes—they are
basically responsible for a lot of tomatoes up north—and they say that, again, water is one of
the big cost factors. They are not opposed to foreign ownership. They are a vertically
integrated company. They have an investment partnership in Japan—hence the name
'Kagome'—but the operations are still organised and run here in Australia. They are a great
example of how foreign investment can help grow our agricultural businesses. That is
something where this side of the House is very different from the other side. Unlike the
government, Labor understands the importance of foreign capital for increasing the
productivity and profitability of our agricultural sector, and Kagome is a very good example
of that. However, they say the challenges that they face in their industry are the costs that
blow out.

If wages went up by 400 per cent in one year, imagine what regulation or legislation or
focus this government would have on wages. They rant a lot about productivity. They rant a
lot about unions, about wages and about a wages explosion. What they do not rant about is the
other cost factors that blow out, like the cost of water, electricity or gas, and the impact that
these cost pressures are having on our agricultural sector. It is disappointing that the
government are not taking the price of water more seriously. Perhaps it is because of the
internal tensions that they have within their party. On one side they have the investment
bankers in the Liberal Party who are very pro the water market, and on the other side they
have the Nationals, who are closer to the farmers and closer to the land. Perhaps they cannot
get that marriage between the two halves of the coalition right, which is why we are not
seeing serious reform and a serious discussion about pricing, about water and about the water
market.

There are places where the market is not always the solution, and I believe that water is one
of those areas. There are a lot of farmers who really struggle in drought years. One of the
farmers in my area who spoke to me last year came to me with an example in cropping.
Basically, to get the crop to a yield where he could make a profit, he said he had to do a cost-
benefit analysis: if he spent $200,000 on that final water to get the crop ready for sale, what
price would he get and would he actually make back the money that he spent on that water?
He worked out that it was not worth it. It was not worth putting that final water on the crop, so
he ploughed the crop, sold it at a stockfeed rate—a low rate—and copped a loss on that crop.
If the price of water had not been so high, if it had been this year—this year they will get
better returns, because the price of water has dropped, as I have said. This year they are
hoping for a better year.

Our farmers, and particularly our dairy farmers, are productive. They are very productive
and, when you talk to them, you know that they have done all they can to make their farms
and their businesses as productive as they can, yet they are still struggling. They are falling
behind each year. The dairy farmers that I met with do not live as millionaires. The ones that I
met with, who I had a cup of tea with and spoke with at the front of their house, live in simple
homes—but they are their homes and they are proud of them. One particular dairy farmer who
I spoke to, in the 16 years that he had owned, co-owned or co-shared dairy farms, had only twice not been able to break even—twice. That is pretty good, considering the exceptional circumstances that our dairy farmers have faced over the last 16 years, whether it be drought, flood, water prices, or Murray-Goulburn and what they have done to the milk prices. Yet when they were hit by Murray Goulburn they did not qualify for the concessional loans—another policy that the government has championed—and even though Rural Finance said, 'Yes, we will consider you as a client,' their bank did not guarantee them. So this is just another example of how the government misses on creating policy which will deliver real outcomes for people in the regions. Labor supports this bill, but, as I have said, the bill is really tinkering around the edges and it does not deliver the kinds of reform and support that we need to grow our agricultural sector.

Another thing that dairy farmers said to me was, 'If one more person tells me that we will be the "food bowl of Asia" I am going to punch them.' You cannot keep making these bold claims that our region will be the food bowl of Asia if you do not have proper investment in these areas. That is why we in Labor understand the importance of foreign capital to increase our productivity and profitability in the agricultural sector. It is also important to note that we will continue to push for further transparency in both the land and water registers, because there is a lot of scepticism within our community and not just in relation to water. There are lots of different understandings in the community about who actually owns are water—whether they be true or not. One person suggested to me that the Prime Minister owns all of the water and that next time he is in parliament could he give it back to Shepparton and the Shepparton farmers. I do not know if that is true. Perhaps this register may help provide some answers to that.

There is a need for further transparency in both land and water registers. We saw that particularly with foreign ownership of farms. Despite a lot of the scaremongering saying 'China are buying up all our farms' when the statistics came out we found out that Chinese nationals have bought a very small percentage of farms and farmland. It is important that we have transparency in both land and water so that people know the facts. Properly designed registers will help build public confidence in foreign capital, and being more transparent is a crucial step in achieving this objective. However, we need to make sure that in all cases of public policy we are addressing the needs of the community.

When I talked to the farmers—whether they be the dairy farmers up north or the croppers and wheat farmers around Bendigo and the Marong area—they said: 'is this all the government has to do? This is just crazy.' They want to see a government that is real about investment in agriculture. They want to see a government that is going to take on some of the tough issues that we have in agriculture, not just do this window-dressing. Creating these registers for transparency is important but it should not be the main game. I call on the government to really take seriously the concerns that the agricultural sector are raising around the cost of water. We need to look at how that water market is working. We need to make sure that we review it and that it is fair. We cannot have another situation occur that has occurred up north, because it may not rain next time. The next time this kind of disaster hits up north, it may not rain to save the farmers.

We see price spikes where in 12 months it goes from 300 down to 62 and back up to 300. I reiterate: imagine if wages spiked like that. We would see bill after bill in this place, with
speaker after speaker demanding that wages be cut and that there be some kind of government intervention. But we have not seen those opposite suggest that for water; we have not seen any suggestion from those opposite that it is even an issue. I strongly encourage the government, if they are serious about our agriculture sector and seeing jobs and growth in that sector, to do more than bring in window-dressing policy like this. This policy is good and we support it, but it is clearly not going to be enough for people in the industry. They want to see real action on water.

Mr PITT (Hinkler—Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment) (17:42): In summing up, I thank those members who have contributed to the debate. With the Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Amendment (Water) Bill 2016, the government is implementing its commitment to increase transparency around foreign investment in water, through the creation of the register of foreign ownership of water entitlements.

Last year saw this government make the most significant overhaul of the Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Act 1975 since its introduction over 40 years ago. The changes, which took effect in December 2015, sought to ensure that Australia remained an attractive environment for investment while also strengthening the integrity of Australia's foreign investment framework. As part of these reforms the government introduced a Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land. This register has improved the level of transparency around agricultural land. The first report released on 7 September showed that 13.6 per cent of all Australian agricultural land was foreign owned.

This bill is looking to complement the Agricultural Land Register by introducing a register of foreign ownership of water entitlements. For the first time, the government and community will have a comprehensive and reliable source of information about the level of foreign investment in water.

Foreign investment makes an important contribution in supporting economic growth, jobs and prosperity, and can assist in expanding Australia's production capacity. But community concern that foreign ownership of certain water entitlements and rights is impacting prices has the potential to undermine confidence that foreign investment is in the national interest. This bill seeks to address these concerns by increasing transparency and ensuring that the government and community have a clear picture about the level of foreign ownership in this resource.

The bill amends the Register of Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land Act 2015 to require foreign persons who hold registrable water entitlements and contractual water rights to notify the Commissioner of Taxation of those holdings from 1 July 2017. Leveraging off the existing Agricultural Land Register framework will minimise the regulatory burden for foreign persons who need to register both agricultural land and prescribed types of water. The Commissioner of Taxation will be required to provide a report on the findings of the register, which will be tabled in parliament each year. The reports will include aggregate details on the overall level of foreign ownership in water entitlements and provide a picture of the source country of investors. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.
Mr PITT (Hinkler—Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment) (17:45): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.


Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr HAMMOND (Perth) (17:45): Whilst the opposition supports the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Petroleum Pools and Other Measures) Bill 2016, I take this opportunity to address the House in relation to a number of matters that are relevant to this bill and also to the current state of affairs with energy and resources, particularly in the great state of Western Australia. As a proud Western Australian, this bill, and the subject matter of this bill, is certainly something very close to my heart.

By way of background, as those opposite will surely be aware, whilst this bill does address a number of relatively technical amendments the subject matter of these amendments to the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act is relatively straightforward. Speaking broadly, the legislation arises out of the proposed development of the Browse Basin. Again, those opposite will need no reminder that we have been discussing the potential of the Browse Basin for decades, and this legislation represents a very important piece of the puzzle in relation to the development of the Browse Basin project. Here is a little more context for those who might not be aware of it: the Browse Basin is located in ocean some 400 kilometres north of Broome in Western Australia's north west. It has enormous gas reserves, estimated at some 16 trillion cubic feet of dry gas as well as 466 million barrels of condensate. The potential for developing this resource will have a significant and positive impact on the Western Australian and the Australian economies.

By way of background, oil and gas were discovered in the Browse Basin as far back as the 1970s. However, there has not been a lot of development, due to its relative isolation from our shores and also the depth of water some 425 kilometres off the Western Australian coast. In recent years, we have seen the development of resources in the Browse Basin begin. The Ichthys field is being developed by INPEX as we speak, piping gas and condensate over 800 kilometres from the basin to Darwin for processing. The LNG processing facility in Darwin is currently under construction, and the first train is expected to be operational in or about September 2017. The Woodside-led Browse Joint Venture has also looked at the development of three other fields in the Browse Basin, including the subject matter of this legislation, the Torosa field.

The Browse joint venture, whose participants include Woodside, BP, MIMI, PetroChina and Shell, is eager to progress its planning for developing the Browse Basin—but there is a problem. Browse straddles an area that encompasses both the Western Australian and the
Australian Commonwealth royalty jurisdictions. This project has been a source of some tension between the Western Australian government, the Commonwealth government and the joint venture over past years. Maritime borders were redefined in 2014 when Geoscience Australia discovered several rocky outcrops above the field. It was concluded that these lonely outcrops, sitting miles out to sea, should be considered to be islands and therefore belonged to Western Australia as opposed to the Commonwealth. This meant that, due to a very modest little outcrop almost in the middle of nowhere in the ocean far off the north west of Western Australia, Western Australia's share of the Browse project rose from, approximately, a very modest five per cent to 65.4 per cent. The corollary affect was that the Commonwealth government's share dropped down to 34.6 per cent of the royalties.

The purpose of the legislation before this place today is to provide protection and certainty to all parties in the event that the area contains multiple petroleum pools rather than a single pool. The Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006, as amended by successive bills over time, makes provisions to provide certainty to extraction companies, so that they can then make informed investments knowing full well what the taxation and royalty arrangements will be. Unfortunately, as the act currently stands it fails to make provisions for circumstances in which additional pools of hydrocarbon deposits are discovered in the extraction process.

It is relevant at this point in time to segue off to discuss what a pool actually is. If you think it is something that mirrors a very large version of a backyard swimming pool you would be wrong. It is not a pool in the traditional sense of the word that many people might think of—that is, a cavity that is simply filled with liquid. Rather, it is more correct to describe one of these hydrocarbon pools as a reservoir of deposits, usually involving deposits of hydrocarbons stored in the pores of undersea rock, that then, in themselves, form a closed system. By way of analogy, think of the gas piping in a caravan connected to a gas bottle. If one turns on the stove, it affects the pressure of the gas going to the hot water system and the gas heater. It is the same sort of thing: if you tap a subsea hydrocarbon pool, it will affect the gas pressure and the extraction processes elsewhere in that same pool. Currently, section 54 of the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act contemplates that an apportionment agreement only relates to a single petroleum pool that straddles a Commonwealth-state jurisdictional boundary. If it subsequently becomes apparent that the area specified in the apportionment agreement contains multiple petroleum pools, as may be the case when fuller technical information is obtained when the source is developed and new information comes to light as the resource is being extracted, then the apportionment agreement would subsequently fall away, created uncertainty on behalf of all parties. If at the point of extraction an oil and gas company finds a separate petroleum pool, we need to make sure that the legislation makes provision for a swift and certain division of royalty rights between the Commonwealth and the state. As we see here, that is precisely the point of the amendments to this bill.

The bill also makes other amendments to the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act to allow the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority to refund fees paid to it where necessary. Of relevance in relation to current developments, I note that in March of this year the Woodside joint venture decided to defer any further development of Browse. The reason cited at the time included low prices currently on the open markets and the high costs of gas extraction. However, the fact that we see a
temporary halt to further development within the Browse Basin does not mean certainty in relation to this legislation is not important right now.

The reality is that for us to have confidence in both the markets and our ability to extract this precious resource, at a time when we know that we have significant supplies of oil and gas, particularly gas, that are without real competition across the globe, as well as future developments in the way we both harness and use energy, we fully expect and are confident that at some stage in the future the Browse Basin will be further developed. That is why this amendment applies equally both to existing agreements but also, most importantly, to future agreements.

This bill is all about providing certainty of investment. Investors in the development of offshore oil and gas facilities need a number of things in order to have the confidence to proceed with their investment. What they need is regulatory certainty about their tax and royalty liabilities before they are able to properly invest and invest with any real confidence in extraction of this precious resource. Any business looking to invest in a capital-intensive project such as these, which involve such significant and enormous logistics dealing with a reserve that is over 400 kilometres offshore and at significant depths, needs certainty over a forward projection of more than 40 years. This bill will provide that certainty. As we know, when we talk about resources and energy, we talk about certainty in relation to investment into the commodities trade in Australia. Certainty will provide government revenue and jobs.

In relation to certainty, resources, government revenue and jobs, we contrast the substance and effect of this bill with what is also currently happening at the moment in my home state of Western Australia in relation to what the Western Australia Nationals leader, Mr Brendon Grylls, is doing at the moment in undermining investment and certainty in resources sector generally and, more specifically, in relation to iron ore. At this stage it is appropriate, when we focus on certainty of investment in the mining and resources sector, that we spend a few minutes in relation to this topic at this juncture. As I am sure you would be aware, what is being proposed by Mr Grylls in Western Australia is a $5-a-tonne iron ore mining tax that would apply at first instance. It is important to footnote the issue of it applying at first instance because it does have significant ramifications throughout the sector insofar as the unilateral variation of state agreements goes. This proposed tax would apply at first instance to BHP and Rio Tinto. The effect of imposing a $5-a-tonne iron ore mining tax at this stage would be that the change in the royalty rate under the state agreement would shift from a mutually negotiated rate of 25c per tonne to $5 per tonne. The immediate impact of that is an anticipation that it would generate revenue of about $3 billion a year. This is where things start to get very, very interesting in relation to how we see the conversation about the iron ore mining tax proposed by Mr Grylls bearing out in relation to political conversations that are happening all over the world that bear a very, very similar theme.

And that theme is: by isolating some low-hanging fruit in an area of discussion where there is a reasonable expectation that the community might think, 'Yes, we should probably be entitled to a bit more of that' and put forward an overly simplistic and very short-term proposal that has an immediate impact upon the ability of those organisations to operate in the current circumstance and then proclaiming that this is really simply to right a wrong and that the populace is demanding that—'There is nothing further to see' and 'This is the solution to all of our current budgetary ills.' We see that happen in the context of Europe and Brexit; we
see that happen at the moment in the US presidential elections. We see Donald Trump in the context of his dangerous and erratic rhetoric as he tries to address an immigration problem by building an enormous wall that will keep the Mexicans out. We have a similar proposal to impose a significant mining tax in order to get more money into the state coffers. The question then is: how does this actually work? Just as Mr Trump proposes, 'We will build this magical wall but we will get to Mexicans to pay for it,' we have: 'We'll whack on this enormous mining tax in order to address our hideous failures to manage state revenues and we will get BHP and Rio to pay for it.'

It all sounds pretty good, I hear others say, but, as usual, if it is that simple, it can't be true. And guess what? It isn't true. Let me tell you why—I am glad you asked, as they say in the classics. Firstly, the problem in relation to this tax is that it bears absolutely no relation back point to this notion of profitability. Royalty taxes, and particularly significant increases such as the one Mr Grylls is proposing, are effectively a tax on production; they are not a tax on profits, they are a tax on production. What that means is that it is effectively a tax on jobs. And the reason for that is that it depends upon the buoyancy of the price per tonne of iron ore, which may well be something, as we have previously seen, that is entirely outside the control of a state like or a country like Western Australia at times. The new royalty being proposed by Mr Grylls could mean the difference between new projects not going ahead when they could actually be developed quite profitably in another circumstance where we have a taxation trigger that relates to profits and not to production. That is not what is being proposed here and, as a result, there is a real risk that what is being proposed in Western Australia will destroy job creation and also economic activity. For a state like ours, where unemployment is running at well above the national average, it is the very last thing that Western Australia needs.

Secondly, the arbitrary nature of the tax really should provide absolutely no comfort at all to other miners or other industries, who feel that, if they just keep quiet right now, they might dodge a bullet. Why is that? Should this proposal gain any meaningful traction—and I will come back to that—what is there reasonably to stop a protagonist of a similar tax aiming their sights at other state agreements or other commodities, for that matter? Given that state agreements cover other commodities like alumina or salt and even forestry products, what is there to stop an arbitrary tax being aimed at those vital industries? If we extend that by analogy and if we follow through the logic of Mr Grylls, what is there to stop an irresponsible government placing an arbitrary tax upon every tonnage of grain? Why would you stop at commodities? If you followed through the flawed logic of this proposal to its natural conclusion, there is no real telling of where it might stop. One can only imagine the catastrophic potential that might have in relation to the two fundamentals that underpin both the resources sector and the sector more generally—job creation and certainty in Western Australia.

Thirdly, if Mr Grylls is searching for ways in which to increase revenue streams into Western Australia, sadly he is looking in the wrong direction. Given what we have, which is the inevitable effect of the GST distribution as dictated by a Commonwealth Grants Commission, the proceeds of any proposed tax on iron ore royalties would be spread all over the country and not into the coffers of the West Australian Treasury. Quite simply, it would not do what Mr Grylls proposes this tax would actually achieve—that is, going some way to
rectifying a diabolical set of accounts that have been created by the Liberal-National government in the state of Western Australia over the course of the last eight years.

Fourthly, if that was not enough and if it was not just the case that this was a proposal that has been opposed by industry and all sectors of the industry, what we are seeing more than ever before is that the community is crying out for politicians on all sides of the political divide to try and put party politics or partisanship to one side, if at all possible, and take a step back to look at policy proposals on their merits. It is certainly something that resonates very strongly with me as I go about the community, every day that I am on the ground and not in this place. The community expects us to get together whenever possible and agree on policy proponents that are for the benefit of the state and of the country. If we actually undertake that analysis in this case, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, what do we have? Let us analyse that on every facet and at every level of government, both state and federal.

In Western Australia, Colin Barnett, the current state Premier—at least, up until 7 March, although some proponents say perhaps not that long—is vigorously opposed to the proposal by Mr Grylls. And he is not a lone wolf in that on the conservative side of the political divide, neither at the state nor at the federal level. His federal colleague Senator Mathias Cormann, in the other place, has been equally strident in his opposition to Mr Grylls' proposal. The Prime Minister, addressing the Minerals Council of Australia dinner only weeks ago was critical of Mr Grylls' proposal in relation to the effect it would have on the certainty of the mining industry. Again at the WA state level, both the state Labor leader, Mark McGowan; and the shadow Treasurer, Ben Wyatt, and a host of others, have been strident in their criticism of Mr Grylls' proposal.

Mr McCormack: What's your alternative?

Mr HAMMOND: The alternative plan—as my friend opposite has asked—is to ensure the books of a state are run properly the first time around, without seeking to ameliorate them with a short-sighted, populist proposal which will not seek to achieve on any single level what Mr Grylls proposes it will achieve, and that is revenue into the Treasury in order to address what we have right now by way of a significant level of debt and deficit in the state of Western Australia.

But, even if all of that is not an accurate analysis, let us just look at the timing. Timing, as they say, is everything, and this is the worst possible time to impose anything that looks like a new tax on mining production. The Western Australian economy, led by the Liberal-National party, is basically on life support. You need look no further than the level of total private sector investment in Western Australia, which has collapsed by more than 30 per cent over the last two years; and state final demand, which is down by nine per cent over the same period.

When one looks at the vibrancy and the dynamism of the mining sector and the resources sector as a whole, one has to take a step back and look at what is it that as a great state and a great country we have going for us, particularly in relation to iron ore but also in relation to other resources and certainly oil and gas, the subject of this bill. What is it that sets us apart from all of our competitors all over the world?

We know that projects in other countries often attract a cheaper level of labour. We know that. If we think we are ever going to be able to compete on the level of labour costs, we are
kidding ourselves. And we should be happy about that because is it due to a very proud Australian tradition that I and all of my colleagues on this side of the House will fight for with our very last breath, and that is a standard of occupational health and safety that is the envy of the developed world. That comes at a cost, as it should. So we are never going to be able to compete in that area. How about quality of product? Whilst I am very proud to say that our quality of product, particularly iron ore, is world class, the reality is that higher concentrations of product are available elsewhere. So again, whilst we are up there, it is true that other countries around the world can match us when it comes to the quality of what we produce. So where are we currently without peer? We are without peer around the globe when it comes to offering an investment environment in our resources and energy sector that is consistent, reliable and a safe choice.

If we kick this can a little bit further down the street, what do we have? We have a proposal that, if implemented, would actually extract the ace that we have always held up our sleeve, rip it up and replace it with nothing—that is, remove the certainty and stability of investment that this country and my home state of Western Australia offer and replace it with nothing at a time when we have a direct threat to jobs, when employment, particularly employment in the oil gas and mining sector, is already under siege.

It is time for us as elected representatives to take a step back and buck the modern-day trend that we see with Trumpism, with Brexit and with Mr Grylls' mining tax proposal, and simply stop peddling populist policies. Our community, very rightly, expects a lot more than that from us.

It will be very, very interesting to see what happens from here. It was only a few weeks ago, remember, that the Deputy Prime Minister was telling the New South Wales National Party to dump their plan to ban greyhound racing, and he got his way there. We cannot help but notice that, despite his initial tentative approval of Mr Grylls' proposal, the Deputy Prime Minister is now on the record as opposing the plan. It will be very interesting to see whether he goes two for two, and rolls the Western Australian Nationals as well. I, for one, at least in relation to this issue, hope he succeeds sooner rather than later, because what is important here is certainty. That is what this legislation currently before the House is about—providing certainty for the oil and gas industry, and it also needed for iron ore.

The extraction of Browse hydrocarbons is estimated to potentially provide a boost of over $2 million to Western Australia's royalties income. That is right—not 'million' but 'billion', with a 'b'. And that is just in royalties, before other economic benefits to Western Australia are taken into account. They include, of course, job creation and the local provision of construction goods and associated services.

This investment, if we land it, comes at a critical point for the Western Australian government's fiscal difficulties. I say difficulties, but the reality is that the state of the Western Australian budget is almost certainly a product of poor planning and stewardship of the economy by the current Western Australian Premier, Mr Colin Barnett. Mr Barnett refuses to take responsibility for this plight; he blames everybody else but himself. Last month we saw the Western Australian Treasurer Mr Nahan, crying poor again, arguing that his $480 million annual income from LNG royalties on the North West Shelf is not enough.

The geological skills and profound understanding of our planet required to discover hydrocarbons is significant in its own right. The feats of engineering required to build an
offshore facility hundreds of nautical miles from home are immense. The jobs that these projects create are some of the best jobs in the world, but all of this expertise is only deployed because of certainty for the investors underpinning it. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Minister for Small Business) (18:16): I rise to sum up on the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Petroleum Pools and Other Measures) Bill 2016. I thank the member for Perth for his remarks. I thank the House for its commendation of this bill, but I do take some exception to the disparaging remarks made about the Western Australian Nationals leader, the member for Pilbara. At least Brendon Grylls has policies that he is putting forward to the electorate prior to the 11 March 2017 state poll in Western Australia, unlike Mark McGowan, the Labor leader, who has no vision, no plan and no policies to put on the table. At least the WA Nats are putting their measures out in front of the electorate for the electorate to decide on them—which they like them and vote accordingly or whether they do not like them and vote accordingly.

The bill contains important amendments—I appreciate the member for Perth acknowledged that—to the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006. The principal amendments made by this bill will ensure the ongoing validity of the apportionment agreements under section 54 of the OPGGS Act if it becomes apparent that an agreement relates to an area which contains multiple petroleum pools rather than a single pool. An apportionment agreement provides for the apportionment of petroleum for revenue purposes between Commonwealth and state or territory jurisdictions where a petroleum resource straddles a jurisdictional boundary. These amendments will provide certainty for petroleum titleholders to underpin investment decisions and revenue certainty for Commonwealth and state or territory governments. This is critical to the bill.

The bill underscores this government's ongoing commitment to investment in the offshore petroleum sector. It is critical that the appropriate legislative and regulatory frameworks are in place, and the amendments made by this bill will provide a level of certainty to support these significant and long-lived investments, which characterise Australia's oil and gas sector—a vital sector, I might add. The bill also amends the OPGGS Act to ensure there is a clear regulation making power to support regulations which provide for the refund and remittal of environmental plan levies and safety case levies in certain circumstances. The power to make regulations for the refund and remittal of levies is important to ensure the application of levies to titleholders and appropriate cost-recovery for the offshore petroleum regulator, the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority. With that, I commend this bill to the house.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Minister for Small Business) (18:19): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.
COMMITTEES

National Broadband Network - Joint Standing
Electoral Matters Committee

Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly) (18:20): I have received a message from the Senate informing the House that Senator Hinch has been appointed a participating member of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Broadband Network and the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters for the committee's inquiry into the 2016 election.

BILLS

Narcotic Drugs Legislation Amendment Bill 2016
Narcotic Drugs (Licence Charges) Bill 2016

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (18:20): It is a great pleasure to be speaking on the Narcotic Drugs Legislation Amendment Bill 2016, because the amendments contained within this bill go to a matter that I have campaigned on for quite some time and a matter that I feel very passionate about and that is putting in place a nationally consistent scheme, which facilitates the availability of medicinal cannabis for people who are suffering pain or undergoing a course of treatment for which there is no alternative medicine and access to medicinal cannabis has provided them with relief from the symptoms that they are suffering from. The bill fixes a number of issues that arose after the original amendment bill was introduced into the House in February this year. Labor supported the legislation when it was first brought before the House in February this year; in fact, we take some credit for the fact that the matter was brought on. In my speech on the second reading I highlighted the concern that Labor had with the speed with which the bill had been brought into the House for debate, even calling for the bill to be referred to a short inquiry in the other place. In my speech during the second reading debate I called for that inquiry to occur 'to ensure that the policy intent of the government and the Labor opposition has found its way into the bill and that there are no unintended consequences'. Today it appears that there were some unintended consequences—unintended consequences that probably would have been flushed out if such an inquiry had been allowed to occur.

The government at the time assured Labor that the bill required immediate support. It did not say why. We later found out why. It said it required immediate support and there was no time for any detailed examination. We had to pass it through both houses of parliament and enact it as soon as possible. The minister said in her second reading speech:

It is important that the government is able to communicate on the full regulatory costs of this scheme as soon as possible in order to allow potential applicants to plan their businesses and complete their applications.

We have absolutely no problems with that course of action, but the fact that there is an amending bill before the House not nine months later indicates that a short perfunctory
inquiry would have thrown some light on the deficiencies that we are now legislating to fix. We now know that the real reason that they were in such a God-almighty rush to get the bill through this place and the other place is that the Prime Minister was feverishly working on his plans to call a double dissolution election. The rest, as they say, is history—and not a happy history for those on the other side.

We are, disappointingly, back in this place debating amendments to the original bill because there are loopholes and problems with the original legislation. We want to work with the government. We want to provide them patriotic support to fix the shambles they are so regularly creating. This is like so much that we are seeing from the government. This point needs to be made: a week ago the scheme to permit licensing for the manufacture and production of medicinal cannabis in this country kicked in, but we are back here amending the enabling legislation.

What do the amendments do? We are told they are needed to protect the sensitive law enforcement information that is available to determine whether an applicant for a cannabis licence is a fit and proper person. They are needed to guard against cannabis licences being transferred from one person to another person. I interrupt myself there for a minute. It does not take the intelligence of a genius to know that, if you are granting a licence for something as sensitive as the production of medicinal cannabis and you have put in place an entire scheme to ensure you have strict controls on that licence, from the get-go, from the very beginning, you should ensure that such a licence is not a transferable instrument. Any second year law student could have told you that you would put in place a scheme to ensure that the licence created under this act is not a transferable instrument. Unfortunately, the government in their haste to move the legislation into the House ahead of a double dissolution election did not rest upon this basic fact. The amendments are also needed to recover the cost of regulating the new medicinal cannabis industry.

All of these amendments will enjoy our support. They should have been done when the legislation was introduced in the House in the first place. Speaking for Labor in my speech during the second reading debate I said:

Labor gives this commitment today. We will work with the government and all interested parties to ensure that the Commonwealth government can provide national leadership to get the job done and ensure that we can—as we aspire to do—make these products available in a safe and legal way.

Our position remains unchanged today. We continue to support sensible legislation in good faith. Labor supports medicinal cannabis. Labor was the first national alternative party of government that called for the introduction of a national scheme. We are happy that the government took up that call. They made some mistakes. We have pointed them out. We are happy that the government has taken up that call. We are committed to the approvals process through the Therapeutic Goods Administration, where medicines are approved on the basis of evidence and science. We did not support dragging our heels, which is what the Liberal government did until February this year.

There is more that needs to be done to ensure that we have in place a scheme that will permit universal access on a medical basis and on the basis of good science to medicinal cannabis treatments across the states in this country. We have said on many occasions that it is not a simple process. The fact that we are here amending the enabling legislation is evidence of that. There are myriad treaties and laws at the state and federal levels—and,
indeed, I suspect there are a raft of local government regulations as well—that impact on every aspect of the supply chain. So it is not a simple task. We acknowledge that. It is why we have offered the government our full support in this process.

We should never forget what lies at the heart of this issue and that is to ensure that no family is put in a position where they have to choose between getting their loved ones the medicines that they need to relieve them of agonising pain and abiding by the law. We should be able to do both. Labor want this scheme to succeed. We say that very frankly. We want it to succeed so we can provide ongoing certain legal relief to young men like Ben Oakley, who I have had many conversations with over the last 12 months. Ben is a young bloke who is living in the Illawarra. He suffers from something which is colloquially known as stiff person syndrome. Ben has been a champion in the Illawarra—and throughout the country, in fact—for medicinal cannabis.

To say he is living proof of the tremendous life-giving effects that medicinal cannabis can have on somebody in his situation is no exaggeration: were it not for the administration of medicinal cannabis treatment, Ben would probably not be alive today. It is not an exaggeration, because one of the indications that people with stiff person syndrome suffer with is uncontrollable fits. I am not talking about a sneeze, I am not talking about a small spasm; I am talking about somebody who can suffer from literally hundreds and hundreds of fits in a 24-hour period. Many of these fits leave Ben in a position where both of his parents struggle to constrain him, and any one of those fits could lead to the loss of his life.

Ben's father, a trained nurse, has researched this deeply, and he is keen to ensure that he is no longer in a position where he is potentially breaking the law because he is accessing the medicines which are keeping his son alive. Because of the course of medicinal cannabis that Ben has been taking, he has been able to get his life back together. He will not return—in the near term, in any event—to doing triathlons, as he was doing not six months before the time when he was struck down by this life-altering condition. But, because of the treatment he is receiving, he has been able to get his car licence—an aspiration that any normal 18-year-old boy has—and he is able to attend university and get his life back on track.

When we are debating dry legislation in the heated exchanges that often occur across the bar table during debates in places such as this, it is always important that we keep in mind for whom and why we are doing it. It is for the thousands of people like Ben Oakley and their families, who know that a nationally consistent scheme that provides safe and reliable medicines that can be administered to them on the recommendation of their doctor is going to make an enormous difference to their lives, and that is why we support the legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr PITT** (Hinkler—Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment) (18:33): It is always good to follow the member for Whitlam. I thank him for his brief contribution. I have a suitably brief contribution to make myself on the Narcotic Drugs Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 and a related bill.

Can I say at the outset that there has been a very unusual champion of this legislation in the former member for Hinkler, Paul Neville, who has some personal circumstances in which one of his grandchildren suffers from severe epileptic seizures. As a staunch conservative, the former member for Hinkler has been very supportive and very outspoken on the need for this legislation, and I certainly commend him for his actions.
The primary purpose of this legislation is to put in place protections for information provided by law enforcement agencies used in decision-making under the Narcotic Drugs Act 1967. Without these protections, law enforcement agencies will not provide to the Commonwealth the information necessary to prevent criminal elements from infiltrating the scheme for the cultivation of cannabis for medicinal purposes.

Amendments to the Narcotic Drugs Act 1967, administered by the Office of Drug Control within the Department of Health, will enable the cultivation of medicinal cannabis. The ODC is accepting licence applications from individuals or businesses right now. There are three types of licences relating to the supply of medicinal cannabis products. They are: the medicinal cannabis licence authorising cultivation or production or both; the cannabis research licence authorising a similar process for research purposes; or a manufacturing licence authorising the manufacture of a drug or product. Before any activity under a licence can commence, the licensee will need to obtain a permit. This will set out the types and amount of cannabis that can be grown and/or produced, and the types and quantities of medicinal cannabis products that can be manufactured under the said licence.

All applicants for licences under the medicinal cannabis framework will be subject to regulation. Licensing decisions on the cultivation of cannabis plants, production of cannabis or cannabis resins, and the manufacture of drugs are underpinned by a 'fit and proper person' test and other tests that are designed to exclude those that may represent a risk of diversion of the cannabis crop because of their criminal history or criminal activities. These regulations also include an applicant's criminal history, financial viability, business history and capacity to comply with the licensing requirements. Sensitive law enforcement information will be used for the purposes of making licensing decisions under the Narcotic Drugs Act.

We should not forget that cannabis is an illicit drug. It does have a high street value. The legal cultivation of cannabis for medicinal purposes may be attractive to those criminal elements looking to profit by diverting some or all of the crop to illegal uses. In addition, prohibited substances that are narcotic drugs authorised to be manufactured under the Narcotic Drugs Act may also be subject to this diversion risk. It is essential to take all possible actions to prevent the infiltration of organised crime into the medicinal cannabis framework or into the manufacture of narcotic drugs. In order to achieve this, extensive background checks of the individuals involved in cannabis cultivation and the manufacturing enterprises will be required.

Information such as conviction history and noncompliance with requirements under the Narcotic Drugs Act is accessible. It is either publicly available or held by the Commonwealth. However, other information may be intelligence gathered by, and known only to, law enforcement agencies. Therefore the protection of this information would give law enforcement agencies confidence that they can share pertinent information that will not be released to the applicant or to third parties, thus protecting ongoing criminal investigations, investigation techniques and, very importantly, the lives of those involved in those investigations. This bill also includes provisions to allow the secretary to refuse to grant a licence where the applicant has provided false or misleading information, and also allows for the revocation of licences and permits where applicable standards are not met. Allowing for the creation and existence of a legitimate industry to ensure that Australia patients can get
access to medicinal cannabis products provides a benefit to that industry by opening a new
market for commercial cultivation, manufacture and sale of medicinal cannabis products.

The global supplies of cannabis for medicinal purposes are relatively scarce and expensive. This legislation will allow Australia to develop a safe, legal and sustainable local supply of cannabis for medicinal or scientific purposes. In turn, this will support greater local opportunities to research, develop, manufacture and supply medicinal cannabis based products for suitable products. Other benefits of a local supply include a potential new agricultural industry within Australia, similar to that already established for the use of Australian-grown poppies for medicinal and scientific purposes.

In my electorate of Hinkler there is already a company that has been breeding ultra-low-THC industrial hemp plants since 1998. Agri Fibre Industries has developed a range of plants for food, fibre and other uses, including medicinal cannabis. With these changes to the legislation and the introduction of the licensing system, innovative firms like Agri Fibre realise there is potential for new industry in the region. This Bundaberg based company has explored making building products from hemp, which could make inroads into environmentally sustainable buildings. They have also considered the potential of low-THC hemp for food production. Some of its breeds, including large seed varieties, can be grown all year round. I hope that innovative companies such as Agri Fibre Industries are well-placed now to grab this opportunity with both hands and see what develops. If it results in a new agricultural industry, which would mean more jobs, I hope it happens in my part of the world.

The amendments already made to the Narcotics Drugs Act 1967, as well as the legislation I am speaking to today, show that Australia is on track to have a nationally consistent licensing scheme regulating the controlled cultivation of cannabis for medicinal or scientific processes. It is another example of this government taking on challenging reforms, and it has been challenging. We will deliver sensible changes that will benefit Australians in need. It shows that this government is doing exactly what we promised: we are delivering. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (18:39): Labor will not oppose these bills, as the member for Whitlam has already indicated. These bills, the Narcotic Drugs Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 and the Narcotic Drugs (Licence Charges) Bill 2016, are here only because of the government's shambolic legislating ability. In February this year the parliament passed the Narcotic Drugs Amendment Act 2016. That act amended the Narcotic Drugs Act 1967 to establish a national scheme for access to medicinal cannabis. Labor supported that legislation. We had led the charge for a national scheme so that access to medicinal cannabis was equal from state to state. That should have been the end of the legislative process. The government should have been able to get on with implementing the new national scheme. But that was not the case.

Now, more than six months later, we learn that the government's legislation included loopholes and errors, and that these bills are needed to fix those errors. Everything in these bills could have, and indeed should have, been included in the government's legislation in February. For example, the government should have known that it needed to protect the sensitive law enforcement information that is available to determine whether an applicant for a cannabis licence is a 'fit and proper person'; that it should guard against cannabis licenses transferring from one person to another—for example, when a business changes hands; and,
thirdly, that the legislation was needed to recover the cost of regulating the new medicinal cannabis industries. These are obvious considerations that should not have been overlooked, as the member for Whitlam quite rightly pointed out earlier on.

The government's shambolic processes have real consequences. In her second reading speech on these bills, the Minister for Health said:

It is important that the government is able to communicate on the full regulatory costs of this scheme as soon as possible in order to allow potential applicants to plan their businesses and complete their applications.

Yet here we are, still considering this legislation, a week after the start of the national scheme on 30 October. By the minister's own account, that could delay the development of the medicinal cannabis industry, and delay access to medicinal cannabis for Australians who need it to manage pain or medical conditions.

This shambolic health legislation is nothing new from this chaotic government. We saw another example of that only today when a member of the government seconded a motion that criticised the government itself. On 4 May, on the eve of the election campaign, the government signed a contract with Telstra to operate the National Cancer Screening Register, despite not having passed the necessary legislation. The government introduced that legislation in this parliament. It tried to rush the bills through to retrospectively authorise its $220 million contract with Telstra. When Labor and the crossbench raised concerns and referred the bills to a Senate inquiry, the health minister accused Labor of a 'hysterical tirade'. But the inquiry uncovered serious concerns with the government's legislation. Not least of all, the government's own privacy and information commissioner identified six loopholes in that legislation that needed to be fixed. Ultimately, the government was forced to accept many of Labor's amendments to its legislation. Far from a 'hysterical tirade', Labor improved the government's bills and added protections for Australians' most sensitive health information.

So perhaps we should not be surprised that this government is taking a second crack at legislating a national scheme for medicinal cannabis. That said, Labor does support a national scheme for medicinal cannabis. We supported it back in February and we continue to support it. For some, that decision at that time was to be controversial. But Labor is driven by science and compassion with respect to this issue. We firmly believe the time has come for a national scheme.

Labor understands that some Australians cannot find relief from pain with existing therapeutic goods and have debilitating and life threatening conditions. There are thousands of Australians who are suffering from unbearable pain, muscle spasticity, conditions like multiple sclerosis, and nausea from chemotherapy who may benefit from taking medicinal cannabis. No-one can imagine how horrific it must be for someone to see their child, their partner or their parent in immense pain, knowing that relief is available but currently illegal. I have spoken to some people who fall into this category myself. Patients who are suffering from a terminal illness or other serious medical condition should be allowed access to safe, reliable and legal medicinal cannabis if prescribed by their doctor. And I stress the point of 'legal' medicinal cannabis, because I have no doubt that some of these people, in order to relieve their pain, are perhaps accessing the cannabis illegally, not knowing exactly what is in the substance and perhaps taking additional risks because of that.
No person and no family should have to choose between getting the medicine they need and breaking the law. Right now families who are accessing medicinal cannabis products on the black market are at risk of being arrested and possibly convicted, unable to determine the exact ingredients and the quality of the medicine they are taking, and not protected in any way by any independent regulatory authority. This legislation does that. Only the Commonwealth can ensure that there is a national scheme which ensures equity of access and a safe and reliable supply. The national scheme that passed in February deals with supply by establishing a tightly controlled supply chain with multiple security measures, and it deals with demand by allowing the prescription of these medicines by a doctor through the Special Access Scheme, the Authorised Prescriber Scheme and medical trials.

This is not about allowing free access to a drug for recreational use; it is about ensuring that there is a legal and regulated market so that family members and carers are not forced to rely on the black market to relieve the pain of their loved ones. It is worth noting that the Victorian Labor government is perhaps driving the national agenda on this and pushing ahead. The Commonwealth was forced to act in February because, I suspect, if it had not then some other states would have done so. The Victorian government has committed to legalising access to locally manufactured medicine or cannabis products for use in exceptional circumstances from 2017. Again, I would not be surprised if other states were to follow. We also acknowledge that the New South Wales government has pursued medical trials of cannabis, as well as reforms to penalties for possession and use for particular classes of people.

