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SITTING DAYS—2015

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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIFTH PERIOD

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

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell MP
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP,
Mr Alexander George Hawke MP, Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP,
Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP, Ms Sarah Moya Henderson MP,
Mr Stephen James Irons MP, Mr Ewen Thomas Jones MP, Mr Craig Kelly MP,
Ms Michelle Leanne Landry MP, Mrs Jane Prentice MP, Mr Donald James Randall MP,
Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mr Brett David Whiteley MP, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Wicks MP

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

Party Leaders and Whips
Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Government Whip—Mr Scott Buchholz MP
Government Whips—Mr Andrew Alexander Nikolic, AM, CSC and
Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

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

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

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## Members of the House of Representatives

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<td>Braddon, TAS</td>
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<td>Williams, Mr Matthew</td>
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<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
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**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

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

**Heads of Parliamentary Departments**

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
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<td>(Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
<td>The Hon. Jamie Briggs MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
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<td>The Hon. Bruce Billson MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Joshua Frydenberg MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Social Services</td>
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<td>The Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment</td>
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<tr>
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Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans' Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.
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<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Small Business</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
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<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
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The SPEAKER (Hon. Bronwyn Bishop) took the chair at 12:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

COMMITTEES

Public Works Committee

Membership

The SPEAKER (12:01): I have received a message from the Senate informing the House that Senator Canavan has been discharged from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and that Senator Smith has been appointed a member of the committee.

BILLS

Corporations Legislation Amendment (Deregulatory and Other Measures) Bill 2014

Returned from Senate

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

Tax and Superannuation Laws Amendment (2014 Measures No. 5) Bill 2014

Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with amendments.

Ordered that the amendments be considered immediately.

Senate's amendments—

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (table item 2, column 1), omit "Schedules 1 and 2", substitute "Schedule 1".
(2) Clause 2, page 2 (table item 3, column 1), omit "Schedules 3 and 4", substitute "Schedule 4".
(3) Schedule 2, page 4 (lines 1 to 16), omit the Schedule.
(4) Schedule 3, page 5 (lines 1 to 17), omit the Schedule.

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Assistant Treasurer) (12:02): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

There are four amendments. Amendment (1) will remove the reference to schedule 2, abolishing the seafarer tax offset from the table listing commencement information for the measure contained in the bill. Amendment (2) will remove the reference to schedule 3, rates of R&D tax offset, in the table listing commencement information for the measure contained in the bill. Amendment (3) will remove schedule 2, abolishing the seafarer tax offset from the bill. Amendment (4) will remove schedule 3 on rates of R&D tax offset from the bill.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Human Rights Committee

Public Works Committee

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Assistant Treasurer) (12:04): by leave—I move:
That:
(1) Ms F. M. Scott be discharged from the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights and that, in her place, Mr Ruddock be appointed a member of the committee; and
(2) Mrs K. L. Andrews be discharged from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and that, in her place, Ms F. M. Scott be appointed a member of the committee.

Question agreed to.

**BILLS**

**Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2014-2015**

**Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2014-2015**

**Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2014-2015**

**Second Reading**

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

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

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading the House notes that:

(1) the 2014-15 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook showed a $44 billion blow-out in the budget deficit over the forward estimates from the 2014-15 Budget, which represents a $202 million blow-out in the Budget deficit by the Government each and every day;

(2) Government debt is higher now than it was when the Government took office;

(3) the Budget bottom line in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook incorporates a series of broken promises, including: the introduction of the GP tax, increasing the petrol tax, cuts to pension indexation, $6,000 cuts to a typical Australian family, plans for $100,000 university degrees, cuts to the ABC and SBS, and a $11.3 billion cut from foreign aid;

(4) the Government continues to undermine business and consumer confidence with its unfair Budget, which are now below the levels at the 2013 Federal Election; and

(5) the Government's failure to have a clear plan for economic and jobs growth has led to the unemployment rate increasing to its highest level since August 2002, when the current Prime Minister was the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations."

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (12:06): These three appropriation bills deal with significant sums of money in relation to the government's budget, and so I will speak widely and, hopefully, wisely as well in relation to all of the changes that have been made. So much has happened since these bills were initially brought before the House. So much has happened in the last couple of months—the government's MYEFO or minibudget, the machinery-of-government changes, a ministerial reshuffle and an attempted leadership coup with a leadership spill attempt in the Liberal Party. So much has happened. Many barnacles have been removed and much water has passed under the bridge. When these pieces of legislation were put before the chamber seems like another time.

We have seen the Prime Minister dump his $7 GP tax, replacing it with a GP tax of $5. That will supposedly go today. I am still not quite sure whether that will actually happen, but we will wait for question time to see what the Prime Minister has to say about that. His then
health minister, the member for Dickson, then announced a $20 cut to the Medicare rebate for a short consultation when a person saw their doctor, which caused much angst in the local community across my area and across other parts of Australia. Later, the Prime Minister would describe the $20 Medicare rebate cut as a 'tough' but necessary decision—just 24 hours later recalling his newly reshuffled health minister from a cruise boat so she could dump the policy.

Around the same time, the education minister's ideological changes to Americanise our universities and usher in $100,000 degrees started unravelling in the Senate. He declared that parliament would 'inevitably' support his radical higher education agenda. The minister scrubbed a few nasties from the rejected bill, reintroduced it to the House the next day, and then he interpreted the Australian public's antipathy towards these higher education changes as not a failure of policy but a failure of marketing. So many of the Abbott government's problems they allege to be a failure to communicate, when in fact the Australian public is onto them with respect to the unfairness of their budget. Of course, these appropriations bills feed into the budgetary process of the Abbott government.

Indeed, the Abbott government's position when failing to win public support for their policies seem to always be: 'Our policies are perfect. If you're unhappy with our policies, you just haven't understood them.' That seems to be the rhetoric there. The education minister found himself in that dilemma last year with his higher education proposals. He could not understand why the Australian public rejected them and kept telling the public these reforms were 'inevitable', but the public remained unconvinced. Since then, the minister has decided that Australia has not understood his agenda—again, a market failure. We have seen that minister, the Leader of the House, cost the taxpayer $15 million in a marketing attempt to convince the Australian public, then claim that Senator Madigan actually supported this and urged him to do it—something that Senator Madigan rejected.

So the Abbott government had a lot on its hands in December. Elsewhere in Australia, Campbell Newman was still the Premier of Queensland, and thank goodness he is gone—as a Queenslander, I can say that. Who knows, perhaps the Prime Minister has been contemplating a relaxing summer break or autumn break in the future. Prince Philip had yet to be knighted of course, and that was an important step back in January.

All of these things happened in the context of these appropriations bills. So much has taken place, and in the middle of all this, the 2014 MYEFO detonated like a grenade. It hammered the final nail into the Treasurer's budget, and it shredded the government's economic credentials. It also busted the myth that this Liberal-National Party government are a low-taxing, low-spending government. Many of those opposite would have you believe they are members of a frugal government. In fact, really, they are Tea Partyists. They claim that they want to bring down small government and get government off the back of people. In reality, the exact opposite is what happens. The government's claim to be a small-government government is in fact a myth—it is rubbish.

In terms of government spending, according to the respected economist Stephen Koukoulas, Managing Director of Market Economics, the December MYEFO revealed that the Abbott government is a big spender, spending at about 25.9 per cent of GDP in 2014-15. He went on to say:
In the final full year of Labor … this ratio was 24.1 per cent and the average for the Labor government as a whole was 24.9 per cent of GDP. This included the stimulus measures associated with the GFC. According to Treasurer Hockey's MYEFO, in no year including into the forward estimates to 2017-18 will government spending be below the average of the previous Labor government. The Abbott government is a big spending government. Fact.

In terms of taxation, Mr Koukoulas states that the average tax to GDP ratio of the former Labor government was 20.8 per cent, reaching down, at the height of the global financial crisis, to 19.9 per cent—its lowest for 40 years.

As for the Abbott government, he says:

Mr. Hockey's MYEFO document confirms that the tax to GDP ratio under the Abbott Government will, in every year, be above the average of the previous Labor government … hitting a peak of 23.1 per cent of GDP in 2017-18. Only the Howard government had an average higher tax to GDP ratio.

Remember, this is the Treasurer's own MYEFO—the figures that I am eliciting here.

Aside from busting the myth that the Abbott government is a low-taxing, low-spending government, MYEFO lays out the truth about the escalation and acceleration of debt and deficit under the Abbott government. MYEFO reveals that the Abbott government has overseen a $16.4 billion blow-out in the deficit in 2014-15 since its election. We know this because we can compare the 2014 MYEFO to the independent 2013 Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook, known as PEFO. Under the PEFO 2014-15, the deficit was to be $240 billion. Under the Treasurer's MYEFO it is $40.4 billion—a startling increase of nearly 70 per cent. The Treasurer's MYEFO also reveals a $44 billion blow-out in the budget deficit over the forward estimates compared with 2014-15. So we have got a $16.4 billion blow-out in the 2014-15 deficit and a $44 billion blow-out of the deficit over the forward estimates. This from a government that promised to improve the budget bottom line—and these are appropriations bills before the chamber. This from the Treasurer who pledged before the last election that a coalition government would:

… achieve a surplus in our first year of office and we will achieve a cash surplus in every year in our first term.

I wonder where that promise went? That is just the considering the deficit, and I thought it appropriate to put that on the public record.

The Treasurer's MYEFO also revealed a worse debt position than that predicted in the 2014-15 budget. Under PEFO, net debt for 2014-15 was $212.1 billion. Under the Treasurer's MYEFO, net debt is $224.8 billion, an increase of over 15 per cent. Department of Finance figures at the end of February 2015 show government debt was $252 billion in January 2015, 40 per cent more than at the end of 2013, when this government was in office. These figures give the lie to the claims of the Abbott government, including its Prime Minister and Treasurer, that they would reduce debt and deficit when they came to office and, in fact, that they would bring in a surplus every year that they were in power.

We do not hear this rhetoric very much anymore. Now they are all talking about the good times. They are all talking about how well the economy is going. But, with this mob opposite on the treasury benches, debt and deficit continue to climb. It is a matter of choosing how you spend the money. What this government has done is attacked working families, middle-class families, the poor, the vulnerable, the disabled the disadvantaged, the Indigenous, older Australians and pensioners. We have seen cuts to pension indexation that would make a
pensioner $80 worse off in 10 years time; cuts to family payments; the GP tax; and $100,000 degrees.

Lest anyone think this is all academic, I give you a few figures that I have obtained from my electorate in South-East Queensland, based on Ipswich and the Somerset region. The 12,779 families in Blair who rely on family tax benefit worry they will not be able to manage once their payments are cut off after the youngest child turns six. The 4,920 families in Blair who rely on childcare benefit fear the $1 billion that the Prime Minister wants to rip from child care, including the $235 million cut to the targeted childcare benefit that helps low- and middle-income families. The 14,512 families in Blair who rely on the schools bonus know they will soon be $410 a year worse off for every primary school child and $820 a year worse off for every high-school child—about $15,000 worse off for a family with two children across the school education of their children. The government needs to reverse these cuts, because its priorities are wrong. There is $5.5 billion of cuts to families and over $1 billion worth of cuts to child care. The budget should be re-looked at by this government.

We have seen unemployment rise during the tenure of this government. Under PEFO when Labor was still in government, unemployment was forecast to peak at 6.25 per cent. Under the current Treasurer's December MYEFO, it is forecast to rise to 6.5 per cent. The unemployment rate now sits at 6.4 per cent. There are 100,000 more Australians who are unemployed since the election of the Abbott government. This is the highest number of unemployed since 1994, and the unemployment rate is close to the highest it has been since 2002. To put it into context, that is higher than when Labor was successfully negotiating us through the global financial crisis.

But this is not just happening nationally. Back in my home state, under the former Labor government, the unemployment rate was 5.5 per cent. After Campbell Newman came to power, he sacked about 24,000 public servants and trashed business confidence, and unemployment skyrocketed to 6.5 per cent in January 2015, in the last month of that government. Queensland has turfed them out, and Campbell Newman lost his own seat of Ashgrove. His government cut the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program, which Deloitte Access Economics said got 50,000 Queenslanders into jobs, including 8,000 long-term unemployed. I look forward to the new Annastacia Palaszczuk Labor government bringing back Skilling Queenslanders for Work, because in my electorate the unemployment rate is currently at nine per cent. What is worse, in Blair the youth unemployment rate is a staggering 19.1 per cent. Nationally, 14.2 per cent of 15- to 24-year-olds are unable to find work; in Blair, almost one in five young people in Ipswich and the Somerset region cannot get jobs—and the Abbott government seems blissfully unaware of that.

In my shadow portfolio areas of Indigenous affairs and ageing, the government have simply made cuts. They cut $534 million from Indigenous programs. On top of that, they cut the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, leaving the whole community sector, whether people are in remote areas or in urban areas, up in arms. They still do not know the future of funding for family violence prevention legal centres, employment programs, assistance and emergency relief and a whole bunch of areas where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people themselves provide wonderful services, whether it is in places like Utopia, the Kimberley and the Pilbara or in big urban centres like Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney. This is a government which seems intent on creating chaos and uncertainty across the Indigenous
affairs portfolio and intent on thinking it can cut its way to closing the gap, when you simply cannot do so.