As I said earlier, Labor supports this legislation, and we have done so from the outset. It is a pity that these amendments need to be brought into the House. But, having said that, we accept that the legislation is in the best interests of the people of this country, and it will be supported by us.

Dr Gillespie (Lyne—Assistant Minister for Rural Health) (18:47): The Narcotic Drugs Legislation Amendment Bill is being put forward to protect the integrity and security of the Medicinal Cannabis Scheme. As you would no doubt appreciate, cannabis is a crop of significant interest to criminal elements, and preventing infiltration into the legitimate medicinal cannabis industry must be a high priority for the government. This bill puts in place mechanisms supporting the sharing and subsequent protection of very sensitive law enforcement information to prevent such infiltration. Further, the Narcotic Drugs (Licence Charges) Bill is being put forward to encourage a level playing field with the nascent medicinal cannabis industry in Australia through imposition of annual charges. These charges support a risk based inspection model that is designed to target licence holders where concerns over compliance with licence conditions, regulations or the legislation may have arisen. The risk based model ensures that industry participants are regulated at an appropriate level based on compliance history.

Both of these bills act to round out the existing narcotic drugs legislation and prepare the Commonwealth for the enactment of the medicinal cannabis scheme. I thank all the members of the House, on both sides, for their valuable contributions and the bipartisan nature of their support in the debate on these bills.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.
Third Reading

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne—Assistant Minister for Rural Health) (18:49): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Narcotic Drugs (Licence Charges) Bill 2016

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne—Assistant Minister for Rural Health) (18:50): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That the following Address in Reply to the speech of His Excellency the Governor-General be agreed to:

May it please Your Excellency:

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

Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (18:51): Sadly, I rise to speak about Manmeet Sharma, who so tragically lost his life on Friday 28 October in my home suburb of Moorooka at a bus stop that I walk past every morning when I am at home. Mr Sharma, I am told by his community, was a gentle, kind, creative soul—a leader in Brisbane's Punjabi community who, on that fatal Friday, was just going about his business, serving the greater community of Brisbane as a driver with Brisbane transport. Not long after 9 am, as he drove along Beaudesert Road on the 125 route—a bus that goes almost from my home suburb to right outside my office at Sunnybank—Mr Sharma pulled into the Moorvale shops to collect more passengers. There, he became the subject of a horrific and violent act that ended his life, sadly, and shocked Queensland—shocked the nation—and broke the hearts of my community. Our whole community—the Moorooka community and the broader Queensland community—feels a deep sense of grief for Mr Sharma's loss.

I want to pay tribute to those people who were first on the scene, particularly to the tow-truck driver who stepped out with his fire extinguisher to put out the fire initially, the paramedics who attended, the firefighters and the local police, who rushed to Mr Sharma's
aid. I particularly note again Mr Peter Buxton, the passing tow-truck driver, who acted incredibly quickly and helped people to safety. I commend him for his bravery. I also commend Mr Aguek Nyok, who smashed open the bus door. He is a taxi driver who was on his rank, saw the smoke coming from the bus and saved at least six passengers’ lives. I understand that his nomination by the Queensland Premier for a bravery award is very well deserved. I am thankful that the Liberal National Party lord mayor, Graham Quirk, working with Councillor Steve Griffiths, has agreed to a memorial in Moorooka so that we can remember Mr Sharma. I thank the local council for this commitment. To my good friend Councillor Steve Griffiths, who was instrumental in organising the community vigil full of care, love and respect, thank you for your leadership, Steve, in this difficult time. To Mr Sharma’s family, we offer our deepest sympathies and hope that in time the grief you feel does not weigh so heavily on your hearts.

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (18:53): The House of Representatives that I first entered in 1990, I realise with the benefit of that wonderful thing called hindsight, was a different kind of place than it is now. For one thing, words still mattered. Speeches mattered. They mattered enough for members to actually listen to them, react to them and engage in real debate. Sometimes what was said in the chamber was even reported. Alas, those days, when parliamentary proceedings were seen as more than today’s daily televised sideshow of question time, have passed, but, out of nostalgia, this traditionalist persists with one sliver of those former ways. With each new parliament, I listen with interest to what, apparently, it now is appropriate to call first, rather than maiden, speeches. They provide great insights into new colleagues—their history, their hopes and their aspirations.

So it was, on the last day of the last session back in September, that I sat in the chamber during the adjournment debate waiting to speak on some of the remarkable first speeches delivered earlier in the day. I had prepared to congratulate new members on what were some marvellous, sometimes entertaining and sometimes very moving addresses. But, as I sat waiting for the Speaker’s call, my spirit of good humour evaporated as I listened to the member for Dawson deliver what amounted to a diatribe about the rise of Islam in this country. The member’s speech was replete with generalisations. There were appeals to fear and prejudice that appalled me. My instinct was at the very least to dissociate myself at the first opportunity. I should have remembered the advice that John Stuart Mill gave 110 years ago:

Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing.

That I did nothing and said nothing when my turn on the adjournment did come is not something I can be proud of. Controlling my tongue on the basis that saying what I thought would only result in the member for Dawson receiving more attention than his contribution deserved was not the right thing to do; nor was worrying that differences between coalition members would be exploited by our political foes. That had been the response of other members in this and the other chamber to another provocative speech that week, by a new senator from Queensland. She too played on the fears of those Australians feeling economic and social exclusion. She too made those bogus claims that Australia was in danger of being swamped by Muslims—dangerous Muslims who were arriving with their ‘violent extremism’; dangerous Muslims who did not share ‘Australian values’. Same speech, different house. My silence on the adjournment that night did not prevent the views of the senator and the member
for Dawson from being widely circulated. It did not stop their words from further inflaming the views of the prejudiced. It did not stop the government's opponents from exploiting the unfortunately different views that exist on my side of politics.

During the break, I thought long and hard about how to respond to those who encourage division; how to respond to those who exploit fear in the vulnerable and disillusioned for political gain; how to respond to the member for Dawson; and how to politely point out to the Prime Minister that a man who holds an office in the Turnbull government seemingly has views at odds with the Prime Minister's own description of our country in New York recently, when he said:

We are not defined by race, religion or culture but by shared political values of democracy, the rule of law and equality of opportunity—a 'fair go'.

These are noble sentiments, good sentiments and sentiments repeated again last week in the parliament, when the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition spoke as one on the issue. They are the kinds of sentiments that should have replaced my silence.

It was a long and lonely walk before the penny dropped as to why I had not called out the member for Dawson on the spot. The issues swirling in our multicultural nation for me are public and passionate, but for me they are not personal. The truth is I did not act as I should have because I am not Muslim, Chinese, Afghan or Greek looking. I am not Italian, Sri Lankan or Sudanese. I am not Aboriginal. I might have noted in that adjournment speech how the member for Chisholm, Julia Banks, spoke quite passionately about the little girl at school who was called a wog, and how she had to go home, grab her brother's dictionary, look up what 'wog' meant and then deal with the pain of seeing others seeing her as being different because of her darker skin and her dark hair, and how she looked a little different and so was a point of attack. I have not been called a wog, a dago, a Chink or a raghead. You see, I am plain white bread, cut for toast. I was born in the town that Gillian Triggs, the human rights commissioner, said she would never hold a function in: Koo Wee Rup. It might be expected for someone with my background to shrug their shoulders when members of parliament make remarks directed at a particular race or to ignore the hurt those remarks can cause; to defend the members' right to free speech as if that right should be unlimited; and to nod wisely because a member was simply reflecting the views of those who elected them—'Don't blame me; blame them.' It is another of those changes in this place that I referred to earlier: the now prevalent belief that members of parliament should follow, not lead.

For my part, I remain as steadfastly Burkeian in my view of the proper relationship between the elected and their electors as I was those 16 years ago. So I remind you of the words of Edmund Burke, that great parliamentarian:

Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.

That is a principle I have always followed. Perhaps remaining true to my conscientiously held beliefs contributed to the 1998 defeat I suffered along the way, just as Ewen Jones paid the ultimate political price in Herbert this year for his stand in always deferring to his better angels on matters of principle. But I believe I enjoy a special relationship with the community I now serve. They may not agree with the positions I take, but they know I am on their side and that I am serving them in the best way I know how.
So, too, all of us in this parliament should reflect on our relationship with the Australian people, and right now it is broken. A bit of humble representation from the powers that be would not hurt. It is time for us to rise above the politics of fear and division, because our love of diversity, difference and freedom will endure. Our love of the rule of law, of respect for one another and of tolerance of each other will endure. Our love of freedom of religion, of freedom of speech and of country will endure. Our love of shared values, of a fair go for all and of shared responsibilities will endure.

At the recent election, the coalition received 42 per cent of the primary vote, while Labor received close to 35 per cent and the Greens received a tick over 10 per cent. Eighty-seven per cent of Australians did not vote for minor parties. Only 1.29 per cent of Australians gave their first preference to Pauline Hanson's One Nation. Family First, the Christian Democratic Party and the Nick Xenophon Team all received a greater vote than One Nation. Why, then, are some on my side of politics prone to cuddling up to Hansonite rhetoric? Those propositions and policies will only hurt the coalition parties in the long run, in the same way that the once great Labor Party is now the captive of the Greens, relying on their preferences to win 31 of their seats in this House.

I understand the fear of Islamic-based terrorism, and the government is responding with every resource available. I understand, as well, the concerns of the Australian people over these issues. I am not immune to the fears that are expressed to me by the people I meet. At the same time, we cannot condemn the whole of the Muslim community for the actions of a crazy, dangerous few. That is not fair. Otherwise, the people who hate all that is good about this nation win, and we are the losers. Australia, we are better than this. We need not walk in the footsteps of the world. We, as a nation, can stand apart—confident, fearless, separated to the better way, together, united and unafraid. Together, we as a people can stem the tide of divisiveness infecting Western countries around the globe. Right here, right now, we can turn to take the higher road, believing in one another to defend against the purveyors of fear and disunity. Let this nation be the circuit-breaker and travel the road of the wise, leaving the foolish to perish in division.

We should always have empathy and consideration for those doing it tough. We must speak to the people in their language about the basic concerns affecting their daily lives. If not, we further push those that feel alienated and disaffected by economic and social exclusion into the arms of the One Nations of this country. As Michael Gordon said in his article in The Age of 30 September:

In other words, the problem in Australia is not with the people, but a leadership more intent on making political points than expressing empathy, or pressing the case that we all gain from an open, inclusive, pluralist society, or addressing inequality, or celebrating the multicultural success stories.

One of them is unfolding this weekend, whether or not the Western Bulldogs raise the Premiership Cup at the MCG: the story of how a club facing extinction survived and thrived by supporting all elements of a community facing multiple challenges. "At a time of widespread institutional weakness, the club is a model of how to win a social licence," says Labor MP Tim Watts.

Back in June, the club celebrated World refugee Day by hosting its 11th annual citizenship ceremony at the Whitten Oval, when 45 migrants and refugees from 21 countries sang the national anthem and then the Bulldogs' club song. Along with their citizenship, they received Bulldogs membership packs.
As club president Peter Gordon strolled among the throng at Thursday's final training session, he recognised many of them in the crowd, joyous, united and prepared to invest without reservation in a dream: the face of modern Australia.

The vast majority of the Australian people fit the Western Bulldogs's view of the world. It is our challenge now to show those who feel alienated and disenfranchised that they also share in a bright future, investing in a dream without reservation. Our responsibility in leadership is to bring those that feel they have been left behind to know that our intention is for all Australians to share in the wealth and opportunity that this nation affords, to feel they have hope for the future and some control of their lives through representative democracy, and to enjoy a sense of belonging so that they can confidently stand firm against those peddling policies of fear and division. The politics of fear and division have never created one job, never come up with a new invention, never started a new business, never given a child a new start in life and never lifted the spirits of a nation.

At this moment, I do not know what Muslims are asked to do. But I know what Christians are asked to do: to do justly, to love mercy and kindness, and to walk humbly with their god.

The question is that the address be agreed to. I call the honourable member for Wakefield and congratulate him on the birth of his first child.

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The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): The question is that the address be agreed to. I call the honourable member for Wakefield and congratulate him on the birth of his first child.

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (19:05): Thank you, Deputy Speaker; that is very kind of you. It is a great honour to follow the member for McMillan, who made a very fine speech about tolerance and decency in our country and about how best to make sure that tolerance and decency continues. I think he talked very ably about Edmund Burke and his fine contribution to the House of Commons. Interestingly enough, Edmund Burke only lasted two terms in the House of Commons, so I fear his very noble belief about an MP's relationship with their electors was perhaps better in theory than it was in practice! Nevertheless, it serves as an example for all of us, and I think we do have an obligation not just to reflect the passing mood in our electorates but also to reflect our own judgements about what is good for the country. The more of that that is done, the better this place will be, because it forces elected members to reflect on their own principles and make sacrifices sometimes, in the cause of the nation.

The member for McMillan made a very fine contribution to the House tonight, and I hope others pay as much attention to that as is paid to the member for Dawson and others, in the Senate, who grandstand and talk nonsense. Sadly, such is the nature of public discourse and the media machine now. I do not think any of us like it, including those in the media. We all crave more substance, but what we get is, really, the lowest common denominator in public debate, and that does not serve us well. It does not create a job. It does not invent anything. It creates no scientific advantage. On that front, I am as one with the member for McMillan.

It is, of course, a great honour to serve in the House of Representatives for a fourth term in Wakefield, and I am the first Labor member to do so. That is a great privilege. I should reflect that the boundaries in Wakefield have changed somewhat and now include the good people of the northern suburbs, which does help Labor's cause. Of course, there are many places in the mid-north, around where I grew up, which are slowly coming to appreciate me perhaps. A real surprise this election was the very curious result in Freeling, which is a town I had not expected ever to win—a very traditional conservative town. It swung by 9.2 per cent, and I ended up getting 51 per cent in Freeling this year. Dominic Shepley, who runs the Freeling...
Hotel, tells me I am the only Labor man to be allowed in the front bar of the Freeling Hotel. I think it is a Labor town now! So they will have to adjust, I suppose. I have many good friends there, and I do appreciate their industry and their efforts.

It was a very challenging election for me personally—not just because of the electoral dynamics in South Australia. My wife, Fiona, was pregnant through the campaign. I certainly did curse the Prime Minister—not in a normal way. His timing of the election left a lot to be desired from our personal point of view! I know my electorate and the country did not really appreciate an eight-week campaign, but I can tell you I would never combine the two things again, even though the result was completely joyous. My daughter was born shortly after the election. Fatherhood is an even more unique privilege that one can have, and I have been very blessed with such a beautiful wife and such a beautiful daughter. Every day since has been a great blessing, so before I begin my thankyou I certainly reflect on that.

I have many people to thank: of course, the many electors, both those who supported me and those who did not. I have always had the view that the day after the election I do not care how you voted; I will always meet with people, give them my opinion and expect to get theirs. I do not really care for partisanship on a personal level. I think partisanship belongs in these chambers and it is a good, but it should not really be expressed when it comes to representing your constituents or community. So I have always made a fair bit of effort to be in every bit of my electorate and try and serve them as best I can.

I have to thank my leader, Bill Shorten, and the whole of the Labor Party. It was a magnificent effort by probably the most underestimated Labor leader since Jack Curtin. There is a fair bit of commentary in this business and Bill gets his share, but it was a magnificent campaign. I had the great pleasure to go with Bill to places like Whyalla and other communities, and every time he came to South Australia he was always enjoying it and enjoying the campaign and the opportunity to get out there and engage with the Australian people.

Mr Ramsey interjecting—

Mr CHAMPION: I hear the member for Grey interjecting. We put a bit of pressure on him around the place. I know he would prefer it had Labor ran second rather than third, but we will be working to do that. Maybe we will even run first up in Grey and repeat the glorious representation that they have had in the past by Lloyd O'Neil and others.

Of course, there were thousands of volunteers across South Australia, and I have to thank all of mine. I have to thank the union movement, including: the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, particularly the vehicle builders division in my electorate; the CEPU, particularly those from the electrical division, a union I am privileged to be a member of and happen to represent in this House; and the SDA, which I am a member of and was an official of. Thank you to all of those unions. Thank you to former senator John Quirke for your help in the campaign. Thank you to my campaign manager, Tom Kenyon, who is a colourful member of the South Australian parliament with very strong views. Tom is a very good organiser and a great marginal seat campaigner. It is good to have a campaign manager who is a contemporary of yours, because at this stage of public office, I suppose, they are the only ones who can really boss you around. Your campaign manager always has to boss you around and that gets progressively harder, I think, with members of parliament as time goes on.
I have to thank my staff—many of them long-suffering, I have to say! They have stuck with me for some time: Mathew Werfel, Rob Klose, Caleb Flight and Richard Brooks—all fine gentlemen and all long-term staff members. I have to thank Michelle Wilby, Amy McInnes, Ruben Bala and the many volunteers—not in particular order—Beau Brug; Heidi Mohring; Sam Miller; Alex Pados, who is certainly the most interesting Facebook meme generator I have ever met; Paige Stevens; Maddi Brett; Gareth Bailey, who has recently been to Italy and back; Zachary Gallaway; Tahlia; Chad Buchanan; Aivi Nguyen; Lucas Jones; Isabel and Claire Scriven; David Jones; Leroy Cook; Peter Skinner; Barry and Nadia Penney; Graham and Jordan Klose; and Carmel Rosier. The last one, Carmel, has helped me on many campaigns all the way along and has been a very strong supporter over the years, along with her husband, Stephen.

Of course, we have to make some special mentions of those who served on booths. Handing out how-to-vote cards is a pretty old school bit of public politicking. I do think that one of the most positive things we could do is ban how to vote cards. I know that that is sacrilege and many people will disagree with me, but I do think it would be an important function for our democracy that the ballot booth be sacred, both the internal bit of the ballot booth and also the approaches. I know the booth presentation is particularly important. It can win or lose elections in close seats, and we have increasing contests for them across the country. I think in New South Wales they are now arriving on Friday afternoon straight after school closes or as soon as the booth can possibly be manned. I do not think that is particularly healthy for democracy, and there are pretty easy solutions to it. You can just say that you cannot canvass within 50 or 100 metres of the booth, and that soon fixes your problem. I have always regarded that as an unnecessary intrusion. These days people can get how-to-votes by email or by postage, or you could have copies for people upon request. I do think that that would be worthy of consideration. It is just a personal view, of course; it does not reflect that of my party.

Regarding those who do man booths, Joe and Jasmine Daniele at Two Wells have always manned a booth for me, and I am very privileged to have their support. Antonio Polonco is another long-term supporter at Elizabeth Park. There is the Caunce family, particularly Tom and Peter; Kathy Chiera at Roseworthy; Mark Napper and Steve West manning the Hamley Bridge booth and returning it to the Labor fold, which I know will be a cause of great consternation for some of my friends in the local branch of the Liberal party up there; Councillor Paul Koch on the Gawler booth; Tony Bell out at Owen; and Guy Ballantyne at Saddleworth. Guy has been a long-term supporter, contributor and candidate for the Australian Labor Party, and a very strong presence in the mid-north for Labor. Sadly, now he has moved back to Adelaide, but I do appreciate his last efforts for us in Saddleworth. Roy Hadley and his family have been at the Watervale booth; Louise Drummond has been out at Marrabel. Marrabel has not switched. The member for Grey will know Marrabel is good farming country. I never ever get much above 33 votes, or 28 per cent—

Mr Ramsey: The people in Marrabel are very smart.

Mr CHAMPION: As the member for Grey says, the people in Marrabel are, indeed, very smart—but not for the reason that he thinks. There is Councillor Adrian Shackley and all of Young Labor, particularly Ben Rillo and Sean Hill who are always great organisers for Young Labor across the state. There is Kamal Dahal from the Bhutanese community; Sheila
Rammell; Councillor Gay Smallwood-Smith, who is a really great supporter of mine; Councillor Marcus Strudwick, who has always handed out for Labor in Malalar, and continues to do so; Ron and Sue Wurst, who are strong supporters in the Clare Valley; Susan Cunningham, a former employee of mine and a great contributor to the Labor movement, and I cannot thank her enough; and Lindsay Palmer, a former member of the South Australian state parliament and another big contributor in the Clare Valley.

Amongst the Wakefield federal electoral council, I have to thank: Glen Armstrong, a long-term former president of the branch and former vice-president of the Centrals footy club, is always the best companion to have by your side at a shopping centre stall or a community meeting, and is a steadying voice in those debates; Stephen Hollingworth, who is a cleaner at the Munno Para shops and who I see every morning when I go to my electoral office, and also a former head delegate at the Holden site—he is amazingly connected to that part of working-class Australia, the factory workers and the people who really did want to continue to make things in this country but for the actions of the Abbott government; Derralyn Dellar; Brad Templar; 'Cricket' and Phil Fox; and Paul Purvis. These people were all big contributors to my branch and its organisation through the term and also during the election campaign.

I have to thank Zak Gadalla, Ollie Bullitis, Ali Muhammad from the Hazara community, David Amol from the Sudanese community, and the state members of parliament—Tony Picollo in Gawler, Jon Gee in Napier, Zoe Bettison in Salisbury, Lisa Vlahos in Taylor, and Lee Odenwalder, who is a former employee of mine and a former police officer in the local area of Little Para, and is a great contributor to state parliament and the local community.

All of these people made a big contributions to my re-election and I do not know where I would be without them. As you go on in this job, you realise how much you rely on the local community and your supporters within it. I also have to thank all the local papers for their contributions, and I have always found the local media, without fail, to be fair and reasonable and to reflect community opinion. All of them are country newspapers. I have a fair smattering of really successful country newspapers that are, in some in some instances, expanding. It is nice to see newspapers—which were all told are going the way of the dodo—expanding their readership and their base and finding a market out there. I have to thank the Plains Producer, the Two Wells & Districts Echo, the Barossa and Light Herald, the Northern Argus, the Barossa Leader, The Bunyip and the Northern Messenger. We rely on those papers to have the news and the local footy. I rely on them to get the local message out about the community.

For this term there are many priorities, but the priority that will remain steadfast in South Australia is jobs. We have a big challenge. In the member for Grey’s electorate there are the workers at the steelmaker Arrium. We know that they rely on a government that is active and interested in their welfare and that is committed to keeping steel manufacturing happening in Whyalla. I certainly appreciate that there has been an outbreak of bipartisanship in recent times, and I think that is an important and good thing for Whyalla.

Tragically, in my electorate we will see the closure of Holden in 2017, in this term. Many of the Holden workers do not want any media interest at this point in time. They want to look for more work through the transition centre, which I visited last week with Doug Cameron and Kate Ellis to look at the work being done by the Holden transition team to help those factory workers seek other work and sometimes be released with a modified redundancy
package to take those jobs. But we are going to see a great bulk of workers who want to see the last car come off the line—an important car because it will reflect the end of car manufacturing in this country. It will be an emotional moment for this country, and I think it will be a moment of reflection for people in South Australia and people in the country, particularly when they realise the dollar is at 70c and we could have been exporting these cars, particularly to the United States. Cop cars and Chevy SSs could have been happening if different decisions had been made.

I think there will be both nostalgia and disappointment—not so much anger any more, but disappointment—with the actions of this government. We have seen the same thing at ASC, in shipbuilding. In one way or another, whether it is the supply ships, whether it is the government decision making around submarines, they got there in the end, but the decision-making process caused unnecessary angst and debate in South Australia. We now have a job to retain a skilled workforce in shipbuilding and automotive and make sure that those people go back into productive enterprises. That is going to be the great challenge for this government, and if they fail it will be a challenge for the next government, a Labor government.

It is a challenge that I want to be at the forefront of. For that reason I am very thankful that Bill Shorten has made me shadow parliamentary secretary for manufacturing and science. I want to see a country where people do make things, where manufacturing is highly engineered, where the value is driven by science, research and productivity. We can do that. We did it in the car industry, despite all the palaver that you might read in some of the news outlets. We did it in shipbuilding as well. We are capable of making very well crafted and effective bits of machinery in this country. You only have to go down and look at the latest Holdens. You only have to look at the performance of the Collins class submarines to know that Australian workers can make great and magnificent bits of kit—cars, medical instruments and a whole range of things. That is what I will dedicate myself to do, to face the jobs challenge in my state and across the country. Hopefully we will be doing it in government in short order.

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (19:24): I thank the Governor-General for his address setting out the plans this government has: stabilizing the budget, ensuring our nation is safe, growing our economy, developing new markets, embarking on the greatest ever investment in infrastructure and stimulating regional economies through our $200 million Regional Jobs and Investment Package, which I will speak about a little later in this speech. The Governor-General also outlined our intentions to support and promote agriculture, making a significant effort in the environment reducing CO2 emissions and real-time efforts in the natural environment, the National Innovation and Science Agenda, education, employment, health and a whole host of initiatives from aged care to the cashless welfare card, the same-sex marriage plebiscite and constitutional recognition of our Indigenous peoples. This government, the Turnbull-led coalition, has a very busy program and has been very busy since the election. While we have made considerable ground, I am really looking forward to the challenge of the next three years.

In my electorate of Grey I would like to express my satisfaction with the programs committed to through the election period. The funding to complete the Port Lincoln recreation centre upgrades; the Safer Communities programs in Wallaroo, Port Augusta, Minlaton and
Port Lincoln; three mobile phone blackspot towers that we committed to make sure will happen at Bute/Tickera, Robertstown and Marree; and a commitment to fully fund a new headspace unit in Whyalla. However, the biggest and most important is our commitment to the upper Spencer Gulf generally with the announcement of a $20 million Regional Jobs and Investment Package for that area.

Australia is aware that steelmaking in Whyalla is facing an existential challenge. For those who are not familiar with the steel industry in Whyalla, it was originally developed on the back of Australia's first iron ore mine at nearby Iron Knob by BHP. In 1998 BHP spun off its steelmaking enterprises in Australia and the company Arrium was formed. One of its assets was the integrated iron and steel production platform in Whyalla.

Since that time, the fortunes of the integrated operation have waxed and waned, with the highlight being the investment in Project Magnet in the early 2000s, when a refurbished blast furnace was supplied with magnetite instead of hematite, thus freeing up the significant hematite supplies for direct export. The Whyalla port was redeveloped to facilitate barging of iron ore for loading onto Cape class vessels. This just preceded the peaking of the iron ore market and its subsequent retreat. To cut the story very short, in the last ten years the company increasingly focussed on mining and borrowed billions of dollars to expand capacity. These decisions coincided with long-term underinvestment in the steel plant, and when the price of iron ore crashed Arrium was left owing creditors more than $4bn in total. Arrium reported in early April that the company was going into receivership.

That news was certainly very challenging for the community. The steel works employ about 1,600 people directly, and the mining venture which supplies about two million tonnes a year for the blast furnace and eight million for direct export employs another 700. Given even a very modest multiplier effect, it is not difficult to extrapolate that well in excess of 50 per cent of the Whyalla workforce depends on the survival of the integrated operation. There is very little flexibility in the Whyalla economy. Essentially, it is a custom-designed city built to service one industry. If there is no iron or steel, there is very little reason for Whyalla. That, and the security imperative of Australia retaining an independent heavy structural steel capacity, is why I believe that we simply must find a way for this industry to survive and prosper, and it is why I have been very pleased with the federal government's input up to now in bringing this operation back to profitability, thus greatly enhancing its sale prospects.

Our work in tightening up the antidumping rules, making sure the commissioner is well resourced, advancing the Adelaide to Tarcoola line replacement, thus delivering an order of 80,000 tonnes of rail to the plant—this order, and a renewed commitment from the large Australian consumers has led to the recent announcement that the plant is to run an extra shift in the rolling mill with around 44 new jobs, and the blast furnace is operating at around 90 per cent capacity. Throughput is everything. The plant has high fixed costs and that means that maximum output significantly reduces the unit cost.

Further, the coalition government has delivered a $49.2 million low-interest loan for the purchase of a new beneficiation plant in the nearby mines, which will bring unmarketable ore stockpiles to be upgraded to export standard. It is estimated that this action alone will improve the bottom line in Whyalla by $50 million per annum.

Debate interrupted.
ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER (19:30): It being 7.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program

Bruce Electorate: Community Engagement

Mr HILL (Bruce) (19:30): I would like to share with the House a little of what I did and learnt in two weeks away from this place. I have only been elected and here for a few months, but in that time I have already come to realise the incredible diversity of the privileged work which we undertake and the things we get to do—from local community issues, talking with desperate and sometimes difficult people to wonderful people doing great things with great ideas in our communities, to national and international policy issues in our work here.

Surely, one of the most privileged things that we can do here is to engage with our Defence Forces. I said in my first speech to this place that politics is the alternative that we choose to violence and that war as state-sponsored violence is surely the greatest failure of politics. I apologise for being Mayor Quimby in quoting myself—that is my Simpsons reference for the day. I saw in the two-week break how true those words are.

I visited the Middle East region as part of the ADF Parliamentary Program, which includes Afghanistan, too long a troubled place. For the first time in my life, I donned the uniform of our troops and lived amongst them, talking, seeing and learning firsthand the professionalism, the dedication, the commitment and the skill of our women and men in the ADF and the work they are doing in our name to help create a more peaceful and stable world. And it is no easy task; it is slow, difficult and necessary work with others. I have learnt that there can ultimately be no military solution—you cannot kill your way to peace. It will require a political solution one day, but that has to be negotiated, in my view, from a position of strength and stability. We are contributing to that work.

Whilst living amongst them, our work as MPs was transient. We are not of that world while we are in it. I could never really claim and would not claim to understand and know the sacrifice that is putting your life at risk, but I pay tribute with heightened respect to those who are serving and in this week, as we approach Remembrance Day, those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. The member for Kingston was there with me and observed as we were leaving that she has never been prouder to be Australian. I understand and share that sentiment and know the truth of it. I record my thanks to Major Brianna Stirling at the ADF, our escort officer.

Back here now in parliament, despite the bad rap we too often get—sometimes for our behaviour in question time, and I will take that as a collective 'we' which has nothing to do with this corner of the chamber—I confess to a fondness and respect for this institution. It is where our nation bestows our power and has a great responsibility to debate and legislate, not to plebiscite. It is privileged but sometimes it is unreal and too easy to forget and lose touch in this oppositional bubble with what everyday Australians are saying and thinking. So I, like others, try to keep in touch.

On Saturday I conducted a number of street stalls in my electorate, including in Noble Park and Mulgrave, and spoke with dozens and dozens of people. Some would say I am a strange
person because I love street stalls—that is once you get over the shock of being the guy carrying the sign with your head on it through the market and setting up shop. You talk to people and you learn stuff and return recharged and grounded with the voices of people from the community ringing in your head.

I will report to the House the top issues. It is fair to say, and the minister is here, that the top issue was that basic services matter. There were many complaints about Centrelink and Medicare and the failure of the government to do basic services properly. It is not a welfare crackdown. Waiting times and cruel tests affect not just people on welfare; but also working families who spend hours on the phone simply trying to get an answer. People are not stupid, and unfairness is also making them really angry. There is visceral anger that ordinary people are being asked to bear the brunt of governments budget savings, like the three-dollar cuts to pensions that the government is still trying to put through the parliament while promoting tax cuts to the top one per cent—a $50 billion tax cut to multinational companies. That is actually quite amazing, given that so many of them pay no tax.

There is anger about the pension cuts that come in on 1 January and the loss of utilities and other discounts that flow. There is not a lot of love for politicians by pensioners. I do remind everyone that I was elected after 2004 and do not get a pension—for the record. There is also concern about the next generation and about our future economy and how people will afford to buy a house. Funnily enough, it is also interesting to reflect on what people did not say. Not one person came up to me and said that their greatest national priority, wish or desire was that they would be able to say more racist things to their fellow citizens—that it should be a national priority for the parliament to weaken our race laws. There is a desire for us to do our jobs respectfully, listening to each other, remembering everyday decent folk—(Time expired)

Corangamite Electorate: Bushfire Recovery

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (19:35): On Christmas Day last year, the communities of Wye River and Separation Creek, nestled in steep hills on the Great Ocean Road between Lorne and Apollo Bay in the Corangamite electorate, were devastated by a terrible bushfire. One hundred and 16 homes were lost, and many were damaged. It was a miracle no-one was killed. But for the incredible planning of emergency services including the Wye River CFA, led by Captain Roy Moriarty, tragedy could have so easily occurred.

Under the National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, the Commonwealth has contributed almost $4 million to the cost of the clean-up, infrastructure repair works and emergency payments.

Recovery has been long and slow. Many businesses have suffered, particularly in Wye and Apollo Bay. The Great Ocean Road has been closed for a total of some 46 days since last Christmas, most recently because of floods and landslides and the ongoing threat of a major landslip at Paddy's Path, between Wye and Sep. A large wall is now under construction there in an attempt to keep the road open and safe.

As part of the Turnbull Government's $25 million contribution to a $50 million Great Ocean Road upgrade in partnership with the previous state Liberal government, the Separation Creek bridge is being rebuilt at a cost of $4 million. Proudly, we have committed another $25 million to the Great Ocean Road upgrade, but, very regrettably, the Andrews
Labor government continues to turn its back on this iconic tourist attraction and refuses to match this funding.

Last week I visited Wye River, on a magnificent spring day. Many people are preparing to rebuild in this magical part of the world. But there is one group of homeowners, including Geelong photographer Mark Strachan, who are battling yet another injustice. They were unlucky enough to have taken out a total replacement policy for their home with AAMI insurance, owned by Suncorp. AAMI's treatment of these policyholders has been nothing short of disgraceful. AAMI's complete replacement cover is meant to take all the worry away. In its promotional material, it states:

If your home is damaged or destroyed by an insured event, we'll repair or build it no matter the cost to us.

The problem is AAMI will not rebuild the home itself—the policy does offer this discretion—and it is refusing to provide sufficient money to cover the cost of the rebuild.

In at least six cases, AAMI is underquoting the cost of the rebuild by between an estimated $100,000 and $250,000. In a number of cases, AAMI will only reveal the lowest quote to rebuild and refuses to release any funds so policyholders can get architect plans drawn up, which is required for an independent costing. It is using companies which have no local knowledge of the terrain and the complexity of building to the required BAL, or bushfire attack level. These companies also carry none of the risk of rebuilding, meaning there are no consequences for them for underquoting or not providing sufficient contingency.

Homeowners are paying mortgages for homes which do not exist, and nearly 11 months on they are still in dispute, being forced to the wall by an insurer that is, frankly, trying to screw them—excuse the language, but that is what they are doing, Mr Speaker—at every turn.

Another case involves a woman who is a permanent resident but cannot move back into her badly damaged home because AAMI will not provide sufficient funds to repair it. She does not want to be named, but she told me: 'I had carried their premium total replacement insurance for many years with never a claim. Depressed, homeless, staying with friends after having worked hard all my life for my own little home near the coast. It is AAMI, not the fires, which have taken that all away.'

As but one example, AAMI's scope of works for each proposed rebuild contains an estimate for wastewater works. AAMI's quote is $16½ thousand, but the real cost, according to reputable local builders, is between $50,000 and $60,000.

AAMI is willing to discuss these claims, and I am meeting with AAMI this week. But, frankly, after almost a year, the time for talk is over. Mark and the other policyholders have been extremely unlucky to be with AAMI, and the full cost of the rebuild, along with compensation for lost interest, earnings and costs must be paid as a matter of urgency. Justice must be done.

Age Pension

Mr CONROY (Shortland) (19:40): For the last few months, my electorate office has been inundated with complaints about the processing time for applications for the age pension by the Department of Human Services. I know from speaking with colleagues that my office is not alone in receiving these complaints. My timing is quite fortuitous; the minister responsible is at the table right now.
At the outset, I want to pay tribute to the staff of the department. I know how hard they work, in very difficult circumstances. But, as a result of the Abbott-Turnbull governments' slashing and burning of the Public Service, there are now huge delays in processing pension applications for our ageing population.

Mr Tudge: You cut $4,000 staff!

Mr CONROY: For Australians to access good public services, there must be sufficient public servants to attend to the work. You do not get public service without public servants. The most basic point I want to make about these processing delays is this: it is not fair that senior Australians who have worked all their lives—

Ms Henderson: Why did you cut so many staff?

Mr CONROY: paid their taxes and contributed to our society and economy—

Mr Tudge: Labor—

Mr CONROY: are forced to wait months on end to have their applications for the pension, one of the cornerstones of our social security safety net, processed.

These delays are causing significant problems in the electorate I represent. Twenty-six per cent of people in Shortland are aged over 60, and more and more people will be applying for the pension in the years to come. The processing time for pension applications has doubled under this government. Let me repeat that: the processing time for pension applications has doubled under this government—from 34 days to 62 days. No matter what the protests from the other side are, what the Minister for Human Services, who keeps blaming everyone else for his own failures, is saying, the processing time has doubled under this government. This is a truly shocking statistic and a damning indictment of the Turnbull government's attitude to older Australians.

I particularly want to raise the case of a Shortland resident called Ron. Ron worked his entire life as an electrician, mostly in our local mines. He raised a family and is a prominent and well-liked member of our local community. Ron applied for the pension in April. He was finally granted it in late September. In modern Australia, in 2016, a five-month delay is just not acceptable. And Ron and his wife found themselves in a real catch-22 situation, as her application for Newstart could not be finalised until Ron's pension application was processed.

This is just one example of the calls I and my staff deal with every day. And there are not just delays in processing age pension applications. I regularly talk to people about significant delays in relation to applications for Newstart, carer payment and youth allowance, including at my mobile office in Valentine recently, where the grandparents of one student were quite distraught that her youth allowance application had been delayed by over 10 months. Again, this is not acceptable. All these people deserve better.

Vulnerable Australians who rely on a fixed income are being targeted by the coalition. The coalition have a nasty and callous disregard for millions of Australians, and their record speaks for itself. They wanted to cut the pension rate. They failed to do that. Instead, they reduced the threshold for the pension assets test. That will impact on over 300,000 Australians. They are cutting family tax benefit payments, and they are trying to force young job seekers to wait a month before accessing payments.
At the same time, they are giving huge tax cuts to their mates at the big end of town. How can they justify a $48 billion tax cut for some of Australia’s largest companies when they are cutting pensions, delaying pension application processing and attacking other recipients of our social security system? Labor are willing to support sensible and fair budget repair, and we have done so, but we will never tolerate targeting vulnerable Australians.

Another of the Liberals’ unfair approaches is to force older Australians to work until they are 70. This would mean that Australia has the highest retirement age in the development world. Now, this approach might suit someone like the Prime Minister, who sits at a desk all day in an air-conditioned office. But ask a builder, a nurse or anyone with a tough and physical job if their bodies will cope with working until they are 70, and the answer is clear. They do not want to and they think it is unfair.

Regarding the huge delays in processing pension applications, I have written to the Minister for Human Services regarding what options are available to applicants experiencing these significant delays and if any other resources in his department can be allocated to processing applications for the pension. I look forward to receiving his response.

I will end my contribution where I started. The age pension secures dignity in retirement for older Australians. It is an achievement we in the Labor Party are very proud to have initiated. The fact that so many senior Australians are waiting months for their applications to be finalised is wrong. Older Australians deserve so much more than this.

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**Page Electorate: Grafton Jacaranda Festival**

**Page Electorate: Karate**

**Page Electorate: Orara Valley Ball**

*Russell, Mr David (Page) (19:44):* Mr Speaker, as I am sure you are aware, last week was the Grafton Jacaranda Festival. It was another great event and we had more international tourists this year—the numbers are growing every year. In fact, last week, at one stage, I had to actually stop driving along the road because there was an overseas tourist lying on his back in the middle of the road taking photos of the lovely Jacaranda trees. They are more than welcome and so is the tourist dollar they bring with them. I would also like to congratulate the Jacaranda Queen contestants, Shannon Carter, Heidi Madsen and Sharni Wren. Sharni was crowned the 2016 Jacaranda Queen, and I congratulate her. Well done to the Junior Jacaranda Queen entrants, Lucy Hackett, Chloe Hallam, Ariana Smajster, Faith Sullivan and Annelise Uren. Kate Smith was crowned the 2016 Junior Jacaranda Princess, and congratulations to the Junior Jacaranda Queen, Maeve Dougherty.

There was also a beautiful baby competition and the grand champion was Unique Laurie-Davis and the runner-up was Dominic Wheatley. The best dressed boy was Landen Ford and the best dressed girl was Lucyana Corbett. The boy 0 to 6 months category went to Angus Irwin and Eden Summers was second; in the 7 to 12 months category, Dominic Wheatley was first and Oliver Dell second; in the 13 to 18 months category Zander Waugh was first and Elhi Laurie was second; in the 19 to 24 months category Liam Templeton was first and Kaeleb Oliver Lowe second.
In the girls 0 to 6 months category, Unique Laurie Davis was first and Phoebe Lee Senz was second; in the 7 to 12 months category, Lucyana Corbett was first and Xanthe Jackson second; in the 13 to 18 months category Navaiah Turner was first and Kalahni Bettison second; and in the 19 to 24 months category Darcy Falcke was first and Jordyn Reti second. I congratulate everyone involved in what was yet another wonderful Jacaranda Festival week.

Recently students from the Northern Rivers Shukokai Karate Dojo travelled to the Gold Coast to compete in the national all styles tournament. I am proud to announce that six of those students went on to compete at the Queensland state titles. Kane Williams, Imogen Crampton, Emily Le, Frederika Yee, Ruth Potts and Tia Steele all competed in the titles, with Imogen and Frederika both coming first in their respective divisions. These talented students will now be competing in the national titles in late November in Melbourne. Having six students competing in the national titles is a huge achievement for such a small dojo and it is testament to the hard work, passion and determination under the leadership of Barry Potts. I congratulate all involved.

The Orara Valley Ball was held on Saturday. This is a great event hosted by the Orara Valley Progress Association. The ball raises money for projects within the valley. Members of the Orara Valley Axemen football club spent three days before the event setting up. They helped with everything from erecting the marquee to putting down the dance floor. They were helped by the Nana Glen Rural Fire Service members. It is a true community event with many people freely giving their time. The ball could not have happened without people such as Loraine and Peter Waller, Joe McMenamin, Daryn McEwan, Brendan and Stephanie Luck, Peter Wood, Chelsea Shelley, Sam Mihelffy and the Crowe family, who generously donated auction prizes. Over 40 local businesses got behind this event including the Coramba Hotel, Jungs Quarry, Sally Taylor Racing Stables, JDR Windows, TuffCo Glass, Steve Long-Smartline Mortgage Broker, Knights Electrical Contracting, Leading Edge Telecoms in Coffs Harbour, Newcombe's Coach Lines, Brendon Luck Welding Services, Reg Latter Electrical, Orara Valley Pool Services and Stephanie Luck Bookkeeping. I congratulate and thank everyone involved in that event.

Lastly, a Lismore local, David Russell, has been excelling in recent motorsport races. He finished in the top 10 at the recent Bathurst 1000, and soon after he finished seventh at the Gold Coast 600. Most recently David was in a Lamborghini RX at the Hampton Downs 101 in New Zealand, which he won, beating the favourite, Greg Murphy. Congratulations, David—we are all very proud of you.

**Diabetes**

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (19:50): On Sunday, 30 October I joined thousands of South Australians for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation One Walk in my electorate in the suburb of Glenelg along the seaside to Somerton and back. The JDRF One Walk is the world's biggest type 1 diabetes fundraiser event. Each year JDRF walks around the globe bringing together around a million people to raise over $85 million to help fund life changing research for people with type 1 diabetes. This success is only possible because of the support, commitment and strength of our community. Type 1 diabetes is a lifelong autoimmune disease that usually occurs in childhood but can be diagnosed at any age. It is estimated that over 120,000 people in Australia alone are affected by type 1 diabetes. In fact, type 1 diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases in children. It occurs more frequently than
cancer, cystic fibrosis, multiple sclerosis and muscular dystrophy. Around 2,400 Australians are diagnosed with type 1 diabetes every year and the incidence is increasing at 3.2 per cent a year.

Type 1 diabetes is caused by the immune system mistakenly turning on itself. When this happens beta cells within the pancreas are destroyed, affecting the body's ability to produce insulin—and insulin, as we all know, allows the body to process sugar and to create energy. Without insulin the body literally starves and it cannot process food. In order to stay alive people with type 1 diabetes must have a constant supply of insulin through injections or an insulin pump, and they test their blood sugar by pricking their fingers at least four times a day.

It is important that research into this disease is supported. That is why I was so thrilled to take part in the walk on Sunday a week ago. I have participated in virtually every walk since its inauguration a few years back. I have sounded the horn. It is a very exciting part of the day. It is a very loud horn. I get great joy out of pressing the button and hearing the siren. It is an absolutely fantastic event. I pay tribute to Tamara Aitchison, the CEO of the South Australian JDRF, which is situated in the suburb of Plympton in the middle of my electorate.

Many thousands participated in the walk on the day. The weather started out quite well, but then a storm blew over. Many of us did not manage to finish the walk because of the high winds and the rain. It was attended by many, including the President of the Legislative Council, Mr Russell Wortley; Senator Don Farrell and his wife, Nimfa; Senator Sarah Hanson-Young; Dana Wortley, the MP for Torrens; and the Mayor of Holdfast Bay, Stephen Patterson.

JDRF works tirelessly for millions of children around the world. We see the hard work they do not only in our electorates but also in this parliament. Their vision is to have a world without type 1 diabetes. They say that it is the determination of the people affected by the disease to overcome it that gives the foundation its inspiration and the determination to do all it can to end it.

JDRF has set itself the goal this year of raising $1 million. I understand that it has currently raised over $700,000. I again urge everyone to get behind this initiative. Participate in a walk if there is still one scheduled near you or donate through their website—walk.jdrf.org.au. It will remain open until January 2017, so there is still plenty of time to donate. In South Australia, my home state, it estimates that we will raise a total of $120,000. That is quite amazing by a group of volunteers and a lot of kids. A lot of kids who have type 1 diabetes are fundraising. It was fantastic to see so many people participate, despite, as I said earlier, the very cold and windy conditions.

I sincerely thank the fantastic people at the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation for all that they do to find a cure and improve the treatment for this disease. I also thank the South Australian politicians who I named earlier who participated—it was a bipartisan team—and the many people who braved the elements and took part in this great event. Most importantly, I acknowledge those young people with type 1 diabetes and their families. They are an absolute inspiration to all of us. I very much look forward to meeting some of them at a morning tea in my electorate office in December. I will host them and have a chat with them. It is great to see how together we can all make a difference.
Petrie Electorate: Constituent Concerns

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (19:55): Mr Speaker, you know that we live in the best country in the world—we certainly do. One aspect that makes Australia great and unique is our democratic governance and accountability as members of parliament to the people and the places we represent. Since my election in 2013 I have been out meeting and greeting people on a regular basis. Yesterday I put up a Facebook post asking locals if there was anything that they wanted me to address in parliament this week. There were various topics, including whales in Antarctica, veterans' affairs, cameras on the Ted Smout bridge, immigration, the state government train debacle, the Bruce Highway, homelessness, false accusations against some men in divorce situations, the NBN, section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act, and same-sex marriage versus heterosexual marriage. I do not have enough time to cover all of these topics now. I will raise a couple of issues and try to cover some of the other ones at a later date.

In relation to traditional marriage, Mr Jason Young said, 'I would like parliament to strengthen the value of the family, including preservation of traditional marriage.' Sally Mitchell said, 'Marriage rights for all Australians.' The coalition took to the last election the promise to hold a plebiscite so that all Australians would have a democratic choice when it came to changing the definition of marriage. I am pleased to say that we have voted on that in the House of Representatives and supported that. It is now with the Senate. Over past parliaments we have had a few marriage bills that were defeated. I supported the plebiscite and made the commitment that I would honour the outcome of the Australian people. Unfortunately, it looks like the opposition will not support that. They do not trust the Australian people on that issue, neither does the Nick Xenophon Team and the Greens. I made a full speech on the plebiscite, if constituents would like to look at it.

Then there is the NBN in North Lakes. Mr Trent Dixon said: 'NBN. I have another 12 months to wait.' Vieve Mason said: 'Why parts of North Lakes/Mango Hill still have no NBN or internet connection? Been waiting five years now.' Vieve and Trent I hear you. North Lakes has been waiting longer than five years—probably 10 to 15 years, since it was built. Of course Labor made a lot of promises when they were in government but there was not a lot delivered. I call it fibre-to-the-press-release. In 2013 there were 5,279 premises connected in Petrie. Right now we are at 34,500 and there are over 14,000 with an active NBN connection. There are 10,000 under construction. Vieve, there are 6,000 in Mango Hill and North Lakes. The Prime Minister and the Minister for Communications know how important this area is for the Petrie electorate. I am very pleased to announce that in early 2017 just about all of North Lakes will be connected. It is being rolled out now in Copeland Drive and Discovery Drive. It is all being rolled out now. That is great news.

I also want to mention Mr Damian Dancer, who said: 'The Bruce Highway, Luke. You need to get that sorted out, mate. The Pine River Bridge through to the Bracken Ridge overpass.' Damian, I hear you. It is about a $1 billion build. We simply do not have the money at the moment to do it but I am talking every day I am down here to the transport minister. I know that we need to get it from four lanes to six lanes. There will be a bottleneck when the Gateway upgrade is completed. That is a section that is well on my radar. Thank you for raising it on Facebook with me.
Debra Summers said: 'What's the government going to do to get the country to start making money not borrowing it?'

Mark Wilkinson said, 'Reducing government which costs millions, three levels of government for 23ish million people is crazy.'

Mark and Debra, I hear what you are saying. The purpose of government is to provide strong economic management and to keep its citizens safe. In relation to the deficit and in particular to Debra, we are the only party that has a strong economic plan for jobs and growth. We believe that if we can create more jobs in the private sector through giving incentives to small and medium businesses, through reducing company tax from 30 to 25 per cent and helping with the instant asset tax write-off, it will create more jobs. We have got our defence manufacturing plan. There are a whole lot of issues. There is increased funding for health and education. We have a plan to address the chaos and we have had $6 billion in savings since the 2016 election.

If people would like to talk to me, I am doing mobile offices on Saturday, 19 November. The details of that are on my website: lukehowarth.com.au. Thank you to everyone for contacting me. I will address more issues later.

The SPEAKER: It being 8 pm, the House stands adjourned.

House adjourned at 20:00

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Dutton to present a bill for an act to amend the Migration Act 1958, and for other purposes. (Migration Legislation Amendment (Regional Processing Cohort) Bill 2016)

Mr Giles to move:

That this House:

(1) condemns the shocking findings uncovered by the Victorian Inquiry into the Labour Hire Industry and Insecure Work, including revelations of widespread underpayment, workplace health and safety breaches, maltreatment of workers, and tax avoidance in Victoria;

(2) welcomes the 35 recommendations made by the Inquiry in its Final Report (August 2016);

(3) commends the Victorian Government for:

(a) establishing the Inquiry; and

(b) committing to a labour hire licensing scheme in response to the Inquiry's Final Report; and

(4) calls on the Australian Government to:

(a) investigate the operation of the labour hire industry Australia-wide; and

(b) commit to developing a national response to widespread exploitation in the industry based on findings.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bird) took the chair at 10:30.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Lowles, Mr Charles, OAM

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (10:30): Sadly, the Blacktown community recently lost one of our own. Affectionately known as the 'Mayor of Mount Druitt', Charlie Lowles dedicated both his public and private life to the residents of the Blacktown local government area. First elected to Blacktown City Council in 1989, Charlie served his community with pride and passion until retiring at the council's elections held on 10 September this year. Throughout his service on Blacktown council, Charlie was mayor on three separate occasions. He served as deputy mayor and was conferred the title of emeritus mayor.

I had the honour of serving with Charlie on council when I was a councillor and deputy mayor during the period 2004 to 2008. During this time, Charlie always passionately and respectfully advocated for his beloved Ward 5 constituents. He served them with every fibre of his being.

As the news filtered through of his passing on Sunday 30 October, more and more people came out to thank Charlie for his service and to express their deep sorrow at losing a dear friend. He touched so many lives and treated everyone fairly and respectfully. I am sure that not only his former constituents are feeling his loss today but also the many staff of Blacktown City Council and members of the numerous community groups he worked with for so many years.

We often hear words like stalwart, dedicated and passionate. Charlie was the epitome of these words. His love of Blacktown city and Mount Druitt in particular shone through in everything he did. He not only spoke affectionately of the area; he also spoke fondly of its people. He loved Mount Druitt, and Mount Druitt loved him. It did not matter who you were or where you were from, Charlie would affectionately refer to you as 'Kiddo'—myself included. His lovable nature made him a popular fixture at councils events and branch functions.

In 2013, Charlie was awarded the Order of Australia medal for his service to his community. Never one to take credit or be boastful about his achievements, he said at the time: 'It is Mount Druitt's people who have been part and parcel of my journey.'

During his tenure on council, Charlie was fundamental in several wins for the local area, including the Mount Druitt library, Mount Druitt Swimming Centre, basketball courts and the Emerton Leisure Centre and Emerton Youth Recreation Centre.

I remember being at the opening of the Emerton Leisure Centre some years ago and someone made a passing reference to whether Mount Druitt deserved such a fantastic facility. Well that was a red rag to Charlie's bull. Parliamentary rules do not permit me to quote his response other than to say that it left nothing to imagination.

It is very sad that Charlie did not get to enjoy a lengthy retirement after so many years in public service. Outside of politics, he was a proud Korean War veteran and a staunch Everton
Football Club supporter. He migrated to Australia in the early 1960s and settled in Blackett, a suburb he called home and loved so dearly.

This is the man we will miss so dearly, the 'Mayor of Mount Druitt'. Charlie will be laid to rest at his beloved Holy Family Catholic Church in Emerton this Wednesday. Vale, Charlie Lowles.

**Illicit Drugs**

**Mr PASIN** (Barker) (10:33): I rise to speak about the scourge of the ice epidemic and some of the great work being done in my community to address it. As a former criminal lawyer, I have seen firsthand the devastating evil of this drug. It is a drug that does not discriminate, with people of all ages and backgrounds potentially at risk of having their lives and the lives of those closest to them destroyed by it. That is why I applaud the leadership shown by this government in creating the National Ice Taskforce and developing a national action strategy in response to its findings.

The strategy supports a joint national focus on tackling ice and includes achievable actions across a range of areas that will help reduce the supply and use of this insidious drug in Australia, and, consequently, the harm it causes. The objective of the strategy is to ensure that: families and communities have better access to information, support together with the tools to help them to respond to the drug; prevention messages are targeted at high-risk populations and accurate information about ice is more accessible; early intervention and treatment services are better tailored to respond to ice and meet the needs of the populations we serve; law enforcement efforts are better targeted to disrupt the supply of ice; and better evidence is available to drive our responses to the drug.

Effective 1 July this year, the Australian government is providing an additional $298.2 million over four years towards a number of measures to reduce the impacts associated with the drug and alcohol misuse on individuals, communities and families. This funding will strengthen education, prevention, treatments, sport and community engagement. It is provided under the National Ice Taskforce. Already the coalition government has taken practical steps to fight the scourge, including $1 million to boost Crime Stoppers with their Dob in a Dealer program, $9.8 million over two years to establish a new national crime intelligence system, $5 million for the ACC’s transnational crime analysts and $3.4 million over two years to boost the ACC’s capability to target money-laundering activities to undermine the business models of transnational criminal syndicates.

Although I am proud of the work our government is doing to address this issue nationally, I want to stress that the primary responsibility for funding drug and alcohol rehabilitation and treatment services resides with state and territory governments. To date, I have seen very little action from the South Australian government in my community to address this issue. The good news is that there are some very positive steps being taken in my community, regardless of the lack of noticeable action from the state government. I want to pay tribute to the Substance Misuse Limestone Coast working party. This group of dedicated professionals seeks to facilitate the establishment of a community-based collaborative model to address the needs of drug and alcohol misuse across the Limestone Coast region. Their dedication and planning, with such professionalism, to address the issue of substance misuse in the region is to be commended, and I look forward to working with them to achieve their success.
Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (10:36): I come here today to speak about the Macarthur Legal Centre. Nationally, and not for the first time, a coalition government is placing legal aid services across the country at risk. There are about 200 not-for-profit community legal centres across Australia. The one I know best is in Campbelltown, and that is the Macarthur Legal Centre. It is staffed with passionate and selfless workers dedicated to helping those that are most vulnerable and most disadvantaged in our society, including people suffering from the effects of domestic violence, those with tenancy difficulties in a time of housing stress and those living in poverty. I have the highest regard for their professionalism, and I continue to refer people to them, both in my role as a parliamentarian and in my role as a paediatrician.

Every year community legal centres deal with well over 200,000 requests for legal advice but, sadly, have to turn away many thousands due to lack of funding. Community legal centres are a lifeline for those who cannot afford to access qualified legal help when they need it most—often in an emergency or after a family crisis or tragedy. They provide hope and certainty where otherwise there would be none.

Today I call on the government to fully reverse the cuts foreshadowed to all community legal aid centres. Those cuts are mean and miserable and will make little if any tangible difference to the government's overall budget position. In a Commonwealth budget of over $400 billion, the cuts are a drop in the ocean. To the people affected and their communities, they are of incalculable value. As the Law Council has noted, cuts to legal aid services are a false economy. The Productivity Commission agrees. In 2014, the commission concluded that civil legal services were already underfunded to the tune of $200 million and that 'money invested in legal aid would yield substantial economic savings'.

The Macarthur Legal Centre has operated for 29 years, providing free legal advice, referrals and assistance for people of the Macarthur electorate and also those outside the electorate. It is used by over 4,000 people every year and offers family law, care and protection law, civil law, elder law and employment law, as well as other support services. It encompasses a tenancy advocacy service and is of enormous value to the families that I see in difficulty. It also encompasses a women's domestic violence court advocacy service—a vital need in our society. It is one of many that have been told their federal funding is to be cut by 25 percent from the middle of 2017. That is the equivalent of 1½ solicitors, and many more people in desperate need will be turned away.

My plea to the Prime Minister is to show his better self, heed the expert advice and permanently reverse all the cuts and false economies first proposed by his predecessor. We have a responsibility, as members of parliament and as human beings, to ensure that all Australians have fair access to the law. (Time expired)

O’Connor Electorate: Kalgoorlie-Boulder Leadership Summit

Mr RICK WILSON (O’Connor) (10:39): On Saturday, the federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Nigel Scullion, and I attended a leadership summit convened by the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder to address tensions that have been growing in the community with escalating juvenile crime, disengagement of Indigenous youth from education and assaults in schools. The vandalism of a newly-built school building and the death in August of 14-year-
old Elijah Doughty, who was run over while riding a motorbike, brought these issues to a head.

The summit brought together all levels of government, including WA Premier, Colin Barnett; his deputy, Liza Harvey, in her capacity as police minister; Andrea Mitchell, Minister for Child Protection; Mayor John Bowler; state MPs Wendy Duncan and Dave Grills; opposition leader, Mark McGowan; and Indigenous services providers, educators, local police and Indigenous community leaders.

Senator Scullion and I spent the previous day consulting with various Indigenous service providers and Aboriginal community leaders. We discussed possible ways to engage disaffected Indigenous youth in education, employment or training and to reconnect them with their culture, family and greater community.

The summit began with an acknowledgement that the recent escalation of racial tensions was driven by only a small number of individuals. It was also acknowledged that there was a willingness of all parties to commit to collaborating to achieve positive outcomes and greater social cohesion of the entire Kalgoorlie-Boulder community. After several hours of productive discussion moderated by John Walker, CEO of the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, the summit settled on three priorities going forward: firstly, supporting families to provide a stable and supportive environment for children; secondly, seeking better education outcomes through higher attendance rates and more appropriate curriculum; and, thirdly, more genuine employment opportunities through the local business sector and local government departments.

Minister Scullion asserted the situation in the goldfields was not unique, and was certainly resolvable in his experience. To this end he has committed the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to seven actions: firstly, a survey of local Indigenous youth to assess what they think would engage them—whether that be mainstream education, vocation related training like hairdressing, motor vehicle maintenance, aged care and nursing or back-to-country activities like in the Indigenous Rangers program. The survey will be conducted imminently, and it is hoped it will report by the end of 2016. Secondly, it would facilitate a regular and reliable means of transport back to the lands so that people are not trapped in the towns. This would involve cooperation of the state governments to ensure that all PATS patients scheme users were taken all the way home, reducing strain on the Kalgoorlie-Boulder accommodation and services. Thirdly, it would perform an audit on early childhood attendance and accessibility. Fourthly, it would assess where there is a duplication of Indigenous services across Kalgoorlie-Boulder. Fifthly, it would speak to Premier Barnett about co-location of the state Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet staff in Kalgoorlie. Six, it would help to form an Aboriginal leadership reference group; and, lastly, it would draft an economic engagement strategy encompassing jobs and jobactive CDP opportunities in the pastoral and mining industries. (Time expired)

**Hunter Electorate: Bushfires**

**Centrelink**

Mr **FITZGIBBON** (Hunter) (10:42): Most members in this place will be aware that, over the course of the weekend, bushfires threatened many communities in New South Wales, including my own home town of Cessnock and many of the villages close to Cessnock itself. I
take this opportunity to extend my thanks to our very courageous firefighters, both permanent and retained. Our volunteers in particular do amazing work. As do, also, of course, our emergency services personnel and, not to be forgotten, our police and our ambulance officers are all doing wonderful work in and around Cessnock.

Thankfully, to date at least, we have lost no homes, and there have been no significant injuries and certainly no deaths. Of course, we all pray that the threat has now passed but, again, I thank all those who did so much to ensure that lives, property and homes were not lost in that event.

Secondly, and on a very different note, I want to reflect on what is happening with Centrelink. The cuts to Centrelink have been enormous and are now having very, very significant impacts on the constituents represented by each and every one of us—not just Labor members in this place but also, of course, coalition and crossbench representatives. This is now in a state of crisis, I would say. The workload in my constituent office—and I am not complaining about it—has risen considerably as people become so frustrated by the inability to secure the advice, support and help they need at Centrelink. I feel for Centrelink staff, who are doing their very best in very difficult circumstances, but there are not enough of them. They are simply not sufficiently resourced to cater for the demand at the front office in Centrelink, nor indeed on the phones. These are not just the unemployed; these are elderly residents whose financial situations might have slightly changed, who need to make declarations to Centrelink and, more importantly, secure advice from Centrelink. They are families who have lost an elderly loved one and need to make arrangements and need advice. They are parents with children with severe disabilities. All these people are unable to receive help from Centrelink. This government needs to start listening to this problem. It needs to start doing something about it. Only money fixes it—that is the reality. You cannot just take efficiency dividend on efficiency dividend. You have to give Centrelink the resources it needs to assist people who need their advice and assistance.

Medicare is no different. We are closing our Medicare offices all over the place. People on low fixed incomes are waiting long periods to receive recompense for money paid to a GP and for other services. I do not buy this, ’Everything’s electronic now and it can be easily fixed.’ It is not working, particularly for elderly people. (Time expired)

**Grey Electorate: Indigenous Affairs**

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (10:45): Last week I was fortunate enough to have the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, visit the electorate. Apart from a bit of a misfire in Port Lincoln, I must say, where for the second time in a month his prime ministerial jet was unable to land because of a crosswind factor, the trip went swimmingly well. Port Lincoln I am going to have to sort out later, but the rest of the trip was primarily focused on remote Indigenous Australia.

In the first leg, we went to Ceduna and surrounding communities. We spent a short amount of time in Ceduna and met with representatives of both the Indigenous community and the local council. Then we ventured out to Koonibba, and then on to Scotdesco for a dinner that evening, and on to Yalata the next morning, where we participated in the school attendance pick-up. Later that afternoon we flew up to Fregon, which is on the APY Lands. We spent over 24 hours there, overnighting at Umuwa and meeting with a wide range of community leaders, NGOs and those that live and work within those communities. I think, on many
levels, it has been a very beneficial trip. I often say to people, when your friend moves interstate, the first thing you should do is visit them so that, when you ring them up and they start talking about their home, you know what they are talking about. I think that is the great value of having the Prime Minister visit these remote communities: when I speak to him in the future about them, similarly, he has a very real, personal understanding. So that was very successful. He was treated, I have to say, with a very warm welcome. It was a bit like travelling with a rock star at times, but it was good all the way around.

One of the primary focuses of the trip was on the implementation, and the six-month report, on the cashless credit card in Ceduna. I have been a great supporter of this, and let me say from the outset that we would never have got there without the strong and very dedicated leadership of the local Indigenous groups and the local council there. I think we have reached a new level of understanding and working and cooperation between all of those groups.

Some of the figures that came out of the six-monthly report are quite astounding. Domestic violence incident reports are down by 13 per cent, for instance. The poker machine turnover is down 15 per cent, and that sounds pretty good, but in fact, when you look more closely at that, Ceduna is included in a much bigger region—another five council areas. In fact, the feedback I have is that the reduction of usage of the poker machines at the Ceduna hotel is down by probably double that figure. That is making a very real impact on the goods and things that people are buying for their children. There is more food going out to Hope Valley—there is a truck a week, as opposed to one every fortnight. Thank you. (Time expired)

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (10:48): I recently attended a Writers' Festival Week held at Greenvale Primary School in my electorate. Writers' Festival Week is an innovative program organised by Ms Georgia Kroger, the English leader at Greenvale Primary School. It is a program that sees students learn new writing devices, helps them increase their vocabulary and also helps them understand how powerful the use of words is and how writing in itself can be a very powerful expression of one's feelings, emotions and ideas.

The entire school—all 700 students plus, from the foundation students to the year 6 classes—took part in this year's festival, which was themed 'Wishes, hopes and dreams'. During my visit I did enjoy hearing what our students wrote about through their stories. Some students revealed emotional tales of hope, some wrote of their social justice and equality dreams for the world that we live in and some wrote personal wishes for their families, friends and communities. Their writings showcased a sophistication that pretty much belied their age. In these classrooms I saw future leaders and a generation that deeply thinks about and cares about community and the environment.

Given that we do live in an era of spellcheck, emoji and text messages, students have at their disposal all sorts of language shortcuts through their PCs, iPads and iPhones, so initiatives such as writers' festival week are of the utmost importance, especially in younger students, because they allow the emphasis to be put back on the writing and they encourage students to use their imagination and become creative writers. They also allow the next generation of professionals and leaders in this country to understand and explore the value of words, and understand grammar and language so that they can all obtain the full benefit of language and communication.
A number of the students at Greenvale Primary School told me that before the program they thought writing was boring and it was a chore but, since going through the program, they realise just how important reading the thesaurus is and what a wonderful tool writing is to help them express themselves and to tell their stories. They became very excited and very engaged.

I want to take this opportunity to read out one particular story written by young Adela Luke that I was touched by. It was a story filled with so much emotion. She wrote about her everlasting wish to bring back and have one more moment with her beloved brother Harly. In her story she wrote, 'If it comes true, I'd jump all the way to heaven and back.' I was moved. Adela's writing is just wonderful, and the fact that she was able to express this deeply held wish and read it out to everyone was quite a treat for us all. (Time expired)

**Fadden Electorate: Volunteers**

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (10:52): On Friday I had the enormous privilege of recognising the hardworking volunteers we have in my electorate of Fadden on the northern Gold Coast. Today I wish to acknowledge each and every one of those pillars of our community in this great place in parliament. Something like 140,000 Gold Coast residents volunteer each year with the combined impact in the community of some $6 billion. Our volunteers truly are the glue that holds our community together.

Our volunteers that received an award last Friday include Kay Hobson from Volunteers in Policing; Beverly Sharp from the Lynne Richardson Community Centre; Katrina Dunbar, chair of the Gaven State School P&C; Alex Wells, who started an inclusive sports program at her school LORDS; Gareth Roberts from the Runaway Bay Cricket Club; Alan Farrell, who does great work at the Helensvale branch of Parkinson's Queensland; Gunter and Marie Pfitzer of the Crestwood Heights Neighbourhood Watch; Dean Cummins, who does everything at the Runaway Bay Rugby League Club; Alan McFarlane for his efforts building up the Coomera Soccer Club; Leanne Woolard, Jayde Gofton, Alex Blaine, Mel Voight and Roy Gerards from the State Emergency Service; Mike Findlay from Hatcher raceway; Joan Norman from the Coombabah Community Garden; John Doric from the Serbian-Australian Pensioners Association; Kathleen New, captain of the Southport Croquet Club; Robert De Colle, Maureen Cooper and Joe Nola from the U3A North Gold Coast—they have just celebrated 25 years; Sandy Parker from the Runaway Bay Lions Club; Vicky Goodrich, founder and President of the Labrador Community Garden—a wonderful community initiative where one of my staff even has a garden, though I am not too sure his veggies are growing particularly well; Janet James, who does great work for local women and girls at Soroptimist International Gold Coast; Leeanne Braund from the Discovery Park Tennis Club and Broadwater financial services; Leanne Watt, who is involved in the Helensvale primary and High School P&C and the Helensvale Hornets Junior Rugby League Club; Judith Hendriks from the Ormeau Progress Association; Del Cole, an extraordinary woman who does so much for Papua New Guineans through the Runaway Bay Rotary Club and her provision of support for birthing kits in Papua New Guinea; Merle Buckley from the Helensvale State School P&C; Ben Tullipan, who runs Empower Golf Queensland; Marion Anderson, founder and director of Hands to Hold; Corina Profke, Caryn Reeves, Roz Rowe, Tania Mackie and Amanda Hartwig from the Coomera Rivers State School P&C—an extraordinary P&C that has got something like 140 parents involved in it, quite amazing;
Margie James, Brad Pledge, Samantha Leonard and Christie Nunn from the Labrador Scout Group doing such a great job with our young people; and, finally, George Dick and Brad McEldowney from the largest union club on the coast the Helensvale Hogs, as in a rugby union club.

Let me acknowledge in front of not just my peers and colleagues but the whole nation the great work that our volunteers do. On behalf of the country, let me thank them for all their efforts. I wish them well in their future endeavours. (Time expired)

**Braddon Electorate: Broadband**

Ms KEAY (Braddon) (10:55): I rise to draw the chamber's attention to the ongoing saga of connecting the west coast of Tasmania to the NBN. The west coast is isolated and has a challenging climate. The local economy is a mix of mining, aquaculture and tourism. Recent tragedies at the Mount Lyell copper mine in Tasmania and its subsequent closure, combined with lower metals prices, have seen a significant economic downturn on the west coast. Despite this, this region still has an annual gross state product of around $372 million from a population of 4½ thousand.

Yet, for the economy to grow and diversify, it needs the best possible infrastructure. When Labor announced a full-fibre NBN, we highlighted the ability for such infrastructure to remove the disadvantage of distance, allowing such communities to access health and education, for example, in new ways. The NBN under Labor was always about equity and providing modern infrastructure that would leverage economic growth. When it comes to delivering the NBN to the west coast, Labor's policy has always been fibre-to-the-premises NBN to connect Queenstown, Rosebery and Zeehan, and a mix of other technologies for smaller towns in outlying areas.

But what is the coalition's policy for the NBN? Before the 2013 federal election, the now Prime Minister promised the coalition would honour all existing contracts and roll out the NBN to all Tasmanian homes and businesses by 2015. That is a fail. He then broke these promises and said the west coast would be connected to the second-rate fibre-to-the-node network. He broke that promise, too. In 2015, he then quietly put the west coast on the NBN satellite without informing the community. It is fair to say the community were up in arms, knowing the satellite would not work given the climate and terrain of the west coast, and an unrelenting campaign ensued.

The former Liberal member for Braddon ignored and dismissed the community's pleas for many, many months. I would like to pay tribute to the community that never relented and that stood its ground with the backing and support of the West Coast Council and Mayor Phil Vickers. Finally, in the dying days of the election, a desperate coalition relented and promised to connect the major towns to second-rate fibre-to-the-node service. This is now the fourth coalition west coast NBN policy in the space of three years, yet it comes with strings attached.

During Senate estimates, NBN Co admitted it does not whether the existing copper network is capable of delivering the fibre-to-the-node service and further said, if the copper network is incapable, then those west coast towns could actually end up with fibre to the premises.

So under the coalition, after four different policy positions, failures and years of waiting, the outcome could be Labor policy. It is really simple: rather than continuously stuffing
around the west coast, the coalition should admit their policy is wrong and provide the west coast with the NBN it needs and deserves. *(Time expired)*

**National Adoption Awareness Week**

Ms FLINT (Boothby) (10:58): This week is National Adoption Awareness Week, which draws attention to the fact that 30,000 Australian children are in need of a permanent, loving home. According to Adopt Change, these children have been living separately from their birth families for two or more years. In my home state of South Australia, there were 2,786 children placed in out-of-home care in 2014. This was double the number of children in care in 2004.

The Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People reports that children in out-of-home care want their parents helped, if help would make a difference, but they do not want to be left in limbo. Children want a safe and loving home. Sadly, this is an outcome too few children enjoy, as adoption rates remain at record lows. There were just 317 adoptions Australia wide in 2013-14. In 2014-15, only 209 children were adopted. And yet, while we have low adoption rates, a very high number of children need safe and loving homes. We have record numbers of Australian women undergoing around 65,000 IVF cycles a year, with an average success rate of only 19 per cent. We clearly have many people desperate to have a baby or to adopt a child who cannot do so. We have children in care and children at risk who could be provided with safe and loving homes. We need to give these children the best chance in life. Through adoption, they can be provided with a permanent loving home.

I commend the work Adopt Change and CEO Renee Carter are doing on this issue this week to raise awareness. I commend their four points of change, which are: No. 1, an increase in the number of children in permanent, loving and stable homes across Australia; No. 2, removing barriers to permanency to allow timely, positive outcomes for children; No. 3, trauma-informed support services should be provided for children and for their families, and No. 4, prioritising a streamlined system for adoptions across Australia. I again commend the incredible work that Adopt Change are doing. They brought a number of very impressive speakers to Parliament House this morning, and we had the honour of hearing from them and the minister, Zed Seselja, on this very important issue. I hope that state colleagues will work with us at the federal level to achieve change and make sure that we are giving all children the best chance in life. As I said, through adoption, they can be provided with a permanent loving home, which all children deserve in life.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bird):** In accordance with standing order 193, the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Stroke**

Ms BANKS (Chisholm) (11:01): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) National Stroke Week:

(i) ran from 12 to 18 September 2016; and

(ii) is about raising awareness to prevent stroke in Australia; and
(b) the National Stroke Foundation encourages all Australians to:
   (i) be aware of what stroke is, how to recognise a stroke and what to do;
   (ii) live healthy to reduce the risk of stroke; and
   (iii) get a regular health check;
(2) acknowledges the:
   (a) launch by the Minister for Health in June 2015 of the Acute Stroke Clinical Care Standard; and
   (b) bi-partisan work done by past governments in the area of stroke; and
(3) notes the requirement for greater awareness and promotion of the prevention of stroke within the Australian community.

Stroke is a time critical emergency, caused when blood supply to the brain is interrupted owing to a blocked or bleeding artery. This prevents the flow of oxygen and vital nutrients, resulting in sudden impairment that can affect a range of functions and, at worst, can lead to significant disability or be fatal. Stroke and its effects place a significant physical, emotional and financial burden on patients, their families, carers and loved ones and, by extension, on the wider community. Community awareness and the promotion of the prevention of stroke are paramount to improving outcomes after stroke. A timely response and rapid access to treatment are crucially important.

Stroke is a leading cause of death and disability in Australia, with over 50,000 strokes each year. In 2015, within my electorate of Chisholm alone, over 900 stroke and transient ischaemic attack, TIA, patients presented to Eastern Health's Box Hill Hospital and over 100 patients received a brain-saving clot-busting medication, equating to more than two calls each day. Mr David Plunkett is the Chief Executive Officer of Eastern Health's Box Hill Hospital, which encapsulates expertise in relation to strokes. The hospital has seen a disturbing surge in the demand for its stroke expertise, with a 48 per cent increase in stroke and TIA presentations and a 102 per cent increase in urgent stroke calls. On a proud note, the Box Hill Hospital received a certificate of achievement for being a top performer in the provision of intravenous thrombolysis for ischaemic stroke and for discharging patients with stroke on anti-hypertensive medication in 2015.

The Turnbull government is funding quality clinical research into stroke, and the update of the clinical guidelines for acute stroke management. This will ensure that medical practitioners across Australia continue to be guided by current best practice evidence when organising the care management and rehabilitation of their stroke patients.

Also in the Chisholm electorate, there is Monash University's Health, Stroke and Ageing Research Group, consisting of four divisions headed by mentoring and research experts. The centre adopts a transdisciplinary approach to research and clinical translation in the fields of cerebrovascular disease, including acute stroke and stroke prevention. It proudly leads international studies and secondary prevention trials in stroke and several projects aimed at improving the quality of stroke care in hospitals, telemedicine provision in regional hospitals, as well as the use of behavioural techniques to improve stroke outcome in patients.

Working closely with the health professionals, patients, carers, government and the community, the National Stroke Foundation is Australia's peak not-for-profit organisation, committed to increasing awareness of risk factors and signs of stroke, reducing the impact of stroke and, indeed, preventing stroke through a number of important programs, some of which
would not be possible without the Turnbull government's support. These include: The FAST program, which teaches Australians the most common signs of stroke; the Know Your Numbers! program, which aims to raise awareness of high blood pressure; Australia's Biggest Blood Pressure Check, which enables opportunistic health checks it and community settings; the StrokeConnect program; and a plethora of educational resources. The NSF is also responsible for developing clinical guidelines to assist medical practitioners in providing treatment and rehabilitation to stroke survivors.

National Stroke Week, held in September this year, is the Stroke Foundation's annual awareness campaign and it focuses its efforts to encourage all Australians to understand the impact that time has on stroke. An urgent response to the onset of a stroke not only influences the treatment path for the person having a stroke but also their long-term recovery. The Acute Stroke Clinical Care Standard Initiative, launched by the Turnbull government in June last year, is aimed at improving the early assessment and management of patients with stroke and supporting the delivery of appropriate care to ensure optimal treatment during the acute phase of management regardless of their geographic location. Commonwealth funding has also recently been provided to support education and awareness activity through the Stroke Safe Ambassador program and through the FAST campaign.

The Turnbull government is committed to reducing the impact of stroke on the broader community and looks forward to continuing to work with the National Stroke Foundation to improve support to all Australians and their families affected by stroke.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): Is the motion seconded?

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

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (11:06): I am very pleased today to rise to support the motion moved by the member for Chisholm to raise awareness of the impact of stroke and its impact on our community. It is a reminder of the great work also that is done by lots of people in the community to raise awareness, in particular the Stroke Foundation. National Stroke Week took place between the 12 and 18 September. While it is important not to confine our efforts to raising stroke awareness and prevention to one single week, we are reminded that we have a responsibility to raise awareness amongst our communities throughout the entire year.

Additionally in November this year the Stroke Foundation is also promoting Stride4stroke, a campaign encouraging people to become active. Of course I would like to encourage everyone here and elsewhere to take up the challenge of Stride4stroke.

An honourable member: Good luck.

Ms VAMVAKINOU: As co-convenor of the Parliamentary Friends of the Heart Foundation and of the Stroke Foundation, I am very much aware of the significance of the stroke as an issue that touches everyone in our community and the significance of raising awareness. In 2013, it was estimated that stroke cost our community $5 billion dollars. The economic costs of stroke not only include the expenses associated with medical treatment but significantly the loss of productivity, wages and the cost to carers, families and friends when helping someone who has suffered from and is recovering from a stroke.

Stroke in our community has a tremendous emotional and social impact. In addition to the profound emotional burden felt after the death of a loved one from stroke, caring for a stroke
survivor also involves significant personal expense for the carers. They perform a very important job. They provide assistance and support and may also need in turn to be supported so that they can help their loved ones and nurse them back to physical and intellectual wellness so that they can fully enjoy the rest of their life.

The health of my constituents is an enduring concern to me as the member for Calwell. Currently thousands of my constituents are living as survivors of stroke and every year hundreds more will be added to this growing list. Even more concerning is the number of people living with the risk factors of stroke. Some 15 per cent have high blood pressure, a quarter have high cholesterol levels and nearly half are not getting nearly enough exercise as is required. These numbers are comparable to the state and national averages and are indicative of a more endemic issue that warrants our continued attention and support.

Because strokes can occur quite suddenly and unexpectedly, acting quickly can make a difference to a person's chances of survival and also help in their recovery. Importantly we have to ensure that information is extended to the broader community and particularly to culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This is particularly a concern to me in Calwell where more than half of my constituents speak a language other than English.

It is very important that everyone is aware of the symptoms of stroke, the risk indicators and how to respond in a situation where you are, or someone you know is, suffering a stroke. A lack of English should not be a reason why people are prevented from receiving that critical information. The Stroke Foundation provides information about stroke and how it can be prevented and treated, and it now does so in several different languages, including Arabic, Mandarin, Greek, Italian, Turkish and Vietnamese. Additionally, their program StrokeConnect, which follows up with discharged stroke victims, uses interpreters and caters for cultural sensitivities in these services. The Stroke Foundation is hoping to extend these services and acquire a greater understanding of how linguistically and culturally diverse communities respond to stroke and how best to support them.

Now, for our part, successive Australian governments from both parties have been very interested in the impact of stroke and its dangers for our community. In 1996, the then government made stroke a national health priority, recognising the pervasiveness of the disease as a risk in our country. In 1999, both parties came together to extend the welfare support available to carers, specifically recognising that stroke victims and their carers were at risk of being particularly impacted by gaps in the existing framework. I would like to congratulate all members speaking on this very important issue today.

Mr DRUM (Murray) (11:11): I too would like to take the opportunity to talk to the importance of raising awareness in relation to National Stroke Week, which ran from 12 to 18 September this year. As we all know from those that have taken the opportunity to research this area, it is one of Australia's biggest killers. Obviously, the number of people that suffer either permanent or temporary disability due to stroke is an incredibly significant issue.