Indeed, in this legislation before the chamber, there is some funding that is being rolled out under the MUNS program, which is the funding going to areas where there is actually incapacity for sewerage, road maintenance and other things in remote communities. But the government has put no conditionality on that, and we see the Western Australian government talking about closing 150 remote communities because the minister has failed to put any conditionality on rolling out $90 million, including the money under this legislation. There is no conditionality on the Western Australian government's doing the right thing by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote communities.

This is a government of failure, of unemployment, who said one thing before the election and has done another once in government.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (12:21): I rise to speak on these appropriation bills and acknowledge the coalition government's commitment to rewarding and recognising pioneering visionaries. In a recent address to the Harvard Club in New York, our foreign minister Julie Bishop outlined who we are as Australians—why and how we are innovators. She mentioned some of the bright young minds making their mark in New York. She spoke of the way Australians embrace every opportunity and are always looking for a way to do something different to get ahead, to inspire, to motivate, to do.

No-one can dispute the fact that Australians are doers. We take every opportunity given to us and do not believe in the word impossible. There is something about Australian minds. We think like no others, possibly because we have always had to be inventive. When white settlers first came to this land they found everything to be a struggle. European crops were not suitable; the weather vastly different. Everything was different, even the homes we lived in, but we found ways to survive. We used ingenuity and developed the strong work ethic Australians are known for today. People continue to come to Australia to make new lives for themselves. The Australian story is an inspiring story and it attracts people from all over the world. Australia is known as a country of opportunity.

If our ancestors managed to make better lives in a distant and isolated land, it should come as no surprise that nothing is beyond the ability of Australian inventors. That is why some of the most remarkable and beneficial inventions in the past century have been created by Australians. Let me start with something less serious but nonetheless innovative: Felix the cat, the wonderful, wonderful cat. Felix was a marketing phenomenon years before Mickey Mouse and his friend Walt Disney arrived on the scene and was for a time the most popular cartoon character in the world. The producer behind the animated cartoon was Australian Pat Sullivan. It seems surprising that it was an Australian, not an American, who was responsible for this Hollywood success story, but Australian ingenuity has a very long history. In the 1850s, James Harrison was the first person to invent and patent a mechanical machine for making ice. He invented the refrigerator, in Geelong. The inventions kept coming: solar hot water, the black box, Google maps, spray-on skin, the electronic pacemaker, the ultrasound.

Medical innovation seems to be a particular speciality for Australian minds. In the 1940s Howard Florey, from Adelaide, developed a way for penicillin to be manufactured and processed so it could be used to treat infections in humans. The ultrasound scanner, invented by Australians David Robinson and George Kossoff in the 1960s, has helped ease the anxiety
of so many expectant parents. The cochlear implant, invented by Professor Graeme Clark in the 1970s, has made a difference to so many lives.

Australians as a whole are inventive people; Queenslanders also often lead the way. I have the privilege of being the member for the electorate of Ryan. My electorate is not only home to some amazing minds but also a hub for research and development in many different specialties. The innovations developed in Ryan in just the past few decades have changed the lives of literally millions of people all over the world. Ryan is home to the University of Queensland, CSIRO’s Queensland Centre for Advanced Technologies, the cooperative research centres for ore and mining, and Life Sciences Queensland. All of these facilities contribute to the advancements in science and technology we are seeing every day.

I am very proud of the achievements of the University of Queensland. Not only is it ranked No. 85 in the top universities in the world but it produces and supports some of the best scientists, researchers and academics. This includes 2006 Australian of the Year and inventor of the cervical cancer vaccine, Professor Ian Frazer. Professor Frazer began research for the vaccine Gardasil in the mid-eighties and by 2006 it was made available worldwide. Since then, Gardasil has been used to vaccinate millions of women in 120 countries against the human papillomavirus, HPV, that causes cervical cancer. Cervical cancer kills more than 275,000 women a year and is the second-most common cause of cancer in women. Thanks to Professor Frazer and his team, this will not be the case for future generations. Professor Frazer, originally from Scotland, called Australia the land of opportunity. He said of his decision to come to Brisbane in the early eighties: 'Brisbane was a growing city with a growing opportunity to conduct medical research. I’ve not been disappointed over the last 25 years.'

He is currently conducting phase 2 trials for a herpes simplex vaccine and developing a skin cancer vaccine.

The University of Queensland continues to attract great minds. One of the more recent inventions is the Nanopatch. Developed by Professor Mark Kendall, Nanopatch technology for vaccine delivery is undergoing clinical trials this year. The technology, smaller than the size of a postage stamp, is needle-free and painless. It will be invaluable to the health of people all over the world, particularly in Third World countries, as it is easily transportable and requires no refrigeration. It is also far more cost effective than traditional syringe methods, as there is no need for expensive disposal. Professor Brian Lovell and his team have created the world's first real-time facial recognition software. It is being used in security, military and immigration areas internationally. He is currently working to implement software for the bionic eye. Professor Maree Smith's pain relief research has seen her develop patented novel analgesics to target neuropathic pain, which is a type of nerve pain that affects more than 1.5 million people worldwide. These are just a few of the innovators, inventors and creators who are working on remarkable inventions and making incredible discoveries at the University of Queensland. I know that due to the solid reputation and record of the University of Queensland there will be much more to come.

The people in my electorate of Ryan are looking for a hand up, not a hand out. That is why our government has given the University of Queensland more than half a billion dollars in funding to make sure that ingenuity and innovation can continue to be fostered. This funding is not just aimed at the university itself. Developing great minds takes special teachers, so we contributed $75,000 to the Australian Awards for University Teaching to help recognise these
exceptional educators. We also gave up to $141,000 towards Endeavour scholarships, so that Australians can acquire a broad depth of knowledge from all over the world. The Australian Research Council provided more than $67 million to the University of Queensland to help fund research and development; Professor Kendall was a beneficiary for his Nanopatch technology among other research programs. In 2013, the University of Queensland received more Australian Research Council funding than any other Australian university or research body.

However, at the University of Queensland they do not rely purely on government funding. They also source their own funding from private donors and attract the attention of international investors. Their reputation precedes them and draws in international sponsors who respect their work. In 2009, philanthropist Chuck Feeney donated $102 million dollars for Queensland medical research. The University of Queensland was one of the beneficiaries. This was the largest single donation ever made in Australia. In fact, Mr Feeney's Atlantic Philanthropies has donated more than $100 million towards research at the University of Queensland since 1998. This funding has gone towards establishing the Queensland Brain Institute, the Institute for Molecular Bioscience, the Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology and the University of Queensland Centre for Clinical Research. Another one of the University of Queensland's major donors is Wotif founder Graeme Wood. Graham donated $15 million towards UQ's Global Change Institute in 2011. The $32 million, six-green-star Living Building, a 'flagship for sustainability', is naturally ventilated, has solar panels, stores up to 60 thousand litres of rainwater and generates more energy than it consumes.

There are many more outstanding projects I could speak about, with the $44 million in philanthropic funding they received last year alone, but there is much more in the electorate of Ryan. CSIRO's Queensland Centre for Advanced Technologies is situated in Ryan and some of the research and development coming out of there is truly remarkable. It is Australia's largest integrated research and development precinct and research covers robotics, automation, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, casting processes, mining science and engineering, and improvement of iron ore processing. The Cooperative Research Centre for Ore and the Cooperative Research Centre for Mining, based in Pinjarra Hills, have developed a water powered drill that will revolutionise the way we can mine coal seam gas. Ultimately, this drill will eliminate fracking.

Another organisation committed to developing and supporting science and research in my electorate is Life Sciences Queensland. The organisation provide leadership, organisation and growth opportunities for their members, enabling them to work together and complement each other—important in the fields of research and development. Their members come from all aspects of the life sciences, including human health, animal health and agriculture, and environmental, industrial and marine biotechnology.

These examples of innovation and leading-edge organisations in Ryan give just a small snapshot of the way Australians are making their mark on the world. We are creating, designing and inventing and, in the process, changing the world. Because of an Australian, cervical cancer will no longer be the huge killer it is today. Because of an Australian, those who were born without hearing will grow up surrounded by noise. Because of an Australian, an infection does not mean death.
As a government it is our job to encourage these innovations—to foster and support these great minds. I want to recognise the Minister for Education, the Hon. Christopher Pyne, for acknowledging and rewarding these amazing minds through grants and funding, and also for working towards creating a future that will facilitate more competitive and comprehensive universities, to allow Australians to aim even higher and achieve even better outcomes. I also want to acknowledge the Minister for Industry and Science, the Hon. Ian Macfarlane, not only for the more than $7 billion worth of industry program grants distributed in just the past year in Ryan but also for taking the time to actually come out and meet with these organisations face to face and, importantly, for his ongoing support.

The coalition government is dedicated to maintaining Australia's reputation as a country of innovators. We have cut red tape. We have provided billions of dollars in funding. We are determined to promote and encourage these great minds. We want to build on their passion to make a difference in the world. These Australians are not only leading world innovators but inspiring others to do the same. As an isolated and relatively young country, we are batting above our weight and standing out as intelligent and savvy innovators who are contributing to the technological and scientific advancements of the world.

The coalition government wants to ensure support for these innovators. We do not believe in stifling creativity. We want to reward ingenuity. That is why we are focused on cutting red tape. Repeal days are about ensuring these creative minds are never held back because of minor restrictions or paperwork. It is evident our government is doing everything possible to foster and support our great minds. I am proud of our government's commitment to supporting the advancements I have spoken of today. These appropriation bills are about funding for a strong and stable government. We need the best minds possible to ensure our future as a leading country, and this can be achieved by continuing to support these visionaries, who provide life-changing and life-saving innovations.

Ms KING (Ballarat) (12:34): When the story of this government comes to be written, and when we look back on how it unravelled so quickly and in such spectacular fashion, the budget whose appropriation bills we are debating today will feature very heavily. Because the budget represented such a fundamental betrayal of this government's commitments to voters, it immediately poisoned any goodwill it might have expected from the electorate and set the course for the debacle that we now witness on the government benches.

'No cuts to education, no cuts to health, no changes to pensions, no changes to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS'—we all heard the Prime Minister pledge the night before the election that that is what he would deliver. But, instead of a policy platform, we soon learnt that this in fact was the Prime Minister's platform of platitudes; a shopping list of all the promises he planned to break. Nowhere has that deceit been greater than in the one area that matters most to Australians: our healthcare system. 'No cuts to health and no new taxes'—it barely survived the first 100 days before the cuts to hospitals commenced in the mid-year review and the government started softening us up for its GP tax.

It is worth documenting again in this debate just how widespread the government's cuts in health policy have been, across every single element of health policy. Fifty seven billion dollars has been cut from public hospitals. They tried to cut $3.5 billion out of primary care and we are in the middle of a fierce debate about that today. They shut all 61 Medicare Locals, to transition to Primary Health Networks, at a cost of some $200 million already.
There is their $5 hike in the price of every prescription, and they have made it harder to reach the PBS safety net—$1.3 billion cut out of the pockets of people trying to access medicines. That measure is still blocked by Labor in the Senate. They are cutting $368 million out of preventative health programs, which states were relying on to tackle obesity and reduce smoking and alcohol use. They have cut more than $650 million out of dental funding, including $229 million out of dental clinics and $391 million from adult public dental programs, which will see public dental waiting lists blow out—$200 million has been cut this financial year, a decision that will restrict access and blow out dental waiting times. They have cut $3 million from the National Tobacco Campaign, $54 million from the Partners in Recovery Campaign and abolished Health Workforce Australia, which included a cut of $142 million in funding which sees the Commonwealth with little or no role in planning and resourcing Australia's future health workforce. And, of course, they have cut $264 million of priority health initiatives, things like Westmead Hospital; Millennium institute at Westmead, Children's Medical Research Institute, Nepean Hospital, St George Hospital, the MRI at Mt Druitt, Queensland Cancer Package, Biala health service, Flinders neonatal unit, the WA cancer team and stroke coordinators across the country—that is how extensive this government's cuts to health have been.

It was not until the budget, which we are now debating here again today, that the full extent of that deceit became apparent. It was a budget that destroyed the electorate's trust of the government, a budget the government had no mandate for and a budget which all the evidence shows will be bad for health, bad for patients, bad for doctors and bad for the budget. None of this, understanding what it was going to do to the healthcare system, has caused the Prime Minister to abandon his GP tax. The health experts have all been telling him what a disaster this policy actually is. We think we will know today, we think, what they are planning to do with the GP tax when the Minister for Health makes her press statement at 1.30.

It has not been the patients and doctors deluging the government with petitions and warnings about what a disaster this plan is. We have had 10 months of a government with no health policy at all, at war with doctors and at war with patients. Patients are already starting to be charged different fees within doctor's surgeries. It has not been the state governments telling him how this plan would deluge our emergency departments with patients and destroy the public hospital system. It has only been when his own party has moved against him that the Prime Minister has had to throw everything overboard to keep his own leadership afloat. And finally—we think, finally, today—he claims to be junking his GP tax. Well, let us see. There are $2 billion of cuts to primary care, to general practice, are still sitting on the table.