One in six people will suffer a stroke at some stage in their lifetime. I lost my dad to a stroke in 1987. Whilst on a golf course, he went down and did not get up. Obviously, it is something that our family has been quite aware of. We like to think that all of the children are very keen to get check-ups with their respective GPs. Also, my mum, who was a nurse, would always say, 'The one thing I don't want as I get older is to have a stroke.' Of course, mum had a stroke about six years ago and was in a nursing home for the last three years of her life.
due to its pretty significant effects. It certainly raises that importance for all of us of making sure we have strong and close relationships with our GPs so that we can have the tests and the range of medicines that are available to prevent clotting, stroke and so forth. There are very strong messages out there.

Some of the statistics in relation to the prevalence of stroke are good signs. Over the last three decades, there has been a significant decrease in the incidence of stroke in the broader population. That is a very positive statistic. These declines have been driven by improvements in the key risk factors such as high blood pressure, the reduction in the smoking rates, as well as the progress in medical treatment, other advanced care and the advancement in the medicines that are available to people who are in that high-risk category.

It is also worth remembering that stroke kills more women than breast cancer does, and kills more men than prostate cancer does. We should not be thinking, 'This is something that only happens to those old folk; it is only something that happens at the end of our lives.' That is just not true. A quick walk around any aged-care facility will generally find somebody in that 50 to 60 age bracket who is sitting there because they have had a stroke and they are significantly impaired. It is very sad state of affairs when those purpose-built facilities are not prevalent enough to cater for people that are suffering from serious disabilities as the consequence of stroke.

I will just take this opportunity again to raise awareness but also to send the message out to the broader community. This is a real opportunity for us to get tested and to have our family history checked because there is evidence that suggests your likelihood of being hit by a stroke does, in fact, have a hereditary chain; therefore those of us who have stroke in our family history need to be very cognisant of that and need to take the necessary opportunities.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare there is currently no comprehensive monitoring of new cases of stroke. Again, that would suggest that there is a real need and real opportunity for an increase in data collection and an increase in the studies that are done into the new causes of stroke. Perhaps that could create an improved picture as to the quality of stroke care that could take place right around Australia. I think that is the message that I would like to push: let us get the data, let us make sure we understand the incidences of stroke and the causes of stroke, and let us make sure we understand as much as we possibly can about this real killer in our society.

Dr ALY (Cowan) (11:16): I would like to begin by commending the member for Chisholm for raising the important issue of stroke awareness. Approximately 55,000 Australians are affected by cerebrovascular accidents, commonly known as strokes, each year. One of them is Shane Hopkins, who wrote to me last month. His letter highlights some of the challenges that people living with stroke face but also the possibility of hope for a full recovery. Shane writes:

I suffered a stroke and have been forced to write to you with my left hand. (I am right handed.) I am working on my right side and I know I will recover.

It is safe to say that I do not often get fan mail; it is quite often more hate mail. I was very honoured to receive this, especially from an individual who is living with stroke, as my father did. My father was one of those 55,000 affected by stroke. In his lifetime, he suffered several smaller strokes, eventually leaving him incapacitated and with rapid onset Alzheimer's in his final years. He passed away around 18 months ago.
Of these 55,000 Australians who are affected by stroke, it is estimated that about one-third will recover with little or no visible signs, one-third will survive but will have a permanent disability and one-third will die. Time is a major factor to recovery. If treatment can be initiated within the first three hours, the chances of a full recovery from stroke are greatly enhanced. In my electorate of Cowan, the 2014 records show that there were 2,268 people who suffered a stroke. That number is not likely to have decreased; in fact, it is estimated to rise each year as the population increases. Despite this large number of people in Cowan suffering from stroke, our newest hospital, the Fiona Stanley Hospital, is a considerable distance away and traffic congestion causes additional problems, meaning that delays occur in those critical first few hours after a stroke has occurred.

There is also a lack of services for stroke survivors post an attack. The Northern Suburbs Stroke Support Group is the largest stroke group in Western Australia. It is a voluntary not-for-profit group, and it is not government funded. They rely on their own fund-raising efforts to provide respite breaks for members on an annual basis. I had the pleasure of visiting the group earlier this year and seeing firsthand the wonderful work that they do for strokes victims and their carers with little access to resources or funding. The Northern Suburbs Stroke Support Group’s major concern is the lack of facilities in the outer northern suburbs for speech and physiotherapy services for stroke survivors once they have been discharged from hospital.

According to them, stroke is one of the most devastating tragedies that can be inflicted, because, of course, it affects not only the individual but also the entire family. Someone becomes an instant carer with virtually no knowledge of what is going to be demanded of them for many years to come and, without the urgent help and facilities available, the new stroke survivor will often give up the hope to live. There are no facilities in the northern suburbs for speech therapy and no facilities for physiotherapy for stroke survivors. Patients are being discharged from hospital and left to their own devices, and many have been waiting 14 months for access to services.

Of course, as the previous member mentioned, stroke is not only confined to the elderly. I will mention some examples from my electorate. A young 11-year-old girl recently had two strokes in nine days, and one of the youngest stroke survivors, who comes from Girraween, in the southern suburbs of Cowan, was still in her mother’s womb when her stroke occurred. Both her grandparents are members of the stroke support group. A 33-year-old male, also from Cowan, suffered what is called the locked-in syndrome stroke, whereby he was completely paralysed and could only blink his eyes. It has taken him five years to recover.

The community awareness of stroke needs to be encouraged. It is essential to be able to identify the signs and symptoms of stroke and the urgency of immediate hospital treatment. The outer suburbs in Cowan urgently require more hospital facilities for stroke patients and access to speech and physiotherapy services. Since we have had closures of rehabilitation hospitals in the area, it has been increasingly difficult for any stroke survivor in the northern suburbs to receive these essential services.

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (11:21): I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this motion moved earlier today by the member for Chisholm in relation to stroke, one of the biggest health issues affecting the Australian community. Strokes are one of the leading causes of death and disability in our community, and, sadly, there would be very few of us
who have not been touched by stroke in some way through relatives and friends. Addressing the causes of stroke and doing what we can to minimise the risk of stroke are incredibly important priorities.

Another thing that is very important is recognising the early signs of stroke, because often that identification of a potential stroke prior to its occurrence is literally the difference between life and death. It is critical as a community that we build understanding of how to identify those signs. That underlines the importance of National Stroke Week in getting the community to come together to acknowledge the significance of stroke in our community and to turn its mind to the risk factors relating to stroke. In 2015, there were some 50,000 strokes in Australia, which works out to about one every 10 minutes. This is a disease that will kill more women than breast cancer and more men than prostate cancer. So it is extraordinarily widespread in our community.

In recent years, the FAST test has been developed to help enable loved ones to try to determine whether or not someone may be at risk of suffering a stroke. The FAST test has four key parts. First is face: check the person's face; has their mouth drooped? The second is arms: can they lift both arms? The third is speech: is their speech slurred? Do they understand you? The fourth is time. This is critical. If you see any of the above signs, call 000 straightaway, because the difference between literally a few minutes can be absolutely critical in these circumstances.

We need to continue to make a concerted effort to promote awareness of the prevention of stroke within the Australian community and to heed the National Stroke Foundation's call to live a healthy way to reduce the risk of stroke and to get regular health checks.

The four main risk factors in relation to stroke are: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, physical inactivity and an irregular heartbeat. They are the four main risk factors and a number of those are things that we, in our own lives, can do something about to minimise the risk of stroke.

It is good to see that, in my own electorate of Banks, the two main hospitals that service my region—St George Hospital and Bankstown hospital—both have specialist stroke units, and they have been put in place in recent years. In 2013, Bankstown hospital was accredited as a stroke unit and has a thrombolysis centre that allows patients to access drugs that are designed to declot the bloodstream. So, great work is being done both at St George and at Bankstown hospitals in this most important of areas.

About two per cent of all people at any given time have previously suffered a stroke. If you look at the National Stroke Foundation's statistics on this, it makes for quite sobering reading. Of the 437,000 stroke survivors in Australia in 2014, that represented close to 2,000 per 100,000 population—so, as I say, about two per cent—and, in New South Wales, 146,000 people are living with the consequences of having suffered a stroke. So, it is an extremely important issue. National Stroke Week is something that is very important in our community, and I commend the member for Chisholm for bringing attention to it.

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (11:26): I thank the member for Chisholm for her motion in helping to raise the profile of the National Stroke Foundation and the different ways to prevent stroke. According to a 2014 report from the Australian Institute of Health and
Welfare, stroke is the second-leading cause of death and disability in this country; it affects thousands of Australians every year.

This is an issue that is close to my heart as my father, John Gosling, has worked for Guide Dogs in Australia for 46 years, and every day of those 46 years has been working in assisting people who have become sight- and mobility-impaired due to the effects of stroke. Vision assessment post-stroke determines someone’s loss of vision, and then Guide Dogs work with those people around their loss of vision to help them gain mobility skills, increased independence and also to reduce the risk of falls and improve the quality of life through that increased mobility. Thirty per cent of people who have a stroke will have a change to their vision functioning, so it has a very definite and real effect on their lives.

There is an enormous cost to stroke in our community in the Northern Territory—in 2012, about $51 million and, nationally in that year, about $5 billion. There is a financial cost, apart from the very human cost, incurred by the estimated 375,000 Australians who have had a stroke at some time in their lives. A third of these people sustain a disability because of that stroke, and often loved ones or colleagues are unable to read the signs when that person is having a stroke. This can lead to increased damage or even death.

That is why it is important for the F.A.S.T. stroke check to continue to be promoted and learned by all Australians. If there is one useful thing that I can do this morning, it is to remind people about what the F.A.S.T. check is. F.A.S.T. is a way to check if someone is suffering from stroke. Firstly, look at their face and check their face—has their mouth drooped; arms—ask them if they can lift both arms; speech—is their speech slurred, and do they understand you; and the T is for time—time is critical. If you see any of these signs, call triple zero straightaway; the person that you are with may be having a stroke.

Stroke changes people's lives, often permanently, and impacts not only the person who has experienced the stroke but also the families.

If you look at the stats regarding stroke, you will understand how the people and services of my electorate of Solomon are disproportionately impacted. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have twice the rate of hospitalisation for stroke and are 1½ times more likely to die from stroke than non-Indigenous Australians. People living in remote and very remote areas have 1½ times the rate of stroke than people living in major cities, and people from the lower socioeconomic group have 1.3 times the rate of stroke than people from the highest socioeconomic group.

The Northern Territory leads the country in many ways—our rich culture; our fishing, cattle and horticultural industries; we are a fantastic tourism destination; we have excellent opportunities for development of the defence industry; we have an amazing heritage and big hearts. But, unfortunately, the Northern Territory also leads in the risk factors that contribute to strokes—smoking, obesity and alcohol consumption. We have many, many people in the Territory who are suffering from the effects of strokes, and I urge Territorians to have a look at their lifestyle in order to reduce the likelihood of stroke. For me, too, this is important; I am doing it more and more. We need to keep up the exercise and to try and cut down or quit smoking and excess drinking, as those factors will increase the likelihood of stroke.

There is enough in the Territory to finish you off—there are crocodiles and there are box jellyfish. We cannot do a lot about some of those things, and we certainly cannot do anything...
Ms CATHERINE KING (Ballarat) (11:31): I rise to also support the motion moved by the member for Chisholm. I think this was originally moved to highlight National Stroke Week back in September, but it is timely in any event to talk about the importance of investment in cardiovascular disease, and stroke in particular. Through contributions this morning, we have heard people talk about the need to recognise and respond to the signs of stroke. We know that one in six Australians will have a stroke in their lifetime, with Australians suffering more than 50,000 this year alone, and one Australian will suffer a stroke every 10 minutes. We know that, of course, the time in which you respond after having a stroke is critically important for your rehabilitation and the success of your outcome.

The Stroke Foundation estimates that, in my own electorate of Ballarat, there are almost 3,000 people living with the effects of stroke. Significantly, there is a high number of people with one or more stroke risk factors across my electorate—more than 27,000 have high blood pressure and almost 40,000 have high cholesterol, which are two of the key risk factors for having a stroke.

More than 13 years ago, regional Australia’s first dedicated stroke unit officially opened at Ballarat Health Services Base Hospital, and I am proud that my local region has been a leader in this space. We know that having a stroke unit is critical, again, to making sure people are seen quickly, that they are seen by the right specialist quickly and that the right decisions are made. I am very pleased that that is available in my community, but a lot more needs to be done. It is vital that more Australians are aware of what strokes looks like and of how to respond quickly when they occur. That is why, during the election campaign, the Labor side of this House took the decision to commit $16 million to boost stroke awareness and to improve follow-up care for the survivors of stroke—one of Australia’s biggest killers and a leading cause of significant disability.

Almost half a million Australians are already living with the effects of stroke, and that is forecast to rise to almost one million by 2050. But it does not have to be this way—access to quick treatment and support services can save lives and absolutely reduce the level of disability. Awareness of the Stroke Foundation’s FAST test is critical to improving treatment and reducing the impact of stroke. Thinking fast and acting fast is critical. Early treatment could mean the difference between death or severe disability, and is critical to ensuring a good recovery from stroke. When you speak to stroke survivors, you hear that the No. 1 issue for them is improved care. Leaving hospital after a stroke can be a really frightening experience, especially if a survivor does not have family support. Certainly in rural communities the access to support can also be diminished. Survivors speak of not being able to access the information and services and of being left to fend for themselves unaware of the right places to seek help. Many stroke survivors I have spoken to have attempted to return to work and have found that that it fails pretty quickly as they have not had the support services that they need.

The Stroke Foundation’s follow-up and referral service provides vital information for families and carers as they help their loved ones adjust to life after a stroke. This service proactively contacts stroke survivors directly around six weeks after they leave hospital.
When people leave hospital they are often lost to the system very quickly as they try to go back and regain their ordinary lives or they have to deal with a disability while trying to access services or their family is trying to access those services for them. So actually having someone proactively connecting them in with services and with other people in the community who have had a stroke makes sure that they actually do get the assistance they need. The service contacting people makes sure that the survivors and their families do get that much needed assistance and access to information quickly after leaving hospital. Whether it is assessing their needs or helping with important community referrals and linking them with other services, this follow-up service can help fight the isolation many stroke survivors feel and helps their recovery.

While we have stroke awareness week once a year, it is really important that people are aware of the symptoms of stroke throughout the entire year. It is important that you do get regular health checks, that you do try and mitigate against the risk factors for stroke but it is equally important that we, as members of parliament and prospective governments, actually invest in this really important area. The whole area of cardiovascular disease is not one that has been significantly funded. We tend to focus a lot on cancers. I would like to see far more awareness of stroke and far more awareness in this parliament of the need for funding.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (11:36): According to one fact sheet, each year about 35,000 Australians are admitted to hospital with a stroke. As other speakers have pointed out, it is the second leading cause of death and disability throughout the country. The latest figures I have seen suggest that over 440,000 Australians have had a stroke at some time in their life and about a third of those have been left with a disability. One in six Australians are likely to suffer a stroke at some time during their lifetime. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have twice the rate of hospitalisation from stroke and are 1.6 more times more likely to die from stroke than non-Indigenous Australians. With a similar trend, people living in remote and very remote Australia have 1.4 times the rate of stroke than people living in major cities and people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have 1.3 times the rate of stroke than people from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Indeed it seems to be a recurring trend that inequality and poor health go hand in hand.

In 2013, Deloitte Access Economics put the financial cost of stroke to the Australian economy at $5 billion with $3 billion of that being in lost productivity. The more important cost, however, is the impact on the lives of those people affected and on the lives of their family members who often become their carers. We simply cannot put a figure on the value of that. If a person is left with a serious disability because of a stroke it can become an incredible strain on the whole family. Not surprisingly, stroke support groups have emerged across the country to deal with stroke. From my experience with the local stroke support area groups in my area, they do a marvellous job.

By raising community awareness, which Stroke Week aims to do, we can: minimise the effects of stroke if it does occur; help families manage the ongoing care, lifestyle changes and rehabilitation process; and take preventative action to lessen the risk of stroke. Inevitably, however, when a stroke does occur, medical treatment becomes increasingly necessary. That means more GP visits, more pathology tests, more diagnostic imaging, more medication, more hospitalisation, more surgery times and certainly more rehabilitation with several allied health professionals contributing in the recovery process.
We also know that over two-thirds of stroke victims are over 65 years of age and that many of those people are either in an aged care facility or will ultimately end up in one. So the government's freeze on Medicare rebates until 2020, cuts to hospital funding, cuts to pathology and diagnostic imaging bulk-billing incentives and the latest $2 billion cuts in aged-care funding will directly impact on stroke victims and make their difficulties even greater. For Indigenous, remote and very remote Australians, who are already much more likely to suffer a stroke, the government's Medicare cuts will make their disadvantage even greater.

The motion, quite rightly, refers to regular health checks, which, of course, may prevent strokes. However, efforts to reduce strokes by encouraging more visits to general practitioners, who, in turn, will require more frequent pathology or diagnostic imaging tests, will not be effective if, at the same time, all of those costs are going to be pushed up. People will simply not take the preventive measures that they otherwise should, because they may not be able to afford to do so. Going back to my earlier comments that stroke affects more people in low socioeconomic areas, then those are the people that are least likely to go for more regular health checks if the costs have already been pushed up.

Likewise, when a stroke does occur, limiting access to allied health providers such as physiotherapists and speech pathologists by cutting aged-care funding programs will be detrimental to recovery efforts. During my time in this place, there has been a bipartisan approach to reducing the incidence of stroke across Australia, and there has been bipartisan agreement that prevention is the best objective. But we will not be able to prevent stroke if we increase the very costs that we are asking people to incur in order to keep regular checks on their health, which is exactly what this government is doing. My view is that the best thing we can do to prevent stroke is ensure that people can afford to see their doctor in the first place.

Ms LAMB (Longman) (11:41): I rise to speak in support of this motion. As the member for Chisholm notes, National Stoke Week was held in September to promote stroke awareness, the role of the National Stroke Foundation and the need for regular health checks. This issue must be considered a matter of public importance, as one in six Australians will have a stroke in their lifetime, with Australians suffering more than 50,000 new or recurrent strokes this year alone. The sad truth is that this disease will likely impact all of us, either directly or indirectly through someone we love. I recognise that past governments, both Labor and coalition, have given bipartisan support. I commend them for this approach, and it is imperative that this bipartisanship continues. But it is equally essential that we continue investing in diagnosis and treatment. Investment in stroke prevention is not just good policy; it is also the right thing to do. Stroke is one of Australia's leading causes of death and disability, and I am proud that the previous Labor governments developed and funded various preventive programs.

Our knowledge and expertise in this area of health have significantly improved and has allowed organisations such as the National Stroke Foundation to raise important awareness. This work is incredibly important because research overwhelmingly shows the time taken to diagnose and treat a stroke is critical to our survival. Across Australia, our health professionals, paramedics, nurses, specialists and rehabilitation professionals play an integral role in this treatment, and I congratulate them for their dedication and commitment.
I have no doubt about the dedication and commitment of health professionals and, given their commitment, we have an obligation to resource health facilities with the necessary equipment to provide first-class care. Unfortunately though, my electorate has only one MRI machine licensed, which is located in the region's largest public health facility, the Caboolture Hospital. I am sorry, but this is just outrageous. MRI is the most effective piece of equipment we have for diagnosis and management of acute ischaemic stroke. Its precision is superior. Albeit a little more expensive, it works. I do not accept that, in a population of around 170,000, it is okay to have one machine accessible to everyone. Timing is critical in diagnosis, and yet, in my electorate, we have one machine accessible to all.

While I have previously recognised the level of bipartisanship on this issue, I feel compelled to point out the recent evidence provided by the Department of Health in estimates. Their evidence was that the department gave no advice on the two MRI licences that the government committed to marginal Victorian seats—to the Frankston Hospital in Dunkley and the Maroondah Hospital in Deakin. There was no advice whatsoever. So yes, while Labor will always take a bipartisan approach where common ground can be found, I find it morally reprehensible that the government appears to be politicising where MRI licences are allocated. We cannot play politics on this issue, and this government must allocate licences based on scientific evidence and data. They must base licence allocations on need, not on political fortune, so that communities just like mine in Longman have sufficient access to essential medical equipment.

While the state has an obligation to provide these resources, I am incredibly excited about and supportive of our Morayfield Health Hub. From mid-2017, the constituents of Longman will have access to additional but essential services for acute and chronic health conditions. This health facility, including one that will improve early diagnosis and treatment of strokes, is one of the most significant developments in our community. It is going to boost the local economy and create jobs. I am incredibly proud that the Morayfield Health Hub will also include a day-to-day stay unit to accommodate 70 patients per day in a range of programs which includes stroke rehabilitation.

Strokes devastate lives. They cause permanent and serious disability and often impact entire communities. We must continue raising awareness of these issues and we must ensure all Australians, not just those who live in marginal seats, can have access to life-saving equipment. In a choice between life and death, we simply cannot play politics.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

**Western Australia: Infrastructure**

Mr KEOGH (Burt) (11:47): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises the parlous state of Western Australia's finances, brought on by the economic mismanagement of the Western Australian Government and a record low share of GST revenue, which was foreseeable;

(2) acknowledges the importance of Commonwealth infrastructure funding and state infrastructure spending for creating employment and driving economic growth;
(3) notes that $1.54 billion of Commonwealth infrastructure funding has been allocated to the Perth Freight Link (PFL) and Oakajee Port over the forward estimates, in circumstances where:
   (a) the Western Australian Government has not committed to stage two of the PFL, a contract for which will be required before Commonwealth funding flows to Western Australia, and the Western Australian Opposition is opposed to the project; and
   (b) the Turnbull Government has kept a $339 million allocation to Oakajee Port in the federal budget for more than two years after the project was abandoned;
(4) notes that although Western Australia takes up one third of Australia's land mass and holds 10.4 per cent of the population, the loss of Commonwealth funding for the PFL and Oakajee would cause Western Australia's share of the Commonwealth infrastructure budget to drop to just 9.5 per cent; and
(5) calls on the Australian Government to redirect funding allocated to the PFL to the infrastructure projects that Western Australians actually want and need—the Armadale/North Lake Road Bridge, an Outer Harbour and METRONET.

In Western Australia, people are being confronted by something that we here in Canberra have known for a long time: the harsh reality that, when it comes to economic management, the Liberals cannot be trusted with the finances of government.

The Western Australian Liberal government under Colin Barnett inherited a $1.85 billion surplus, state debt at just $3.6 billion and a 2.7 per cent unemployment rate. In 2012, the peak of the mining construction boom, Western Australia faced net interstate migration of 11,500, while New South Wales was losing 17,000 people. Infrastructure Australia has reported that by 2031, Perth will have seven of the country's top 10 congested roads.

The Barnett Liberals have floated many ideas over the years to address WA's burgeoning infrastructure needs, like a new railway to Ellenbrook, an extension of the Thornlie line to connect to Cockburn Central, MAX Light Rail and a railway tunnel to Morley. But always they failed to deliver and, to make matters worse, they have trashed the state's finances along the way. State debt will hit $31 billion this year. WA recorded a $2 billion deficit last year, and unemployment has now reached 6.3 per cent. All of these issues have been exacerbated by WA's miniscule share of GST distribution. I will talk about that particular issue another time, but these issues have been known for a long time and were even acknowledged in many state budgets.

Among all of this, though, the Abbott-Turnbull-Joyce Liberal-National government are not without blame. Over their three years in government, the federal Liberals have neglected Western Australia's infrastructure needs. Instead of committing to Western Australia's future infrastructure needs, they have instead just rebadged Labor's previous commitments, like the Swan Valley bypass, now the NorthLink WA project. Or they have blatantly taken credit for Labor's projects, like Gateway WA, which the member for Warringah took delight in opening during the Canning by-election, despite it not yet actually being finished. Then there is the commitment to the duplication of Armadale Road, only made to match a commitment by Labor. It is a project that the government was dragged kicking and screaming into, in an attempt not just to secure victory in the Canning by-election but also to save Tony Abbott's prime ministership—I suppose one out of two ain't bad!

However, they did not get this right, as the government has failed the people of Burt, and Fremantle in particular, first by ignoring the requirement to also build a new bridge crossing at the freeway for Armadale Road to complement the Armadale Road duplication.
Then, of course, we have the Perth Freight Link. The state government has signed stage 1 contracts, and yet the federal government has made clear that its funding for the project will not be delivered unless stage 2 is signed as well. Yet, the state government has said it is unlikely to even have a route for stage 2 before the 2017 state election. WA Labor opposes the project in its entirety, as a white elephant, and no-one has seen a business case for the project that demonstrates that it will deliver any value to Western Australia. But it does not stop there: this government is still budgeting $339 million for an equity stake on the Oakajee Port project—a project that has been effectively mothballed. It appears that we have two projects for which federal funds will not actually be forthcoming, meaning that WA’s share of infrastructure spend will drop to just 9.5 per cent, from 2015 to 2019, of all federal infrastructure spending.

So Western Australia—a state that takes up a third of the country’s land mass, has more than 10 per cent of the nation’s population and, in 2015, accounted for more than 40 per cent of Australia’s goods exported by value—is not only not receiving its fair share of the GST; it is also not receiving a fair share of infrastructure dollars. Instead of spending $1.2 billion bulldozing the Beeliar Wetlands to build WA’s only toll road—which does not even reach its destination—or continuing to hold out over $300 million for a port that will not be built, think about what great projects WA could build to ensure its economy can continue to grow and provide employment post the mining and construction boom, if the Turnbull Liberals redirected these funds to useful projects. These could include the sorely needed new Armadale Road bridge; a new third lane heading north on Kwinana Freeway at Cockburn Central; the Thornlie line extension connecting Canning Vale to Cockburn Central; planning for a new Fremantle outer harbour; or fixing the notoriously dangerous Denny Avenue level crossing in Kelmscott.

The Commonwealth government has a responsibility to provide a fair and equitable distribution of funds across the states, including for infrastructure. This is necessary to drive economic growth, remove bottlenecks, create jobs and to meet the needs of all Australians. In this regard, the Turnbull and Barnett Liberal governments have utterly and fundamentally failed the people of Western Australia.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): Is the motion seconded?

Mr Josh Wilson: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mr Morton (Tangney) (11:52): What a delight to have the opportunity to speak on economic management and infrastructure—even more so in the context of the great state of Western Australia; a state made great by the hard work of Colin Barnett and his Liberal team. Liberal governments make decisions and they get things done, and nothing is truer for Colin Barnett and his Liberal government.

In 2008, the people of Western Australia could not recall three things that the then Labor government had achieved, because they were all talk and no action. When people go to vote at the March 2017 state election, they will be in no doubt about the things that Colin Barnett and his government have done and are doing to support economic growth and jobs.

All we have seen from Labor is opposition for opposition’s sake and a constant handbrake on getting things done and built. Let me run through a few things in WA that Labor are against and, if they were elected, would not have happened: the new Perth Stadium, the new
museum, uranium mining, Elizabeth Quay and Perth City Link. Infrastructure spending creates employment and drives growth. Tens of thousands of jobs, direct and indirect, would not have existed, if Labor had their way. What a sad, pathetic position for the Labor Party to find themselves in. The Labor Party is anti-WA jobs.

We should not be surprised: we cannot forget that WA Labor leader Mark McGowan was the most ineffective education minister WA has ever seen. He oversaw the biggest teacher shortages in our state’s history. Anti-infrastructure, anti-economic development and anti-jobs—that is WA Labor. And what project is most at risk by Labor? The Perth Freight Link. This project is essential for my community and for Western Australia. I support the Roe 8 project and I support the Fremantle bypass tunnel, a tunnel that is needed to take that traffic from Stock Road to connect to the Stirling Highway near High Street. Roe 8 and Fremantle Tunnel will bypass 14 sets of traffic lights on Leach Highway and Stock Road, reducing stop-start traffic, crashes and exhaust emissions; and 12.5 minutes will be saved between Fremantle and the Kwinana Freeway.

By 2021, railway will carry in excess of 6,900 trucks and 74,000 light vehicles per day, taking them off Farrington Road, South Street, Leach Highway and other local roads into this dedicated free-flowing highway. The Fremantle Tunnel will carry 4,700 trucks and 40,300 light vehicles, removing traffic congestion and improving safety on local roads. Property values will increase due to improved transport connectivity in the southern suburbs and the removal of heavy freight from local roads. The project will create 2,400 direct jobs and 10,000 indirect jobs.

The member for Burt and the Labor Party want to take funding away from a project that Infrastructure Australia rates as one of only five highest-priority projects nationally yet to begin construction. It is bonkers! Labor wants to make our streets less safe and more congested. The member for Burt wants to move this money to a bridge that the community does not want.

Mr Keogh interjecting—

Mr MORTON: Not even the people of Armadale want this bridge, member for Burt! If they did want it the member for Burt may have been here a year earlier, rather than being defeated by the member for Canning at the Canning by-election.

What can we say about Labor’s plans to make our streets safer and less congested? Nothing: deafening silence. Just like when the people of WA could not nominate any achievements of the past Labor government in WA, they cannot nominate any plans to make our streets safer and less congested. Why? Because Labor does not have any. The federal member for Fremantle should be very worried about the impact of this shocking position on his community. The state Labor candidate for Bicton heads into the state election campaign with a position that will mean more cars and trucks on our local roads. It is shameful.

Today I end by thanking the member for Burt, because in his motion he highlighted the very strong commitment of the federal Liberal Party to Western Australian and to this important project. The federal Liberal government has committed $1.2 million as requested by the Barnett Liberal state government to build both Roe 8 and the Fremantle bypass tunnel. That is what this funding is for. Let me be very clear: these funds cannot, should not and will not be made available for any other purpose.
I look forward to the state government reconfirming the full project so that planning and environmental approval works can commence. I am standing up for my community and my state for jobs, for growth and for what is right.

Mr JOSH WILSON (Fremantle) (11:57): My colleague the member for Burt has this spot on. The Western Australian economy is facing conditions the likes of which we have not seen for a quarter century. The Western Australian government is in a terrible position to respond because it has run up an astounding debt balance without managing to invest in productive infrastructure or to fix capacity constraints. The reality is that WA is experiencing a recession. Unemployment is high. Full-time jobs continue to fall. The sequence is now at 21 months and counting—something we have not seen since the early 1990s. Underemployment is the highest it has ever been since the ABS began keeping that statistic in 1978, and in some parts of Perth unemployment has risen by 60 or 70 per cent since 2013. Not surprisingly, this is happening in areas that already face socioeconomic disadvantage. The great shame is that those circumstances should have been anticipated.

It is a serious failure that work was not done by the Barnett government or the federal coalition to prepare for the inevitable shift in the resource sector in Western Australia. It was always going to occur. It was always going to involve both a fall in commodity prices and a change away from the construction phase of project development. Getting ready for that shift is precisely what good government exists to do in managing the economy. Unfortunately the very reverse has occurred. The Western Australian government has been fast asleep at the wheel. They have run out of steam at the worst possible time. They are coming apart and, to be honest, it is hard to tell sometimes whether they are abandoning ship or fighting for control of the rudder. At the same time they have been alternatively ignored or, in some cases, particularly with the Perth Freight Link, they have been led down the garden path by their federal coalition counterparts.

But the greatest shortcoming of the Barnett government is wasted opportunity. It is astonishing to think that for the first six years of the Barnett government revenue grew strongly, year on year. At the time of the global financial crisis, when the Commonwealth and other states faced a collapse in revenue, the WA government was sitting pretty, relatively speaking. They should have been working to prepare for change. They should have been anticipating a turn in the cycle, especially because Western Australians know that the resources economy has always involved those kinds of twists and turns.

Did they work to ensure strong local content involvement in resources projects? No. Did they recognise the costs in obstacles of congestion, and did they start to develop and implement transport infrastructure that would support jobs and improve productivity? No. Have they prevailed on their supposedly influential federal coalition colleagues to ensure that WA receives a fair share of future shipbuilding work? No. So what is the reality? As the member for Burt's motion details, you have all this Commonwealth infrastructure money parked in projects that are not happening and, in the case of the Perth Freight Link, should never have been proposed in the first place.

Fully $1.54 billion—$1,500 million—is sitting there achieving nothing as WA slides further into recession conditions. It is money that should be holding up demand in the WA economy, that should be supporting construction and manufacturing jobs, that should be addressing the stifling effects of congestion and that should be underwriting economic
transition and diversification. Instead, those funds are sitting idle, through complacency, through absence of leadership and through a very strange sense of entitlement, through a weird conviction that somehow the people of Western Australia owe the coalition a living. It is ridiculous.

The economic mismanagement and infrastructure paralysis in WA has three flow-on effects. It means there is no effective response to the employment crisis, which is severe and getting worse. It means that WA continues to be short-changed by the Commonwealth and it means the Barnett government has been forced to cast around for public assets to sell, including Fremantle Port and Western Power, when there is no mandate and no justification for those public assets to be privatised. It means local projects of significance are left on the drawing board.

The member for Burt has already talked about Community Connect South, which provides a solution to crippling congestion at the border of our electorates. The City of Armadale is very much affected by it—I am not sure where the member for Tagney is getting his local community information—and the city of Cockburn, on my side of the freeway, is equally affected. Both those local governments are clear-eyed about the solution, and the member for Burt and I are in no doubt about the change that would have been delivered if a Labor government had been elected with $80 million committed to that project.

It is not good enough, as this motion makes abundantly clear. WA has suffered and continues to suffer from state government neglect on a grand scale. It is neglect that has been aided and abetted by the federal coalition.

**Mr IRONS** (Swan) (12:02): It is great to speak on this motion because, all of a sudden, those on the other side of the chamber have become economic geniuses. When I arrived in this place, in 2007, there was $20 billion in the bank—and over the six years that Labor were in government they destroyed the Australian economy and increased debt enormously. These guys over here, the Johnny-come-latelies, have turned up and said, 'Let's focus on state issues and not worry about the Commonwealth.' But in part 2 of his—

**Mr Josh Wilson interjecting**—

**Mr IRONS:** I will remind the member for Fremantle that I sat back and listened to everything he said without interjecting once. You can have a crack if you want to, mate; go for it. In Mr Keogh's motion he acknowledges the importance of Commonwealth infrastructure funding and state infrastructure spending for creating employment and driving economic growth. It is good he acknowledges that, because I will remind him of what the coalition government is investing not only in Australia as a whole but also in Western Australia.

There is a $50 billion spend to get vital infrastructure projects underway across the country. In Western Australia alone we are investing $6.3 billion of productivity-enhancing infrastructure, delivering on our economic action plan to boost economic growth and prosperity and create thousands of new jobs. The Turnbull government has provided an additional $490 million towards the construction of the $2 billion Forrestfield-Airport Link project, implementing the government's commitment to maintaining Western Australia's GST relativity at its 2014-15 levels. I also note that in the previous financial year, they also allocated $500 million as compensation for the low GST, which those on the other side seem
to forget about—that is $1 billion that has gone into the Western Australian economy through the coalition government.

The coalition government has also secured funding for a number of major projects that Labor promised to fund with the proceeds of the mining tax, and I can talk about Gateway as one in my electorate, which is a major project that has been completed ahead of time under the coalition government. It was to be funded by the mining tax but, unfortunately, the anti-Western Australian mining tax and the carbon tax introduced by those on the other side of this chamber, who conveniently forget about it and always forget about it and never raise it in anything they talk about—and I am sure all Western Australians know that they will bring it back if they ever get back into government—were supposed to be funding the Gateway project. Unfortunately, the money raised could not do that; it could not even pay for the administration of that particular mining tax that they dealt to Western Australia. These, as I said, include the funding of the Gateway project, the NorthLink WA and the Great Northern Highway in the northwest coast; all the highway upgrade projects.

The coalition government is also investing $1.185 billion towards the long overdue Perth Freight Link. The Perth Freight Link will provide a direct, free-flowing connection between the Roe Highway and the port of Fremantle, providing improved capacity for heavy-vehicle freight movements to and from the port. The coalition is also improving safety of local roads by making additional investments in the Roads to Recovery and Black Spot programs. I know up to $2 million extra has been invested in Black Spot programs within my electorate of Swan.

Western Australia will benefit from the government's commitment to extend the Roads to Recovery program to 2019-20 at $400 million per year, the maintenance of $350 million per year for Black Spot programs, $60 million per year for the Bridges Renewal Program, and $60 million per year in the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program, which is getting $40 million per year. Also, during the election, due to the advocacy of local coalition MPs during the campaign, the Turnbull government announced over $35 million in funding for a number of additional projects. There was the Woolworths and the Hale Road intersection upgrade, $650,000; the Ocean Reef Road overpass at Wanneroo Road, $20 million; and, in my electorate again, the Manning Road on-ramp, $15 million. The coalition government is building Western Australia's future by delivering the biggest infrastructure investment program in Australian history. The Swan Valley bypass involves construction of a 37-kilometre highway from the Reid Highway and Tonkin Highway intersection in Malaga to the Great Northern Highway at Muchea, including upgrades to connecting roads and interchanges within the existing road network.

What we see here today is a frontline event or campaign in progress for the next state election, which Mark McGowan has set these blokes up to do and embarrass themselves in the federal parliament.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.
Remembrance Day

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) 11 November is Remembrance Day;

(b) on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month Australians observe one minute's silence in memory of those who died or suffered in all wars and armed conflicts;

(c) 2016 marks the 98th anniversary of the Armistice which ended World War I; and

(d) on Remembrance Day we pay our respects and honour the memory of those who have served in our country's defence forces;

(2) encourages all Australians to attend a commemoration ceremony in their local community, and to pause for a minute of silence to remember those who have served in the Australian Defence Force and made the ultimate sacrifice;

(3) remembers:

(a) those who lost their lives serving their country; and

(b) all who came home, wounded, or bearing the hidden scars of war; and

(4) recognises that the return to life in Australia, the journey from battlefield to towns and suburbs, can be a difficult one for those who serve and for the people who love and care for them.

Mr DICK (Oxley) (12:08): It is an honour to speak to the Remembrance Day motion moved by my friend the member for Kingston and shadow minister. It is important that we recognise the sacrifice and commitment by those men and women who bravely fought for this nation, and continue to fight for this nation.

This Friday, we observe an important national day of remembrance for all of those men and women who have been injured or died for their nation in armed conflict. The 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month holds a special place in the heart of all Australians. As we know, it marks the specific time when the guns on the Western Front fell silent, and hostilities ceased after four devastating years of war in the First War conflict, the Great War. As a nation, we solemnly observe one minute's silence as a mark of respect.

It is because of their sacrifice that we as a nation today enjoy peace and freedom. We know that the first modern world conflict brought about the mobilisation of around 70 million people and left between nine and 13 million people dead, and perhaps as many as one-third of them with no known grave.

It was on the anniversary of the Armistice in 1919 that two minutes silence was instituted as part of the main commemorative ceremony at the new Cenotaph in London. The silence was proposed by an Australian journalist, Edward Honey, who was working in Fleet Street. We know that at the time a similar proposal was put to the British cabinet, which endorsed it, and King George V personally requested all people of the British Empire to suspend normal activities for two minutes on the hour of the Armistice. We know that the two minutes silence was popularly adopted, and it became a central feature of commemorations.

Later, post the Second World War, the Australian and British governments changed the name to Remembrance Day. Armistice Day was no longer an appropriate title for a day which would commemorate all war dead. During that conflict, we know that 60,000 Australians...
made the ultimate sacrifice; 156,000 Australians were wounded, gassed or taken prisoner. As a nation, at the time we had a population of fewer than five million people. These figures really do bring home how big a sacrifice was made.

In my electorate this Friday, and in every other electorate around this country, there will be a number of services run by the dedicated men and women of the RSLs and subbranches. In my electorate, these will include the Forest Lake, the Darra Cementco, the Centenary Suburbs and the Goodna RSL subbranches. Today I acknowledge the work and effort of those volunteers in our RSL organisation right throughout the nation. I am really proud to work alongside these great men and women, who dedicate many hours of their time to commemorate and remember that sacrifice for so many Australians. On the weekend, I ran into one of the presidents, Alan Worthington, the president of the Centenary RSL, and I was able to buy another pin. Alan was there, doing what he does week in, week out, giving up his time, away from his family, to support the RSL. They do this to ensure that the men and women get the recognition they deserve.

This is particularly important to me, as a son of a World War II veteran who enlisted in the Navy in 1920. I was able to spend some time with the RAN personnel, men and women, in the Timor Sea, when I spent some time as part of the parliamentary program working with the ADF. Spending time with those men and women continually, once again, reminded me of the great respect I hold for our armed forces personnel.

Today I support this motion to ensure that the sacrifices made by members of our armed forces are never forgotten and never taken for granted.

Ms FLINT (Boothby) (12:13): I would like to begin by commending my South Australian neighbour and colleague the member for Kingston for presenting this motion to the House today. Remembrance Day provides all Australians with the opportunity to honour the men and women who sacrificed their safety and their lives for our country. Their defence of our nation and our values is something that must never be forgotten.

This Friday, 11 November 2016, marks the 98th anniversary of the Armistice which ended World War I. The minute's silence we will all observe at the 11th hour of the 11th day of this, the 11th month, is not only a time to remember the great loss of life borne by our nation in World War I. It is also a time to commemorate all those who have gone to war and those who returned with the hidden scars of battle.

In the year 1914, Australia's suburbs and country towns were emptied as 400,000 men voluntarily enlisted to serve. Over 60,000 Australians died, and a further 156,000 returned as casualties of war. One of those men was my great-grandfather, Private Roy Gambrell. One hundred years ago this year, at the age of 18, my great-grandfather joined the 48th Infantry Battalion. The battalion comprised new recruits from South Australia and Western Australia as well as veterans from Gallipoli. Their first action was as Pozieres—action that was some of the worst that Australian troops have ever endured. The battle at Pozieres caused the greatest loss of Australian life in our military history. The 48th Battalion endured what was said to be the heaviest artillery barrage ever experienced by Australian troops and suffered 598 casualties.

In his recent address to mark the 100th anniversary of our sacrifice on the Western Front, our Director of the Australian War Memorial, the Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson, recalled that more
Australians had been lost in eight weeks of fighting in France than in eight months at Gallipoli. Dr Nelson went on to say that, of Pozieres, our first war historian, Charles Bean, simply wrote:

The shelling at Pozieres did not merely probe the character and nerve; it laid them stark naked as no other experience of the AIF ever did. The ruin of the Pozieres Windmill …

which stands as a memorial today—

was captured on August 4th by Australian troops who fell more thickly on this ridge than on any other battlefield of the war.

Pozieres is more deeply sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth.

I am always touched when I read some of the 102,000 names on the Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial. I also think about the personal triumphs of all the Australian men and women who have served our nation. As we all understand in this House, our armed forces are respected worldwide as professional and humane. Recorded on stained-glass windows above the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Australian War Memorial are the 15 values of Australia's armed forces. They are what I believe we should all strive for in honour of those who laid down their lives: resource, candour, devotion, curiosity, independence, comradeship, ancestry, patriotism, chivalry, loyalty, coolness, control, audacity, endurance and decision. I commend the current Director of the War Memorial, Dr Nelson, for placing these values at the heart of his work commemorating those who have served our nation.

In my seat of Boothby, we also remember the sacrifices of our service men and women. Leading up to Remembrance Day, I know that the veterans and the many volunteers of the Brighton, Blackwood, Marion, Mitcham and Colonel Light Gardens RSLs will be working hard to prepare their memorial services. Boothby is also home to one of Australia's few memorials to the involvement of women in war and service, at the Australian Women's Memorial Playing Fields. I consider Boothby to be blessed to have so many organisations that remind us of those who have given everything so that we can live in safety and in peace and that also act as hubs for our community so that we may enjoy that safety and that peace together.

I hope that the ranks of men and women recorded on the honour roll at the Australian War Memorial never grow as they did during World War I. As our Governor-General, Sir Peter Cosgrove, has remarked:

The soldier, above all other people, prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war.

Mr ROB MITCHELL (McEwen) (12:18): I rise to add my voice to the member for Kingston's motion to recognise Remembrance Day. At 11 am on 11 November 1918, the guns of the Western Front fell silent after more than four years of continuous warfare. The Allied armies had driven the German invaders back, having inflicted heavy defeats upon them in the preceding four months. In November the Germans called for an armistice, a suspension in fighting, so they could seek out a peace settlement to surrender. They accepted Allied terms that amounted to unconditional surrender. This moment allowed the start of armistice between the Allied and German forces, an agreement that, as I said, saw unconditional surrender of the German forces and the end of the war that was supposed to end all wars.
In 1920 this day became both a remembrance and a funeral, as the remains of the unknown soldiers from the Western Front were brought home and buried in their respective nations. After the Second World War, the name for this day was changed from Armistice Day to Remembrance Day, in order to honour all those soldiers who had fallen in these horrific wars. This date has a special significance in the memorial calendar. What started out as a date to mark the end of the war that would supposedly end all wars, it has become a day to honour the generations of men and women that have gone to war, that have exemplified national unity across our nations.

In Australia on the 75th anniversary of Armistice Day, in 1993, Remembrance Day ceremonies became the focus of national attention. The remains of an unknown soldier exhumed from a World War I military cemetery in France was ceremonially entombed in the War Memorial's Hall of Memory. We witnessed that day probably one of the greatest speeches that this country will ever see by Paul Keating. He said:

We do not know this Australian's name and we never will. We do not know his rank or his battalion. We do not know where he was born, nor precisely how and when he died. We do not know where in Australia he had made his home or when he left it for the battlefields of Europe. We do not know his age or his circumstances – whether he was from the city or the bush; what occupation he left to become a soldier; what religion, if he had a religion; if he was married or single. We do not know who loved him or whom he loved. If he had children we do not know who they are. His family is lost to us as he was lost to them. We will never know who this Australian was.

I think those very poignant words of Prime Minister Keating remind us that generations of men and women have gone to war in Australia's name never to return. Those that do return often carry scars that we cannot see—not physical but mental scars. Some people never get over war. Back then we probably did not focus as much on PTSD as we should have and probably did not know or understand the trauma of what war does to someone, to young men and young women that go and see things that we pray we never have to see. I think that all sides of parliament would stand and say that one of the hardest things you can ever have to do is make a decision to send people to die, and I have never seen a government, whether it is our side of the fence or the other side of the fence, do it lightly.

One of the things we do on Remembrance Day is wear a red poppy as a symbol to remind us of the sacrifices made during war. The red poppy has come to be known as an internationally recognised symbol of remembrance. From its association with poppies flowering in the spring of 1915 on the battlefields of Belgium, France and Gallipoli, this vivid red flower has become synonymous with the great loss of life in war. The scope of the poppy and its connections with the memory of those who have died in war has been expanded to help those living too. It was the inspiration and dedication of two women who promoted this same memorial flower as a means by which funds could be raised to support those in need of help, most especially servicemen and civilians suffering from physical and mental hardship as a result of war.

So we should encourage people this Friday to buy a poppy and know the history behind this flower, what it means and how it is supporting our veterans, young and old, their families and those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in this nation's name. We should never forget and we should work together to ensure that no more chapters of war are added to this book of pain.
Mr DRUM (Murray) (12:23): I am delighted to be able to take this opportunity to speak to the importance of Remembrance Day. Remembrance Day, as the previous speaker noted, was originally known as Armistice Day and was introduced following the ceasefire at the end of World War I—the war to end all wars. As we now know, we use Remembrance Day to reflect on all of involvements in all of the various conflicts that have happened to Australia.

Australia has lost over 100,000 lives in battle since the turn of last century but the story is much worse than that. In the First World War, we acknowledge that we lost 62,000 lives. However, what is not often referred to is the fact that we lost another 60,000 lives of those returned soldiers within two years of them returning home, so the real cost, in terms of lives lost, is significantly worse.

Since Federation, our Australian defence forces have served in South Africa with the Boer War, World War I, the Russian Civil War, World War II, the Malayan emergency, the Korean War, Borneo, the Vietnam War—often referred to in Vietnam as the American War—the Gulf War, Afghanistan, Iraq, Timor and also the current war on ISIL.

The 11th of the 11th at 11 o’clock gives us an opportunity to reflect on all of those who have served for our benefit. It also gives us the opportunity to understand that Australia has never entered into a conflict with the ultimate goal of land gain for Australia. We have never entered into a conflict with the end prize being that we were going to take over someone’s territory. We have, ultimately, committed ourselves in each and every conflict to remain where we currently are—to create peace and to create a coexistence with the status quo. That is something that we should all be extremely proud of as we reflect on the amount of conflicts that we have been involved in.

It is also an opportunity for us to reflect on what we are doing with our lives as a way of saying thank you to all of those who have served to preserve our quality of life here in Australia. Is our contribution to our lives here worthy of the sacrifices that have taken place on our behalf? All of those 100,000 people that lost their lives in battle were thinking of a better Australia. They were all thinking, 'I'm doing this so that my children, my extended family and my society that I have left behind will prosper in a way that I would be proud of.'

The question that we need to ask is: are we doing everything within our personal power to create a better life and to actually make that sacrifice worthy? We are all weighed down by that debt: the people who fought for us need to have that debt repaid by us simply doing everything we possibly can to repay that enormous sacrifice.

I had the privilege two years ago to visit the Western Front and the various Commonwealth war graves in the cemeteries throughout the Western Front. It was certainly a very sombre process to witness so many small graves from that horrendous conflict in the First World War. What I can say is that it is an absolute credit to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission administrators that they were able to keep those cemeteries in such an amazing condition. Just recently, I had the opportunity to also visit the war cemetery in Port Moresby and, again, it has been kept in pristine condition so that those families that get the opportunity to visit their long-lost relatives can acknowledge that they lie in well-manicured surrounds.

Again, on this Friday, we will all have the opportunity, as I will at Shepparton, to remember those who have served.
Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (12:28): Can I firstly acknowledge and thank those who have already spoken in this debate. The last two speakers I heard, the member for McEwen and the member for Murray, both raised very relevant issues for all of us, pertinent, of course, referring to the history of Remembrance Day, initially Armistice Day. This year does mark the 100th anniversary of the battles on the Western Front, the Battle of the Somme; the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan; from my own part of Australia, the 75th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin; and, most appropriately, the 75th anniversary of the Australian War Memorial, that great national place and iconic museum. It is more than a museum: it is a place for us to honour those who have served and continue to serve.

Earlier this year, I had the great privilege of being in attendance at the 100th anniversary commemorative events on the Western Front, including those that gave us an opportunity to remember those battles of the Somme. The Battle of the Somme commenced on 1 July 1916. The British offensive started north-east of the town of Albert. They had 60,000 casualties. Then, on 19 July, in a feint the Australian 5th Division entered the battle of Fromelles. In the space of 24 hours, there were 5,000 casualties, almost 2,000 dead. It was the worst 24 hours in Australia’s military history. Then, on 23 July, commenced the battle of Pozieres at Mouquet Farm. It lasted until 3 September. There were 23,000 Australian casualties during that period.

I use these figures only to emphasise that this was really butchery. This was not war as we appreciate war in the sense that people make judgements. This was a war affected by poor leadership, bad strategies and poor tactics, one where leaders actually sent people to certain death. We know the impact that that has had on the Australian nation. During the First World War, we had 416,000, or thereabouts, Australians who served overseas; 60,000 of those were killed and 156,000 were wounded. The member for Murray reminds us that a further 60,000 died in the following two years after the Armistice.

When we are remembering these things, we have to understand what we are talking about. This is about human sacrifice—sacrifice for us. Whilst we can be critical—and I am very critical—of the First World War and the strategies involved, we cannot fault the courage and bravery of those men who served for us, on our behalf, and sacrificed all. It is worth contemplating what this has meant to families. Almost every Australian family was touched in one way or another by the First World War and those battles and the loss of life.

There were some very, very good people, men and women, who worked for us on the Western Front. A Victorian farmer, Sergeant Simon Fraser, was a member of the 57th Battalion. He made some brave efforts to rescue many hundreds of wounded men. He sent a note back on 31 July 1916. In one part he says:

We found a fine haul of wounded and brought them in, but it was not where I heard this fellow calling so I had another shot for it and came across a splendid specimen of humanity trying to wiggle into a trench with a big wound in his thigh: he was about 14 stone weight and I could not lift him on my back, but I managed to get him into an old trench and told him to lie quiet while I got a stretcher. Then another man about 30 yards out sang out, "Don't forget me cobber." I went in and got four volunteers with stretchers and we got both men in safely.

The magnificent Cobbers memorial is a statue of that soldier carrying another wounded soldier, a copy of which is now at the Cenotaph in Melbourne.

It is worth reflecting on a couple of headstones very briefly. Sergeant PJ Ball Military Medal from the 44th Battalion of Australian Imperial forces has this is on his headstone:
I fought and died in the Great War to end all wars. Have I died in vain?

On another headstone of a digger at Villers-Bretonneux, Private W Calhoun of the 48th Battalion, is:

Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten.

Lest we forget.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—Chief Nationals Whip) (12:34): I am honoured to have the opportunity to speak on this very important motion, following on from the worthy contributions of the previous members who have spoken on this. On Friday, the nation will pause to reflect at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month and observe one minute's silence in memory of those who have died or suffered in all wars and armed conflicts. That will mark the 98th anniversary of the Armistice which ended World War I.

As that centenary draws near, the nation's understanding, appreciation and respect for those we honour remains as strong as ever. Although we have farewelled the last remaining soldiers who returned from that Great War, proceeding generations are keeping their memories alive. Many schools around the nation undertake projects to ensure the lessons of our history at war continue to be learned. They ensure the fallen are not forgotten. They ensure their sacrifice is honoured.

This year, I would like to highlight just one of these projects and the soldiers' experiences it brought to life. In my electorate, the Mackay North State High School conducts Anzac commemorative tours every second year, taking in the battlefields, memorials and cemeteries of Gallipoli, Northern France and Belgium as well as the Thai-Burma Railway and Singapore for the World War II efforts.

History students research a soldier from their home town and find grave sites and relevant memorials on the foreign battlefields. Many streets in Mackay are named after locals who enlisted, and these young history students research the soldier and find grave sites and relevant memorials on foreign battlefields. I would like to share from a letter to the residents of Griffin Street, which is named after two brothers, William and Harry Griffin. The letter was written by Alex Byrne, a student of Mackay North State High School, in 2010.

Alex discovered that Harry Griffin was just 19 years of age when he enlisted in 1914. He joined C Squadron of the 2nd Light Horse Regiment and left Australia in September, to arrive in Egypt two months later. Alex wrote:

He landed at Gallipoli with his unit on 12 May 1915 and fought there until being evacuated, on 10 September, suffering influenza. He was transferred to hospital in Malta; however, his condition worsened and he was sent to England. After, he was transferred to the 49th Battalion and joined his new unit, in France, in January 1917. He was wounded on 5 April 1917, with a gunshot wound to the heel, and rejoined the 49th from hospital in July. Harry was killed in action during the Battle of Polygon Wood on 26 September 1917—on his 22nd birthday.

Alex also told the story of Harry's older brother, William Griffin, who enlisted in 1916 and was killed in action, in Belgium, in 1917—three months before his younger brother was killed. Alex continued:

There are no accounts of how he died; however, the 47th came up against many machine gun posts during the battle and many members of the battalion were killed whilst attacking these positions.
Losing those two brothers at about the same time must have been devastating for the family back home.

When we pause to reflect on Remembrance Day we reflect not only on the Australian soldiers but also on the Australian sons, brothers, friends, sisters and mothers. These were people who walked in our community, worked in our community, and fought for our community and way of life. I encourage all Australians to attend a commemoration ceremony, in their local community, on this Remembrance Day. I invite them to pause for a minute of silence to remember those who have served in the Australian Defence Force and have made the ultimate sacrifice.

I congratulate Mackay North State High School and all schools in my electorate that undertake research projects and bring these service men and women to life so that we may better remember them and understand what it means to make the sacrifices they made. A better understanding of these soldiers, and Navy and Air Force personnel, and their actions can change how we think about the past. It can also change how we think about the future.

I would like to close with some final thoughts from young Alex Byrne, which he included in his letter to the residents of Griffin Street. He wrote:

My final thoughts as I watched the silent headstones was that we have to live the life these soldiers gave us ... we have to live our lives to the fullest, love our friends and family to the utmost. It's the least we can do—live the life that these men never got.

I congratulate Alex on these fine thoughts and the other students and schools in my electorate who honour our soldiers and keep their memories alive through similar programs. (Time expired)

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (12:39): I would like to acknowledge the member for Kingston for moving this motion and, also, all the speakers who have spoken on it this morning. The speeches have been moving and they have been powerful and, again, I congratulate the member for Kingston for drawing this motion to our attention. This Friday, 11 November, is Remembrance Day. The day is the anniversary of the armistice that brought to an end the carnage and the chaos of the First World War, and it is important that we remember it. We remember the war even though it was fought by a very different Australia. It was fought by an Australia that was just 14 years old, an Australia with a population less than five million—nearly a fifth of what it is today. Yet, today's Australia is indelibly forged by the terrible sacrifice of its former self; the imprint of the First World War survives to this day.

I recently joined the Australian Garden History Society ACT Monaro Riverina Branch to unveil their 'Planting memories' project in Weston Park in Yarralumla. The project features three commemorative panels remembering a different side of Canberra's wartime contribution. The connection between Canberra and the First World War runs deep; 350 men from the Canberra region served in the war. Many came to work on the construction of Canberra, which was named as the national capital just a year before the outbreak of the Great War. Some of the park's beautiful trees were planted by Charles Weston and his staff during the years of the First World War. Today they serve as a lasting legacy to the Canberra community that gave so much a century ago.

The author Clive James once referred to the First World War as 'a harvest of our tallest poppies'. As a conflict, it holds a terrible record as our costliest. It is why the 11th day of the 11th month is not dedicated to celebration but dedicated to remembrance because we must
remember. We must tally its cost and we must bear witness to its scars. As Armistice Day approaches, the day itself retreats further and further from us. Increasingly, we recognise its significance in the abstract. We imagine its horror, the way we imagine how the water of the beaches of Gallipoli must have smelt or the way the exploding of shrapnel must have sounded. We hear its description, but without an experience of our own, we are forced to cobbled together an impression of the experience out of others who have already lived through it. So while what we remember is inexact and approximate, we know it is important. Our memories of the cost of war have not been dulled by time. We remember those tallest poppies. We remember what we lost, how we lost it and why. Our young nation lost so many, far from the red soil of home. Some returned to an unrecognisable Australia and lived long lives struggling for peace. All made a remarkable and profound sacrifice in defence of their country.

Their sacrifice is honoured by a grateful nation in a safer and more peaceful world. The world may never see war like Australia did 100 years ago. If we do not, it will be a good thing, a very good thing. Those who served in the First World War exist now only in memory. As their stories of the Great War fade from living memory into history, they become abstract. We write down these stories to externalise them so that the memory of the war can survive the mortality of the warriors. It is important that those memories persist. It is important that when we say 'lest we forget', we do so because how we perceive the world and how we act in it are products of how and what we remember.

To forget the destructive chaos of war is to fail to learn from our failure to prevent it. So I say today, as I will on this and every 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, that at the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them. We pause to reflect on those Australians who have died in wars and armed conflicts. We remember those who served in the Boer War, the Second World War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and in Afghanistan and Iraq. We remember the peacekeepers. We remember their families and those whose hearts were broken and their lives shattered—permanently changed by their loss. We pause to reflect, as we remember, and we pause as lest we forget.

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (12:44): That was a most impressive address from the member for Canberra and I congratulate her on that address, as I do of the members who have spoken previously. Many of them spoke from their hearts and have raised this issue to a crescendo, I would say, of commitment to those who have been lost and those who have gone before us. In 1968, I opened a tiny business on the corner of John Street and Main Street Pakenham—

A division having been called in the House of Representatives

Sitting suspended from 12:45 to 13:13

Mr BROADBENT: I was saying, just before we went to the division, that in 1968 I started a small business on the corner of John Street and Main Street, Pakenham. One morning I noticed that the police had come and stopped the traffic both ways. I thought, 'What's going on here?' This was a new experience for me. Something was happening. Then I noticed some older people gather at the corner, out the front of the shire office. They were just standing there. I think Graham Treloar might have been there—he was the local hairdresser—with a trumpet or a bugle. I thought, 'I'll wander over and join them.' That was my first Remembrance Day ceremony, standing just on a corner with a group of older people who
were remembering the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. I stood there with them and noticed their solemnity as they stood there. The local police had come down and stopped the traffic. Now, stopping the traffic in Pakenham in 1968 was not a big issue. We were not lining up a whole lot of people.

An honourable member: You had to hold the horses!

Mr BROADBENT: Yes—just about hold the horses. It was a small country town. We were 1,200 people max. I was there for that moment. I remember how sincere the people were that we gathered. I realised that at their age they had direct memories of the families and all of the things that have been described here in this chamber and in the other chamber today—all of the sadness, all of the grief, all of the trauma that was caused to families. Each member has discussed around this issue of Remembrance Day. So there we were on that morning. The police stopped all the traffic. Graham picked up the bugle or the trumpet and played the Last Post. He played Reveille. The policeman walked off after a few moments of silence. The traffic continued. Everybody dispersed. It was done. It was such a simple ceremony. It was so quite. But it left an impression on me for the rest of my life that somewhere, wherever I am on the 11th of the 11th, I stop and spend a moment.

The traffic no longer stops for Remembrance Day in most areas now. Even though we do recognise those that were fallen at that time in ceremonies—and there were a number on Sundays, especially at Springvale and, apparently, according to the member for Dunkley, down in Frankston, where people attended where the fallen lie—we rather see the traffic continue in the main street of Pakenham now. The service is held elsewhere—at the cenotaph. The community is not brought to a standstill—like the way we talk about the Melbourne cup when Australian stops to watch the Melbourne Cup. In that time, literally the town stopped for the 11th hour, the 11th day, the 11th month and remembered the trauma and loss.

On Friday, we will remember the trauma, we will remember the loss, we will note of the grief that affects families even today. Count the generations: it is only two. So the memory is still strong and the spirit is still strong, and the character that made those men we still see in our younger people today. We see it come through in the generations and we live in pride at our generations of today that are those that have been produced by those that fell in the First World War.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou): The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Forced Marriage

Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (13:18): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that:

(a) some young Australians are being forced into marriage against their will;

(b) child marriage and forced marriage are forms of slavery; and

(c) the Labor Government in 2013 introduced into the Criminal Code Act 1995 specific offences for forced marriage;

(2) notes that:
(a) there has been a gradual increase in people referring to community services for forced marriage since the law was introduced in 2013;
(b) investigations of forced marriage by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) have increased from 3 in 2012-13 to 69 in 2015-16;
(c) the Australian Red Cross and the AFP consider that part of the increase in identifications of forced marriage is due to better community awareness and access to help; and
(d) it is crucial that community awareness continues to be raised so that young people know their right to refuse to be forced into marriage;
(3) notes that:
(a) the Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans produced curriculum materials for the Australian forced marriage Pilot Program for Australian schools;
(b) in every school that participated in the Pilot Program, girls at risk of forced marriage were identified;
(c) funding for the Pilot Program ceased in 2015; and
(d) it is crucial that the Pilot Program is continued as teachers are often the first person a child will tell of their fear of being forced to marry; and
(4) calls on the Government to immediately renew funding to further provide awareness of child marriage and forced marriage in Australian schools and the broader community.
I am very pleased to move the motion inspired by the work of ACRATH that has been circulated in my name calling on the government to renew funding to provide awareness of forced marriage both in Australian schools and in the broader community.
As a parent, I worry about my children eventually finding the right partner to navigate through life. My children are only young—seven and 11. Although, Stan is 11 going on 28. But I said 'eventually' finding the right partner. The very idea of forcing our sons or daughters to marry someone that they have not chosen is abhorrent to most parents. Sadly, this is a very real scenario for some young Australian girls. I am talking about forced marriage, not arranged marriage. I am talking about a marriage where one of the parties has not fully consented to enter the marriage. In some cases the victim is subjected to a complex family dynamic where pressure and coercion is exerted over many years. The victims know that they are expected to fulfill this gendered role and can feel powerless to resist the pressure from their family. They are deprived of their right to fully and freely consent to marriage.

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has observed that a woman's right to enter freely into marriage is central to her life and to her dignity and equality as a human being. Put simply, forced marriage is an abuse of human rights.

Young Australian women may be at risk of forced marriage by three different means—by being taken to another country, usually the country of origin of their parents, to be forced to marry against their will; by being forced to marry against their will in Australia; or by being brought to Australia to marry but, on arriving here, these young women realise that the marriage that they are being forced into is not what they had agreed to before coming here. Forced marriage can result in the victim sustaining psychological and physical injuries, sexual assault and domestic violence, false imprisonment and estrangement from their family.
Sadly, we know that this is happening in Australia right now. The Australian Federal Police investigated 69 cases of forced marriage in 2015-16, and there would undoubtedly be many, many more cases that are never brought to the attention of the AFP. Many victims of forced marriage are reluctant to speak out against the family that they love, and the family members themselves often do not realise that their actions are wrong. A few cases have made it before the courts to prevent the forced marriage from taking place. In 2010 a 17-year-old Australian girl was about to be forced to marry in Lebanon, but she prevented the marriage by calling the Australian Federal Police. An Australian court then issued an order restraining her family from taking her outside of Australia. The Family Court made an order in 2010 to prevent the parents of a 14-year-old girl from taking her overseas to be married to another minor. She was also placed on the airport watch list. An Australian court made an order in 2011 to prevent the parents of a 16-year-old girl from sending her to Lebanon to be married.

There is no denying that the practice of forced marriage is occurring in Australia. The Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans, or ACRATH, has been working on the issue of forced marriage since 2008. In 2012 the Labor Attorney-General, Nicola Roxon, introduced a bill to make forced marriage a criminal offence and, in February the next year, the Australian parliament passed that bill. To raise awareness of this new law, ACRATH sought and was granted funding to run the Australian forced marriage pilot program in nine schools in three states—in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. From that pilot program, ACRATH reports that a number of community leaders were surprised to hear that the law existed. On many occasions girls facing forced marriage had sought help from someone such as a teacher, only to find that the expected help was not forthcoming as the person did not know that the law was available or that there was support available. Professional development and support is crucial for teachers and school welfare staff.

The need for community education is crucial. Through the pilot program, girls at risk of forced marriage were identified by the pilot schools. The great work that ACRATH has been doing needs to continue. The aim is to prevent forced marriage from taking place, and that can only happen with greater community awareness from programs such as this. I call on the Turnbull-Joyce government to immediately renew funding for this crucial awareness program in Australian schools and in the broader community. I note that the member for Mitchell has previously spoken about this topic in this chamber, and I look forward to the bipartisan support for this motion from the following speakers.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou):** Is there a seconder for the motion?

**Mr CHRISTENSEN** (Dawson—Chief Nationals Whip) (13:22): I second the motion.

Most Australians would view forced marriages, especially those involving girls as young as nine, as historical events that happened in foreign countries and foreign cultures, but the reality is that forced marriages are happening right here in Australia, and they appear to be happening more frequently. In the last financial year the Australian Federal Police investigated 69 cases of forced marriage—more than double the number of investigations in the previous year. It is hard to be sure if the incidence of forced marriage is dramatically increasing, or if they have been happening all the time and only the incidence of reporting has dramatically increased.
Last week, Iraqi-born Sydney woman Bee al-Darraj reported that she left home because she was being forced into marriage at the age of 15. Ms al-Darraj said some of her friends and relatives at Al-Faisal high school in the Western Sydney suburb of Auburn were being married off in their teens. She cited the specific case of a girl being married at the age of 13 and giving birth in the public hospital at the age of 14.

I do congratulate the member for Moreton for bringing this issue to the parliament. I also note, though, that the member for Moreton has in the past been quite critical of me in raising issues relating to radical Islam, and I have to say that I do find this one of them. We should not gloss over the fundamental issue here: there are some Australian residents who have migrated to this country believing that they could supplant Australian law with a foreign religious or cultural law, and that includes forcing children into marriage. It includes so many other things—the barbaric practice of female genital mutilation, flogging people or killing them for apostasy, honour killings and so on. And it includes prioritising Sharia law above Australian law.

I have to give credit to the former Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, who was a man who got it. He understood how dehumanising forced marriages could be, and he went on to introduce specific offences to the Criminal Code regarding forced marriages. He also recognised that we needed to draw a line in the sand on what was driving these cases, and that was Sharia law. He said:

As our citizenship pledge makes clear, coming to Australia means obeying Australian laws and upholding Australian values. Australia's brand of multiculturalism promotes integration. If there is any inconsistency between cultural values and the rule of law then Australian law wins out.

Robert McClelland was not afraid of saying what many in this place are now too afraid to mention because we are paralysed by political correctness. It is political correctness that prevents discussion about the fundamental cause of forced child brides, female genital mutilation and all of these other things that we are witnessing that are abhorrent here in this country and that are completely against our culture and our way of life. If we are fair dinkum about equality, we have to strip away that political correctness and be bold enough to come out and say that the Australian way of life is 100 per cent at odds with the way of life of radical Islam. We must be bold enough to say that we do not accept Sharia law in any way in this country. There is one set of laws in Australia, and Australian law applies to all Australians.

When immigrants come to Australia they are choosing to be subject to Australian law, and any other foreign religious or cultural baggage should be left at the door. We need to talk about how to ensure that that baggage is left at the door, and I believe the first step we need to take is to no longer accept immigration from countries where there is a high prevalence of radicalisation or violent terrorism. Opening the door to a free flow of people from these countries is an open invitation to those who are diametrically opposed to our culture and who despise us and our very way of life. We do not need to send out open invitations to those who seek to do us harm. I believe that those who do come to this country should be required to answer under oath a series of questions about their support or otherwise for concepts such as forced child marriages, female genital mutilation and other aspects of Sharia law and, if they support these practices, then they are free to seek refuge in other countries or the citizenship of other countries where such practices are permitted.
Signing up to become a citizen of this country should include a rejection of all foreign laws—religious, cultural or otherwise—that are in conflict with Australian law. Sharia law does not trump Australian law. Political correctness does not trump Australian law. Political correctness should not stop us from upholding and enforcing Australian law, including for those who have come voluntarily to this country. Special consideration should be given to anyone who, having signed up to Australian citizenship or permanent residency and our law, breaks our law out of compliance with a foreign religious or cultural law—including such as forcing a child into marriage. They should forfeit their citizenship or their residency and return to a place where Sharia is the law of the land. There is no room for Sharia in Australia.

(Time expired)

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:28): I too rise to speak in favour of this motion on forced marriage that is before the chamber, and wanted to highlight specifically the last point: (4) calls on the Government to immediately renew funding to further provide awareness of child marriage and forced marriage in Australian schools and the broader community.

This is the critical point of this motion. Yes, in 2013 we amended the laws, and those then made set out very clearly that coercion is illegal. It set out very clearly that it is a crime for a family member to coerce a young child, a young woman, into marriage. However, since the laws have been updated and since they have reflected the broader views of Australians, what we need to do is to continue education and awareness so that young women and girls in schools are aware of their rights.

I too have spoken to the Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans organisation, and they spoke about the merits of their program, the materials that they produced and the pilot program that they ran in Australian schools. The program, the Australian forced marriage pilot program for Australian schools, has been successful in raising awareness so that young women and girls know what their rights are. This particular program is one of many. But these programs can only be successful if this government gets behind them and funds them properly.

Welfare organisation Good Shepherd have also done work in this area. They have seen victims of forced marriages in their offices in Melbourne, and they say that most of the women they see are also victims of domestic and family violence.

Under Commonwealth legislation that was introduced in 2013, those involved in organising forced marriages, including family members and wedding planners, can face up to seven years if convicted. These are laws that were updated or introduced in line with Australian expectations.

As a woman—and this issue is raised regularly in the electorate by other women—it is just abhorrent to think that women can be coerced or tricked into marriage. We know that there are cultural barriers in some parts of our community, and, like all Australians, we do expect people to respect one another in the context of the law, which is why these rules were introduced and updated. But, whilst they were updated, the education in our community needs to continue.

Australia is not alone in this, as others have highlighted. Human Rights Watch estimates that 14 million girls are married worldwide—14 million girls are married! Whilst the
countries that are most at risk are countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, Australia is not immune to the practice.

Other speakers have highlighted individual cases from 2010 onwards of young women who have been brave in speaking out about their experiences. In 2010 there was a case involving a 13-year-old Victorian girl. The school was actually involved in this case. It alerted the state protection authorities about the girl not attending school. The school suggested that her absence may be due to her parents preparing her to marry her fiancé—a 17 year old living overseas—who had been chosen for her. In this particular case, DHS and the Family Court did get involved, and the girl did not leave the country and was not married.

This is a situation where the law needed to be updated and it was updated. This is also a situation where the school acted in the best interests of the child, which is why we need to see funding restored to organisations so that they can continue this pilot program. We need to continue the education not only in our schools but also at our airports, by making sure that immigration officials, security officers and other people working in international airports can support young women and girls if they find themselves in this situation.

To conclude, I support the motion. Again I call on the government to immediately renew funding to this pilot program so that any school that needs to access it can.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (13:33): It is a great pleasure to rise to support the spirit of this motion—namely: that we must stop child and forced marriage, as forms of slavery. This is a deeply important issue, and one of the greatest human rights achievements of those in the classical liberal tradition has been to end slavery. William Wilberforce led the campaign to end slavery until the passage of the Slave Trade Act of 1807. The great Republican President Abraham Lincoln did the same in the United States, at the risk of the very union of the republic.

And every time that slavery has been stopped it is because good people have worked together, with sound mind, to stand up for the type of country that they wanted theirs to be. What they did not do was to use it as a platform for boasting of partisan achievements. Ending slavery is not an issue of partisan politics. It is a basic issue of humanity.

As a liberal, I come to this issue with a clear and resolute commitment that all people are born free and equal. Liberals believe in a society based on consent and that no-one should be forced to act against their will. Every person should feel safe and secure to live a life without intimidation and coercion. That is a denial of their life and liberty. All people should be free to marry, but I cannot tolerate forced marriages. All people, particularly women and minors, must be free to live their own lives. They should not be deceived or be unable to consent to have their future decided for them. The crime of forced marriage rightly covers all forms of marriage, including those that are legal or borne from cultural or religious traditions and ceremonies.

The rise in investigations of forced marriages in this country is deeply disturbing. The aim should be to have no forced marriages in Australia. However, with the AFP and Red Cross concluding that the rise in investigations from three to 69 in only a few short years is far more likely as a result of rising community awareness and people seeking legal avenues—and, from that, we should take a degree of comfort. A first step in addressing a problem is
acknowledging that there is a problem, and that is what we are doing today and will continue to do. Forced marriage exists and we must stomp it out.

With more people seeking investigations, my hope is that, through visibility of the issue, we are addressing it and not ignoring it. As was mentioned by one of the previous speakers, according to Human Rights Watch, there are 14 million girls globally who are forcefully married each year—tragically, with some under the ages of eight and 10. My hope also is that some people who may face a forced marriage are using the investigations process to aid them in dealing and tackling an environment where they face pressure or intimidation, including when they may go overseas to be forcefully married. There cannot be a cultural or religious justification for such a barbaric act as forced marriage. I was disturbed to read reports last year that some foreign clerics have come to Australia to deliberately illegally marry off underage girls.

Such practices are completely inconsistent with who we are as a nation. Tackling this issue speaks to our national character. Are we going to be culturally relativist and say we tolerate this sort of practice because all cultures are equal? Or are we going to stand up for our way of life? That is why I am proud to be a cultural conservative, because I believe in this country and its values. I have no hesitation in saying that all people must be treated equally by the law but, equally, they must enjoy the protection of the law. That is why I am proud to support the spirit of this motion—though absent the partisan politics that has been injected by some. The victims of forced marriages deserve better than that conduct. I hope today that, by raising this issue, giving it visibility and focusing on it, we may encourage people to come forward if they are aware of circumstances where there are forced marriages, to prompt them to be investigated, and to make sure that people seek the assistance they need if they find themselves in positions of vulnerability.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:38): Firstly, I would like to start with a quote from UNICEF. They say: 'Child marriage threatens girls' lives and health and it limits their future prospects.' They go on:

Ending child marriage will help break the intergenerational cycle of poverty by allowing girls and women to participate more fully in society. Empowered and educated girls are better able to nourish and care for their children, leading to healthier, smaller families. When girls are allowed to be girls, everybody wins.

Despite that, there have been some shocking cases of child marriage reported in our country. One case included a 12-year-old Muslim girl who was marriage in a backyard sharia law wedding. The court was told that the husband had sex with the child daily after the wedding. She was examined at the Children's Hospital at Westmead shortly after the so-called husband was arrested and was found to be suffering an ectopic pregnancy and miscarried.

In another case, it was reported that a 14-year-old girl was forced into an Islamic marriage with a Western Sydney drug gang member who raped and beat her and later physically abused their daughter. The report goes on:

So appalling was the woman's life of abuse, which included claims that her father told her she could only leave her marriage "in a coffin", that—

Federal Circuit Court—

Judge Joseph Harman made an unprecedented public appeal … for authorities to act.
There are also recent cases including nine-year-old girls being part of a tsunami of Sydney kids being taken overseas and forced to become child brides. The report stated there are two cases where nine-year-old girls, primary schoolgirls, were being sent to Afghanistan to marry. In another unrelated case, a girl was described as being forced by her mother to return to Pakistan to get married. Yet another case involved a 10-year-old girl who feared underage marriage as well as female genital mutilation, while a 12-year-old girl was told she would have to marry her father's cousins when she turned 13. These are events happening in our suburbs today.

Eman Sharobeem from the Immigrant Women's Health Service said that this epidemic will not end any time soon. She said the community must work with governments to make a difference but she also said that many consider it to be a practice of culture.

We need to make it very clear to all new migrants that come to this country that a practice of our culture is: if you marry a child bride, that is rape and that is paedophilia and, in our country, our culture is to lock you up and put you behind bars. If you aid and abet that marriage, whether as an imam or someone else, that is a crime and we will lock you up. We need to make that crystal clear. It is our obligation to ensure that every young girl in Australia has all the great opportunities that this country provides. They should have every opportunity.

We have the obligation to make sure we discuss this, that we do not bow down to political correctness, that we raise these issues and that we make sure our police forces and the Australian Federal Police are fully armed and equipped to take this head on. I thank the member for Moreton for bringing this motion to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou): I just want to make some comments. I am not able to contribute to the debate, because I am in the chair, but I do want to congratulate Roxburgh College that was one of the nine schools—Roxburgh College is in my electorate—that was part of that project. I want to thank the principal, Fernando Ianni, for being extremely sensitive and willing for our school to participate in this project. Thoiba Saeedh was an intern with me who devised a program that we workshoped at Roxburgh College, and I have worked with ACRATH over the years. They are wonderful projects, and I believe, as a result of that, I would have said that this project should continue. Thank you.

The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Sitting suspended from 13:43 to 16:02

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Homelessness

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (16:02): Homelessness rates are rapidly rising in Australia. The latest figures show 256,000 Australians sought assistance from homeless services, an increase of some 20,000 on the figures from the year before. And this is at a time when service providers are already forced to turn away 329 people each day. Australia's current homelessness crisis impacts on the most vulnerable in our community, which is why the lack of focus from this government is so concerning. The Turnbull-Liberal government has no national housing strategy, no minister for housing and homelessness, and now we see a refusal to commit to the funding for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness beyond June next year.
The national partnership agreement provides up to 30 per cent of the budget for homelessness service providers across the nation. It supports some 80,000 needy Australians through 150 programs. Without funding certainty, the continued viability of these services is at risk. Some of those services threatened include crisis accommodation for women and children leaving family violence, early intervention programs for families at risk of becoming homeless and, indeed, referrals to employment and other support services. It is time the Turnbull-Liberal government stopped dragging its feet and provided some certainty for funding for the most vulnerable in our community. It is time for some national leadership. It is time to fund the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. (Time expired)

Maranoa Electorate: Swickers Fire

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa) (16:03): It is with sadness today that I rise in this place to speak about the tragic fire at the Swickers Kingaroy bacon factory in Queensland's South Burnett that destroyed the boning room yesterday morning. Swickers is the largest pig processing facility in Australia, the largest employer in Kingaroy and one of the largest employers in the South Burnett region. Swickers is also the largest pork abattoir in the southern hemisphere and Queensland's only exporting pig abattoir. In the lead up to Christmas, this fire is extremely unfortunate not only for the owners of this site factory and for the factory's nearly 600 employees and their families but also for the whole community, which relies on Swickers as the major economic contributor to the Kingaroy economy.

I reached out to the owners and discussed the disaster with them this morning. I would like to acknowledge them for their proactive and professional response in ensuring that their people are being looked after as a priority following this disaster. As a consequence, I have also briefed the Deputy Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce, on potential assistance Swickers may require in expediting the return to full capacity and I am comforted by his unwavering support to make this happen. It is important that the rebuilding of this factory be supported by all tiers of government and that we make sure that we get Swickers back to work as soon as possible.

On that note, I wish to acknowledge the local council led by Mayor Keith Campbell, the Queensland government and the state member for Nanango and deputy opposition leader, Deb Frecklington, for her prompt response and sincere support. I know Swickers will be doing all they can to get back on their feet. I want to extend my support to them and the owners. (Time expired)

Thalassaemia and Sickle Cell Society of Australia

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (16:04): On Saturday night I attended the Thalassaemia and Sickle Cell Society of Australia's 40th anniversary dinner. The organisation was founded in 1976 for the purpose of providing support to patients, families and friends of those dealing with thalassaemia. The society was formed by a group of doctors who understood that there was a great need to raise awareness about this haemoglobin disorder affecting a large number of our community. In the last forty years, thousands of people have been assisted with support and, more importantly, information.

Thalassaemia, or thalassaemia A and thalassaemia B—or major or minor—in particular affects large numbers of people from Europe, Africa, Asia and the subcontinent. In all, it affects a very large number of the Australian community. I want to quote the president of the Thalassaemia and Sickle Cell Society of Australia, Mr Sotirios Katakouzinos, in relation to
this. Sotirios says, 'While the available therapies are adequate, they are by no means perfect. Though significant advances have been made in understanding the condition, there is still much to be done to improve treatment. This event is a very important to us as it serves to help raise awareness, hope and commitment to the challenges of fighting thalassaemia and relative conditions.'