If he dumps the $5 GP co-payment—the GP tax—today that is one element. There are still $1.3 billion of cuts on the table to primary care that will be passed on to every single patient trying to see a general practitioner. Let us see how meaningful their actual changes are. He is not doing it for the health of patients; he is doing it for the health of his numbers in the party room, to try to stave off another challenge. It is also important to note, maybe when that challenge comes, that this was not about the Prime Minister's health budget, because as the finance minister has assured us just last month, not a single member of cabinet ever raised any concerns about how deeply unfair this budget is—not the Prime Minister, not the Treasurer and certainly not the communications minister or the foreign minister.
We know on this occasion, at least, he is telling us the truth, because in June last year the member for Wentworth was asked by Ben Fordham, 'Do you support the $7 GP co-payment aimed at reducing doctor visits and improving the bottom line?' The member for Wentworth's answer was unequivocal: 'I certainly do support it. I support all of the budget.' Of course such candour has not always been a feature of this government's health policies. When news broke during the Griffith by-election, for example, in January last year when asked about whether the government was in fact considering a GP tax at all, the foreign minister said that there was no plan for co-payments and the GP tax was just Labor's scaremongering. She said any suggestion was nonsense that Labor had mischievously and dishonestly attributed to the government.

So, here we are, some 10 months later, with several iterations—I think we are up to our third GP tax. The Prime Minister asked us to support a $7 GP tax, then a GP tax that would have seen $20 extra added to patient visits to doctors. We then had the $5 GP tax and the four-year freeze on indexation, which potentially will see patients being forced to pay for some consultations up to $100 up-front before they even get in the door of the doctor's surgery. We have had that many iterations of this GP tax—and this was the GP tax that the foreign minister, at the time of the Griffith by-election, said was Labor's scaremongering.

So while Liberal MPs squabble over who should be their next leader, the sad truth for Australia is that regardless of whoever eventually comes out on top nothing will change. It does not matter. They all support the destruction of Medicare. They have all got their hands dirty with trying to see our universal health insurance scheme destroyed in this country, because the truth is they have never believed in fairness, just like they have never believed in Medicare. They have all endorsed this budget, and at the heart of this budget is a proposal to destroy something Australians hold very dear and that has provided Australia with some of the best health outcomes in the OECD. It is a proposal to end universal access to health care and to make the treatment you receive dependent not on the basis of need but on the basis of your ability to pay. It is a proposal to end bulk-billing and to make bulk-billing only available to concessional patients and nobody else. This fails to recognise that there are many patients who are not eligible for concession cards, such as self-funded retirees on a fixed income, a very small fixed income, whose healthcare needs are increasing and who will have to pay more to go and see the doctor; and people who have chronic conditions, who are struggling—the working poor—to continue to be able to work but who need access primary care to do that.

This government will see a collapse in bulk-billing rates. When we left office they were at 82.3 per cent. We know that the last time they were really low was when this Prime Minister was health minister, when they sat at around 60 per cent. Because we ran a very successful campaign to try to get bulk-billing rates lifted, they had to come in and do something, and we are reaping the rewards of that today. Bulk-billing also is good for the health budget because it keeps GP fees low and it makes sure that general practice continues to be accessible. We already have a problem with bulk-billing not being accessible across the country.

In different parts of the country, it is very difficult to access a bulk-billing doctor at all. Often it is those areas where people are the most vulnerable and are on the lowest incomes, or they are in areas where there are massive GP shortages. Out in some of the mining communities, people already have to pay substantial amounts of money to access general
practice. Instead of dealing with these issues, trying to look at how to deal with the spread of
general practice, how to make sure people are accessing primary care in a better way, how to
make sure people get a good experience and a quality experience out of general practice and
how to support doctors, this government has been at war with them for the past 18 months,
and health policy has suffered as a result. That is what is at the heart of this government's
budget when it comes to health—the end of universal access to health care and making the
treatment you receive dependent not on the basis of your health care need but on the basis of
your ability to pay. That is a proposal which all of the evidence shows is based on an entirely
false premise—that somehow Medicare, the MBS, are unsustainable and must be denied to as
many people as possible.

Just last month, again this dishonesty was shown by the government's own Department of
Health. In a damning admission to the Senate Select Committee on Health, senior officials
from the department admitted they were 'unaware of any substantive work in Australia
specifically about the impact of something like the Medicare co-payment and reduction in
rebate'. We know that the reason they did not do any 'substantive research' was that it would
have told them that the GP tax was built on a lie.

As the Productivity Commission confirmed, Commonwealth spending on health is at the
lowest level since the commission began compiling its statistics. The report found that, in
2012-13, the Commonwealth's share of total health expenditure actually fell, and spending on
the target of the GP tax—primary health care—has been effectively unchanged for a decade.
But, at the same time, the report reveals 4.9 per cent of Australians are deferring visits to a GP
and 7.6 per cent are missing prescriptions because of out-of-pocket costs, figures that will
only worsen as a result of this deeply unfair budget. So the GP tax, and indeed the entire
health budget, is built on a lie, a lie the entire cabinet has been complicit in. As the finance
minister assures us, not one single member of cabinet has ever argued this deeply regressive
attack on the sick is unfair, and, as the member for Wentworth has assured us, it is policy that
has his full support.

The health minister might have changed, and the Prime Minister may soon change, but one
thing we can be absolutely certain will not change is this government's deep antipathy toward
Medicare. Two health ministers have now publicly committed to the GP tax. Let's see what
they do in just under an hour's time. What sort of health minister decides, in the face of all the
evidence from the experts and professionals alike, that a price signal is the most important
thing to pursue in health policy? What sort of health minister thinks that a price signal is good
health policy? Where are you talking about the importance of quality general practice? It is a
Liberal minister that thinks that that is the best thing you can do. Now, and only now, when
the Prime Minister's job is on life support, does this commitment to the GP tax change. The
names on the door may change, but nothing, it seems, changes the Liberal Party's
determination to end bulk-billing and to destroy Medicare.

Labor do not regard health as set in cement, where nothing can ever change. We of course
made significant savings when we were in government. Private health insurance rebate
means-testing was a very difficult thing to do—something this government says it is going to
reverse. I am interested in where they are going to find the $600-plus million that is required
to do that. There were the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme changes. Again, a very fierce
campaign was run by community pharmacy against those changes to the agreement with
Medicines Australia, but those changes have meant that we have realised savings in the PBS which will allow the listing of new and improved medicines—a very important change. Again, that is something that this government, in opposition, used as a campaigning opportunity.

I am going to listen very carefully to what the minister has to say shortly. But be in no doubt that, with these bills, what they have done in the totality of health has been a fundamental attack on our Medicare system and a fundamental attack on patients and doctors in this country, and they should be ashamed of themselves for it.

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (12:49): The thing about being the member for Herbert is that I rarely use the word 'Herbert'. Wherever possible, I use my city's name, Townsville. I do not officially represent all the city, but I do have the bits where most of the jobs in the economy are sustained and grown. I use the word 'Townsville' because it is my home and it is the city I represent, officially or not.

The city of Townsville also represents the greatest and richest region in our country. North Queensland has it all—tourism, professional services, education, defence and defence services, mining and mining services, agriculture and agricultural services, retail, manufacturing, arts and culture. And Townsville is at the heart of the region of North Queensland.

Unemployment figures fluctuate every month, and more so in regional areas. There can be no doubt, however, that underemployment is high. The number of people dropping off seeking employment is on the rise, and small business does not seem to have the confidence to hire. This is a major concern for me but more so for the people who are looking for work themselves or trying to find a position for their son, daughter, mother or father.

Unemployment figures quoted to me recently for North Queensland showed a rate of 9.4 per cent. This figure should not be viewed as the decimation of our workforce, because the figures fluctuate. But, if the overall rate of unemployment is 9.4 per cent, then youth and senior rates would be significantly higher than that. Again, this is a major concern not just to me but to everyone in our city and region.

What we need to find out is why business is not hiring. There are many theories out there and there is much finger-pointing about what government should spend and how much more we should spend on whatever area of self-interest people may have, but that does not answer the question of why business is not hiring. I do not have an answer as to why, when someone leaves a small business, they are not replaced. I do not have an answer as to why small business will not trial a young person with no experience who just wants to work. I do not have an answer as to why business will not access the pool of talent in the over-50s, who would bring a proven work ethic and the stability of future, where they have decided they want to stay in our city. I do not have an answer as to why, when our markets demand our hospitality and retail services remain open for longer and longer, our businesses are employing fewer and fewer people. Sure, the cost of employment is cited as a reason here, but we have always been a high-wage country. We have always, as a city and as a country, been highly productive to counter that.

The issue, to me, always seems to be industrial relations reform. Every article and book I read points to the dropping of our productivity, and the slowing pace of reform in this area. But please do not confuse this with a statement which may link up the Productivity
Commission's upcoming report into penalty rates and minimum wages. I want to know which of the government regulations and laws that are preventing people from getting a chance to secure a job can be removed.

I am currently reading Paul Kelly's *Triumph and Demise*. In that book he takes a swipe at both sides of this parliament. He says that the reforms of the Hawke and Keating era and early Howard era were productivity driven. But, when the boom arrived—and it was sustained for so long—reform dropped as we in this place stood back and watched our economy and our wealth grow without any effort. We, in this place, had become complacent on productivity. We, in this place, must share the blame and correct these errors.

One of the biggest issues is replacement employment. Too often I find employers in small business telling me they simply do not replace people when they leave because either the training is too hard or they do the work themselves to save money as they fight the internet sales. I am an auctioneer by trade, and you do not have to have an economics degree to get that licence. I worked through the Keating recession and I have seen a fair bit of insolvency in my time. These things I know to be true: a business intent on survival only will fail; a business looking only to lower costs will not expand; and a business seeking only to look after their existing customers will not find new ones—and the existing ones will eventually leave. Business must be brave and must look to grow and must look to opportunities to get better at every opportunity. We simply cannot afford to be negative.

Much like Minister Scott Morrison said last week on social security—and what I hope will be a purposeful conversation when the Treasurer releases the *Intergenerational report* this week—we need to have an open and honest conversation regarding employment in this country. It must include the small business people who carry the risk and do the paperwork. If it is a regulatory issue, then let us work on breaking down those barriers. I know that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Christian Porter, is keen to fight for small business and grow our economy. If it is an issue around opening times, security levels, banking conditions, penalty rates, transport, attitude, education, training, social security, racism, cronyism, being overqualified or underqualified, drivers licences, local government, state government, taxation, indexation, bracket creep, or a combination of all these things, we need to get working on it.

I was listening to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Defence, Darren Chester, speak yesterday about the scourge of methamphetamine. He was able to tell this place that he did not have the answer. What he did say was that he knew there was a problem and he was willing to work with any stakeholder to get the answer which works for them. That is the truth of it. The answer must be the one that works for them. For me, it comes down to flexibility and fairness. It must come down to the employee recognising that the employer is the one with the risks and is paying the bills. That must have some weight in the discussion. The employer must recognise that the employee may have a completely different motivation for turning up to work. That must be okay. Neither must abuse their position.

One suggestion that was made to me shows my region's perspective. While I know this cannot work in a commercial world, it is a glimpse of how my region feels left out and vulnerable. Its intentions are pure, so to speak. If a government road or construction tender is awarded to a large contractor from out of town, then the local subcontractors want and need some of that work. If that local council, or some other body, were able to break up that tender
and hand the work to local subcontractors, keeping it under the winning tender price, then that money would wash through our local economies more than once and money would stay in our local communities. I know there are many impracticalities with this idea and it could never work in any real commercial sense, but my community continues to see work handed to large contractors and out-of-town subcontractors, and locals are not getting a lick on the way through. It frustrates the living daylights out of my community, and I know that many communities throughout this country feel exactly the same way.

I have said it before in this House, and I will say it again: government does not create wealth; business creates wealth. Government can only set the scene, lay out the parameters and let business get on with it. When wealth is created people get employed, and further wealth is created. As Minister Scott Morrison, the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, and the Treasurer, Joe Hockey, have all said: the best form of social security that can be provided is a job. My city is focused on an answer. We, as a country, must be focused on finding the answers which will work best in each region. We must be prepared to get them to work for them and not tie them up in red and green tape.

That brings me to the second part of my contribution on these bills. It has to do with Townsville's future health needs and, in many ways, it works hand in glove with the first part of my speech. I have spoken often about our Defence Force and their efforts in places such as Timor Leste, Iraq and Afghanistan. I have also spoken of the ADF personnel who did not make it home. Each of us here carries with them a great amount of respect for our service personnel. Each of us is very aware of the issues surrounding PTSD in service ranks. But it is also prevalent in our day-to-day society. It is said that one in five of us will have a mental health episode in our lifetime. Depression and anxiety are with our families and our communities constantly. Often it is the police, ambulance and fire department who have to deal with the outcomes when things get out of hand. Our hospital in Townsville is a great and modern facility and filled with people and professionals who care a lot about what they do. But when it comes to mental health, there is a void.