I wish the organisation all the very best and thank them for their good work.

**Lifeline Darling Downs and South West Queensland**

**Dr McVEIGH (Groom) (16:06):** Recently I had the pleasure of representing the Senator the Hon. Fiona Nash, Minister for Local Government and Territories, Regional Communications and Regional Development in acknowledging Lifeline Darling Downs and South West Queensland's installation of solar photoelectric energy-saving infrastructure in both Toowoomba and Charleville in the neighbouring electorate of Maranoa, supported through the government's National Stronger Regions Fund.

I congratulate chairman Shane Macdonald OAM and CEO Derek Tuffield. This is a very significant project that represents innovation and a sensible progress towards a new mix of energy sources for Lifeline in its regional activities in our part of the world. Moreover, it represents cost savings that will facilitate more investment in Lifeline's frontline servicing.

Whilst I was there, I learnt of other initiatives, information and context in the background to cultural protocols in acknowledgement and welcome to country in our region, a development and innovation policy and a framework for sustainability policy. Lifeline Darling Downs and South West Queensland is an NGO truly leading the charge not only in social services but also in innovation, sustainability and development.

**Community Legal Centres**

**Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (16:08):** I was recently contacted by one of my constituents, Suzanne, who works for the Youth Advocacy Centre, a community legal centre that specialises in free legal services for young people generally aged between 10 and 18 years in Queensland. Suzanne said that for years this centre has absorbed increasing wages and costs. She is worried about the centre's budget and that it will not survive the cuts proposed by the Joyce-Turnbull government. She is very concerned that the Turnbull government's cuts to community legal centres will cause serious disruption to the Youth Advocacy Centre at a time when it is likely to experience an increase in clients.

Last week the Queensland parliament passed a bill that will result in 17-year-olds no longer being incarcerated in adult prisons. That is good news, and I congratulate the Attorney-General Yvette D'Ath. However, the Youth Advocacy Centre believes that the change will see an increase in the amount of young people requiring this service.

The Productivity Commission has already acknowledged the value that community legal centres add to our community. Services that support young people and help them to find their way through the justice system must add even more value to the community by reducing the long-term social damage and encouraging these young people to become productive members of the community and to pay their taxes.

The Productivity Commission, as you know, is not exactly a left-wing organisation. So I stand with Suzanne. I thank her for making contact with my office. I stand with her in condemning the Turnbull government and the Attorney-General George Brandis, a
Queensland senator, for these proposed cuts to community legal centres and I ask them to reconsider the value that they deliver.

**Forde Electorate: National Youth Science Forum**

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Government Whip) (16:09): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Canterbury College year 11 student William Glass, who has been chosen to represent South Brisbane at the National Youth Science Forum. William is one of the many outstanding students in my electorate who are achieving great things. The forum will be held in Canberra over 12 days in January and will engage students in different areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. At a time when our government is focused on helping young Australians develop their STEM skills, this forum will really be STEM in action. The forum helps students moving into year 12 who wish to follow careers in science, engineering and technology by introducing them to research and researchers, by encouraging the achievement of excellence in all their undertakings and by helping to develop their communication and interpersonal skills. William was chosen after a process which included district interviews and an interactive task, after being endorsed by the Rotary Club of Beenleigh. He has selected physics as his main subject for the trip. I congratulate William and wish him all the best on his pending trip to Canberra. He is a great example of the hardworking and committed students in the electorate of Forde who are achieving tremendous things each and every day.

**Tallangatta Secondary College: Lightwaves**

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (16:11): Colleagues, I have to tell you that young people in northeast Victoria are doing some of the most exciting and innovative work that I have seen in a long time. On Saturday, 29 October, I had the enormous pleasure of being a guest at Tallangatta. The year 9 students at Tallangatta Secondary College organised a projection called Lightwaves right across the town. Today, I would like to say to the parliament how proud I am to be a member of parliament for a community which has wonderful, inspiring work such as that done by the Tallangatta Secondary College. This was a really exciting multimedia presentation made possible through the generous support of Creative Victoria, the Towong Shire, the Rotary Club of Tallangatta and FReeZA. Today, I would particularly like to acknowledge the work of Natalie Ord, the photographer; Aleksa and Rab, the people at the school; and the whole community for getting behind it. We had six projection spots around the town of Tallangatta. The young people had taken issues that were important to them like cyberbullying, homelessness, refugees and equality in sport and had made short videos that they then projected. To the young people of Tallangatta: well done! I was so pleased to be your guest, and I look forward to coming back for your speech night in December.

**Wide Bay Electorate: Schools**

Mr LLEW O'BRIEN (Wide Bay) (16:12): I have recently had the pleasure of attending awards nights at Victory College, James Nash State High School and Gympie State High School. It was great to see the range of awards presented, and I congratulate the students on their achievements under the guidance of their dedicated teachers. At Victory College, there was a wonderful band and a dance performance. The principal, Johannes Solymosi, delivered a very inspiring speech about the importance of students being the best they can be. Johannes is leaving the school after having been there some years, and I wish him well for the future.
At James Nash State High School, there was also a very entertaining band and choir performance, and I thank principal Darrin Edwards and his staff for all their work throughout the year. Their deputy principal, Robert Doust, is retiring after more than 30 years of service, and I wish him and his wife, Sue, who is also a teacher at the school, well in his retirement. At Gympie State High School, there was a special performance of original country music that was written by students. It was a brilliant showcase of their talents. Thanks, principal Anthony Lanskey and your dedicated team, for a great night. We need to give our students every opportunity to be the best they can. I am pleased these three great schools in Wide Bay are helping students to learn and grow into people whom our region can be proud of.

**Hazelwood Power Station and Mine**

*Ms BRODTMANN* (Canberra) (16:13): The Latrobe Valley has a very special place in my heart. My father was an electrician with the SEC in Yallourn in the 1960s. My little sister, my baby sister, was, according to my mother, the second-last baby born at Yallourn Hospital. My first years of school were at Yallourn kindergarten and Yallourn primary school. My school holidays were spent with family friends in Morwell—people who are also friends of the member for McMillan. The little company town of Yallourn was consumed in the 1980s by the open-cut mine. It was not because Yallourn was unimportant; it was because Hazelwood was so significant to the community and the region. The skilled, diligent and proud workers of Hazelwood and their families have made an enormous contribution. They have powered Victoria to become the prosperous and thriving state it is today. So I was deeply affected by last week's news that Hazelwood is set to close. I want to urge this of my colleagues here in this House: now is not the time to politicise the closure. Now is the time to provide these 750 workers and their families and the Latrobe Valley community with the respect and dignity that they deserve. This is a community caught in a transitioning energy sector. We need to support and give them and their community a pathway to a new future.

**Valli, Miss Olivia**

*Mr TED O'BRIEN* (Fairfax) (16:15): I stand today to pay tribute to a brave little girl from Nambour, seven-year-old Olivia Valli. Last week, Olivia was travelling with her mum, Amber, and her two little brothers, Mason and Flynn, when their car crashed off the road. It rolled and eventually came to rest on its side. They all survived. Olivia's mum was badly hurt, but the kids were okay, and little Olivia ensured it stayed that way. She was in the passenger seat and, upon the car coming to rest, she climbed into the back seat. She calmed her younger brothers. She unbuckled them and then wrestled with the door to ensure their safe release. Upon having them released, she went up to the road. She flagged down a passing car, which led to her mum, Amber, being rescued by LifeFlight rescue service, the helicopter service. She is now in Nambour General Hospital. I spoke to Amber last night, and she asked me to pass on to this chamber a very big thank you on her behalf, not only to those who came to her rescue but to the broader Sunshine Coast community who have shown such care and interest in her family. She also wanted to say a very big thank you to her brave little Olivia, that little seven-year-old. I too, on behalf of this chamber, say: 'Well done little girl. You are a little legend.'
Local Council Elections: Victoria

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (16:16): Melbourne is greener than ever before. We are finishing this year with an incredible result for the Greens in the Victorian local council elections, as we increased Greens representation from 17 councillors to 29. In my electorate of Melbourne, congratulations go to Rohan Leppert and Cathy Oke, who will be returned as councillors for the city of Melbourne. The campaign in Melbourne came so close to electing Dr Olivia Ball and Roxane Ingleton as the first ever Greens lord mayoral team. And well done to the Melbourne volunteer team led by Luisa Livingstone, Bridget Lea and Klaus Mahony.

The Greens will now hold four out of nine spots in the Yarra City Council in my electorate, re-electing Misha Coleman and Amanda Stone and electing James Searle and Mike McEvoy for the first time. Matoc Achol and Tony Reck also recorded terrific votes. A special thanks to Bianca Gibson, Luc Favre, Jessamie Yule, Tom Bunn, Zak Hany, Kim Chua and Michael Butler, who volunteered to make this possible, and a huge thanks to retiring Sam Gaylard for his eight years of hard work as a Yarra councillor.

Also within my electorate, well done to Jack Giles, who got within a whisker of being elected to the Moonee Valley City Council, winning the highest number of first preference votes. And well done to Jarrah Woolfrey for your campaigning efforts in Myrnong. And nearby there were historic results for the Greens in Darebin, Moreland and Port Phillip, about which I will say more on another day. I would particularly like to thank Tom Grindrod, who coordinated the efforts of our volunteer teams across Melbourne, Yarra and Moonee Valley. A special thanks to all the support candidates. And finally thanks to all the wonderful Victorian Greens staff. This is your result.

Maranoa Electorate: Swickers Fire

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (16:18): I join with the member for Maranoa in notifying the chamber of the fire that has gutted Swickers Kingaroy Bacon Factory in Kingaroy and the broader effects it may have on the economy in South Burnett, which partly lies in Flynn. The Swickers abattoir and factory has been in operation for more than 50 years. It is the largest in the Southern Hemisphere and currently processes 22,000 pigs per week, and that is about 96 per cent of all pigs processed in Queensland. It is the South Burnett's largest employer, with around 600 staff.

It is believed at this stage that it is only the boning rooms have been destroyed; however, the majority of the abattoir still remains intact. Queensland government representatives will visit the site today to investigate the damage. The company intends to get back to work as soon as possible, with plans already afoot to outsource some operations, including coldrooms, allowing the plant to re-enter production hopefully some time in the next week. I am told Swickers has assured all staff of their positions, which is a welcome call given that Christmas is so close. South Burnett communities like Wondai and Proston are today at the front of my mind as their pig producers consider their reaction to the fire. I will be working closely with the member for Maranoa to identify what the federal government needs to do in support.

Bendigo Electorate: Broadband

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (16:19): Today I call on the government to keep its word with the people of Maldon. Maldon is 'Australia's first notable town'. Its streetscape is precious, and for 150 years it has been preserved. Maldon has also been marked down to receive fibre-
to-the-node technology—something that the people of Maldon believe is unacceptable and inappropriate. I held a community meeting in September, with almost 100 locals calling on the government to meet with them to discuss fibre to the premises to be rolled out instead of fibre to the node. Their view is that the fibre-to-the-node technology with its ugly big boxes will affect the heritage overlay of the town. In the meeting the community affairs manager of NBN Co committed to meet with the community to hold a community consultation about what would be the most suitable and appropriate fibre-to-the-node or fibre-to-the-premises technology to be rolled out. Don't get me wrong: Maldon wants the NBN but it wants to make sure that its technology is suitable and fits with the heritage overlay across the town. I call on the government to keep its promise to the people of Maldon. I call on the government to hold its Maldon community consultation meeting as it committed to do in September.

**National Adoption Awareness Week**

Mr PASIN (Barker) (16:21): This week is National Adoption Awareness Week. As a father of two girls under seven, it is heartbreaking for me to hear stories of child neglect and abuse—stories that, unfortunately, we seem to be hearing far too often. Equally heartbreaking are the statistics that I learned this morning at the National Adoption Awareness Week campaign launch. In Australia, there are some 30,000 children who have been in out-of-home care for more than two years and are not living with a relative or kinship placement. Most of these children have been removed from abusive or neglectful situations. Stability and permanency are key. The implications for children who experience the trauma associated with living in and out of care is devastating. This brings me to more statistics. Children who have had an experience with impermanent care are three times more likely to suffer from drug and alcohol addiction. They have increased chances of experiencing homelessness, mental health problems and difficulty finding stable employment.

These statistics not only throw light on this issue that is devastating to individual children who find themselves in these circumstances but also throw light on an issue for society as a whole. Permanent adoption is a viable solution for this issue when reunification or placement with kin is not possible. Unfortunately, only 209 of the 30,000 Australian children in need of a permanent home were adopted in 2015. And, while the number of children not able to live with their birth family grows by nine per cent each year, the number of adoptions decreases by four per cent.

**Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program**

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (16:22): Over the past week and a half I have been lucky enough to be part of an Australian Defence Force parliamentary program visiting our troops in the Middle East, in the UAE and Afghanistan. During that time I was able to see our incredibly professional men and women of the Navy, Army and Air Force and Defence civilians going about their job on our behalf in the Middle East. A highlight of this trip was spending time with Lieutenant Colonel Steve Jenkins and the team at the Afghan National Officer Academy, training the next generation of Afghan officers. Together with the mentors and also the Force Protection elements, they showed us an excellent view into the important work we are doing in that country.

Last Anzac Day they held a special dawn service outside the National Officer Academy in Qargha. They went up on top of Mount Charandaz to hold a service, and some wonderful photos were taken of that service. These can be seen in the Army newspaper and were also
painted by Jillian Oliver. A former policewoman who had lost the use of her right arm in a tragic accident, she uses painting as rehabilitation and paints with her left arm. She was so taken by those photos that she painted the scene on Mount Charandaz. I purchased that painting, and it will sit proudly in my office here in Parliament House.

**Dreamworld**

**Mr ROBERT** (Fadden) (16:24): Almost two weeks ago my northern Gold Coast electorate was rocked by the tragic loss of four lives at Dreamworld on the Gold Coast. To have such a horrific accident at a park that has brought happiness and joy to over 30 million Australians and guests has shocked many people. In the face of that, our response by our community has been overwhelming. Seeing so many local people come out to honour those lost has been nothing short of heartwarming. I sincerely hope this display of support provided some solace to the families in what must have been a very difficult time. Luke, Roozbeh, Cindy and Kate will forever be remembered by our community and I welcome plans to turn the thousands of flowers placed out the front of Dreamworld into a permanent living memorial at the park.

There is no right or easy time to reopen Dreamworld, but reopen it must. Management have indicated that it will be after the four funerals are held as a display of respect. Whenever it opens, I will be encouraging locals, as well as the wider community and Australians, to come out and support what is a great theme park and icon of our region, and one of the greatest employers on the Gold Coast. I will certainly be one of the first people through the gates with my family and I hope many others will follow to encourage the local CEO, Craig Davidson, and all of the staff at Dreamworld to help get the park back up and running as a great theme park on the Gold Coast.

**Moreton Electorate: Australians of Indian Heritage**

**Mr PERRETT** (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (16:25): I wish to inform the chamber about the exciting project that is taking place in my electorate under the banner of the Australians of Indian heritage war memorial monument and bursary project. This committee, chaired by Surendra Prasad, has been working with the local RSL, the Sunnybank RSL, to establish a memorial to the Australians of Indian heritage—the many who served in World War I, World War II and up to the present day. There has been a design competition and they actually judged the winning design with Griffith University students on the weekend. The committee that judged the many, many submissions were: Professor Sarva-Damon Singh; Captain Chetan Chandgove; Harry Claassen, representing the Sunnybank RSL; Lewis Lee, not exactly of Indian heritage but, because he had been involved with the RSL with the Chinese heritage war memorial project, he was able to work with them; and Professor Gordon Holden and his representative. They went through the many submissions, came up with 11 finalists and on 12 November, this Saturday night at the fundraising dinner, they will announce the winner. The dinner is being held at the Sunnybank RSL, only $50 a ticket, and you can contact surendra1@bigpond.com for tickets. I am sure it will be a great night and I look forward to seeing you there.

**Ober, Mrs Narelle Doris**

**Mrs SUDMALIS** (Gilmore) (16:27): Narelle Ober has been a source of inspiration for me since the moment I first met her. Recently diagnosed with untreatable and aggressive cancer,
sadly, Narelle passed away last weekend. I met Narelle in 2006, when she was one of the leading assistance advocates for drought-affected farmers—part of a group called Hands Across New South Wales. They sent thousands of bales of hay, special women's needs, clothing and scholarships for children to continue to attend school—myriad items to make the lives of our farmers better.

Narelle always fought with passion and determination no matter what she did. Apart from that project, which lasted many years, I have a special connection with Narelle. I was born at Milton hospital and this has been the focus of Narelle's driving force, constantly raising money and funding for a range of new services and equipment for the Milton hospital. She had previously worked with a hospital auxiliary in Sydney, so quickly took a leadership role with the one in Milton, becoming the state's most successful in raising more money per capita of population than any other in rural New South Wales. During her time on the executive, this totalled more than $1 million to help build and equip the new renal and palliative care units, provide humidicribs for transporting infants and so many other pieces of equipment—it is a very long list. No-one ever said no to Narelle. In 2011, on Australia Day, she received the OAM. She was a member of the Order of the Eastern Star. I know she will be inspiring others for generations to come.

Indi Electorate: Moyhu

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (16:28): In the lush King Valley, just to the east of Wangaratta, lies the beautiful community of Moyhu. On 24 October, I had the enormous pleasure of sharing pizzas at the Moyhu Hotel as the guest of the Moyhu Action Group. A special thanks to John and Nicky Bridges for organising the event, and the many in the community who turned out. A special call-out to young Lily Day. Lily is in year 11 at Galen college. She is particularly interested in politics and has been asking me to lobby Galen college to get global politics into the year 11 and year 12 curriculum—I am onto that, Lily.

The issues that the community raised include cycle tourism; changes to the pension and the impact that they are having on local people; penalty rates and the impact they have on getting staff; access to the NBN and mobile phone coverage; the plight of dairy farmers; special note of the road conditions following all the rain we have had; and a call-out to VicRoads and the Wangaratta council to do something about the intersection at Whitlands, where the King Valley Road joins up with the Mansfield road.

I am really looking forward to returning to you next week for the opening of the King Valley Dairy—and particular thanks to Naomi and David for the wonderful work that you have done, the employment opportunities you are creating and the tourism sense you are making for us.

Great Northern Football League

Ms PRICE (Durack) (16:30): I am very pleased to speak about the Great Northern Football League, which is in the Mid West, in my electorate, and which I again sponsored in 2016. The Mid West has a great history with our national game, dating back to the 19th century, punching well above its weight when it comes to producing footballers for the highest level. The rich history led to the birth of the GNFL in 1961.

Powerhouse Towns won their 13th premiership, their 11th in the past 18 seasons, defeating arch rivals Railways by 71 points at the Recreation Ground. The Bulldogs shone under new
coach and experienced footballer Chris Kane this year. He also took out the JJ Clune medal. Kane took out the league's best and fairest award in the South West last year. Towns also took out the Reserves premiership, knocking off Railways by five points—a very close, exciting game.

Congratulations to Chapman Valley, who won the Colts premiership following three impressive seasons.

Like any other sporting league and club, the GNFL cannot work without dedicated, hardworking volunteers. I congratulate for their hard work the GNFL board, led very ably by the president, Colin Cox, in another fantastic season. I am looking forward to 2017.

Canberra Electorate: Broadband

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:31): I recently addressed this chamber, asking Canberrans to send me a screenshot of their internet speeds. I speak today to update the House on the response. The average Australian's download speed is 13.9 megabits per second—I repeat: 13.9 megabits per second. That is the average Australian's download speed. For Rob in Chisholm, in my electorate, his download speed is 6.9 megabits per second. Gavin's speed in Conder is 1.4 megabits per second. Ahmad's download speed in Calwell is 3.8 megabits per second. Ryan's download speed in Conder is half a megabit per second.

Some of my constituents are living with the worst quality internet connection in the country, and yet the Turnbull government's NBN rollout has nothing for large parts of my electorate. Many suburbs of Canberra's south are not even included on the rollout map. We know we are not getting the NBN anytime soon, and we are not sure if we are ever going to get it. Meanwhile, Alan in the suburb of Fisher has a download speed of one-fifth of a megabit per second. It takes Alan 70 seconds to download what the average Australian downloads in one second.

I am asking Canberrans to keep sending me the screenshots of your internet speeds, the downloads and the uploads. Send me your speeds and send the Turnbull government a message— (Time expired)

Steel Industry

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (16:33): Last week I was very happy to receive a call from the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Greg Hunt, from Korea, to inform me that he had just had a meeting with Posco in relation to possibly purchasing the Whyalla steel and iron ore works. I can tell you, and I have told this parliament many times, just how important it is to keep this industry going, not only for Whyalla's future but for Australia's future. Now, there is nothing given in this game, but the industry minister informs me that there are a number of other inquiries in the pipeline, and those meetings in particular were very fruitful. I am very encouraged by that, and I have been giving this message back to the people of Whyalla.

Of course, from the government's point of view, it comes on the back of the fact that we have done a lot of work in the antidumping field, and we have put $50 million into a beneficiation plant, $20 million into a jobs and employment package in the region and an 80,000-tonne order for the Adelaide-Tarcoola railway line. And let me say that it was only last week that Arrium announced they were putting another shift and 44 extra workers on the rolling mill because that mill is flat out building that iron for that plant as we speak. It comes
on the back of the workers having a reassessment of the new EBA. They have reduced their wages by 10 per cent. I think things are very positive for the future.

**Melbourne Employment Forum**

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (16:34): People in Melbourne's African-Australian communities have for a long time told me about the barriers that exist in securing employment. Too often I have heard stories of qualified people sending off dozens of resumes without a response, and it is only when they change their name from Mohammed to David on the application that the phone starts ringing. So I am very excited about an important development that is taking place in Melbourne.

On 21 November I will officially launch the Melbourne Employment Forum, an organisation that is controlled, managed and staffed by members of the African Australian communities. It is a non-profit organisation that provides a one-stop shop where jobseekers can be connected with jobs, training or placements. It also works with employers to bridge gaps that exist in the employment system. Because it is controlled by the community, the Melbourne Employment Forum understands the issues facing jobseekers better than anyone, and it is already having great success in getting people into jobs.

I would like to congratulate the board and the staff of the Melbourne Employment Forum. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the important leadership of its chairperson, Abeselom Nega, who has worked tirelessly to build this important community asset. I would also like to thank the City of Melbourne for providing funding and to acknowledge the important support of Greens Councillor Cathy Oke. I have been very proud to work with you all. To businesses and other employers in Melbourne: get in touch with the MEF, because there are great opportunities for you. To my parliamentary colleagues I say: this is the time to pay attention to the Melbourne Employment Forum, because this outstanding community-controlled initiative may be a model to follow around Australia.

**East West Link**

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (16:36): Despite traffic in Melbourne getting worse by the week, after the last state election Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews and Bill Shorten shamefully turned their backs on this problem by cancelling the much-needed East West Link. Regardless of the evidence demonstrating the ever-worsening congestion on the Eastern Freeway, Premier Daniel Andrews, Bill Shorten and Labor chose to spend $1.2 billion to rip up the project contracts just to appease a few inner-city Greens voters, all at the expense of long-suffering commuters in Melbourne's eastern suburbs.

Now we find that, for weeks on end, squatters have been allowed to illegally occupy empty homes on the land acquired for the construction of the East West Link. Local residents in Collingwood have been terrorised by these thugs, who refuse to leave the properties now designated to support those most in need, including victims of domestic violence. All this has been met with indifference by Labor and the local member, who have stood by and idly watched a wave of crime take place in this area and are now turning their backs on those they purport to advocate for. This sorry saga represents all that is rotten with modern Labor and the socialist Greens—no action to fix some of the worst traffic congestion in the country, and then they allow law and order to get out of control in our suburbs. This is just the latest chapter in this sorry saga, and we will build the East West Link.
Indi Electorate: Yackandandah Theatre Company

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (16:37): In my local community of Yackandandah, the power of art and theatre to tell our stories is so strong. Last Saturday night I had the enormous pleasure of being part of the Yackandandah Theatre Company's performance to a packed house—in fact it was a packed church—of their play From Here to There. These were six monologues inspired by the lives and experiences of real people who have lived in Yackandandah. Today I would like to acknowledge and say thank you to everyone involved, particularly to the playwrights and the actors—to Beverley Lello, to Pete Denahy, to Lisa Mason, to Kate Rotherham, to Brendan Hogan, to Andrew Ferguson, to Emily Cope-Williams, to Bridget Doyle, to Terry Moriarty, to Trevor Matthews—for your acting and your storytelling, and to all the musicians and singers for the power of song as we walked into the church and the feeling you created of how history was in Yackandandah in those golden days. Thank you to the musicians, to the Yackandandah Historical Society, to the cemetery trust and to the Anglican Church.

I would particularly like to do a special call-out today to Brendan Hogan, who is the local director and sort of artist-in-residence in our community. Not only does he work with the adults; he works with the children—with the schoolkids—and he provides enormous opportunity in our small towns for young people to learn about acting and theatre. Thank you, Brendan. We all appreciate what you do.

Bonner Electorate: Gundala Kindergarten

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (16:39): I would like to speak today about Gundala Kindergarten, an outstanding local institution in Wynnum. Gundala is the only Indigenous kindergarten in the local area, and they have been meeting the early educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children since 1978. Gundala services Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander families in Wynnum as well as from all over Brisbane southside. Principal Deb Meates tells me that parents travel up to half an hour to 45 minutes to bring their children to Gundala.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting Gundala with the Hon. Arthur Sinodinos, the cabinet secretary. We saw firsthand the outstanding services that they provide. Gundala offers a deeply embedded cultural program based on the Quandamooka culture that teaches Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander culture to its students. This is a great example of the importance of government funding for early childhood learning.

Over the last year, Gundala has been raising funds for a school bus. They decided on the school bus after looking at studies and recognising the barriers for some Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander families in getting their children to school. I am pleased to report that they now have a new bus. Deb has also told me about their side project to have a local Indigenous artist design a mural that will go up on the bus as well as on the Gundala building. I commend Gundala for their great work in closing the gap for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander families.

Solomon Electorate: Vietnam Veterans

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (16:41): I am very appreciative of an additional opportunity to make a contribution in the lead-up to Remembrance Day. Having recently returned from speaking directly with veterans in the Northern Territory, I am frustrated and I am concerned
that the current Minister for Veterans’ Affairs continues to ignore the fact that Northern Territory veterans do not have the same representation as veterans in other jurisdictions, like Victoria, where he is from, as an example. Reflecting on the sacrifices of Vietnam veterans, I have spoken with Vietnam veterans from the Territory in the last couple of days, and they are disgusted that the veterans’ affairs minister has not even had the common decency to reply to their letters asking why the Northern Territory does not have a deputy commissioner for veterans affairs. I am sure the veterans’ affairs minister in this week of Remembrance Day will be out there talking to all the veterans about what wonderful things he is doing, but he has not had the decency to reply—and it is not just a slight against me, but I represent veterans in the Northern Territory who have been forgotten about by this Minister for Veterans’ Affairs. It is not good enough. We are going to start ramping up the pressure on him, because he is letting those veterans down.

Tangney Electorate: Reach Volunteer Group

Mr MORTON (Tangney) (16:42): Volunteering is such an important pillar of Australian society, and adds so much to individuals and to our local community. At the 2011 census, almost 20 per cent of all Australians said they volunteered—worth more than $20 billion to the Australian economy. I want to acknowledge a volunteer group in my electorate. Reach is a group of 60 high school students, led by uni students, that is making a real difference in Tangney by volunteering their time and effort. It is so impressive to see young people actively searching out ways to help others in our local community. They will do just about anything to help the community, including volunteering at soup kitchens, mowing lawns, being involved with Youth With a Mission and participating in Relay For Life, and they have also created art pieces for a local nursing home. I enjoyed catching up with Reach and the Friends of Bull Creek Catchment earlier this year. I was scheduled to help plant trees, but their enthusiasm was so great and they had worked so hard, that by the time I arrived, the job had already been done. I congratulate Reach and their army of young goodwill volunteers, and I encourage more young people in Tangney to get involved and make our community an even better place to live.

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (16:43): The decision handed down last week by the Federal Circuit Court in Prior v QUT, in my opinion, only adds to the argument for not watering down section 18C. In his judgement, Judge Jarrett found that in two of the three claims that were dismissed, the words complained of were ‘a mere slight’ and were not reasonably likely to give rise to offence, insult, humiliation or intimidation, as required to offend under section 18C. May I point out that the Australian Human Rights Commission was not a party to these proceedings. The role of the AHRC is to attempt to resolve any complaints between the parties. Their role is not to make a decision about whether there has been any unlawful discrimination. This is not the noise that is going around Parliament House at the moment at all. The proceedings were brought by Ms Prior, who was entitled to bring those proceedings, no matter what the Human Rights Commission did with her complaint.

The respondents were entitled to seek to have her claims against them dismissed by the Federal Circuit Court, which is what happened. The decision is an example of the section working as it is designed to so that only claims that are reasonably likely to give rise to offence, insult, humiliation or intimidation are proceeded with. Claims that are mere slight are
not, and that is what the court actually decided. I hope that those opposite would understand— *(Time expired)*

**Fisher Electorate: 5th Light Horse Regiment Maleny Troop**

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (16:45): This Friday, 11 November, Australians will pause to remember those who died or suffered for Australia’s cause in all wars and armed conflicts. On this 99th anniversary it is fitting to reflect also on one of the most famous Australian military campaigns of the Great War and how it has been kept alive by a dedicated group of enthusiasts on the Sunshine Coast hinterland. The mighty 5th Light Horse Regiment Maleny Troop was formed in January 1992 with seven members. The troop strives to keep alive the spirit of the Light Horse by collecting equipment and memorabilia from around the country. The history of the Australian Light Horse dates back to the 1850s. The troop recently opened the Beersheba Living Museum in tribute to what is perhaps the most famous battle the Australian Light Horse was involved in.

The museum preserves the uniforms, weapons and equipment used by the Australian Light Horse regiments, particularly the 5th Light Horse Regiment. It fosters community awareness of the Australian Light Horse’s achievements and traditions in our country’s history. It encourages Light Horse activities to keep alive the horsemanship and skill at arms of the Light Horse regiments, and it preserves the memorabilia, photographs, records and documents of those who served in the Australian Light Horse units for future generations.

I commend the men and women of Maleny for their dedication to the museum.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members’ statements has concluded.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS**

**Northern Australia: Tourism**

Northern Australia: Small Business

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia—Deputy Nationals Whip) (16:47): I move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges the northern Australians working within the tourism industry, which plays a vital role in supporting the northern Australian economy;

(2) recognises that tourist spending provides further opportunities for local small businesses within the community; and

(3) notes that:

(a) the Government is investing in small businesses through its Jobs and Small Business Package released in the 2015 budget; and

(b) this package provides small businesses, including most businesses within the tourism industry, with much needed assistance to grow and create jobs.

The Liberal-National government has, for the past three years, successfully implemented a plan to unlock the future potential of northern Australia. My own electorate of Capricornia is, in fact, both the official gateway and farm gate to northern Australia, but we also have a world-class tourism industry with world-class tourism attractions. Today, I would like to acknowledge the people of northern Australia working in the tourism industry, which plays a vital role in supporting the northern Australian economy, recognise that tourism spending
provides further opportunities for small business within our local regional communities and note that the Liberal-National government is investing in small business through its Jobs and Small Business package.

This package provides small business, including most businesses within the tourism industry, with much-needed assistance to grow and create jobs. It allows small business access to a program where they can immediately deduct the purchase of any piece of equipment in their business for items up to the value of $20,000. Small business owners involved in the tourism sector of Capricornia tell me that this particular budget measure has helped them enormously in the area of cash flow and provided the ability to update much-needed equipment, from cafe tables and coffee machines to business vehicles and rural equipment. This has allowed tourism-related businesses to improve their facilities and attract more tourists.

Tourism spending is an important part of the northern Australian economy. In Capricornia, economic and tourism group Capricorn Enterprise identify one of their big branded destinations as the southern Great Barrier Reef. Capricorn Enterprise reports that 94 per cent of visitors to our region are domestic and six per cent are international travellers, which equates to about two million visitors annually. The top five international source countries are the UK, Germany, New Zealand, North America and France. The average spend per visit to Central Queensland is $499. The southern Great Barrier Reef, including Central Queensland, is the fifth-highest visited region in Queensland and the 14th-highest visited region in Australia by domestic visitors.

I would like to take this opportunity to shamelessly tell you more about the great tourism attractions of Capricornia. In northern Capricornia, we have the Pioneer Valley and the beautiful Eungella National Park, which is home to one of the best platypus-viewing areas in the state. Sarina, south of Mackay, is the sugar capital of Capricornia and boasts great beaches and a unique sugar-based rum distillery. In western Capricornia, we have outback cattle stays, mining tours and historic towns such as Clermont; while in southern Capricornia, we have Rockhampton and the beautiful Capricorn coast around Byfield, Yeppoon and Emu Park.

A visit to the Capricorn area would not be complete without a stop at the Capricorn Caves. Recently, I had the privilege of officially launching an Australian first at this location, near a town aptly named The Caves. The $300,000 project involved relighting the historic Capricorn limestone caves to provide a more dynamic experience for tourists. Old cave lighting from the 1960s has been replaced with new, leading-edge, solar-powered technology. The Capricorn Caves is now the first cave experience of its type in Australia to run lights on solar power.

The Koorana Crocodile Farm near Emu Park is another world leader, selling crocodile skins overseas to be turned into Gucci handbags. And, of course, one of the jewels in the crown is Great Keppel Island on the Great Barrier Reef. Regrettably, Great Keppel Island has been without a major resort development due to the global financial crisis experienced in the tourism sector in the past decade, but I understand that negotiations continue for new business arrangements that could see construction begin on a $1 billion resort project by the end of next year. Such negotiations could have been made easier if the Queensland Labor government granted a boutique gaming licence to the island that would allow it to attract Asian investors to guarantee construction. Central Queensland needs this resort because, in
the long run, it would create up to 1,500 new jobs. This is a testament to the value of tourism in northern Australia.

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

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

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (16:52): I certainly will agree with the member for Capricornia that her electorate in Central Queensland, and indeed, all of northern Australia, has a lot to offer the tourism sector. That is why it is so disappointing that this government is ignoring the tourism sector.

Just two weeks ago, during the break, I was at the Australian Regional Tourism Network national conference in Roma in western Queensland. There you would expect the tourism minister to be, perhaps, but he did not bother to go; perhaps the parliamentary secretary to the tourism minister—did not bother to go. Indeed, no-one bothered to go from the coalition to that conference in the electorate of Maranoa. Can I say that the comment from regional tourism operators at that conference was to express dismay at the lack of support that they are receiving from this government.

The motion refers to support for northern Australia. Of course, the northern Australia infrastructure fund, which was announced some 18 months ago in the 2015 budget, has not had a single dollar allocated from it—some 18 months; not a single project. Labor announced during the election campaign our plan to allocate $1 billion specifically from that fund for a northern Australia tourism infrastructure fund—supported by people like the now member for Solomon—for projects targeting the expanding Asian tourism market; projects promoting Australia's natural environment, such as the Great Barrier Reef; ecotourism; Indigenous tourism ventures; event-based facilities, including stadium and convention centres; and transport and access upgrades, including for ports and airports. Since the election, I have had three round tables in northern Australia on tourism—in Darwin, in Alice Springs and in Cairns. At each of those meetings—

A government member interjecting—

Mr ALBANESE: I will be in Western Australia on Sunday and Monday. The fact is that this government has ignored northern Australia. They also have some hide coming in here at a time when, over in the other place, in the Senate they are considering an increase in the backpacker tax and an increase in the passenger movement charge on everyone who comes to and from Australia. It is extraordinary. Here they are, now, arguing with a new tax that will have an increased revenue from their proposition in 2015 that somehow it is going down. It is that sort of Orwellian nonsense that the tourism sector is slamming them over—just like the passenger movement charge, with no consultation with the tourism sector whatsoever.

The fact is that since they announced their backpacker tax changes numbers are down. That is why they have had to revise their position and do a semi-backflip. They may well have to do a fair bit more, because it has been rejected by the agriculture and tourism sectors as simply not doing enough. Tourism is a super-growth sector. It already employs one million Australians. It contributes $107 billion to the Australian economy, and every dollar spent in tourism generates another 92c in other parts of the economy.

We can talk about our tourism policy because during the election campaign we released one, a comprehensive plan for tourism. Those opposite did not release a tourism policy during
the 2016 election. Having shown contempt for the sector, in their first term, by refusing to have a tourism minister, by not being able to say what department tourism would be located in, they rubbed it in by having no policy announced. Then, the tourism minister, in his first contribution, described the passenger movement charge as being a golden goose strangling the industry—just before they announced they would increase it. (Time expired)

Ms PRICE (Durack) (16:57): I am very pleased to speak on the member for Capricornia's private member's motion highlighting the role Australia's north plays in the country's economy. Developing Australia's north is yet another example of where this Turnbull government has provided leadership and a long-term vision compared with Labor, who did nothing for Australia's north during their six years in office.

The federal government's northern Australia white paper Our North, Our Future was a coalition election commitment and, as members of this chamber have heard me say on many occasions, it is a blueprint for developing Australia's north following years of cheap talk and empty promises by the previous Labor government.

Tourism and hospitality are two of the industry pillars that have enormous potential for growth, as outlined in the white paper, together with food and agribusiness, energy and resources, international education, health care, medical research and aged care. A good tourism sector, however, is reliant upon a good local and backpacker workforce. The $10 million global backpacker boom campaign was launched a fortnight ago by the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment.

The backpacker boom is a three-year campaign targeting working holiday makers in the UK, Ireland, France, Germany and Italy and will lead to making Australia an even better destination to take a working holiday. More than 320,000 people undertook a working holiday in Australia last year, spending around $3 billion in the national economy. We do need Labor to get behind our changes to the backpacker tax—because be it on their head when the fruit rots on the vine.

The federal government's campaign will be of enormous benefit to northern Australia, especially in the north-west, where people from all around the world undertake various jobs, from working in the agricultural and tourism industries in the Pilbara to pouring pints and coffees in the Kimberley. Total visitors to the north-west increased by over eight per cent in 2015, which was an increase by a mammoth 103 per cent in the last three years, according to Tourism Research Australia's national and international visitor surveys. According to the same survey, in the last decade tourists visiting the north-west have increased by 97 per cent—a fantastic effort—and it is with full credit to the small business owners whose staff make the north-west a 'must visit' whilst travelling in Australia.

Tourist spending has increased in the region by 17 per cent in the last 12 months and by 94 per cent over the last three years according to Tourism Research Australia. Karijini National Park, the Bungle Bungle's and Wolf Creek Crater are some of the world-class natural landscapes in the north-west. And the small business sector, as you well know, Deputy Speaker Wicks, plays a vital role in the development of tourism in Australia's north.

In my electorate of Durack, nearly 4,000 people are directly employed in the tourism industry, according to the Tourism and Transport Forum, providing tours for tourists and locals of the beautiful natural attractions throughout the Kimberley, Gascoyne and Pilbara and
keeping tourists' palate satisfied—fed and watered well. Small businesses and their staff are at the forefront of ensuring people have a great experience throughout the region. It is only members on this side of the chamber that understand the importance of small business and that is why we implemented the Jobs and Small Business package, a package which includes a tax deduction for assets up to $20,000. For the new kitchen fit out or for the new pie warmer or for the new vehicle and the like, this is going to be a great boon for those businesses to develop. The federal government will also in turn reduce the small business tax rate down to 27½ per cent for businesses with a turnover of less than $10 million annually.

These economic policies will assist the small business sector in Australia's north and make regions like the Kimberley, the Pilbara and the Gascoyne even greater places to live, to visit and to do business more generally, and the region will become an economic tourist hub of employment for Australians and working holiday makers.

With respect to the backpacker tax, we all want Australians to take Australian jobs. In my electorate of Durack, some 1.7 million square kilometres, there is simply not the local workforce, and I do advocate for welfare reform to ensure that people are not going to be disadvantaged if they come off welfare to take a seasonal job. At the moment fruit is going to rot on the vine, those pints are not going to be poured and those coffees are not going to be made without changes to the backpacker tax regime. I urge the Labor Party to get behind our changes so that we can have a good tourist season in 2017.

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (17:02): I want to thank the member for Capricornia for moving this private member's motion. I share her love of the north if not her party's pretty much destruction of the tourism market when it comes to working holiday makers and backpackers in the Top End—we have seen a 30 per cent decrease. I have spoken to Western Australian tourism operators and they are not happy at all. I understand that this backpacker tax shemozzle has just been an abysmal attempt to try and rake in some more money but unfortunately the tourism and horticulture industries are really suffering, really hurting. If those opposite do like small business, they might want to negotiate something a bit smarter in the Senate—I digress,

Tourism is incredibly important to the north and that is why this has been so disappointing. In my electorate of Solomon, we have the beautiful city of Darwin, which is the gateway for so many people into the north. We have a strong Aboriginal culture, a magnificent harbour, great fishing, markets, breathtaking sunsets and also the Cage of Death. It would be great to throw whoever designed the backpacker tax without any consultation and without any modelling in there because it has done so much damage. Anyway there is a croc in there called Brutus and he is psychic. If I were as psychic as Brutus, I might look forward and say perhaps what the government has suggested as a fix is a backflip on the backpacker tax. In fact, according to their own advice from Treasury, it will not actually make that much difference. I hope there is still time to come up with a regime that makes sense, that attracts people back to the Top End, because, as I said, a lot of those small businesses are really hurting.