Our hardworking nurses and doctors at the Townsville Hospital do not have a facility where patients can be housed long enough to get their heads right and get back to their family and their friends and get on with their lives. Our hospital only has an acute ward where the meds are issued and the patient stabilised. They are then released into the community, sometimes without a home to go, and then they become the police service's problem. They end up in the criminal legal system. They end up, in many instances, in jail or, worse, dead. If they want to get access to a mental health facility where they can really deal with their illness, they have to travel to Brisbane. That causes separation from family, and that is certainly not good enough—and it is not a good outcome. We have to be near our loved ones. Often, when mental illness strikes, we take it out on the people we know will cop it—our families. When that reaches breaking point, there is a wound that must be healed. It cannot be properly healed from 1,400 kilometres away—not properly and not holistically.

Townsville needs a dedicated mental health facility where our people, be they ADF personnel, police, ambos, teachers, check-out chicks or MPs, can go and get themselves right. They need to have quality treatment in our part of the world. We need to tie it in to the teaching side of our university, James Cook University, and the Townsville Hospital's teaching efforts. If we do that, we can drive our tax dollar further, with quality treatment and
observations driven by students ensuring that the government spend is washed through our economy more than once. That is a side benefit of the training in a controlled environment. The real benefit is to the people with an illness treated close to home and close to loved ones to a standard where they can once again cope and succeed in their lives.

Mental health is—if you watch the ads—costing our economy over $10 billion a year. It wrecks lives and it ends in death, at its worst. At the other end is a bunch of people who deal with their issues and get on with their lives. I have always said that, when you have an episode with your mental health, there is a tunnel through which you travel and not a cave in which you dwell.

North Queensland has a growing population. We have a large number of defence personnel, and we are proud of them and their families. We are a retirement destination of choice for many defence personnel and their families. They live and work alongside us every day. We are one community with a single goal when it comes to mental health: that we get the treatment we need in an environment which is most conducive to good results. I have lost three friends to suicide. I have also had two mates die in single car accidents on straight stretches of road. Townsville has seen young people with great promise take their own lives—and very recently. We must do better in this space; we simply must.

I know funds are tight and I know that the issue was not an election commitment from my side. But I want my electorate and my city to know that we are more than roads and dams; we need the social infrastructure as well. My government is a government which knows this and will work with any community prepared to have a go. If you have a plan, we have a way to get a result. But we have to work hard, and my community is prepared to do that. The Minister for Health, Sussan Ley, comes from regional Australia and has seen these things in her role as a member of her community. We have a Prime Minister who brought mental health into the sunshine when he was Minister for Health. We have a Minister for Education who, along with the Prime Minister, was instrumental in creating Headspace and rolling out that vital program of early intervention. I am however putting this government on notice as to what my city needs to cope with mental health issues. We need a hand up to get it off the ground. We need to build this facility and we need to get on with it. So I will be calling on all my ministers to make sure that happens. The good thing about it, though, it that I have ministers who are prepared to listen to us, who will come to our communities and sit down with us as stakeholders and have those conversations.

I support these bills but will not be supporting the amendment proposed by the member for Watson. I stand by what this government is trying to do in this space. We must live within our means and we are going about our business the way we should. I thank the House.

**Dr LEIGH (Fraser)** (13:02): On 6 August 2013 the member for North Sydney, now the Treasurer, said:

I'm not afraid to accept responsibility and I am not afraid to be accountable. We will own it from day one ... We will be responsible for the Australian economy.

What Australian economy was it that the government inherited? That is outlined in the Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook. The Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook is not a creature of the Labor Party. It is indeed a creation of Peter Costello, through the Charter of Budget Honesty. It ensures that governments can no longer pretend when they win office that they were unaware of the state of the books. Prepared independently by the secretaries of
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Treasury and Finance, it makes absolutely clear the state of the books when a government takes office. The member for Cook understands this. He said at the despatch box opposite that the Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook reflects the true state of the economy when the government takes over. Perhaps that is why so many pundits are suggesting that the member for Cook will be Treasurer before the year is out.

In the Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook a range of forecasts were made. The deficit in 2014-15 was going to be $24 billion; net debt $212 billion; unemployment forecast to peak at 6.25 per cent; consumer confidence well above average levels; and growing wages. Since this government took office we have seen a significant increase in the deficit for 2014-15, a significant increase in net debt for 2014-15, unemployment higher than was forecast in the Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook and consumer confidence in the doldrums.

We have seen real wages stagnating. So much for Senator Abetz’s claim that there is a wages breakout—in fact, we are getting some of the most sluggish wages growth that Australia has seen in 20 years. And this is off the back of a significant rise in inequality, where wages growth for those in the top 10th has been three times faster than wages growth for those in the bottom 10th. From the period 1975 to 2014, real wages growth is 72 per cent for the top 10th and just 23 per cent for the bottom 10th. If cleaners and checkout workers had enjoyed the same proportionate wage gains as financial dealers and anaesthetists, they would be $16,000 a year better off today. So stagnant wage growth hurts those at the bottom of the distribution.

What is also hurting Australia is the fact that the Treasurer is in breach of the law. The Treasurer is in breach of a law brought into this parliament by Peter Costello called the Charter of Budget Honesty. He is refusing to table the Intergenerational report within five years, as the Charter of Budget Honesty requires. This is the first Treasurer in Australian history to breach this provision of the Charter of Budget Honesty—to be in breach of the law. Not only is this Treasurer breaching the Charter of Budget Honesty provisions on releasing the Intergenerational report but he is also refusing to acknowledge what Peter Costello laid down in the Charter of Budget Honesty.

What every independent commentator recognises and what the member for Cook—possibly the next Treasurer of Australia—recognises is that the Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook is the independent state of the books when the government takes office. Asked whether PEFO was wrong, Mr Hockey said:

Yes it was, because it didn’t properly account for various losses that needed to be addressed and various capital replenishments such as the Reserve Bank that needed to be addressed.

This is simply not right. The Pre-election economic and fiscal outlook is an accurate statement of the state of the books when this government took over, and it does not include decisions that the government has made since coming to office, like giving $9 billion to the Reserve Bank, with no evidence that the Reserve Bank asked for or needed that money; like giving $1 billion back to multibillion-dollar firms who need a tax handout from this government like Prince Philip needs a knighthood; like making decisions to put in place a gold-plated paid parental leave scheme that gives five times as much to those at the top than those at the bottom. Decisions like this have cost the government bottom line.

In addition to that, we have the government’s decision to hand over $3 billion of public money for the East West Link without a rigorous cost-benefit analysis. Auditor-General, Ian
McPhee, is now pursuing that issue in a formal investigation. He has made preliminary inquiries with Infrastructure Australia and the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development. In a letter to the member for Grayndler, he said that his audit will examine whether the commitment of $3 billion of public money had been informed by ‘appropriate advice’ and ‘sound governance arrangements’. That audit will be an interesting assessment as to this government’s commitment to fiscal prudence. How can it be fiscally prudent to give money to a state government before they need to pay the money—to give two $1.5 billion cheques to the Napthine government in advance payments in June 2014? As a sideline, it also breached a federal coalition promise made before the 2013 election that there would be no infrastructure projects of more than $100 million made without a rigorous cost-benefit analysis.

The Australian economy faces some serious challenges. The Reserve Bank has made clear its views about economic growth, showing that growth is continuing at a below-trend pace, with ‘domestic demand growth overall quite weak’. We have unemployment worse than it was at the peak of the global financial crisis. As Peter Martin pointed out in a column on 10 February, if you look at the total number of hours worked per month, it has scarcely moved since the end of 2011. We have had significant population growth over that period and new workers joining the labour market, and yet the total number of hours has not budged. That reflects the growing trend towards part-time work. Under-utilisation is a serious problem in the Australian labour market and it is rising under this government’s watch. This government is trying to hide facts from the Australian people. They not only hid the Intergenerational report, breaking the law that requires them to bring it out, but have withheld from the budget the family impact statement. We know from freedom of information requests that they were prepared by Treasury and given to the government, but then the government failed to include them in the budget.

We have a Treasurer who seems to get so many fundamental facts wrong. He thinks fuel excise is progressive, but then, when faced with the evidence, refuses to acknowledge that it is a regressive tax. He says that poor people do not drive cars, when in fact his own data shows that the majority of people in the bottom 10th of the distribution do drive cars. He says his electorate in North Sydney has ‘one of the highest bulk-billing rates in Australia’, but it has one of the lowest in all of Sydney. And he has claimed—and this is a real corker—that Australians are working half the year for the government, that the income tax burden is requiring Australians to work half the year for the government. But, as everyone knows, you put all the taxes together—look at local, state and federal government as a share of GDP—and it is a third, not a half. If you look at income tax—the tax that the Treasurer was referring to—the average tax rate is about 19 per cent, not 50 per cent. That is an error showing that the Treasurer is out by more than a factor of two. I do not know who he talks to—if you want to find somebody whose average tax rate is close to 50 per cent, you need to find someone with a $10 million income. Maybe they are the kinds of people who are informing the Treasurer’s thinking. It might explain why the Treasurer brought down a budget which takes $1 in every $10 from the pockets of the poorest single parents while making rich singles better off.
This would be the wrong decision for Australia at any time, but particularly after the vast rise in inequality that Australia has seen over the past generation. As Peter Martin wrote in his column:

Specific businesses are at a standstill. Universities don't know what fees they will be allowed to charge, students enrolling don't know what fees they will eventually be asked to pay, doctors don't know what will happen to their incomes, electricity generators don't know what will happen to the renewable energy target, big businesses don't know whether they will be hit with the 1.5 per cent paid parental leave levy and what it will be used for.

That is why business confidence is in the doldrums. The recent National Australia Bank survey found a broad sense of unease across the community. ANZ-Roy Morgan Consumer Confidence shows, as chief economist, Warren Hogan, says, 'a disappointing lack of momentum'. He said:

… households are clearly concerned about the economic outlook and job security …

NAB's chief economist, Alan Oster, said:

The trend in business conditions has lost momentum.

When we look at the ACCI survey which measures confidence of chief executives, it has the worst results in the 23 year history of the survey. ACCI chief executive, Kate Carnell, said:

Business owners are feeling pretty grim at the moment after a fairly bleak Christmas period …

We saw a glimmer of hope in the middle of the year with a slight upturn in conditions, but that has now been reversed.

She goes on to say:

Generally speaking, the climate for investment is terrible at present and businesses don't see much need to expand their capacity.

So much for the shot of adrenaline that this government was going to bring to Australian business confidence.

The lack of confidence among Australia's business community may come because of the decidedly mixed signals the coalition is sending on foreign investment. Labor supports increased transparency for Australia's foreign investment regime, but what we do not support are measures which will be a red-tape nightmare for potential investors and which will drive investors in agricultural land elsewhere at a time when our agricultural sector is hungry for capital. Without foreign investment in Australian agriculture, there would be fewer jobs and those that exist would be worse paid. Yet, knowing this, one of the Treasurer's first decisions was to knock off American firm Archer Daniel Midlands' bid for GrainCorp—the first time a Treasurer of Australia has knocked off a significant United States foreign investment bid. It happened under this so-called open-for-business government.

The flip-flopping on policy issues was best illustrated in a column by Peter Costello on 3 February in the Daily Telegraph. I do not often agree with Peter Costello but even a stopped clock is right twice a day. He was talking about the parental leave scheme, which he called a 'regressive' scheme that was 'not a Liberal policy', which 'Australia could not afford', and it was 'a bad policy'. He went on to talk about the way in which that policy and its backflip were articulated. He said:
The ambitious woodchucks eager for promotion who have been extolling its virtues to the public now say it is right to drop it. It's one thing to change your mind on principle. It's another to spin on the head of a coin for the sake of advancement. Respect is hard won but easily lost in politics.

I suspect we are going to see some more of that spinning on the head of a coin for the sake of advancement from many members of the Abbott government over coming weeks.

Having gone uphill and down dale to tell Australians why they should pay more to go to the doctor, the government is now telling us why GPs should be listened to. The fact is: if this government were serious about listening to GPs, then it would have acted to drop its GP tax many months ago. I held a roundtable with general practitioners in my office recently and I would hear stories from GP after GP about the early detection of problems when people come to their and thus saving the health system money—catching the problem at the early primary health care end rather than the later, much more expensive hospital end.

We have a budget that the government thinks can be solved by marketing—just by getting the Australian people to pay a bit more, to spruke the Intergenerational Report. But this problem is not the marketing, it is the product. This government's economic policy is the Ford Edsel, the Betamax video tape, the Spork of budgets. This government's last budget is a product that the Australian people do not need and comes at a price that our community cannot afford. Australia needs a fair set of solutions that deal honestly with our challenges. Labor has contributed, as the shadow Treasurer has pointed out, the first salvo in the battle of ideas this week. We will continue to come forward with positive ideas to make Australia great again.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (13:17): I rise to speak on the Appropriation Bill No. 3 2014-15 and related bills. These appropriation bills authorise approximately $1.74 billion in additional expenditure for the 2014-15 budget and onwards. They provide for the ordinary annual capital works and services of government; they provide payments to states, territories and local government authorities; and they fund the services of parliamentary departments. They are measures to save money for the Commonwealth, but at the same time judiciously they fund those initiatives which become an integral part of any community across this nation. My electorate of Hasluck understands that we need to pay down Labor's debt, but I am disappointed at the position we have been left in. Contrary to the previous member's comments that governments knowing full well what the books look like and what the Treasury shelves contain in the way of funding key initiatives, every government I have ever known or worked for, whenever there has been a change, has had the challenge of ascertaining what is currently within the Treasury coffers and what is not available for some of the commitments they have made.