In general, we have had an increase of tourism numbers to the Top End, which has been great. Working holiday-makers have stayed way but, in general, domestic tourism is looking good. However, we always need to attract more people to the Top End, because it is becoming a more and more important part of our economy. We have got a big gas project, the
Inpex project, in the Top End. As we come out of the construction phase, I think tourism will be one of the shining lights, so I hope we can get something that is going to work better for working holiday-makers, because there is fruit that needs to be picked and pints and coffees to be poured. It is becoming more and more difficult for tourism operators in the Top End. We are missing out on money in our economy.

The Turnbull government talks a lot about assisting small business and the importance of the tourism industry for northern Australia but, unfortunately, it is failing spectacularly in this area. There has been no consideration and not enough consultation—in fact, just before I came in here to make a contribution, I had a phone call from someone involved in the aviation industry. They are still shaking their head over the passenger movement charge and about the fact that everyone flying out of Australia after a holiday is going to be charged more. They are desperately wanting some common sense and wanting the tourism minister to do his job. But, unfortunately, in the other chamber, at the end of the question time, the tourism minister got to his feet to make some pathetic point about unions or something. I have not really heard him make a worthwhile contribution on the tourism sector since I have been here—and I have not been here for that long—but I would have thought that he would have been a little more focused on his day job.

Whilst the National Farmers Federation is coming out and doing the right thing by the National Party, in the tourism industry, no-one is impressed with this backflip on the backpacker tax. So let's hope that we can see some smart thinking in the Senate and we get, as I said, a backpacker tax rate that will get people to come back to the Top End.

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (17:07): I have pleasure in supporting the member for Capricornia's motion on northern Australia tourism development. Since coming to power in 2013, the coalition has been passionately committed to developing the economies of northern Australia. There are a number of industries with obvious advantages in the current economic climate. With the Australian dollar for the first time in many years being at a competitive level, export industries like agriculture, tourism and mining will come to the fore. Agriculture and tourism have been identified as the next super growth industries. Recent record cattle prices are evidence of this.

As tourism has increased in global competitiveness, investment is beginning to pour into the north. In my electorate of Flynn, we have entrepreneurs ready to take advantage of the weak dollar by developing high-quality resorts in breathtaking locations ready for the next influx of Chinese, Japanese or global tourists.

We already have a world-class destination in the southern Great Barrier Reef. P&O's tourist boats are now regular callers at the Gladstone docks. We have Heron Island, which is great for overseas tourists; Lady Musgrave Island—again, overseas tourists with a sprinkling of Australian tourists; and a proposed new resort at Hummock Hill, 30 kilometres south of Gladstone—that is a billion dollar investment by Australian investors.

I can see the next tourism boom being similar to that of the 1980s with Australia back at No. 1 as a personal place to visit. This will only be possible if our infrastructure is up to date.

That is why we are getting on with the job of improving our transport network. We are fixing the Bruce Highway, the most important transport route in Queensland. More than 5,000 motorists use the highway between Gladstone and Rockhampton each day. $170 million was
spent on the Yeppen project, south of Rockhampton, and a further investment will be made in the near future.

We are spending $32 million on the Bruce Highway between Midgee and Bajool, making it safer, with new services, better turning lanes and wider centre lines. These projects are part of the long-term vision for the Bruce Highway—Brisbane to Cairns—that will see it a modern, safe highway capable of handling increased traffic brought on by the growth in agriculture and tourism alike.

We are helping tourists experience the interior as well, with the $750 million being spent on the Capricorn Highway between Rockhampton and Emerald. This will allow for safer travel between Rockhampton and Gracemere, with dual carriageways between Gracemere and Rockie, and Gracemere to Emerald, with six new overtaking lanes. From Emerald, tourists can travel around the central highlands, to the unique Sandstone Belt national park attractions: Blackdown tablelands, Carnarvon Gorge and Salvator Rosa. Or they can visit the gem fields, including the quaint townships of Anakie, Sapphire, Rubyvale and The Willows. These places produce some of the best gemstones—sapphires, in other words—in the world. At the gem fields, tourists can choose to fossick for gems themselves or visit a local mine, walk through underground sapphire mines, and enjoy the hospitality of the local people.

This better, safer transport network will not only handle an increase in local and overseas tourists; it will help promote and draw visitors to northern Australia. Northern Australia is a truly wonderful tourist destination.

Mr SNOWDON (Lungiari) (17:12): My mate the member for Solomon is leaving this chamber as I speak. I am going to say a few words about him. Just you go—all right.

Mr O’Dowd interjecting—

Mr SNOWDON: They are all good words. I want to thank him for his contribution. He does speak of matters that need to be addressed in this place. I will not dwell too much on what he said, except to make the point about the passenger movement charge. Clearly, we have had nothing from the Commonwealth to explain to us what they think the impact of this increase in the passenger movement charge will end up being in terms of its impact on tourism visitation. That is a key issue for us in the north of Australia, but in the Northern Territory most particularly, because tourism provides 8.1 per cent of the Northern Territory’s employment and 4.5 per cent of our gross state product.

The GSP percentage is the highest of all states. It is only 1.7 per cent in Western Australia and 4.3 per cent in Tasmania. We rely on tourism in terms of our gross state product more than any other state or territory. So when you fiddle with things like passenger movement charges, it has the potential to impact us more than other places.

In 2014-15, visitors spent $1.85 billion in the Northern Territory. In 2014-15, again, international spending grew by 18 per cent to $460 million and domestic spending grew by 3.4 per cent to $1.4 billion. 11.1 per cent of all Territorians in the workforce work in the tourism industry—that is an extremely significant number—compared with the national average of 8.1 per cent across other jurisdictions. Just to emphasise again the comparative importance of tourism to the Northern Territory: almost one in five young tourists who come to Australia visit the Northern Territory, and in 2014 the Northern Territory was the destination of choice for 15.9 per cent of international overnight visitors. Given the size of the
Northern Territory, in terms of the population not the landmass, that is a significant number. It is because of the iconic destinations that we have: Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Kakadu, both in my electorate, both tourism destinations of renown and both World Heritage areas. But, significantly, tourism visitation to those places has dropped off greatly since 2004-05.

There has been strong growth over the last five years, but the numbers are still down from what they were in 2004. Between 2004 and 2014, total visitor numbers to Uluru fell by 20 per cent. That has a significant impact on the local and regional economies of these places and it impacts directly on the potential for income to be earned by Aboriginal people, the traditional owners of this country, who have a key stake in the tourism industry. In 2013-14 international visitors visiting Uluru numbered 142,000. That is a significant drop from the 200,000-plus visitors in 2008.

This raises significant questions. The federal government is responsible for Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Kakadu. If there is a decrease in tourism visitation to those areas, there is obviously an opportunity for the Commonwealth to see what it can do by way of investment to increase the potential for tourism visitation. But we know what they have done. They increased park entry fees in 2016 by 60 per cent. An adult ticket to enter Uluru-Kata Tjuta or Kakadu is now $40. That is potentially a massive disincentive for people in the tourism industry to market these destinations to overseas visitors. It is a cause of great concern when we know that the tourism industry is so important to the Northern Territory economy.

We need to do a lot better and we need to do a lot more. But it requires the Commonwealth to focus on its main job, and that is to promote the tourism industry across Australia, but particularly in the north, and address the issues that need to be addressed in the management and operation of the Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta national parks if we are going to make a difference and encourage more tourists to come along.

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (17:17): I am delighted to be here to support the member for Capricornia's motion, because it goes to the heart of one of the government's strengths, and that is supporting the economy and ensuring that we have jobs and growth in one of our key industries in this country. But, before I address the specifics of her motion, I feel obliged to address some of the furphies coming from the other side over the last 15 or 20 minutes, with the shadow minister, the member for Grayndler, leading the charge.

There is no such thing as a 'minister for gunna' but, if there were, I think this government would let go of any ministerial rights and give the shadow minister for infrastructure and tourism, the member for Grayndler, that gong, because he is a gunna. We heard it from him a few weeks ago with respect to infrastructure and again we hear it today with tourism. The basis of the argument from Labor is, 'We were gunna do this,' 'We were gunna do that,' 'We were gunna support,' 'We were gunna spend money.' But the facts do not play it out. They are nothing but gunnas.

The reality is that Labor cut Tourism Australia. The coalition committed $639 million for international marketing. It is the coalition that is delivering. Labor's carbon tax slugged the tourism industry—wait for it—$115 million and that was just in year one alone. They want to talk about infrastructure for tourism, and yet the shadow minister himself committed only $4.1 billion to the Bruce Highway—the most important piece of domestic infrastructure in Queensland—compared to the coalition's $6.7 billion. Yet he consistently tries to take claim, because they refused to meet the 80-20 funding requirement from the Queensland state
government. Even in my neck of the woods, the Sunshine Coast, it is the coalition that has invested the money. Over $1 billion will be spent on the Bruce Highway on the Sunshine Coast, which is, not unlike the north of Queensland, a tourism mecca. That will be spent in the next few years, and, yes, that will be delivered by a coalition government.

As for the backpacker tax, which, again, is something that the opposition seems to harp on, it is very simple. The backpacker tax proposal is really now in the hands of the Labor Party. It is 32½ per cent. It can drop to 19 per cent as soon as the members opposite support the bill. They do not know if they support the bill. Instead, they are taking their time to try to talk about it. They are not even in government; they are in opposition and they still cannot be decisive on their position. Here we are with not just tourism but agriculture—key industries that drive our economy—and the Labor Party are holding them to ransom. If we do have fruit that rots on the vine, we know who we are going to be looking to, and that is the Labor Party. The 32.5 per cent can drop down to 19 per cent if they take action, but they refuse to take action, because they are the ‘gunna’ party. We were gunna do this; we were gunna do that. It is time to take action.

With all of the downtrodden stories from Labor about the tourism sector, let me read some terrific statistics about the Sunshine Coast, in which the seat of Fairfax is situated. Domestic visitor numbers last financial year were at their highest level—3.1 million—since before the GFC. How good is that? The year-on-year growth rate among domestic travellers on the Sunshine Coast was a very strong 7.8 per cent. The growth in overseas visitors was 3.5 per cent. The good thing is that not only are more and more people coming but they are staying longer and they are spending more money. This is a vital area for Queensland's economy.

There is an old rule, and it applies to business as much as it applies to countries or regions: when you want to grow your economy, the No. 1 thing you need to do is protect and leverage your core. As an Australian, and indeed as a Queenslander, I say that we have a few cores. We have the resource sector, we have the agrisector and we have the tourism sector. What we see in the coalition's suite of policies is a staunch defence and promotion of our core of tourism, and that is the reason I stand here today in vigorous support of this motion.

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (17:22): I have got to tell you: some people have a lot of nerve. When I read about this motion on the papers, I thought: ‘The member for Capricornia is having a lend of us. She is taking all of us for mugs.’ I think that Australians are pretty sick of that. This is the government that, in its 2015-16 budget papers in May last year, took the tax rate for backpackers from zero to 32½ per cent from the first dollar of income. That is what this government did. This government can stand up all it likes and try to pretend that it is the voice of tourism, that it stands up for tourism, but what actually happened last year was the government introduced the backpacker tax.

I spoke at the Adventure Travel and Backpacker Industry Conference in November last year. I was there representing Anthony Albanese, the shadow minister for tourism. Needless to say, the people in that room were not happy with this coalition government and its new backpacker tax. There was a lot of anger in the room from the many small businesses that were there representing the backpacker industry and the adventure tourism sector. They were very unhappy about this government's decision to impose taxation on backpackers in what was just a naked grab for revenue—a $540 million tax grab. These are the small businesses that make up the tourism sector. There are 270,000 businesses in the tourism sector in...
Australia, and they are mostly small businesses. They do not have a lot of power; they do not have a voice at the table in the same way that some other industries and some other firms do. But they are very clear. They know when they are getting rolled and they know when they are getting treated with contempt. That is what this government did to the tourism sector last year. To now stand up and pretend that it is up to Labor to clean up the mess that it made is deeply disingenuous and wrong.

Such was the outcry from the tourism sector about this outrageous decision they made to push up the backpacker tax to 32½ per cent that they finally gave it a rethink, but it was not until 18 months after they first announced the backpacker tax that they announced their proposed compromise. On 27 September this year they announced a compromise to allow the backpacker tax to be 19 per cent for every single dollar of income earned up to $37,000. They wanted to take their increase from zero per cent to 32½ per cent. They now want to take it back down to 19 per cent and are pointing the finger at us and saying, 'Why hasn't Labor fixed our mess yet?' It is incredibly rude behaviour, and it is rude not only to the members of this parliament but to the members of the Australian public whom they are treating with contempt and disrespect, and whose intelligence they are insulting.

But Australians are not going to fall for it. Australians are not silly. The member for Flynn and the member for Capricornia can stand up and pretend all they like that they have been the great defenders of tourism in this place, but people in their electorates are going to know that they supported the government's move to impose the backpacker tax. Not only that; even with this so-called compromise proposal that brings it down to 19 per cent—still much higher than neighbouring countries, still much higher than the zero per cent that it was before May last year—they are going to point the finger at us and claim that it is our fault and say that we should fix their problem.

There is another kick in it for the tourism industry. It is not enough for this government that they imposed the backpacker tax back in last year's budget papers. It is not enough for this government that their 18-months-later compromise proposal only brings it down to 19 per cent—much higher than neighbouring countries and much higher than the zero per cent it was. They also want to increase the departure tax for tourism. They also want to slug tourism operators, they want to slug our tourism sector, with an increase in the departure tax. It is a tax on tourism, and the worst thing about it is that the Treasurer knows very well what he is doing, because he has opposed this measure being increased in the past.

Needless to say, the transport and tourism forum, local tourism operators and local tourism interest groups are up in arms about this proposal to increase the tourism tax. Next time the member for Capricornia is drafting motions, she might want to think about coming in here and pretending to have been a defender of tourism at the same time as she is supporting a government that has slugged tourism, has slugged tourism again and is now slugging tourism a third time. It is going to look pretty silly to the people back in the electorate because, no matter what she might think of them, no matter how much she might disrespect her constituents, they are not mugs. She can try to take them for mugs as much as she likes, but they are not mugs. They know what is going on with this government. They know this is a tax on tourism and they are not going to stand for it come the next election.

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (17:27): When we start talking about tourism, I have to say it is something that I have a little bit of an understanding of, given that my seat is recognised as
the largest employer, economically, in the country. My little corner of Australia is certainly punching well above its weight. In early June the Cairns Airport celebrated receiving its five millionth passenger in a 12-month period—the first time ever. The latest figures from Tourism Research Australia show that more than two million domestic tourists came to Tropical North Queensland and spent $2.279 billion in the last 12 months. Visitor numbers have increased by 14 per cent from the previous year, while spending grew by 24 per cent and visitor nights were up by 16 per cent. The growth of domestic and international visitors in my region outstripped that of both Queensland and Australia for 2015-16.

At the TTNQ AGM in late October, CEO Alex de Waal said tourism was fuelling the tremendous momentum of positive community sentiment in Tropical North Queensland, and tourism continues to drive local jobs and economic growth. It is fantastic that people are choosing our beautiful region to visit and spend their money in, but it does not happen on its own. It is because of the hard work of so many people in the tourism industry who make visitor experiences unforgettable—the airline staff, taxi and shuttle bus drivers, hotel receptionists, restaurant wait staff, reef boat cruise operators, cleaners, booking agents, car hire staff, bar staff, retail assistants and the list goes on and on.

It is also those at the top of their field who drive tourism development and investment and ensure that we have a broad range of offerings for our visitors. I would like to take the opportunity to mention a few of the highly respected, innovative and dedicated tourism leaders in Leichhardt who were recognised in the recent Tropical North Queensland tourism industry excellence awards celebration. CaPTA Group chairman, Charles Woodward, was recognised as a life member; long-term hotelier Peter Blackburn was also recognised as a life member; Skyrail Rainforest Cableway director, Ken Chapman, won the award for outstanding contribution as an individual; Mossman Gorge Centre general manager, Ben Pratt, won the award for young achiever excellence; Cathay Pacific, which is one of the international airlines flying into Cairns, won the chairman’s award for excellence; and the Big 4 Atherton Woodlands Tourist Park won the award for innovation excellence in tropical north Queensland.

Notionally, Leichhardt is the electorate most highly dependent on tourism, which is responsible for 20 per cent of its employment and 20 per cent of its economic output. People say that we need to diversify away from tourism, but I think we need to recognise that other industries actually rely very heavily on tourism and get very significant benefits from tourism. In fact, tourism is very much an enabler in our community and is a base for most of the other industries that we see, whether it be the fishing industry, agriculture, aviation or even our maritime sustainment and maintenance industry. All of those feed very much into the tourism industry. It would have a big impact if we were to lose the servicing for the reef tourism fleet, which is the largest in the country. We also have education tourism, which is becoming a major opportunity in our area. Tropical sports conditioning is another area that I have been working on very closely, and the list goes on.

According to QTIC, the benefits of a strong tourism industry are considerable. Far more than just a fleeting holiday season phenomenon, tourism can drive a whole lot of opportunities, including employment right across all sectors of the community and business—investment, boosting real estate values, international and domestic educational facilities, business activity, stimulating exports. It creates skills and expertise across a wide range of
sectors. It also creates a very livable community for our locals, and I have certainly ascertained that this has happened in my communities. I certainly commend this motion to the House.

Mr DICK (Oxley) (17:32): I rise to enter the debate on the motion moved by the member for Capricornia and note that it is exactly the same motion moved in the parliament by the former member for Solomon last year. So, just like most things that this government does, it is not really an original idea, it is just another recycled measure. It is too lazy to come up with any new initiatives. But I do find it interesting that members of the government somehow want to be congratulated for their efforts for the tourism sector in Australia. In remarks today, particularly those regarding the northern Australian economy, we have heard the member for Leichhardt want praise for his government's achievements, but what he does not reflect on are the cuts that have happened. I invite the member for Leichhardt to stay to listen and learn a little bit about exactly what his government has done under his watch, apart from cancelling all funding for domestic tourism marketing, withdrawing our membership for organisations such as the United Nations World Tourism organization and scrapping tourism grants.

You want to be congratulated for those efforts. The operators in your home town do not think it is great to scrap tourism grants. One thing that is left out of this motion today is certainty. We know that, as a result of this government's economic settings and their decisions—particularly around the backpacker tax—which those opposite are pretending are in isolation, this motion is somehow not connected to what is happening in that sector in regions like Cairns and Far North Queensland. Last month, an expert from the industry said:

We have got such bad publicity out there at the moment about this backpacker tax, a lesser rate would have maybe made it more attractive to people who have already booked their flights to New Zealand or to Canada.

And:

That reputation, I really have no idea how long it's going to take us to rebuild that …

No wonder the member for Leichhardt has escaped the chamber today—he does not want to hear the facts. Representing a region like Cairns, in Far North Queensland, one would think that he would be defending the new tourism tax that those opposite are so keen to introduce. Today we saw the Tourism and Transport Forum release their findings and study into what the impact of this new tourism tax will mean. I quote from the TTF:

The Federal Government included the proposed increase in the holiday tax—without any consultation or forewarning to industry—as part of its revised backpacker tax package.

According to their research, a paltry three per cent of people support any further increases in the holiday tax, with 29 per cent supporting a lower rate and 19 per cent saying it should be abolished entirely.

So what are the experts saying about this? In the field, what are the tourism operators saying? Today, the TTF CEO said:

… the Federal Government should simply scrap its decision to increase the holiday tax on travellers and instead work with industry to make Australia a more competitive destination for visitors.

I remind the chamber that the tourism industry of tropical North Queensland is worth a whopping $4.7 billion to the local North Queensland economy and supports more than 23½ thousand jobs. We hear a lot of lectures from that side about lower taxes, but when they come
to Canberra, when the rubber hits the road, what do we find? We see increases in taxation. So I, like the industry, do not support an increase in the passenger movement levy. I quote from the TTF CEO:

You don't have to be Einstein to work out that if you want to encourage more people to visit your country you should be reducing the cost of travel not adding to it by hiking the Federal Government's holiday tax.

There were not a lot of lectures today from the government about the tourism industry, because what we are looking at right here—this week and next week in the Senate—is a massive, new, tourism tax introduced by this government. I stand by the operators in Queensland and say no to the government's new tourism tax.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Wicks):** The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

### Adelaide Plains: Floods

**Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (17:37):** I move:

That this House:

1. notes that:
   a. widespread flooding has devastated large food growing areas in the Adelaide plains;
   b. the Adelaide plains are a major economic driver for South Australia, producing hundreds of millions of dollars of fruit and vegetables each year;
   c. the collective losses sustained by growers have run into tens of millions of dollars; and
   d. many of the producers affected by the floods are family enterprises with limited financial capacity to withstand the losses and damage; and
2. calls on the Government to report back to the House on what assistance measures will be provided to growers seriously affected by the floods.

Last month, food growers in Adelaide's northern plains sustained tens of millions of dollars of losses as a result of flooding after days of consistently heavy rains. The Northern Adelaide Plains are where most of South Australia's vegetable growing industry is located—in the electorate of my friend the member for Wakefield. Each year, some $600 million or thereabouts of vegetables are grown by the families who run the many enterprises there. The number of direct and indirect jobs that are created runs into several thousand. It is a major economic driver for South Australia and it is a sector with very strong potential growth.

Most of the growers are experienced operators who know both their products and their markets. Today, their farms are multimillion-dollar enterprises that families have invested their lives and their savings into. They are also accustomed to the risks that arise, such as fluctuating market demand and uncertain prices; low crop yields; weather damage to crops and property; and increased cost of materials, fertilisers, electricity, transport and other production necessities. These are uncertainties and risks that the growers factor into their livelihood. They contend with them each and every year. It is a different scenario, however, when the damage and the losses caused wipe out entire crops after tens of thousands of dollars have been expended in getting the crop ready for picking. These losses are in addition to the property losses that many of them also incurred at the same time—and that is exactly what happened last month after the extensive flooding.
As family enterprises, many growers are not in a position to withstand those kinds of losses; nor are they in a position to simply shut down and walk away from their farms. Indeed, these are people that have never asked for any help in the past but now they could do with some help. I am aware that at the time of the floods, the South Australian government set up a relief centre at the Virginia Horticulture Centre and some emergency relief financial support was made available, as well as some Recovery Assistance grants of up to $10,000. I commend the South Australian government for doing that but I am also conscious that many of the families were not eligible even for those grants and that support that was made available.

Furthermore, that is not the only support that the badly affected growers need to quickly get them back on their feet. And, indeed, we need to get them quickly back on their feet because it is in everybody's interest—particularly as the region is already reeling from the impending shutdown of Holden. The horticultural sector was seen, and is still seen, as a potential growth industry and an alternative employment sector for those people that may lose their work in the car industry.

There are, however, some specific matters that I want to refer to when I talk about additional government assistance and the government intervention that is required. Firstly, there is direct assistance required by the growers either to clean up the mess or to help reinstate what they had on their properties. Only today, AUSVEG, which represents most of the growers that are in that region, sent me a letter—and I imagine my colleague the member for Wakefield might have got something similar—talking about the needs of the growers and what can be done by government to assist. I will refer to some of the matters in that letter, if time permits.

Secondly, there needs to be a very clear plan and a commitment by all three levels of government to do something about improving the local infrastructure. Engineering works that have been talked about for the last 30 or 40 years—and which have not been carried out—directly contributed to the flooding that occurred. We all know what these engineering works are: increased levy banks, perhaps increasing the height the dam and perhaps clearing out the Gawler River in the lower reaches so that water can flow through them. But we also know that it costs money. None of that work has been done in recent years and, if it were done, it would ensure that the flooding is unlikely to occur in the future.

The third area that the government could help with is to assist growers in growing their businesses. That could be done by extending the Bolivar treated water pipeline further out and providing an additional amount of water to the growers that are there. Labor had committed to doing that in the lead-up to the 2016 election and we had committed $80 million for that purpose.

Those are the kinds of measures that will make a real difference to those growers: direct assistance, fix up the flooding problems in the first place and provide the growers with an opportunity to grow the very businesses that they have invested their life savings in. That is what AUSVEG and other growers have been doing. But we saw the Prime Minister going out there last month, and my question to him is: was it simply a media opportunity or will we see real funds contributed? (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Wicks): Is there a seconder for this motion?
Mr Champion: I second the motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member for Wakefield. Do you reserve your right to speak?

Mr Champion: I do.

Ms FLINT (Boothby) (17:43): The Adelaide Plains horticultural area around Virginia is an important part of South Australia's food bowl. With many hundreds of hectares irrigated, including both open-field and greenhouse crops, the industry is a big employer in Adelaide's north and meets much of the demand for vegetables in South Australia.

The spring flooding that ravaged much of South Australia has had particularly devastating consequences for the horticultural enterprises in the region. Over 1,100 hectares were inundated with over 50 millimetres of rain in the last week of September. This flooding caused losses of between $20 to $30 million for at least 165 local businesses. The estimated loss stands at 8.9 million tonnes of various crops, including potatoes, carrots, cabbages, cauliflowers, broccoli, cucumbers, capsicums and greenhouse tomatoes. Across South Australia, about 300 growers have been affected in some way, accounting for a third of our horticultural industry.

This has been a tough year for growers, businesses and families from around South Australia. For many business owners that I have spoken to, the severe weather and blackout in my home state was merely the straw that has broken the back of hardworking small- and family-business owners. While the flooding was a terrible weather event that has hurt my state's economy, we suffer a far worse scourge than that of the weather: that of our state Weatherill Labor government. Every day, small and family businesses, whether they are on the land or in suburban electorates like mine of Boothby, are lamenting the extraordinary cost of doing business in South Australia. Businesses are incredibly concerned about the price of electricity. In addition to the highest state taxes and charges in Australia, businesses are staring down the barrel of ever-increasing prices on contracts that are shorter than ever to accommodate more price hikes in the future. With the closure of the Hazelwood power station, we are set for further increases.

I would say to my Labor Party colleagues here today speaking on this motion: how do you expect businesses to bounce back from the spring floods when they are taxed and levied to the hilt, when they must pay terribly high WorkCover charges and now, above all else, they are facing incredibly huge rising costs of electricity? Furthermore, this is an electricity supply that might be turned off for hours at a time simply because the state Labor government has failed to maintain vital energy infrastructure and provide secure, reliable and affordable energy.

By contrast, a responsible government creates a good environment for businesses. The Turnbull Liberal government has set about creating an economic landscape where businesses can recover from disasters such as this because the economy is geared towards economic growth and job creation. By contrast, the federal government understood the risks going into this weather event, which is why our response included a number of measures to mitigate the effects of flooding on businesses in the northern plains area and on residents around the state.

My electorate of Boothby was also affected by flooding just prior to the event on the Adelaide plains. I am grateful to the Minister for Justice, who provided prompt financial assistance to local residents and state and local government to assist them in the clean-up
through the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. I cannot imagine the stress these residents were under when we had the Weatherill Labor government’s statewide blackout. My residents were in the dark at the same time as they were anticipating another major flooding event. I pay tribute to the Mitcham council and the SES volunteers who helped prepare residents as well as they could—preparation that, thankfully, was not needed.

I also pay tribute to those who helped out in the north: personnel from the 7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, and the 1st Armoured Regiment and Air Force personnel who assisted local emergency services in the filling and distribution of sandbags, and importantly, reinforced the flood levy at Port Wakefield and Two Wells. In mentioning their efforts, I must commend the 250 ADF members and many more volunteers from the SES and CFS who worked to limit the effects of the flooding on businesses and residents in the north. Finally, I commend the Prime Minister for visiting Virginia on 4 October to witness the impact of the flooding firsthand. As all South Australians know, the Prime Minister and the Liberal government are firmly focused on doing all we can to encourage economic growth, jobs and prosperity in my home state of South Australia, which has suffered so badly under 14 long years of state Labor government mismanagement.

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (17:47): I commend the member for Makin for moving this motion about flooding in the Adelaide plains, because this region contributes greatly to the whole of South Australia. We just heard from the member for Boothby, who paid tribute to the ADF—Army and RAAF—personnel and CFS and SES personnel. We all thank them. But, amongst all of those thankyous to the community, there was this weird sort of partisanship injected into it. I do not want to inject partisanship into this, because the management of this river system has never been partisan. It will affect not just one government, but many governments. It will affect not just one generation of politicians, but many generations of politicians in the decision-making process. Of course, for the people along this river, whether they be in Gawler or Virginia or anywhere else, it does not matter how you vote—water does not respect how you vote, or your partisanship; it floods you regardless of that, and so you look to governments of all persuasions to do the job.

When the Howard government—and Jim Lloyd was the minister at the time—contributed $7.8 million to building the Bruce Eastick dam, a dam named after a conservative icon in Gawler, Mr Bruce Eastick, that was a good thing. When I opened that dam with Patrick Conlon and the councils involved, that was a good thing. This dam has been very useful—I went out and looked at it when the floods were on—for mitigating floods in the past. The tragedy of it is that we know that this system floods, and we know that it costs the community money.

The latest report by the Gawler River Flood Plain Management Authority, in March 2016, recounts that a once-in-a-10-year flood will cost $15 million, a once-in-a-20-year-flood will cost $24 million, a once-in-a-50-year flood will cost $102 million, a once-in-100-year flood will cost $182 million and a once-in-200-year flood will cost $212 million. The annual average damage is $7.4 million and the present value of damage is $109 million. Those costs are there for everyone to see. We know, as the member for Makin pointed out, that putting infrastructure in place can mitigate those costs. We know from this very report, which talks about channel modifications, talks about levies and maps out the costs of those things, we have a preliminary cost to fix this problem.
If we were to enlarge the Bruce Eastick North Para Flood Mitigation Dam, it would cost $40 million. The damage reduction for a 100-year flood will bring it down by $51 million so this mitigation dam could be paid for by the cost of one year's flooding in effect. We know that building strategic levies will cost $19 million but the damage reduction will be $24 million. We know both of those mitigation engineering works have cost benefit ratios of 1.25 for the strategic levies and we know the enlargement of the Bruce Eastick North Para Flood Mitigation Dam would cost $1.3 million. Both of them have good business cases and both of them would not protect all of the horticultural land but they would expect at least protect the townships of Gawler, Two Wells, Virginia and it would protect some of the horticultural land. It would go some way to providing a community response. More work needs to be done down near Virginia on channel modification and the like, and we call on the management authority to look at that seriously because it is worthy of consideration.

We have had the Prime Minister in the electorate and we have had the Leader of the Opposition in the electorate. Both of them have committed rhetorically to flood mitigation works. Rather than having a partisan debate in this chamber, as the member for Boothby wanted to do, we should be having a bipartisan debate about what we will do, what we will build. We can name the infrastructure after conservative politicians. We might name a section or a levy bank after a Labor politician. We might name it all after community members and family members who have done so much work on this flood plain. But we need to get on with building these engineering works that will prevent flooding.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (17:53): I wish to echo the sentiments of my fellow South Australian colleagues, the member for Makin and the member for Wakefield. My electorate of Mayo bore the absolute brunt of the storms that hit South Australia. The devastation was heavy and widespread right across my electorate. Our communities were beset with landslides, fallen power poles and broken powerlines. Homes and businesses were flooded, huge trees were completely uprooted, some hundreds of years old. Retaining walls collapsed, culverts failed, pedestrian bridges were swept away and a great many roads were heavily damaged by serious water erosion.

In the Adelaide Hills, a segment of Montague Road was entirely swept away with conservative estimates putting the cost of fixing just that one section of road at $1.5 million. My local councils do not have the funds, quite simply, to address the scale of the storm damage we have suffered. I continue to work hard and constructively with the federal government and with the state governments to expedite additional assistance for the most affected councils in my electorate.

Viticulturists, fruit growers and farmers have suffered very badly. Cherry growers tell me that they expect a much lower volume of fruit this year because they lost so many cherry blossoms. Cherry blossoms are necessary to grow cherries and, with the destruction of the blossoms, we have lost fruit. Planting has been delayed for other key agricultural products, such as strawberries in Myponga, McLaren Vale and Mt Compass.

We know that our state lost power during the second storm, and sizable parts of my electorate remained without power for several days afterwards. Losing power during the storm also affected our community in many very different personal ways. My office has heard stories of people becoming stuck in disability chair lifters and recliner chairs. Many rural residents that are now on the NBN spoke of not being able to use their MedicAlert devices.
once the power went out. In his responsibilities for the NBN, I urge Minister Fifield to consider the effect the NBN rollout is having on disabled and elderly people, particularly in regional areas, who do not have mobile phone coverage and are thus completely dependent on having a fully functional and connected landline at all times.

As is often in the case of adversity, the many storms and the weather damage that we had brought my community together. I have heard many stories of how the storms brought us together and I helped with the sandbagging in Mt Torrens. We filled hundreds of sandbags together in the rain and the mud. It was a very trying and hard day, but we worked together as a community. Once the storms had passed, neighbours checked on each other to make sure they were alright.

I must say though, that after the storms had passed, the road damage was still there. Part of the reason that our roads were so badly damaged is that South Australian roads do not get nearly enough funding compared to the rest of the country. We have 11 per cent of the nation's roads and seven per cent of the population but we still receive less than five per cent of the federal funds towards land transport infrastructure projects and, in 2014, we lost the supplementary local road funds, which made it so difficult and continues to make it so difficult in efforts for recovery.

We are now rapidly entering our bushfire season, with predictions of a very dry summer for South Australia. In my electorate, we are particularly vulnerable. We were already hit hard just a couple of years ago in the Sampson Flat bushfires, and everybody remembers South Australia's Ash Wednesday.

I again urge the government to review their funding model for South Australia's roads, and I request that they reinstate supplementary road funding to make it fairer for South Australia. We need to have access for our roads. I am not being melodramatic when I say that many lives hang in the balance from the government's decision.

In closing, Mayo and South Australia have been hit hard by the recent floods and storms. We have lost produce, crops have been damaged, roads have been washed away and magnificent trees have been uprooted. We will endure, as we always have in times of adversity; however, I implore the government to do all it can to support my region and our state to heal from these recent emergencies and trying times.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Wicks): There being no further speakers on this motion, the debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

**Palm Oil**

**Mr WOOD** (La Trobe) (17:58): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) that palm oil, because of its low cost, is a common ingredient in many packaged foods, often supplementing vegetable oil; and

(b) the misleading labelling of palm oil in Australian products, often labelled as vegetable oil, with 50 per cent of products sold in supermarkets containing palm oil;

(2) further notes that palm oil has high levels of saturated fat with over 50 per cent of its composition being saturated fat, which is very dangerous to consumers with heart or other conditions;
(3) recognises the damage to the environment and endangered animals as a result of mass deforestation in Malaysia and Indonesia which has led to the exponential threat of extinction to animals such as orangutans, tigers, elephants and rhinoceroses, all of which are already critically endangered; and

(4) calls on the Government to change the labelling laws on products sold in Australia to require products to clearly state when they contain palm oil.

Australians regularly indicate a desire for better food labelling standards. That is what Australians want, and I stand here today to support the call for clear and transparent labelling on products containing palm oil. This call is for both health and environmental factors.

Palm oil is made up of 50 per cent saturated fat, which can affect cholesterol levels. Saturated fat is a major cause of coronary heart disease in Australia. Palm oil is potentially harmful to everyday consumers, as it is used in approximately 40 per cent of our food products. Everyday Australians buying from supermarkets would not be aware of this. It has been reported by the National Heart Foundation that every 23 minutes an Australian dies from heart disease in Australia. Palm oil is often listed as vegetable oil and also disguises itself under over 200 alternative names in food packaging. I will say that again: 200 alternative names.

It is time to tighten labelling laws to inform the consumer clearly about what is in the food that they are consuming. Palm oil is popular with food manufacturers because it is cheap compared to other oil options and, unlike other crops, only requires less than half the land to produce the same amount of oil. I am calling on all governments to change the labelling laws of products sold in Australia to ensure that they clearly state when they contain palm oil. This is to ensure that consumers have the ability to make informed choices on food and goods they are purchasing, consuming and feeding their children.

It is important to also note where the palm oil comes from. Palm oil comes from the palm fruit. During its harvesting, it produces immense quantities of smoke into the atmosphere, contributing significantly to climate change and greenhouse gas emissions. The United Nations Environmental Program reported that palm oil is a major driver of deforestation in Borneo and Sumatra. In Malaysia and Indonesia, there has been mass deforestation, which has led to the threat of animals such as the orangutan and other critically endangered species, including tigers, elephants and rhinoceroses. Palm oil production is a major issue contributing to deforestation and habit degrading through logging. According to the World Wildlife Fund, an area the equivalent size of 300 football fields of rainforest is cleared each hour to make way for palm oil production. Two orangutans die per day because of this deforestation to make way for palm oil plantations.

As a nation we need to join the ranks of the EU and America and ensure that mandatory labelling of palm oil made and sold in Australia. There is strong public interest in mandatory labelling of food and other products which contain palm oil. I thank the former Labor member for Wills, Kelvin Thompson, for his invitation to Melbourne Zoo, where I was briefed on the Don't Palm Us Off campaign, which has received 160,000 signatures on their petition. I congratulate Zoos Victoria CEO Jennie Gray; Director of Wildlife Conservation Science, Rachel Lowry; General Manager, Jacque O'Brien; Primate Keeper Fleur Butcher, who travels overseas each year to help the orangutans; and campaign ambassador Kelvin Thompson. Ministers from across this country will be meeting on 25 November at the Australia and New
Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulations, and I urge ministers to collectively agree on changing food labels in Australia.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hastie):** Is there a seconder for the motion?

**Mr Van Manen:** I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

**Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (18:03):** The motion addresses two issues. The first is the matter of clear food labelling—a matter which I have had a longstanding interest in. The second is the preservation of tropical wildlife, which in so many cases and in so many parts of the world is increasingly under threat of extinction—again, a matter that I have talked about in this place on other occasions. Both are important matters and need to be addressed. Perhaps we should have focused on one at a time so that we could have spent more time talking about each one individually but, nevertheless, I am happy to speak on this motion.

Some years ago—in fact, in 2009—there was an inquiry into food labelling in this country, led by Dr Neal Blewett, and it handed down its findings in 2011. There were some 61 recommendations from that inquiry, and one of them specifically talked about some of the labelling issues that are relevant to this motion.

I not only looked at that inquiry, at the time—and, perhaps, agitated for it—but also was part of a House committee that looked at the country-of-origin food labelling issue only a couple of years ago. So I am well aware of the difficulties associated with changing the labelling scheme in this country, the resistance that would be met if you tried to go too far and, in some cases, the legitimacy of that resistance. But I am also aware that it has been done better in other countries. If we can take a leaf out of what has happened in other countries, in making labelling a lot clearer, in respect to the nutritional value of the foods that are being consumed, that will make an immense difference to the health outcomes of people in this country. Clearer labelling is one of the things that is very much in demand when you speak to consumers out there.

As the member for La Trobe quite rightly pointed out, there is a direct link between good nutrition and health outcomes. Not surprisingly, a poll conducted by UMR Research indicates that 84 per cent of Australians support a change to the labelling structures that we have in this country. In particular, when I look at the Labelling Logic review of Dr Neal Blewett, recommendation 12 states:

That where sugars, fats or vegetable oils are added as separate ingredients in a food, the terms ‘added sugars’ and ‘added fats’ and/or ‘added vegetable oils’ be used in the ingredient list as the generic term, followed by a bracketed list …

of added sugars, added fats or added vegetable oils. The bracketed list would identify the specific ingredient added. And that is what is important, from a health point of view. Indeed, I have just met with some people in respect to allergies, and they will need to know if they might have an allergy to a particular food.

It seems that years later many of the recommendations from that initial Blewett inquiry are still to be fully implemented. Yet we know that in Australia over 60 per cent of the population are overweight and around a quarter of the population are obese. So there are some direct costs associated with good nutritional advice that arises when you have much better labelling. There have even been discussions in this place and overseas about adding a sugar tax to products that have a high sugar level within them, in order to try and reduce sugar...
consumption for the very same countries. Again, I note that other countries have been able to make some progress.

One of the concerns I have about all of the food labelling issues that we deal with under the FSANZ process—a process whereby we have the six states and two territories of Australia, and New Zealand—is all having to come to an agreement, a consensus. It is a cumbersome process. Perhaps it is time, if nothing else, we looked at that structure so that we can make the process much easier when it comes to doing what we know and what everyone else knows is common sense.

The last point I want to touch on, very briefly, and the member for La Trobe touched on it, is one of the issues associated with forest clearing in the tropics: the issue of pollution. I have seen it first-hand. It lasts, at times, for months at a time and is something that nobody should be subjected to, particularly those countries that surround the areas where the burning is taking place. They have to endure it for weeks and months at a time, at the expense of their health.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Government Whip) (18:08): I would like to start by thanking the member for La Trobe for bringing this issue and highlighting the issue of palm oil labelling and the impact of palm oil cultivation on the environment and local communities. Palm oil is a low-cost and versatile oil, which is increasingly being used by the processed food manufacturing sector. We find it in about half of all packaged products in our supermarkets. It is so widely used now that it accounts for 65 per cent of the global trade in vegetable oils. It is attractive because it is relatively cheap. It is also, as the member for La Trobe has touched on, a high-yielding crop, needing less than half the land required by other crops to produce the same amount of oil. It is also extremely versatile, in that it maintains its properties even when cooked under high temperatures. The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil go into that in quite some detail in a recent article on their website, which talks about its cooking properties, its texture, its preservative effects and also the yield from production.

Here in Australia we do not produce a whole lot of palm oil; it is mainly done by small producers and is certainly quite insignificant compared with the levels of production in countries like India, Indonesia and Malaysia. Palm oil is used in a wide range of products that we see daily on our local supermarket shelves—including ice cream, chocolate, soaps and cosmetics—but, as the member for La Trobe has rightly pointed out, many of us would be unaware of this, as it is often labelled as vegetable oil.

In 2015 Australia imported around $100 million worth of palm oil for use in our processed food sector. Under current regulations palm oil can be labelled using generic terms such as 'vegetable oil'; however, food manufacturers can voluntarily label it as palm oil or as ‘uses sustainably-sourced palm oil’. Regulations do, however, require the declaration of certain nutrients in the nutrient information panel on food labels, including saturated fat. The total amount of saturated fat from all the ingredients in a food—including palm oil, if it is used—must be declared. Using the nutritional information panel can help consumers to make healthier food choices. FSANZ has previously rejected an application for mandatory ingredient labelling of palm oil when used in food products because the application was about environmental, not health, concerns.

Many food manufacturers are voluntarily labelling their products and some companies are members of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, which promotes the supply of palm oil.
sourced from ecofriendly areas. The government review of food-labelling law and policy in 2011, as the previous speaker touched on, recommended that where fats and vegetable oils are added as separate ingredients in a food, it be followed by a bracketed list of the added fats or added vegetable oils. The government response to the recommendation was that FSANZ would undertake a technical evaluation and provide advice on the proposed changes. The latest update is that FSANZ is progressing work on the technical evaluation and expects to provide further advice in late 2016.

In the remaining time I wish to touch on some of the economic and environmental aspects of palm oil production. We know that in some regions palm oil cultivation has caused, and continues to cause, deforestation, and pollution has also been touched on. This is on land that was once predominantly covered by primary forest and, as the member for La Trobe has touched on, the consequence of this is leading to an increased threat of extinction to a wide variety of animals, including orangutans, tigers, elephants and rhinoceros, as well as plant species. However, the notion that we simply replace palm oil with other oils does not withstand scrutiny when all the facts are considered. As the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil observes, palm oil plays an important role in the reduction of poverty for many in the developing world.

Mr FEENEY (Batman) (18:13): Can I extend my thanks and congratulations to the member for La Trobe for bringing forward this motion, and can I acknowledge the work of the former Labor member for Wills, Kelvin Thomson, who has been a stalwart advocate for the appropriate labelling of palm oil.

Like my colleagues, I rise today to call on the government to amend food-labelling laws for products sold in Australia, to ensure products clearly state when they contain palm oil. Palm oil finds its way into around 50 per cent of the items we buy at the supermarket. However, the vast majority of Australians do not know they are purchasing items containing palm oil, because of misleading labelling—in many instances it is generically labelled as vegetable oil. Clear and accurate labelling of products is in line with the community’s desire to make informed choices when it comes to the products they buy.

Palm oil production can have serious environmental impacts. This is particularly the case in South-East Asia where palm oil production has expanded exponentially and, for the most part, in a way that is unsustainable. Palm oil production has led to widespread deforestation in Malaysia and Indonesia, putting already endangered species like orangutans, tigers and elephants in further danger of extinction. Orangutans in particular have been disappearing at a shocking rate as a result of deforestation. Palm oil production currently contributes to the death of around 1,000 orangutans each and every year. I know that I and many in my electorate would like to be able to make an informed, ethical choice when it comes to environmentally unsuitable products. Clear labelling of palm oil will allow consumers to use their buying power to advocate for sustainable practices.

Palm oil consumption also has significant health implications. Palm oil is made up of over 50 per cent saturated fat and can be found in around 40 per cent of our food products. Added fats, sugars and vegetable oils cause significant health risks when consumed in excess. They can lead to health problems such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease and even some cancers. Saturated fats are a major cause of coronary heart disease, and we know that Australians already consume about twice the amount of saturated fat that they should. We all know that
We need to limit our intake of certain fats and sugars, but how can we do that effectively if we do not know what kinds of sugars, fats and oils are in the food we eat? To make informed decisions, we need clear information on food labels. Whether it is a nutritional decision or an ethical one, Australians deserve to know whether palm oil is contained in the products they buy.

Action on this issue began all the way back in 2009 when it was agreed by Australia and New Zealand to undertake a comprehensive review of food-labelling laws and policies. The resulting report, *Labelling Logic*, recommended that added sugars, fats and vegetable oils must be clearly labelled. That report is now some five years ago. Tens of thousands of Australians have spoken out against unsustainable palm oil production through petitions, polls and campaigns like Zoos Victoria’s Don’t Palm Us Off. The government must act in line with community expectations and implement the *Labelling Logic* recommendation as a matter of urgency. The government must act to ensure that palm oil is clearly and accurately labelled on our food and other products. Through proper labelling we can begin to make healthier and more environmentally friendly choices. This is a win-win proposition: good for the environment, good for consumers and good for the health of Australians. On that basis, it requires action from this parliament.

Ms KEAY (Braddon) (18:17): I thank the member for La Trobe for bringing this motion to the parliament today into this chamber to debate. The motion calls for a change, so that we have palm oil being labelled on products—noting that labelling is currently misleading; that palm oil contains 50 per cent of saturated fats which is dangerous to consumers with heart and other conditions; and the environmental damage and loss of habitat for threatened species.

The United Nations Environment Program identified that palm plantations are a problem because of deforestation of rainforests and loss of habitats, which is the greatest threat to the orangutan. Such transformation of land has led to increases in greenhouse gas emissions and threats to biodiversity. Palm oil is the most produced and traded oil. It employs about six million people globally and has been a key factor in moving many communities out of poverty. We have seen a rapid rate of growth in South-East Asia, Malaysia and Indonesia, producing around 85 per cent of the world's palm oil.

Labelling that informs people of what they are eating and where food comes from is a policy that Labor supports. It is important for health reasons that people know what types of oils they are eating. As we know, palm oil has high levels of saturated fats, which is a cause of cardiovascular disease, and contains palmitic acid, which is a chief constituent of palm oil that affect insulin and leptin regulation of glucose and appetite. At the moment, consumers cannot identify what type of oil they are consuming, because the oils are genetically listed on labelling. To understand what is on a written label and, I guess, to support this motion, it is important for people to have a higher level of health literacy to make an informed choice, particularly if health is a key driver of consumer choice. I think it is very critical that, whilst we are looking at changing labelling, we need to place a bit more emphasis on preventative health to educate people on such matters.

The environmental issues are of a great concern to the industry. Through consumer choice and pressure placed on multinational manufacturers, they should be demanding a more sustainable source of palm oil. But what this motion does not highlight is that there are significant labour issues within this industry: child labour; low wages; abuse of migrant labour from countries such as Nepal, the Philippines and Bangladesh; debt bondage; labour
trafficking; tens of thousands—if not more—stateless children of parents working in the plantations; and violations to human rights. Yet this industry provides significant economic support for communities in Malaysia and Indonesia, employing around 3½ million people, so much so that that has been a driver of people coming out of poverty.

Much has been done to address these issues. What has been mentioned is the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil certification system that assists in identifying palm oil that has been sustainably harvested, and also work in the area around labour, with Free and Fair Labor in Palm Oil Production: Principles and Implementation Guidance released to inform the minimum standards for plantations. What has previously been mentioned by other speakers is the Blewett report, and I think that highlighted the need for much broader labelling around oils and sugars. I think it is very prudent that recommendation 12 out of that review, which the ministerial forum will be looking at at the end of this month, is actually supported, and I do hope that is the case.

Previous attempts by private members’ bills looking at changing labelling to address palm oil have failed. They have failed because they have looked outside the process, which is that the states and territories are the bodies that are responsible for the regulation and enforcement of food labelling. They have failed for a number of reasons around the cost to business. In fact, it is quite ironic that the Abbott opposition at the time actually supported the bill, which would have cost Australian businesses $150 million to implement the changes. Not only that; there are our obligations under the World Trade Organisation, so we need to be very mindful of what we do with that. The regulatory system in place with the states and territories is a way forward, and I do hope that those ministers meeting at the end of the month do support recommendation 12.

But will that change deforestation? Probably not. Will it lead to better health outcomes? Maybe so. I think the key message, though, is that this government has not put a lot of emphasis on prevention measures for health. If you do not have a high level of health literacy, it does not matter what labelling is there. We need to ensure that those programs are funded, that those that have poor health outcomes do have a higher level of health literacy and do gain out of— (Time expired)

Debate adjourned.

### Housing Affordability

#### Homelessness

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) having safe and affordable housing is a basic human right and the absence of which has a huge human, social and economic cost;

(b) housing stress and homelessness are serious issues in Australia—first-home buyers are having difficulty entering the market, rental affordability in cities is at a crisis point, waiting lists for social housing continue to grow, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are disproportionately represented in homelessness and housing stress and there are rising levels of homelessness with 105,000 people designated as homeless on any given night; and
(c) there are often complex social, financial and medical issues that cause housing stress and homelessness that are beyond an individual's direct control; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

(a) appoint a Minister for Housing and Homelessness to provide the necessary focus and leadership required to address the housing issues being experienced in Australia; and

(b) develop and implement a national housing strategy to ensure a sufficient, modern and equitable housing system for all Australians.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (18:23): Before I start, I would like to acknowledge and thank the member for Newcastle for putting up this motion. It is a very important issue that we do need to discuss and we do need to dwell upon. It is incredibly complex, and there is no silver bullet, but we do need to be having a national conversation about this. Most importantly, we need to have a minister who is actually initiating that conversation.

I remember the day I was elected as the member for Canberra in 2010—it feels like 1910! It was a tremendously exciting day, and I was eager to throw myself into everything. My mind was racing with the potential and the possibilities, and there was so much to do. I needed staff; I needed to prepare my first speech and I needed to call the volunteers who got me over the line. I got the keys to the office and I went to work transforming the office from a storage space that had been used for so much to a meeting space. It was where I was, standing alone amongst the cardboard boxes, having just got the keys to the place, when the office phone rang and I picked it up. A woman was on the other end. She told me her name and that she was a constituent and she did not know what to do. She had fled a relationship that had turned violent, but with teenage kids—one of them a boy—she was having a hard time finding women's refuges able to take them in because, at that stage in Canberra, women's refuges did not take boys. She was running out of options. She had been sleeping in her car with her kids, who were going to school. They were sleeping in the car at night and going to school the next day. She told me it was getting harder and harder to manage and she did not know if I could help. She told me she was trying everything she could do. She said it was draining, because not only was she homeless and sleeping rough in the car, having survived an abusive relationship; she was also sick. She was undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer.

That was the very first call I received in my electorate office as a new MP and it completely floored me. That call took me by the nose and pressed it firmly to the grindstone. Everything else fell away, because I had a job to do, and right then she needed me to do it. Around 2,000 Canberrans slept rough last night. The ACT has the highest rate of homelessness in the country after the Northern Territory—and you can imagine what it is like in a Canberra winter. I have received many calls just like that first one. The reason may differ every time, although quite often, when it comes to women, it has a lot to do with domestic violence. But the need remains consistent: it is the need for a roof over one's head. Australia should be able to provide that. It is a basic human right that we as a nation are failing to provide. When we fail, we fail women most of all.

Homelessness comes in waves, and the research on the next wave is clear. The next wave will be disproportionately made up of older women. A recent report by the Equality Rights Alliance called for urgent action to reinforce the safety nets, if we are to prevent poverty and homelessness for the current cohort of single older women. ACT Shelter estimates there are
more than 11,000 women and 7,000 men over the age of 45 at risk of homelessness. What we do here in this building makes a profound difference to what happens to those men and women. We can either smother the wave or sit and wait for the tsunami.

From time to time, I recall that first call because it reminds me what government is capable of doing and what we as MPs, as senators, are capable of doing. We should never forget the power of government to transform people's lives. In government, Labor invested almost $5 billion in new funding for support services and programs to assist people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. We invested $5.6 billion in social housing—the single-largest investment in social housing in Australia's history. Today, this massive investment is providing 31,000 affordable homes to those who need them most, particularly here in Canberra.

The mother whose call I took now has a home. She works just around the corner from my electorate office in Canberra. Her cancer is in remission, her kids are excelling and they are now at university. She is a reminder that safe and affordable housing changes lives, but only if it is available. Addressing our housing issues will require focus and consistent leadership. It is why the motion calls for the appointment of a dedicated minister for housing and homelessness. It is why the motion calls for the development and implementation of a national housing strategy. People are depending on the government to really start doing its job. Things will not get better by being ignored.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Government Whip) (18:28): This is an issue that is relevant to many of us in many of our electorates. I thank the member opposite for bringing the matter to the chamber's attention. I know the member for Canberra in her contribution has touched on matters affecting local constituents. I have certainly had similar discussions in my electorate of Forde. But, as usual, Labor like to tell a story that does not necessarily bear out the reality or the facts. If we look at the history of this, whilst Labor put an enormous amount of money into the National Rental Affordability Scheme, as usual with most Labor programs, the ANAO report identified that it was slow in delivery and failed to meet its delivery targets despite ongoing government funding.

Mr Dick: So you've cut it altogether, then.

Mr VAN MANEN: Let the member opposite get a bit of a history lesson on what the government is actually doing. The member opposite talks about funding. It was a Labor government that actually failed to fund homelessness funding after the end of the previous financial year. There was not a single dollar of funding provided after 30 June 2014 by the previous Labor government for national partnership housing funding.

Let us get a few facts on the table. This financial year the coalition government will directly contribute $6.4 billion to improve housing outcomes. That includes some $1.3 billion to the states and territories through the National Affordable Housing Agreement for housing assistance and homelessness, $4.38 billion in Commonwealth rent assistance to support more than 1.3 million individuals and families renting in the private and community housing market, $257 million in financial incentives through a national rental affordability scheme for the construction and rental of dwellings for low- and moderate-income households and some $428 million to assist Indigenous housing outcomes through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing. The coalition government understands that we
need a long-term systematic effort to address homelessness and housing affordability. In fact, I was discussing the matter with the Treasurer earlier today.

The government has restored funding for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, providing some $230 million over two years from 1 July 2015, which will be matched by the states to fund frontline homelessness services which were left unfunded by those opposite. Under the 2015 to 2017 National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, priority has been given to services focusing on women and children experiencing domestic violence and on homeless youth. We know that among the most common factors leading to homelessness, particularly for women and children are issues to do with domestic violence. The member for Canberra touched on that in her contribution and the Salvation Army has spoken about it in its reports. There are almost 450 homelessness service providers delivering some 775 homelessness services around Australia.

The coalition has also finalised a number of initiatives to encourage new and innovative solutions to provide housing for people with disability. In 2015, the coalition finalised a specialist disability accommodation pricing framework. We are also allocating $10 million towards that initiative, to encourage the completion of housing projects for people with disability outside of NDIS trial sites. In February this year, the coalition established the Affordable Housing Working Group to investigate ways to boost the supply of affordable rental housing through innovative finance models. The working group received some 77 submissions, which are currently being evaluated, with the final report to include recommendations for possible trials and the next steps. The working group will canvass a range of innovative ways to increase investment in affordable housing. In addition, the government committed in the 2016-17 budget to implement a compulsory rent deduction scheme for social housing recipients. (Time expired)

Mr DICK (Oxley) (18:33): I rise to speak wholeheartedly in favour of the motion on safe and affordable housing that is before the House today. I commend my friend the member for Newcastle as someone who has a long and abiding interest in those suffering homelessness and who is also a progressive, speaking out for those who need it the most. We on this side of the chamber are not afraid to speak on behalf of our record, because we on this side of the chamber have a proud record. Labor has a proud record of not only talking the talk but delivering when it comes to housing affordability and homelessness. We know that this nation is in the grip of a national housing crisis. On any given night, 105,000 Australians, including around 705 in my electorate of Oxley, are without a home.

We hear a lot of platitudes from those opposite, and we just heard from the member for Forde. I give it to the member for Forde: when, in August 2014, we had that disgraceful attack from the former Treasurer Joe Hockey, who said that people on low incomes either do not drive cars or do not drive very far—that was the beginning of the 'lifters and leaners' attacks on poor and working people—the member for Forde was appalled by those comments, just as most Australians would have been. We have a Treasurer of the nation who thinks that, to get into the housing market, you need rich parents. We have a government with the wrong priorities when it comes to delivering housing affordability and homeless services in this nation. What we heard from the contribution by the member opposite was that we do not have a minister for housing and homelessness. The government shut down the National Rental Affordability Scheme. They abolished the National Housing Supply Council. They abolished
the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness. They cut funding to Homelessness Australia, cut funding to National Shelter, cut funding to the Community Housing Federation of Australia and cut $88 million from the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. Ministers from around the nation met on Friday, and yet no commitment was given to increasing funding and no commitment was given to the funding arrangements needed to deliver outcomes for those most vulnerable in our community. There was also a cut of $26.8 million from the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing. Those opposite have suspended the housing affordability inquiry. They have failed to commit to provide funding to the NPAH beyond June 2017, placing at risk crisis accommodation, assistance with long-term housing needs and early intervention programs.

When you look at Labor's record, you see that we make housing a priority. We set the target to halve homelessness by 2025. We know that reforming the tax treatment of rental properties to inject fairness into the property market—limiting negative gearing to new property—will provide incentives for new constructions and add thousands of jobs to the construction industry. On this side of the House we have a genuine commitment to dealing with the long-term housing issues in this nation. In my home state, the Palaszczuk Labor government was forced to deal with some of the cruelest cuts that we saw from the previous Newman government—that toxic experiment that failed the people of Queensland. In my electorate, in working-class suburbs like Inala, we saw some of the cruelest cuts that I have seen in my 25 years in politics, from the LNP government. In the term of the last government, we saw cuts to 23 organisations that provide tenancy advice and advocacy services to 100,000 Queenslanders. Thank goodness those days are behind us in Queensland. The Palaszczuk Labor government is now reversing those trends and making sure that we are seeing $152.6 million invested in specialist homelessness services. I am proud to see a $100 million investment in new government-led housing construction, something that was abolished and cut by the previous Newman government. We on this side of the House know that only a federal Labor government, working hand in glove with state Labor governments, will provide long-term housing for those who need it. We have seen it time and time again. I remind this chamber that over 105,000 Australians will be without a home tonight. My hope is that this government will start investing in real housing solutions for those who need it the most.

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa) (18:38): I thank the honourable member for bringing this motion to the parliament. As we all know, homelessness is a serious issue and one that, quite frankly, should not be politicised in any way, shape or form. Homelessness is not only about supply; it is also about issues around mental illness and drug dependency. Homelessness should not be conflated with housing affordability. They are two separate issues. I am proud of our government, which has actually tackled mental illness. We have only recently invested another $192 million into mental health programs right across this country, to ensure that we tackle the scourge that has embraced many parts of our country, along with drug addiction, particularly the scourge of ice. We have invested $300 million to tackle ice and the scourge that it brings not only to metropolitan areas but also to electorates like Maranoa, where we have small communities that have been decimated by ice. In my own electorate, our coalition government has put nearly $9 million into the Primary Health Network that will ensure that those programs are run at a local level to make a real impact on people who have that addiction.
Let's not just look at the mental health than the drug addiction issues. Let's look at the affordability issues and responsibility. Affordability is squarely and wholly a state and local government responsibility. They are the ones that can unlock the tenure of parts of the country to allow more supply to reduce the costs of developers going out and developing more land in order to reduce the cost of land in our metropolitan areas, and they can reduce the red tape and reduce the stamp duty. Our big metropolitan areas like Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne have high-density building infrastructure.

The big issue comes back to our good friends over the road here, the CFMEU. The costs are inhibitive because the CFMEU adds costs to the construction of any high-density building. The reality is it is the CFMEU that adds this value. It is the CFMEU, but, lo and behold, the Labor Party is there continually taking the money. The CFMEU are always out there adding to the costs and that is the problem we have in cities.

An honourable member interjecting—

A government member: You should be ashamed.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I am not ashamed. In metropolitan areas where there is a big demand for housing, the problem is the CFMEU is driving up the costs so that people cannot afford to buy houses. That is the blindness of the ALP. They are unable to understand the reality of economics—101 of economics. In my electorate of Maranoa, we are fortunate not have the scourge of the CFMEU impacting the price of construction. I am fortunate that our government is investing in the key economic levers that are actually creating jobs and growth.

Telecommunication connectivity creates wealth in my electorate with the NBN to 68,000 households and premises. It actually creates jobs and allows us to take advantage of the free trade agreements that our government has created with China, South Korea and Japan. We are putting real wealth and jobs in communities like Roma and Dalby and Chinchilla because we are putting money in people's pockets and that allows them to create jobs.

We actually have an oversupply of housing in my electorate. We in the government are creating wealth and creating jobs that allow people to decentralise away from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Those people on the other side would not know what it would be like to be west of the great divide. They would not know where the Great Dividing Range is, to be honest, so they would not know what happens out there because their emphasis is on what happens in metropolitan areas where they can help their mates in the CFMEU. Their mates in the CFMEU continue to make more money and continue to support the Labor Party.

It is about connectivity and about creating opportunities for people to decentralise out of metropolitan areas to create jobs and to create real growth. That is what happens. It is not just about creating more big government; it is about creating opportunity and that is where Labor fails to understand. Those opposite create big government, create big infrastructure around government that over holds people and they actually ensure that they create nothing other than big government. The reality is we need as a government to pull the economic levers to create jobs and growth and that is what this government is doing. I am proud to be part of this government.

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (18:44): I commend the motion moved by the member for Newcastle even though I think it is exceptionally mean of the member to advance the proposition that this government have a minister for housing and homelessness. Clearly that
would involve someone in the Turnbull government taking a lead on housing policy and presumably responsibility for it—something that has been anathema to them so far. Does the honourable member for Newcastle not realise that, in the words of Yes Minister, this is an area in which the government would rather hope to have a policy of not having a policy. Instead, I understand, they prefer to cast themselves as independent commentators making sage remarks at industry conferences on the problems of the housing market, the causes of the budget deficit and the distorting effects of capital gains tax and negative gearing—as if it was all so very, very sad but really nothing to do with them.

Having a minister would have the entirely undesirable effect, from the standpoint of this government, of making someone accountable for what was going on. Who knows—that might even lead to the whole government finding itself collectively held to account. As recorded by Peter van Onselen and Wayne Errington in The Turnbull Gamble—an excellent read—the last time the Prime Minister and the Treasurer had some modest thoughts about tackling the excesses of negative gearing and capital gains tax, they took them to cabinet and got told by the 'internal government in exile' to get a grip and stop messing about so they can keep their hands clean for attacking Labor's ideas.

I am reminded also that the member for Bennelong—by all accounts, a decent, hardworking and intelligent young man—had spoken previously in this debate, suggesting that he would like to see incremental change and not anything radical. This government, of course, to date, has not even been up to that. In fact, even the idea of incremental change has seemed so radical to this government that it eased the honourable member from the chair of the economics committee's housing inquiry in 2015 when it became all too apparent that he had the unnerving habit of telling the truth about housing affordability. Of course, now economic commentators and many of us here are wondering just why the Alexander inquiry on housing has not been reactivated to complete its work in the 45th Parliament. In any event, he may well have left it too late for the sort of exclusively incremental approach that the member for Bennelong and the temperate types on all sides would prefer.

Tinkering with a few state planning laws, like the members opposite want, will not be enough. Assuming we all live long enough to see that happen, the $11 billion hole punched in the Commonwealth budget by the combined effects of negative gearing, capital gains tax and other depreciation concessions does not allow the luxury of these short-term solutions. Nor should we continue to tolerate a housing market which excludes about half of those under 45 from homeownership, leaves one in 200 Australians homeless and parks 200,000 households on the waiting list for social housing.

The percentage of Australians owning or on the way to owning their own dwelling is continuing to slip—now down to 67 per cent of all Australians, compared to 75 per cent a few years ago. The proportion of Australians aged 34 and below who own a home is down by a quarter in the last decade and there are similar statistics for those 35 to 44. Older women have now become the fastest growing group of homeless people in Australia. Mortgage arrears are at record level, despite record-low interest rates.

We now, too, have the perverse situation, in parts of Australia, where tens of thousands of people are homeless or on waiting lists, while the tax laws encourage overinvestment in lots of flats and units which are then left vacant—and policy settings make it profitable for them to be so. The so-called ghost house phenomenon—well recognised in other countries such as
Singapore and Canada—is becoming a major problem in our major cities, in spite of what our opponents are saying about the building industry. We still, too, have inefficient state stamp duty regimes that stop many people making appropriate housing choices.

Governments on both sides, for the most part, saw housing in the same way that Labor sees education: as an investment and a resource that would allow all Australians to build a better life and therefore a fair society. Labor's election platform in 2016 gave the government the political cover to make the changes the country needs. It should take advantage of the opportunity and make a start. Leaving a giant hole in the Commonwealth budget necessarily depletes the Commonwealth's capacity to help those struggling to get a toehold in the housing market.

Average national income per head is four times higher now than it was in the time when Menzies left office, but, in 50 years, there are fewer and fewer people able to afford their own home.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hastie): The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Gambling Advertising

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (18:49): I move:

That this House:
(1) notes that:
(a) more than $800 million was lost by Australians on legal sports betting in 2014-15, an increase of more than 30 per cent from 2013-14;
(b) while some restrictions on gambling advertising exist, there is an exemption that allows gambling advertising during televised sporting events at children's viewing times; and
(c) research shows that children are especially susceptible to such advertising;
(2) recognises the pressing need to act to reduce the level of gambling advertising, particularly during children's viewing times;
(3) calls on the Government to amend the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 to ban gambling advertising during sporting broadcasts; and
(4) further notes community concern about the recent increased level of gambling advertising on the SBS, and calls on the Minister for Communications to issue a directive under section 11 of the Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991 to limit the amount of such advertising.

In essence, this motion calls on the government to act on sports betting advertising and, in particular, for the implementation of a ban on gambling advertising during sports broadcasts in children's viewing times on commercial television as well as on the SBS. It also recognises the increasingly large sums of money being lost on sports betting and acknowledges that the current revelatory framework is inadequate.

This is a very important issue, and one that a great many people have contacted me about over the six years I have been a member of parliament and an advocate for gambling reform. It is also an easy issue to fix, because the change to legislation required is simple and would no doubt attract significant community support. It is also a good start if the government genuinely wants to start getting serious about gambling reform—and get serious it must. Not least because the latest set of Australian gambling statistics show that in the 2014-15 financial year some $814 million was lost by Australians on legal sports betting. This might seem like a
drop in the ocean when you consider that nearly $23 billion was lost on gambling in general—half of which was on poker machines—but this $814 million is in fact a serious issue in its own right when you also consider that it is the fastest growing area of gambling losses, and up by a staggering 30 per cent in just 12 months. Indeed, if sports betting keeps growing at this rate, and there is no evidence to suggest that it will not, then gamblers will be losing more than $1 billion in this year alone.

I am not suggesting we should ban sports betting or sports betting ads, but what we must do is put in place measures that limit the harm it causes. Heavens, surely it is common sense that if a product is harmful, then the government should step in and regulate it? One key problem with sports betting is, of course, the saturation of advertising—and I am sure anyone who has ever watched a sports broadcast on commercial TV knows exactly what I am talking about. You just cannot escape it and, if the feedback to my office is anything to go by, the community is well and truly over it. They just want to be able to watch the footy or the cricket in peace.

Yes, there are some restrictions in place about when these ads can be broadcast, and the Free TV Australia commercial television code of practice says that gambling advertising cannot be shown during G-rated programs broadcast between 6 am and 8.30 am or between 4 pm and 7 pm. But immediately below that clause is a great big loophole, which says that this restriction does not apply during sports broadcasts. In other words: there is nothing whatsoever stopping or limiting betting ads during sports broadcasts themselves, and the sports section of news broadcasts for that matter, when children are watching.

As a father of two young daughters, I well understand the community concern about the impact of all of this on children. Clearly the restrictions during G-rated periods are designed to protect children from inappropriate advertising, which is why the exemptions for sports are so nonsensical. That is the time not only when children are watching but also when they are watching their sporting heroes in particular.Crikey, we know that children are especially susceptible to advertising and to hero worship, and that gambling advertising has a real and measurable impact on the children who are subject to it. For example, a Deakin University study just this year showed that three-quarters of children surveyed could recall at least one sports betting brand, and one-quarter of children could identify four or more brands. The study also showed that children as young as eight could recall things like 'bonus bets' and 'cashback refunds' after watching sports broadcasts. No wonder there is a real concern, backed up by evidence, that the proliferation of gambling advertising during sport is normalising gambling for children.

The solution is simple: what the government should do is amend the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 to explicitly ban gambling advertising during all children's viewing times, including sports broadcasts. This is not my idea; this is what gambling reform advocates have been calling on for years. It is what the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform recommended in the 43rd Parliament. It simply should not be left up to the commercial TV industry to self-regulate. Moreover, not only do we know that self-regulation does not work; there is also a fundamental conflict of interest. Remember, the gambling industry is the fourth biggest spender on TV advertising in Australia, so you can see why the TV stations do not want to give up that revenue.
While we are at it, this motion, if passed by the House, would also call on the Minister for Communications to issue a directive under section 11 of the Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991 to put in place a similar ban on gambling advertising on the SBS. This is necessary because there has obviously been a big increase in the amount of gambling advertising on the SBS, including during times when children are watching, and SBS is not covered by the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice.

One of my first acts after the election in July was to stand with Senator Xenophon and the Reverend Tim Costello from the Alliance for Gambling Reform to put gambling reform back on the agenda in this parliament. Doing so was regrettably necessary because so far there has been so little interest in serious gambling reform from both the Labor and Liberal parties. Yes, we did achieve some reform in the 43rd Parliament, despite Prime Minister Julia Gillard reneging on her deal with me for meaningful poker machine reform, but even the modest reform we did achieve was overturned by the coalition government after the 2013 election—with, I would add, the support of the Labor Party in the Senate.

There is so much that needs to be done at both a state and a federal level. Take poker machine reform, for example, where there is still a pressing need for the federal government to put in place effective harm minimisation measures. This is why I will keep calling for $1 maximum bets and mandatory precommitment, exactly as the Productivity Commission recommended in 2010. At least in my home state of Tasmania we have the opportunity to finally get poker machines out of the pubs and clubs, because the current monopoly licence period is coming to an end in 2023.

Of course, all of this comes down to money. The major parties simply refuse to give up the enormous donations they get from the gambling industry, the states and territories do not want to give up the taxation revenue they get from the gambling addicts, and the commercial TV stations do not want to give up the revenue from the gambling advertising.

Whenever we talk about gambling addiction, it is easy to use facts and figures and to look at how much money is lost every year, but let's not forget that a huge amount of this money is lost by gambling addicts, and a gambling addict is a mother or a father, a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, a husband or a wife, a friend or a work colleague. They are real people with real challenges.

Thankfully, though, there are men and women of good heart in the Labor and Liberal Parties who would like to see gambling reform. Indeed, the Prime Minister himself is on the record, before he became Prime Minister, as being concerned about the harm caused by problem gambling. Moreover, there is no doubt that the community overwhelmingly wants to see gambling reform and, in particular, restrictions on gambling advertising. Regrettably, though, when Senator Xenophon put this same motion to a vote in the Senate recently, it was voted down by both the Liberal and Labor parties. But despite this I still hold out hope that members in this place, if only because we are directly accountable to our local communities and are popularly elected, can bring themselves to see the harm caused by gambling in their communities and actually do something about it. How refreshing would that be: politicians putting the public interest ahead of political self-interest. (Time expired)

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hastie):** Is there a seconder for this motion?

**Ms Sharkie:** I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.
Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (18:58): Firstly, I would like to acknowledge and say that I respect the advocacy of the member for Denison in the area of gambling. I think we both have the same goals in mind, but we disagree, perhaps, on how we should go about it.

I think it is wrong to focus on the money the gambling industry gets as losses. I think we should acknowledge that there are many people that find gambling a legitimate recreational activity. I would find no enjoyment sitting in a club playing a poker machine. But I should not put my values and judgements against people who find that to be a legitimate recreational activity. People may well look upon other recreational activities, whether they be ten-pin bowling or golf, as being of no particular value inherent to society. Rather than looking at it as money lost, let’s look at the money that is actually spent on the gambling industry and, rather than looking at it from a position of prohibitions and stopping and aborting things, let’s look at it as a legitimate business. Let’s try and put legislation in place there that we would for all other types of industries.

If you look at the losses that the member for Denison brought out for us, you will see that the amount of money that the average Australian spends on gambling is quite shocking. The latest numbers I have seen is something like $1,130 per adult. If you go through those numbers, you will see that we are spending more than double the amount on gambling, per average adult, of nations like Canada, the USA, New Zealand and the UK. The expenditure on gambling here per adult in this nation is five times more than it is in somewhere like Germany and, if you look at where most of the gambling money is going, you will see that it is on poker machines. I can pick up my mobile phone and I can bet on anything anywhere around the world. I have an electronic slot machine on my phone, so I do not think we can hide this from our kids. Gambling has become, for better or worse or for right or wrong, a part of Australian culture.

Rather than trying to ban it and rather than trying to hide it from kids, I say it would be best to do the opposite. In school we should be using percentages and probability for gambling to teach kids about gambling, because understanding the maths behind it would be the best cure we could put through to make sure that kids do not go on to lose money. I say that if you understand the odds of rolling a dice or a playing a poker machine, then that is the best cure we could have. Also, when it comes to poker machines, again, there is nothing wrong with someone deciding that they like to sit and play a poker machine. The problem we have is the cost for someone to play, and that gets back to the price. The price is on the rate of return to the player, and the volatility. The poker machine industry is one of the few industries where there is no price competition. You can walk into any club in Australia and you can have two machines lined up side by side that can be identical in every respect, but they can adjust the settings on the machines and you would have no idea which one gives you the greatest return. Those returns should be clearly advertised on the front of the machine. If we could reduce that margin through price competition, as we do in every other sector of the economy, that would be one way of reducing the harm.

The other thing I would quickly like to bring up is that I understand that the class-action lawyers Morris Blackburn currently have a case claiming that the design of poker machines is misleading in their intent. I think there could be something to this. A recent article by DHL Piper talked about how all modern slot machines use some variation of what is called the 'Telnaes patent'. If you go to the actual patent application, you will see that it says:
… it is important to make a machine that is perceived to present greater chances of payoff than it actually has within the legal limitations that games of chance must operate.

The patent application actually has an admission in there that the design of a modern poker machine is meant to make a customer believe something that is false! This will be a very interesting case that this parliament will be watching with great interest. Again, I commend the member for Denison on his work, but I cannot support this motion. (Time expired)

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (19:03): I wish to echo in the strongest of terms my support for the member for Denison's motion and, particularly, my support for his concerns about the advertising of gambling during television sporting games. I also wish to acknowledge and thank the member for Denison for his tireless work on reforming predatory gambling in Australia. My Senate colleagues and I will continue to work closely with the member on this important community issue.

We know that the overwhelming majority of the Australian community opposes gambling advertising during prime time sporting events, with the protection of children being the most vocal of the arguments put forward. The only way that children are going to be protected is if we close the loophole that allows gambling ads on sporting broadcasts during G-rated periods.

If one had to choose a word to describe the effect of prime-time gambling upon children, it would be: insidious. As the member for Denison referred to, a study by Deakin University Associate Professor Samantha Thomas found that three-quarters of children can recall the name of at least one sports-betting brand, and one-quarter of the children could identify four or more brands. This is reprehensible. How can the government not only condone but also support this behaviour?

Predatory gambling targets adults. That is one thing. But predatory advertising of gambling products during prime-time viewing, when children—we know—are watching television is absolutely disgraceful. Do not let anyone convince you that running wall-to-wall sporting ads on television during prime-time viewing is a victimless crime. Predatory gambling costs the Australian community approximately $5 billion a year. It is destroying lives, families and our communities. It is the leading cause of homelessness. And gambling addicts struggle to kick the addiction and rebuild their shattered lives.

Can you imagine if the government allowed ads for other addictive products during prime-time television? Thankfully, we no longer have television adverts promoting cigarettes. That was something during prime-time hours, when children were watching, not that long ago. Unfortunately, just like cigarettes before them, the gambling giants do not appear to be averse to hooking the punters while they are young. Such prime-time advertising only serves to normalise this behaviour in the pliable minds of young Australians. It is when gambling becomes addictive that it becomes a problem.

It is deeply concerning that the study I just referred to also found that three-quarters of children thought betting was an entirely normal part of the sports process—the normalisation process is already well and truly underway. Unfortunately, the two major parties are beholden to the vested interests of the gambling lobby and have shut out the overwhelming community demand for real reform.

I would like to touch upon the Reverend Lynn Arnold, a former Premier of South Australia, who, wisely, recently said that gambling comes in new forms now—where
someone can sit in their home while losing their home. Dr Charles Livingstone and Dr Maggie Johnson, from Monash University, recently searched the Australian Electoral Commission's political donations record and found that between July 1999 and June 2015 just one pro-gambling organisation—Clubs New South Wales—declared political donations to the two major parties of over $2.5 million. The coalition received $1.6 million of this money. This is just one of many gambling groups that make donations to our major parties.

I urge the government and the opposition to look past the donations, look past the vested interests and look at the real issue. And I urge the government—in no uncertain terms—to listen to the Australian community and act. I urge you to close the loophole that allows gambling ads in sports broadcasts during G-rated periods and to close it quickly—before an entire generation becomes irrevocably primed to debilitating gambling addiction. It is not too much to ask.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Coulton): The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 19:09
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

International Development Assistance

(Question No. 1)

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 31 August 2016:

(1) Is it a fact that AusAid donated $5.7 million to World Vision for activities in Palestinian Territories.

(2) Was the Hamas military organisation classified by the Commonwealth Parliament, at the recommendation of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, as a terrorist organisation.

(3) Is it a fact that World Vision Gaza official Mohammed El Halabi has confessed to diverting 60 per cent of foreign donations to Hamas; if so, did the Australian Government have intelligence on this.

(4) What sum of Australian tax payer funds does she estimate were misused to assist Hamas and does she have plans to recover some or all of these funds from World Vision.

(5) What communication has there been between the Australian Government, the Israeli Government and World Vision in Gaza to prevent the misuse of funds in the future.

(6) What procedural policies have been employed to prevent the misuse of funds in the future.

Ms Julie Bishop: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) The final amount provided to World Vision for activities in the Palestinian Territories is subject to ongoing audits.

(2) No, the Attorney-General is responsible for the listing of terrorist organisations in regulations made under the Commonwealth Criminal Code, including Hamas' paramilitary wing, the al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (the Brigades).

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS) is not consulted with respect to the listing of terrorist organisations under the Criminal Code before the regulations are made. The PJCIS has authority to review regulations listing an organisation as a terrorist organisation, and report to each House of the Parliament. In its review last year (October), the PJCIS did not recommend the disallowance of the regulations listing the Brigades, therefore the Commonwealth Parliament did not take any further action in respect of the listing.

(3) The facts of the case remain before Israeli courts. It is not appropriate to respond to questions on intelligence matters.

(4) The facts of the case remain before Israeli courts. It is not appropriate to comment on the veracity of allegations before the courts in Israel.

(5) We are in regular contact with the Israeli Government and World Vision on this matter.

(6) The Australian Government has rigorous processes in place to investigate under DFAT's funding agreements and consistent with DFAT's Fraud Control and Anti-Corruption Plan.

Shariff, Mr Zulfikar Mohamad, and Hizb ut-Tahrir

(Question No. 2)

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 31 August 2016:

(1) Did her department know of Mr Zulfikar Mohamad Shariff's activities in Australia, and that he is purported to be a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir; if so, why did the Australian Government not act.

(2) Does the Australian Government consider Hizb ut-Tahrir to be a terrorist organisation; if not, does the Australian Government realise that the Singaporean Government does.

(3) Has the Australian Government made representations on Mr Shariff's behalf.
Ms Julie Bishop: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

1. Yes. The second part of the question should be addressed to the Attorney-General and the Minister for Justice.
2. This question should be addressed to the Attorney-General and the Minister for Justice.
3. The Australian Government, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has made representations on Mr Shariff's behalf in line with the Consular Service Charter.