I am disappointed that the number of measures that would benefit our community are now not within reach. I am disappointed every time I get a call from a community organisation because I have to advise them that they may have fewer resources in the future. These organisations play a significant role in the way they help families who struggle financially and who at times get themselves into a situation where the advice from these organisations makes an incredible difference. The coordination they do in referring people to the right agencies, solving problems as well as working through with the family measures they can undertake in order to get themselves out of the situation that they are in. I think of some of the community facilities that local governments, organisations and groups of people have raised with me.
There are those who have retired from the workforce and who want to build a new centre to replace the existing ageing one, and I indicate to them that I will certainly go into bat for them. I tell them I would certainly be approaching the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance to look at the possibility of funding being in the pipeline of forward estimates, while also indicating to them, because of the economic circumstances that we find ourselves in, that it may not be possible to fund them within the next two years. I think too about playing grounds that are associated with those community facilities; they provide a place for mothers with children to come together and spend time in the centre. Such engagement is an important part of belonging. When they ask you whether there is a possibility for the funding of replacement playground equipment, it is challenging; again you have to deliver some hope and aspiration but at the same time indicating the reality.

In my electorate I have a number of men's sheds, and the number has grown substantially. They are great initiatives that bring those who have retired out of their homes to connect with other men, to talk about some of the challenges that they experience, to learn new skills and to enjoy the comradery of other men who have retired. Again, they want to expand the Kalamunda Men's Shed would like to build another section to have a metalwork component to what they do. But at the moment that is not feasible, although there are opportunities of looking at Lotterywest and other charitable organisations to assist.

In my electorate, I have worked with a group of women to create the powder room. They came to me with a concept about the number of fly-in fly-out wives who do not have an adult conversation at night, or who do not have adult connection, and the need for women to support each other. In working together we acquired a building from the Shire of Kalamunda, who were generous in giving a peppercorn rental. The shire came to the party and refurbished the building so that it could be used by the women. They would like to have it operating full-time, but there is no capacity. Again, this is because the financial avenues that were open to them previously cannot support what they hoped to do. Nevertheless, I continue to work with them to make sure that women who play an important part within their families, and within the community, have a centre they can go to and share experiences, thoughts and ideas and look at some enterprising activities that they can do together. The spin-off of that is their teenage daughters have also asked if they can become part of the powder room. It is a great concept, and they are going to have the support of the men's clubs.

I look at these sporting and recreational facilities that do not exist within my electorate. It is a challenging area when you think of the socioeconomic dynamics. The three local governments that I meet with regularly talk to me about key initiatives that they would like to undertake not only out of the ratepayers funds that come in to them, but also the opportunity of some shared arrangements with the Commonwealth and states, including Lotterywest, again in Western Australia, to provide the best possible facilities that engage and support the people that they represent within their local government catchment areas. It is disappointing when you see great ideas that are not going to be able to be supported to the extent that they should. But it does not mean that they have not accessed some Commonwealth funding. At least their planning and the work that they do are developed in phases. So they still bring to the community those things that are important, but it would be better still if there were the immediacy of funding.
Within the Shire of Kalamunda, the rugby union club that we have is quite a strong club, connecting some 400 players and families. They would love a new clubroom and facilities that would enable them to host the east metropolitan competition and engage clubs across the metropolitan area from Guildford through to Armadale. They need lighting that allows them to have night games and so be part of the night competition, but there is no funding for that at the moment. They will continue to have that aspiration and continue to work together to get that in the ultimate future. The Kalamunda union league club have a similar issue with a ground that is on an old rubbish site. They have had to develop facilities. The Shire of Kalamunda have built the ground up so that it is not sinking. Again, it is a club that would like to have facilities that meet the needs of their growing numbers of players who are part of that community. Kostera oval, where there is the AFL component of the football codes, also has the same challenge. They need an improvement in the quality and the size of the grounds. Again, this is through the process of finding that we do not have the level of funding that was there when the Howard government left office—in the Future Fund and in other funds. That is not an avenue through which they can reach.

There are unmet mental health needs within my electorate. I have had forums on the issues that face families who are confronted with challenges around somebody whom they love and care for having a mental health problem. It would be good to access a raft of programs that are localised and available. I think of the unmet aged care needs in my electorate. At the moment I am chairing a working group with a number of key leaders, including Sue Bilich, from the Shire of Kalamunda, where we are looking at sites within the Shire of Kalamunda. At the moment, if you become old and you need aged care then there is nowhere for you to stay within Kalamunda. The waiting lists for the existing facilities are substantial. So you have families taking their mother or their father down to Rockingham or to Salter Point or to Joondalup. The public transport on a weekend to these facilities is not brilliant, so if they have an aged husband or wife, we are, in a sense, separating partnerships of a husband-wife combination by putting them into facilities where they are distant to each other. The appropriation processes are absolutely critical in the minds of constituents, because they look to Commonwealth governments to fund a number of these initiatives, but because of the squandering over the last six years that capacity is not there.

I have within my electorate the Perth Heat baseball club. It is an incredible club that has had outstanding achievements over the last five years, including four national titles. They have a ground where the facilities need upgrading. If there were the opportunity to upgrade these facilities then I know from their discussions with me that they would like to be part of an Asian competition for baseball. This would grow the interest of competition between our Asian neighbours and create the opportunity for Perth to become a key, central point for national baseball in the way in which we compete on the international level. Their ambition also is to have a test series between Australia, New Zealand, England and South Africa. The other stage they would like to move to is bringing American baseball teams down here to play in Australia so that we get exposed to some of the players that we often hear about, who are iconic within American society. But it is only a small amount and part of the challenge is that I, along with every other member, compete for what is left within the available funding. The challenge is in the way in which we have to consider providing limited resources.
I have a strong Arabic community that would like a facility of their own—a hall—which they do not have to hire in which they can come together and where the representatives of Arab nations that live within my electorate can—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour and the member will have leave to continue his remarks at that time.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Health Care

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (13:30): I rise today to speak on the government's unfair and cruel GP tax. This tax is particularly devastating to the people of regional and rural Australia, who will be hit hard by this doctor tax. In my area of northern New South Wales, locals know you just cannot trust the National Party when it comes to health care and hospitals. There are lots of rumours going around today about this GP tax but, whatever the Prime Minister may announce, we know it will be back—make no mistake about it. He has said he is committed to it. He remains committed to it. This is all about the Liberal-National Party destroying Medicare and destroying bulk-billing—that is their agenda.

Let's run through what the PM has announced so far. In the past, he has announced a $7 GP tax, a $20 rebate cut and a $5 GP tax. He has also announced four years worth of cuts to Medicare rebates. So what is next? Who knows how many more changes he will make? The one thing we do know is that on at least 53 occasions the Prime Minister has supported the GP tax as good or decent policy that he is committed to. On 7.30 on 2 September last year, he said it was 'good policy'. On 9 October he again said it was 'good policy'. In question time on 1 October, he said: 'It is right and proper that we have more price signals in our health system.' The fact is that the Prime Minister and the Liberal-National Party remain committed to a GP tax. Be under no illusions: this government is the greatest threat to Medicare that we have ever seen in its 30-year history. (Time expired)

Poppy Park

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (13:31): 21 March will mark the annual Penrith festival. But this year there will be a very, very special event for all of the community participating—the opening of Poppy Park. 102,804 people from our country have served and lost their lives in a conflict overseas. These 102,804 people will be commemorated with a poppy each, all placed into the earth just behind Judges car park in Penrith. It will be open for all the community—in fact, all Australians—to participate.

You can buy a poppy from either popppark.org.au or from Remember A Soldier. They are also being sold at Westfield Penrith for only $9.95. Volunteers can plant one of the 102,804 poppies from 15 March. Our local schools will then get involved, laying poppies from 20 March, with the Minister for Veterans' Affairs then opening the park and planting the last poppy on 21 March. This exhibition will be open for five weeks for us all to remember every single one of these 102,804 soldiers.

The wonderful thing about this event is that the poppies will be assembled and then, after the event, boxed up by the local Thorndale Foundation, which is providing jobs for those in our community with disability. I would like to commend Owen and Martin Rogers for their work—(Time expired)
Health Care

Mr GILES (Scullin) (13:33): For more than 40 years there have been two great truths when it comes to health policy in Australia. On this side of the House, the Labor Party has stood and will stand for universal health care through Medicare. On the other side, the conservatives have been characterised by their determination to rip it apart. They tore down Medibank and they are still committed to ripping up Medicare's universal health care and, with it, the social wage that is so important.

It is striking that amongst the chaos and dysfunction that has characterised this government there has been some consistency. The Prime Minister has said not once, not twice but on 53 separate occasions that he supports the GP tax. So let's take today's announcement with more than just a grain of salt, particularly because government members continue to describe this policy as desirable and, indeed, as good policy. This of course flies in the face of the evidence and it flies in the face of the views of the Australian people, particularly those in my electorate of Scullin where 93 per cent of GP visits are bulk-billed currently and where nearly 10,000 people have signed a petition calling on this government to scrap its plans to introduce a GP tax.

I will say this one more time to government members, and maybe they will listen. The Australian people know the government cannot be trusted. They know that, for Liberals, attacking universal health care is in their DNA. Only Labor stands for universal health care, only Labor stands for Medicare and only Labor says, 'Your health care depends not on your credit card but on your Medicare card.' (Time expired)

Health Care

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (13:35): The Labor Party just have not got the memo. They have not got the memo about the GP co-payment. The Minister for Health is making an announcement at this very moment. Unfortunately, their whole tactic of having an orchestrated campaign of 90-second statements on this for the next 30 minutes just means that they need to catch up. The announcement is going to be made that the co-payment will not exist.

But, also, there have been a lot of other claims made here about the Liberal Party's stance on Medicare. During the period of the Howard government, it was often said that we were the greatest friend Medicare ever had. When we were last in government we saw Medicare being expanded to allied health, mental health and dentistry. We were strong supporters of Medicare and remain so.

On the budget measure from last year, it is very clear that that did not have a lot of support from health professionals and medical professionals. But I have to say to the Labor Party that it is a terrible shame that the posters you have made are now going to be wasted. It is finished. It is over. We are going to go on much stronger with Medicare—(Time expired)

Health Care

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:36): I thank the member opposite in telling us that we did not get the memo for confirming the rumour that we have been hearing. We read the papers yesterday. We have certainly got the memo. But, most importantly, we remember the Prime Minister's promise—no cuts to health. We know what happened to that. We have watched since last year's budget. We have watched the government attack Medicare time and
time again with a price signal, a value signal, a $7 GP tax, a $20 rebate cut, a $5 GP tax and four years worth of cuts to Medicare rebates.

The only signal that has resonated for us and for the public is that this government are hell-bent on their agenda to rip apart our universal healthcare system and to Americanise Medicare. We know that the attacks will continue. We know that there will be another attack coming because the Prime Minister has told us on 53 occasions what a good and decent policy it is to rip up Medicare. Now we are watching a Prime Minister making a commitment that this is over, that the GP tax is gone and that he is the best friend of Medicare. But this is about his leadership. This is about shoring up his numbers. We know the attacks will come back. We will stand for Medicare. Labor have always stood for Medicare. We created Medicare, and we will protect Medicare.

Food Labelling

Mr HOGAN (Page) (13:38): I welcome the government's announcement that we are going to implement a food and grocery code of conduct to ensure fair and transparent commercial dealings between suppliers and retailers. This is great news for our local farmers and producers, and it comes only a week after we said that we would do country-of-origin food labelling. Under this new code, the consumer watchdog, the ACCC, will be able to take action against any retailer or wholesaler who breaches the code. It covers contractual dealings such as supplier-funded promotions, labelling, shelf space and positioning, intellectual property and payments for wastage—and that is an interesting one because you can have the issue where you have supplied one of the big supermarket chains product and if that product is damaged after it arrives at the supermarket, depending on the contract there is a question about who pays for that damage. This code of conduct is going to make that much clearer and much fairer. It will ensure that relationships between retailers and suppliers are built on good faith and will help them work together to achieve the positive outcomes for the health and vitality of our grocery sector, and is very much for the good of Australian consumers. The code applies to retailers and wholesalers, and features an obligation to enter into these agreements in writing. There are minimum standards of behaviour. There are dispute resolution mechanisms and the ACCC will enforce compliance within the code.

Indi Electorate: Alexandra Cup

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (13:39): As you would know, thoroughbred horseracing is alive and well in rural Australia, particularly in my electorate of Indi. I had the enormous pleasure on Saturday to go to the Alexandra Cup. It was a wonderful day with terrific crowds, great fields, excellent prizes, a fantastic atmosphere and such a warm welcome when I arrived from Barb Gamble, the treasurer; and Marg Tranter—thank you very much.

One of the highlights of the day was being able to congratulate Dr Doug Norman on his being awarded life membership. Doug is a traditional country vet, well loved by all—farmers, pet owners and the whole community. His two daughters, whom I was proud to meet, are both vets, and his son is an electrician. Not only has he supported the racing club as a vet, he has also offered significant sponsorship to make the day such a success.

It was a wonderful day, and I am very, very pleased to be able to say thank you to the wonderful committee—and to the whole community that make it possible—particularly to
Chris Walsh, president; secretary, Robyn Walsh—no relation; to Kerry Burge for being my wonderful host on the day; to all the team; and particularly to the men's woodworking club. Thanks for making it such a fantastic event.

**Livingston, Mr John**

Mr Ewen Jones (Herbert) (13:40): Townsville celebrates 150 years of settlement next year. I want to speak about a man who has been at the forefront of our city's educational excellence for nearly a fifth of that time. John Livingston has been principal at Kirwan State high school for nearly 30 years. In that time, he has seen the school develop from a tiny place on the edge of town to a massive corporate entity with a huge student base, international recognition for education, fantastic music and arts programs, and sporting excellence rivalled by few. More than that, John Livingston has loved his school, his students and the role of the educator in everyday of his professional life. Whether you were there 25 years ago, or whether you have graduated last year, he has touched your life with a love of learning, and has a capacity to inspire students, parents and citizens to want better for themselves and for each other. I count John as a friend and mentor. He is very sick at the moment and I want him to know that I love him as a mate. I want him to know that if none of my children attended his school, his mantra of doing better and giving opportunity—

**Health Care**

Mr Stephen Jones (Throsby) (13:42): I wish the honourable member for Herbert and his colleague back home in his electorate all the very best.

The tragic fact is this: in New South Wales this month, public hospitals are being forced to hold fundraisers to make up for the shortfall in funding that has been left to them by this terrible Abbott government. Over $16 billion has been ripped out of hospitals in New South Wales. That is on top of the $3 billion that has been ripped out by the New South Wales Baird government—$16 billion by the Abbott government and $3 billion by the Baird government. It will take a hell of a lot of cake stalls to fill that hole in hospital and health funding.

You have got to ask yourself: against that backdrop, where are the New South Wales MPs? Are they standing up in their caucus room defending hospitals and health care in New South Wales? Where are the National Party MPs? Where are the regional Liberal MPs? The answer—they are nowhere to be seen.

According to the member for Boothby, somewhere in Canberra today, the health minister is going to stand up and make a new announcement about a new health policy. By my reckoning, that is going to be the fourth policy they have had on health in four months and the fifth since the election. It really seems that they are finding it harder to dump their GP tax than they are to dump their Prime Minister.

**Dobell Electorate: The Glen**

Mrs McNamara (Dobell) (13:44): I would like to thank Joe Coyte, manager of The Glen Central Coast Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre, for hosting the Hon. Sussan Ley, Minister for Health, during the minister's recent visit to the Central Coast. The minister gladly accepted an invitation to tour the facility and to learn about the programs offered by Joe and his team.

The Glen is a leading alcohol and drug rehabilitation centre for men.
I have been actively working with The Glen for a while and recently had the pleasure of announcing $157,000 of federal government funding to enable the construction of two new houses to accommodate participants in The Glen's rehabilitation programs. This funding will deliver 12 new beds as well as some much-needed building works, including plumbing, construction of footpaths, and landscaping. The Glen offers a long-term residential program based on the 12-step programs of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, with consistent and achievable outcomes. I am proud to say that, from 1 July 2015, there will be more beds at The Glen for men who suffer from substance abuse and associated issues.

The Glen does tremendous work in our local community, and I was proud to showcase this outstanding facility to the Minister for Health, enabling her to experience their work firsthand. I also want to congratulate the local Bunnings store, who have worked in partnership with The Glen in offering these men opportunities to get back into employment. They are doing fantastic work, working with Bunnings. I also thank the corporate members, who have made more funding for The Glen possible. Thank you.

**Health Care**

**Mr CHAMPION** (Wakefield) (13:45): Woven into the Liberal Party's healthcare DNA is a complete hatred of Medicare—complete hostility towards Medicare. The only thing that tops that is their fear of public affection for Medicare. In the 1975 federal election, we had Fraser committing to keeping Medibank; but, when he got in in 1978, he introduced Medicare part 3, which was—guess what? It was a co-payment of $20. In the 1980s, we had Howard calling Medicare a 'miserable, cruel fraud' and promising to 'pull it right apart'. That was his promise before the 1996 election—promised to keep it, hand on heart. Then he let bulk-billing fall to such low rates before the 2004 election, which he was going to lose, so he did a little fix on Medicare. Then we had **Fightback!** in the 1990s, when I joined the Labor Party. I remember **Fightback!** well. They committed, on page 7, to getting rid of bulk-billing for everybody but pensioners and concession card holders. So, woven into the Liberal Party's DNA is a hostility for Medicare.

We had Mr Abbott pledging in **Real solutions** not to do anything to Medicare. But what do we find once he is in government? We find an on-again, off-again, on-again, off-again GP tax—first of all $7, then $5—distressing doctors, distressing patients and distressing the community. And we know that it will be back.

**Ryan Electorate: St Andrew’s Catholic Primary School**

**Mrs PRENTICE** (Ryan) (13:47): Recently, I was delighted to join Councillor Andrew Wines and attend the opening of the St Andrew's school parliament at Ferny Grove, in my electorate of Ryan. All of the students from year 6 get involved in the parliament. They form committees, the head of each committee is a minister and then these committees develop bills. The bills are about key issues and key programs for the school, from supporting the local environment and doing outreach community work to doing sporting activities. They set out what they want to achieve in the year ahead. It was a very formal process. They had a Speaker and a Governor-General. They had a procession coming into the hall, and of course it was supported by parents and family. They had over 12 committees, which established all the goals for the year ahead, and they put forward some very well thought out ideas and plans for what they wanted to achieve.
I was delighted to have the opportunity to speak to the students, and I challenged them to come up with a petition that they could raise throughout the community and that I would present to the parliament for them; and to perhaps look at doing their own 90-second speeches about some of their achievements.

I congratulate these students on their dedication and on the very thought provoking bills that they presented.

**Health Care**

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (13:48): In the less than 12 months since we first saw the idea floated in the public arena, Tony Abbott has announced a $7 GP tax, a $20 cut from the rebate to doctors and then a $5 GP tax. Today we have heard rumours that cabinet has dumped the GP tax, but the public of Australia will not be fooled, because every time the Abbott government say they are walking away from the GP tax it seems they take a step closer to it. This is a government with a product it was to sell—a GP tax. The problem is the Australian public knows a faulty product when it sees it.

The electorate of Chifley, which I represent, has the highest rate of bulk-billing in the nation, at 99 per cent. Why? Because doctors in our area know income should not be a barrier to getting quality health care. They also know that seeing a GP helps avoid patients turning up at our hospitals with more serious conditions later.

Labor built Medicare. Labor believes in Medicare. Labor will fight for Medicare. This government has spent 18 months at war with doctors and patients—18 months in a war with Medicare. This is a war we cannot and will not let Tony Abbott win.

**Queensland: Cyclone Marcia**

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (13:50): The recovery process continues in Central Queensland after Cyclone Marcia, but it is a long and difficult road back to where we were before, and people are feeling tired and frustrated. I can assure the people of Capricornia that I have not been idle. I have been out in the field with senior ministers and pushing for further help in our communities. This week I am pushing for this crisis to be elevated to a category C or D crisis under the NDRRA system. Advice suggests that a category C rating will offer local people, small business, primary producers and local councils the maximum assistance available to recover. I am hammering on doors in Canberra to push for this and other help. This includes help for small business, workers, farmers and councils.

I acknowledge there has been a vicious smear campaign of misinformation during this crisis. I am not going to engage in that. This is no time to be throwing stones or to be irrational; it is a time to work as a team. I am working with Queensland's agriculture minister, state member for Rockhampton Bill Byrne, to get on with helping people. I thank him for his cooperation. My priority is to get things done for Capricornia.

I would like to acknowledge, once again, the wonderful work done by the councils, Ergon, the SES, the Army, and police and ambulance services, as well as the many volunteer organisations who have assisted so many people. Thank you.

**Health Care**

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:51): There is a Labor Party branch member in my electorate who, for every single time the Liberals and the Nationals have been in government,
has a sticker calling on the community to rally to save Medicare. This time is no exception. Whilst we might have some people from the government standing up and saying, 'Don't worry, it's all over,' nobody is going to believe you. Nobody believes you and nobody is putting their placards away. That is because on 53 separate occasions this Prime Minister stood up and said introducing a Medicare co-payment for visiting the GP was a good idea.

This is the same Prime Minister who has a pattern: right before a state election he backs down. Guess what is happening this month? The New South Wales state election. Guess what happened in January? The Queensland state election. Guess what happened last November? The Victorian state election. This Prime Minister has form; he backs down right before a state election. But before you know it, around the side door, through the roof—who knows which way he will come—he will put this GP tax back on the table. But don't worry, Australians will not be fooled, our doctors will not be fooled and people in regional Australia will not be fooled. We have our placards ready. They will be out tomorrow, because this Prime Minister's word cannot be trusted. We will keep standing up and fighting for universal health care and for our Medicare.

Flynn Electorate: Cyclone Marcia

Mr O’DOWD ( Flynn) (13:53): Ex-tropical cyclone Marcia swept through Flynn and left behind a path of destruction. Hundreds of kilometres of fences are down. Crops like cotton, mung beans, sorghum, lucerne and herbs all went under water to about one to three metres, depending on where you were, and were lost as water rushed through the paddocks. Homes were flooded and cultivation was severely washed. Machinery was swamped. The damage bill is approximately $100 million to date, and that figure could go higher as the damage is further assessed. I would like to thank the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott; the Minister for Human Services, Marise Payne; the Minister for Justice, Michael Keenan; and the Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, for visiting the electorate and assessing the damage and talking to the people affected. We would like to see our electorate recategorised from B to C under the NDRRA scheme. Furthermore, telecommunications were found very wanting in this trying situation.

Health Care

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (13:53): There is no more-important role for a government than to ensure that its constituents, the people of Australia, have access to affordable high-quality health care. No-one understands that more acutely than those of us who represent seats in rural and regional Australia. We heard in the contribution of the member for Bendigo that she understands this only too well. Sadly, we have not heard it from the member for Eden-Monaro, the member for Flynn or the member for Capricornia, who join us in the House today.

In my own rural electorate, bulk-billing issues have been with us for decades. Over the six years of the Labor government we significantly increased bulk-billing rates through a range of health initiatives. Unfortunately, my constituents and constituents right around rural and regional Australia are now confused. They do not know what is in store for them, because the government keeps backflipping and flip-flopping and changing its health policy. They do know one thing without any question: they know that this government has never understood the importance of high-quality, affordable health care in rural and regional Australia. They also know only too well from experience that this is a government that does not have their
interests in mind. No matter what the outcome of the government's internal divisions, my constituents know instinctively that bad things are coming for them on the health front and that Labor is committed to fighting the government all the way on this very important issue.

**Eden-Monaro Electorate: Green Army Program**

Dr HENDY (Eden-Monaro) (13:55): On the morning of Monday, 12 February, I joined the Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt, at Glebe Park, Queanbeyan, on the banks of the beautiful Queanbeyan River, to announce the successful applications for round 2 and the opening of round 3 of the government's Green Army Program. With us were the Queanbeyan Mayor, Tim Overall; city council Manager Parks and Recreation, Tim Geyer; leading officials from various service providers; and two young, energised Green Army teams from Queanbeyan and Yass, the former so very ably led by team supervisor Katie Hendry.

Minister Hunt inspected the great work that has been completed next to the Queanbeyan River. The team has done a wonderful job of restoring the river corridor through weed control, track maintenance and planting species appropriate for native fauna. I am proud that the government has delivered on this election promise. I am prouder still that the government is pressing ahead with its partners to implement still more projects across the nation that will practically improve the environment while building up participants' skills and experience. Eden-Monaro will host five more projects over the next period. The Queanbeyan River restoration project is to continue. In the Eurobodalla we embark on a three-stage restoration of 110 kilometres of coastal reserves. In the Bega Valley there will be a Green Army project in partnership with the Far South Coast Landcare Association. It will help in restoring and planting native vegetation across a range of sites and aims to improve existing habitat and create new habitat and connectivity for threatened species. *(Time expired)*

**Health Care**

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (13:57): On 22 January this year, the Prime Minister said, 'Why isn't it fair enough to have a modest co-payment for Medicare?' Then, last month, he said, 'I don't have a problem with co-payments.' Indeed, on 53 separate occasions the Prime Minister has either defended or advocated a Medicare co-payment. He has done so for over a year. As my colleagues have already pointed out, we have already had three different proposals put in respect of a Medicare co-payment: first there was the $7 co-payment, then a $20 cut to GPs and then a $5 co-payment. None of them got up, because the public are not fools and they will not wear them.

Regardless of what the Prime Minister says today, the Prime Minister is committed to a co-payment. He wants a co-payment, and the issue will not go away under a coalition government. The Prime Minister simply cannot be trusted. Medicare will only ever be safe under a Labor government. The government has spent the last 18 months at war with doctors, at war with patients and at war with Medicare. It has had 18 months in which its only health policy has been to destroy Medicare. Today's announcement is nothing more than a diversion to safeguard the Prime Minister's leadership.

**Petrie Electorate**

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (13:58): I rise to talk about youth employment in the electorate of Petrie. Unfortunately, while 82 per cent of people in the Petrie electorate are employed, 18 per cent are unemployed. I inherited that rate when I came to office 18 months ago. I want the
young people in my electorate of Petrie to know that we support them, that the government is acting on a whole range of issues around the economy, to repay the debt and deficit that Labor left us.

Work for the Dole is a great program giving young people experience to help them get a job. The Green Army Program is being implemented right across this nation, and there are a few Green Army projects being rolled out in my electorate. There is the New Colombo Plan, which the Minister for Foreign Affairs has been a strong supporter of. One person in my electorate already has taken up a position under that program. There are opportunities for study, to do further training and education to get the skills that young people need and that employers are looking for. Of course, there is small business. We want to see small business continue to grow, to continue to create job opportunities in this country.

I encourage the young people in my electorate and all around Australia to grab every opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge and relationships—we want them to succeed. We want to see small business succeed. We are a nation of opportunity. This government is making sure it stays that way.

The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded. We will move to questions without notice.

Mr Burke: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the opposition is willing to grant leave to the Prime Minister if he wants to make a statement on the sending of troops overseas.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

General Practice

Ms KING (Ballarat) (14:00): My question is to the Minister for Health—thank you for joining us. Will the health minister be introducing a value signal for visits to general practice?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Did the honourable the Minister for Health hear the question? I did not hear the question. If we could have some silence, the member could ask her question again—and I mean silence!

Ms KING: My question is to the health minister. Will the health minister be introducing a value signal for visits to general practice?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (14:01): It is a pleasure to take my first question from the shadow minister for health. The shadow minister asked me about a value signal and I will say this: we value general practice; we value primary care; we value the role of the profession in providing a high-quality system for patients. As I have announced today, I am continuing my consultations with the professions to make sure we build a sustainable Medicare. One thing we do know is that Labor's policy of doing nothing is not an option. When we see how Medicare is growing—

Ms King interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left! The member for Ballarat!

Ms LEY: It is very difficult, Madam Speaker, when the member asks me a question but does not appear to want to listen to the answer.
Ms Macklin interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga! We will have some silence for the answer!
Ms LEY: When we see how Medicare is building in expense compared to GDP, we know that Labor’s policy of doing nothing is not an option. May I remind members opposite that Medicare was built on three principles.
Honourable members interjecting—
The SPEAKER: If the noise keeps up, we will have some people leaving!
Ms King interjecting—
Ms LEY: May I remind the shadow minister—
The SPEAKER: The member for Franklin is warned.
Ms LEY: Medicare was built on three principles: universal in coverage, equitable in distribution of costs and simple to administer. The coalition’s consultations are based on three key areas: keeping Medicare universal in coverage—
Mr Brendan O’Connor interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The member for Gorton will leave under 94(a).
The member for Gorton then left the chamber.
Ms LEY: equitable in distribution of costs and simple to administer.
Ms King: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order, on relevance. Are you introducing a value signal, yes or no?
The SPEAKER: The member will resume her seat. It is not a point of order to simply stand up and repeat the question. Quite clearly, there seems to be a determination to make enough noise to make it impossible for questions to be heard and the answers to be heard.
Mr Dreyfus interjecting—
The SPEAKER: That includes the member for Isaacs. That noise will simply not be tolerated and, if several people have to leave, so be it.
Mr Albanese interjecting—
The SPEAKER: And that includes the member for Grayndler.
Mr Albanese interjecting—
The SPEAKER: Do not answer back!
Ms LEY: I remind members opposite that it is important for all members in this House to recognise those three principles on which Medicare was built and that we should all work together to keep Medicare sustainable. That is why we remain the best friend that Medicare will ever have, because we understand that universal coverage, equitable distribution in costs and simplicity in administration from time to time may need to be managed, modernised, consulted with, appreciated and built into the future. That is what my consultations are doing. I understand that the shadow minister is looking for good ideas—
Ms Collins interjecting—
The SPEAKER: I said the member for Franklin is warned!
Ms LEY: I understand the shadow minister must be looking for good ideas because, so far, I have not seen one single idea from the Labor Party about health.

Ms Owens interjecting—

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

The member for Parramatta then left the chamber.

Iraq and Syria

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (14:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. What further action is the government taking to support international efforts against the Daesh death cult?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:05): There is no weightier decision a government can take than to deploy our armed forces abroad, and we never make these decisions lightly. As members well know, while we here in Australia are reluctant as a peaceful people to reach out to conflicts abroad, the conflict in Syria and Iraq is reaching out to us and it has been reaching out to us for many months. About 100 Australians are fighting with the Daesh, or ISIL, death cult in Syria and Iraq and about 150 Australians here are supporting the death cult with recruiting and fundraising. Two terrorist attacks in this country already—the attack on policemen in Victoria and the Martin Place siege—have been inspired by this death cult, which is now promulgating a new dark age in large areas of Syria and Iraq.

Since September last year, Australia has been playing its part in the international coalition to disrupt, degrade and, ultimately, destroy the death cult. Our Super Hornet strike fighters, our airborne early warning and control aircraft and our refuelling aircraft have been flying many effective sorties in the skies above Iraq. We have also had 170 of our special forces on an advise and assist mission with the Iraqi special forces. I can advise the House that thanks to the good work of the international coalition and the good work of the Iraqi armed forces, the advance of the death cult has, for now, been arrested. But the challenge is for the Iraqi regular forces to gain and hold ground. It is to reconquer their country. We cannot do it for them, but we can assist them to do it themselves. That is what we are now proposing to do. We are preparing a Building Partner Capacity mission to go to Iraq. It will involve some 300 Australian defence personnel, some 100 New Zealand personnel—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The deployment of Australians overseas, of all issues, has always been reserved for ministerial statements. This issue was raised—

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

Mr ABBOTT: I want to stress that this is a training mission; it is not a combat mission. It is inside the wire; it is not outside the wire. But it is vital for our national security. It is absolutely vital for our national security because, as I said at the beginning, this Daesh death cult is reaching out to this country—

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield!

Mr ABBOTT: as well as to the people of Iraq and Syria. The protection of Australia requires work abroad as well as at home, and this government will never shirk the tasks that are necessary to keep the Australian people safe.
Health Care

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the health minister's comments, before question time, when she said of the Prime Minister's GP tax, 'The policy intent was, and remains, a good one.' Does the Prime Minister agree with his latest health minister?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:09): I preface the answer to this question by saying that if members opposite were so concerned about my previous answer, why did they not ask the question about the deployment to Iraq?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence! The member for Isaacs!

Mr ABBOTT: If members opposite are so concerned about parliamentary propriety, why did they not ask a question about Iraq?

Mr Shorten interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Resume your seat, Leader of the Opposition. Resume your seat! The Prime Minister was asked a specific question by the Leader of the Opposition—not the previous question, but this particular one.

Mr ABBOTT: If the Leader of the Opposition really wanted statements on Iraq—

Mr Dreyfus: Answer the question.

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: he could have risen in this House to add to the observations that I previously made. Let me return to the question asked. I want to make what the government is intending to do absolutely crystal clear. We are determined to protect and sustain our great Medicare system. We are determined this government will be, as the former Howard government was, the best friend that Medicare has ever had. Part of being the best friend that Medicare has ever had is protecting the vulnerable, including protecting bulk-billing for the vulnerable. And, yes, of course, we are determined to ensure that our Medicare system is as efficient and as effective as possible. Of course we want to ensure that, and the best way to do that is to work collegially with the medical profession. The best way to do this is to secure the backing of the medical profession—people who really care for their patients; people who want to ensure that we have the best possible health services. That is exactly what this government are doing. We are continuing to work with the medical profession about making our Medicare system even better in the future than it is today.

Iraq and Syria

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra) (14:12): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister update the House on the steps that the government is taking to deny—perhaps I should say starve—terrorists and terrorist organisations of the funds they need to continue fighting in Syria and Iraq?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:12): I thank the member for Berowra for his question and acknowledge his deep concern about this matter. In our support for the global fight against terrorism, in addition to the military support that we are providing to the Iraqi government through our airstrikes, announced last year; the 170 special forces, announced last year; and the announcement made today about the building partner
capacity initiative, this government is determined to starve terrorist organisations, such as Daesh, of all support, including the funds and resources they need to carry out these wanton acts of violence in Syria, Iraq and beyond.

If Daesh, through its illegitimate claims of a caliphate and its ideology, takes hold it will seek to reverse centuries of human progress. Civilisation in areas controlled by Daesh is under threat. It is estimated that Daesh has an annual income of at least $2 billion, derived from various criminal activities, including oil smuggling, drug trafficking and extortion, and from donations, including through non-profit organisations and fundraising through online networks. Australia is taking a lead role internationally to protect the integrity of international financial systems and to prevent the transfer of funds to terrorist groups.

Under Australia's presidency, the Financial Action Task Force last week called on its members to strengthen efforts to prevent global financial flows to terrorists. The Australian government's experts have worked on a strategy for this task force to cut off the financing of Daesh's terrorist activities, and we are shaping international efforts to starve them of funds. Last year, Australia secured international support for a Security Council resolution, 2178, which requires countries to prevent the financing of terrorist activities. We co-sponsored another Security Council resolution, 2161, which extended the sanctions regime on terrorists and reaffirmed the prohibition on paying ransoms to terrorist groups.

Last week I listed Egyptian terrorist group Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis under Australia's counter-terrorism sanctions regime. About 400 individual entities are now subject to targeted financial sanctions under Australian law. Australia's targeted financial sanctions for those associated with terrorist groups are among the toughest in the world. We have penalties of up to 10 years jail for those found guilty of financing terrorism and up to 25 years jail for those who undertake other terrorist offences.

But there is more to do. A review of the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act is underway, looking at options for enhancing our anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing regulations. We have frozen the assets of known terrorists, but we are going after more. The government is pursuing all avenues at our disposal to combat terrorism and to starve terrorist organisations of the funds they need.

Mr Shorten: Madam Speaker, I would seek your indulgence in light of that last answer. Our first thoughts today, in light of the foreign minister's answer and the Prime Minister's invitation before in regard to his answer, are with the troops already in Iraq and the Middle East and their families. We understand that the ADF mission, in a region torn by violence, carries deadly risk. All Australians admire the bravery that such action demands. On behalf of the Labor Party, I say to our men and women in uniform: all Australians are proud of you today and every day, and we are proud of your families. I promise you that our nation will stand shoulder to shoulder with the people who love you until you come home.

The situation in Iraq, as the government has observed, is most serious. Daesh are totalitarian zealots beyond redemption.

The SPEAKER: I say to the Leader of the Opposition that I am more than generous with granting indulgence, but this is amounting to a statement during question time.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left!
Mr SHORTEN: I would seek your leave and your indulgence to continue this—

The SPEAKER: Your seeking indulgence to identify with that answer is perfectly in order, but to read how many pages?

Mr SHORTEN: Four.

The SPEAKER: I am sorry, that is too vague. I will give you indulgence at the end of question time.

Mr SHORTEN: Madam Speaker, I—

The SPEAKER: I will give you indulgence at the end of question time.

Mr SHORTEN: Madam Speaker, when the government sends troops—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. I will grant indulgence at the end of question time.

Mr SHORTEN: Well, can I ask a question, at least?

The SPEAKER: Yes, you may ask a question. The Manager of Opposition Business?

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I move:

That leave be granted for the Leader of the Opposition to make a statement.

The SPEAKER: That is not in order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I am moving a motion. Are you saying I am not allowed to do that either?

The SPEAKER: No, I am not saying that. You may move your motion, knowing it is against the spirit of the standing orders for question time. The Leader of the House?

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, there are two options open to the Manager of Opposition Business. The first option is to seek leave to move a motion—

Mr Albanese: He's just done that.

Mr Pyne: No, he did not. He simply started by saying, 'I move a motion.' The second thing he could do is move a suspension of standing orders. On either basis, we are happy to consider it. But right now he is out of order.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I will just seek leave.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. I will hear from the Prime Minister.

STATEMENTS

Iraq and Syria

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:18): by leave—Madam Speaker, the last thing I would want is to have the opposition feel that they were deprived of a full statement by the government on this subject and deprived of an opportunity to respond. That is the last thing I would want. So, if it would suit the opposition, because of the gravity of any decision—even a decision to prepare, not a decision to deploy—I will gladly make a brief statement to the House, to which the Leader of the Opposition will obviously have an opportunity to respond.

But, before making this statement, I should point out that I did first raise the subject of a possible build partner capacity mission to Iraq with the Leader of the Opposition in a phone
call to him in January, when this invitation was first extended to us by the Prime Minister of Iraq. I have indicated subsequently to the Leader of the Opposition that it was likely that this mission would eventuate. I have indicated to the Leader of the Opposition that it was likely that New Zealand would be our partner. The Leader of the Opposition was briefed by my office on the details at about one o'clock today, as I was making the announcement with the Chief of the Defence Force and the Minister for Defence.

So, at all times, we have tried to keep the opposition in our confidence, because one thing that I have been grateful for in recent times has been the broad bipartisanship that the opposition has extended to the government on matters of national security. There are many things that we disagree on, but I am pleased that, broadly speaking, we do agree on matters of national security. And I am pleased that the Leader of the Opposition does share my concerns about the rise of the Daesh, or ISIL, death cult, because this is a threat not just to the people of Iraq, not just to the people of Syria, but indeed to the people of this country, who have already been the victims of two terrorist attacks inspired by Daesh here in this country.

I can advise the House that the government has decided to commence the preparation—I stress 'the preparation'—of a military force to contribute to the build partner capacity training mission in Iraq that has been publicly flagged by the government in recent days. This action follows requests from the Iraqi and the United States governments, and the government anticipates that it will be in a position to make a final decision to commit this force in a matter of weeks.

This decision to prepare, prior to a subsequent decision to commit, marks the next phase of Australia's contribution to the international coalition to disrupt, degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL, or Daesh. Already our FA18 Super Hornet strike fighters have completed at least 167 missions. Our air-to-air refuelling aircraft have conducted 156 missions, and our early warning aircraft have conducted 71 command and control missions. Our Special Operations Task Group has been training members of Iraq's elite counter-terrorism service and boosting its effectiveness against priority Daesh targets.

I spoke to Prime Minister al-Abadi last week and when I visited Iraq in January. He did request our contribution to a build partner capacity mission. He requested that we lead a build partner capacity mission—one of four build partner capacity missions in Iraq. When I spoke to him last week, he expressed Iraq's continuing gratitude for Australia's assistance and, in particular, his gratitude for this anticipated next phase of our assistance.

Having stemmed the death cult's initial advance, the Iraqi security forces now require additional support to build their capacity to reclaim and hold territory. While the final numbers are still to be finalised, the potential build partner capacity force would include about 300 Australian Defence Force personnel. The force would comprise a training team with command, force protection and support elements. It would be based at Taji, north-west of Baghdad. I do stress again, as I have already stressed in this parliament and outside it, that this is a training mission not a combat mission. Following discussions with Prime Minister Key in Auckland last weekend, I can confirm that this potential Australian build partner capacity force would work closely with personnel from the New Zealand Defence Force.

Australia is part of a large international coalition. There are some 60 countries, including many Arab countries, that are working together to degrade and ultimately defeat the Daesh death cult. Our principal partners include the United States, Spain, Italy, Germany and the
Netherlands, which are already working to train the Iraqi security forces. I stress, as I always do, that, when it comes to the commitment even the potential commitment of the armed forces of this Commonwealth, the decision is never taken lightly. This decision is a decision in Australia's national interests. Yes, it is ultimately Iraq that must defeat the death cult, but Iraq cannot do it alone—and it should not be left alone to confront the death cult on its own.

While we are always reluctant to reach out to faraway conflicts, this conflict is reaching out to us. Terrorist violence inspired by this conflict has already hit out at us. There are, as we know, about 100 Australians fighting with Daesh and other terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria, and there are about 150 here at home supporting these extremists with recruiting and financing. This fight, far from our shores, is a matter of domestic security as well as a matter of international security. It is a necessary complement to the strong domestic security measures that this government has taken. It is absolutely right and necessary that we in this country make a prudent and proportionate contribution to help the Iraqi government to keep their people safe, to wrest back control of their territory from the death cult and, in so doing, make a significant contribution to the peace, the tranquillity and the security of the wider world.

I respect, admire, honour and am in awe of the professionalism and the commitment of the Australian armed forces. They are the best of us. The rest of us should do whatever we can to support them and encourage them in their work. I love all my time spent with the Australian defence forces—I really do. I have tried to make it my business to visit their bases as often as I can and to speak with them as often as I can. Obviously I cannot go out and fight with them, but I try at least to sweat with them, which is one of the reasons why I have tried so often to have physical training, at the very least, with the members of our armed forces when I am on their bases. I respect them. I admire them. I salute them. I honour them—and I pledge them the support of this government in all of the dangerous missions upon which they embark. I thank the Minister for Defence. I thank our Defence chiefs. I thank the men and women of our Defence Force who serve our country and keep us safe, so often far from home, particularly as they prepare for this new mission.

The SPEAKER: I will take that as being a statement made by leave. I will grant leave to the Leader of the Opposition to similarly make a statement in reply.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:27): by leave—Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do appreciate what you say. I do believe that the parliament is an appropriate forum to hear statements about committing our troops to a region in conflict. I do appreciate what you say. I do believe that the parliament is an appropriate forum to hear statements about committing our troops to a region in conflict. I thank the Prime Minister for his statement to the parliament. Our first thoughts today are with our troops already in Iraq and the Middle East and their families. The ADF mission in a region torn by violence, under threat of attack from an aggressive enemy capturing weapons, supplies and money as it advances, carries a deadly risk.

As the Prime Minister has said, all Australians admire the bravery that such actions demand. I had the privilege of visiting Baghdad and bases in the Middle East, where I personally witnessed the skill, the professionalism and the absolute commitment to task. As the Prime Minister has said, when you are in the presence of our troops on a mission or on a posting, you do realise that these people make you feel proud to be Australian. On behalf of the Labor Party I say to our men and women in uniform: all Australians are proud of you today and every day and we are also proud of your families. I promise them that our nation
stands shoulder to shoulder with the people who love you, so, whilst you are away and until you come home, everyone will be doing what they can to ensure that they are looked after. The situation in Iraq, as the government said, is most serious. Daesh totalitarian zealots are beyond redemption. Their followers believe only in violence for the sake of violence. Australia is right to stand against them.

From the outset, Labor's support for Australia's current mission in Iraq has been bipartisan, and our foundation for that is based upon the invitation of the Iraqi government as part of an international coalition with responsibility to protect Iraqi civilians from Daesh. It has been underpinned by four key principles: one, Australian operations to be confined to Iraq; two, that our involvement should continue only until the Iraqi government is ready to take full responsibility for the security of their people and their nation; three, that we do not support the deployment of Australian ground combat units to directly engage in fighting Daesh; and, four, if the Iraqi government and its forces engage in unacceptable conduct, Australia would withdraw its support.

I thank the government for the detailed briefing that we received in the last hour before question time. It appears from the information that was provided to us that the commitment most certainly likely accords with Labor's principles and the scope of activities that we have outlined. There have, of course, been some troubling reports regarding the behaviour of some Iraqi militia groups, and we know that our military, our ADF and our foreign affairs department are of course monitoring this most carefully.

Our mission in Iraq is about building partner capacity and providing training inside the wire to improve the military capacity of conventional Iraqi security forces. This important work includes training Iraqi soldiers on ethical lawful military operations. We welcome the measures being put in place for force protection and we will continue to seek reassurance in this respect. I can appreciate the risk of green on blue in indirect fire. That is something which of course has to be managed and minimised, but it is dangerous work.

I believe our work in Iraq is valuable and important, but we cannot put our faith in draining the swamp of terrorism by military means alone. We need, and to support, a social, political and economic solution. I note some progress has been made by the Iraqi government to achieve a settlement that holds on the ground, including working with the Sunni and Kurd communities to improve their safety. But the sectarian politics in Iraq and the region are extraordinary and deep. There is no doubt in my mind that, as Daesh seeks to spread its horrendous franchise to Libya, Syria, Afghanistan and elsewhere, we need to work towards a broader approach and a regional solution.

Australia's mission in Iraq is not about pursuing territory or power, but helping the displaced and protecting the vulnerable. We do not seek to assert the supremacy of one faith all one people, but defend the rights of all faiths and all peoples. Labor believes that peace and tolerance can and will prevail over poisonous hatred and fanaticism in Iraq, in the region and of course everywhere. That is our shared hope and our common cause.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

The SPEAKER: We will now return to question time. It is actually the crossbenchers' time. I call the honourable member for Fairfax.
Liberal Party Financial Accounts

Mr PALMER (Fairfax) (14:32): My question is to the Prime Minister. Where has the $70 million contributed by public funds and members of the public been spent? Why does your president and director of the Liberal Party refuse to provide the party's financial accounts to the vice-presidents of the party and the national executives?

The SPEAKER: I ask the member to resume his seat. That question is not in order. I call the honourable member for Page.

Data Retention

Mr HOGAN (Page) (14:33): My question is to the Minister for Justice. Will the minister inform the House of the importance of data retention to our law enforcement agencies in the fight against terrorism and other crimes?

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (14:33): I thank the member for Page for that question. The House has already been updated today about our international efforts to combat the horror we are seeing in the Middle East, but this government has also been focused on what this means for Australia's domestic security. The main priority of this government is to keep the Australian people safe, and to do that we need to make sure that our law enforcement and intelligence communities have the resources and the tools they need to do their job.

It is impossible for us to overstate how important metadata is and what a valuable tool it is to our law enforcement community. Metadata provides law enforcement agencies with the invaluable intelligence to disrupt attacks and provides the evidence they need to prosecute perpetrators. As the Prime Minister said in his national security statement, 20 people have been arrested and charged as a result of six counterterrorism operations conducted within Australia within the past six months alone. This is one-third of all terror related arrests since 2001. Metadata has played a significant role in all of these investigations. I remind the House that metadata was used in the investigation that stopped a mass casualty attack at the MCG on grand final day in 2005.

The current situation is that Australia's internet service providers are not obliged to retain metadata. The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security has recognised that this is an enormous gap and that retaining the metadata for a period of two years is a necessary and a proportionate response to the terror threat that Australia faces.

We on this side of the House appreciate people's concerns about privacy, but I want to assure all Australians that protecting the security of our personal information is a key priority of the government—and we are taking steps to ensure that that is the case. Under this new regime, data can only be accessible on a lawful case-by-case basis. The number of agencies which access metadata, which currently stands at 80, will be reduced to around 20. The Commonwealth Ombudsman and the Privacy Commissioner will continue to assess industry's compliance with privacy principles and the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security will continue to report back on ASIO's access to data. The government has listened to the report brought down by the committee—a unanimous and bipartisan report—and the parliamentary joint committee will be empowered to review the effectiveness of the data retention scheme.
I want to stress to everyone that this legislation does not provide our law enforcement or intelligence agencies with any extra power. This strikes the right balance between allowing them to access metadata to do their job and the right of all Australians to the privacy of their personal information.

Health Care

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:36): My question is to the Prime Minister. In May last year the Prime Minister was asked about the GP tax and said: This is right and fair and proper, and that is why it will happen under this government.

Given the Prime Minister has promised a GP tax time and time again, when will the new GP tax happen under this government?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:37): As has been made absolutely crystal clear today, it will not. What has become obvious is that it is not possible to do optimal health reform in this country without the full backing and support of the medical profession. That is what our consultations, beginning with Minister Dutton when he was the minister and continuing with Minister Ley, have confirmed. As a former health minister, I suppose I should have been more conscious of this. I should have been more conscious of the fact that proper health reform in this country does require the support, the cooperation and the consent of the medical profession. Proper health reform in this country does require government and the medical profession and the other great health professions of our country to work hand-in-hand together. That is exactly what we are doing.

There are three principles that are guiding this government: first of all, the protection and the sustainment of our great Medicare system; second, the protection of the vulnerable, particularly the protection of bulk-billing for children and for concession card holders; and, third, the fact that we want to work in the closest possible harmony with the medical profession and the other great professions to make our excellent health system even better in the future than it is now. I do accept that it has taken us some time to come to this position, but we have been serious about trying to set Medicare up for the long term to ensure that Medicare is set up for the long term. It has to be as efficient and as effective as possible, and the best way to ensure that Medicare is as efficient and as effective as possible is to work as closely as we can with the health professions, particularly the medical profession—to work with the backing, whenever we can secure it, of the medical profession, and that is exactly what we intend to do.

Health Care

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (14:40): My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the minister update the House on the progress of her Medicare consultations? What has been the feedback from the medical profession? And what is the government doing in response?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (14:40): May I thank the member for Dobell. I appreciate her involvement in the Medicare consultations that I am having across the country. Thank you to the member for Dobell for inviting me to her electorate to meet with doctors and other health professionals. We are a government that listens. We are a government that has heard. We are a government that consults. And that is, may I say, part of the process of government. I said from the outset that in this policy area I wanted to pause to consult, and that is exactly what I have done. I have met with doctors in
their practices, from Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast, Bundaberg, Tasmania, north-east Victoria and in my own electorate of western New South Wales, and the consultations have been extensive, and they are not over yet. I will travel to Western Australia when the House rises at the end of this week to continue these discussions.

To ensure that we protect Medicare for the long term, the government will be proceeding with its pause on indexation of Medicare rebates for GP and non-GP items while we work with the professions to develop future policies. This is actually a measure that Labor introduced and we are continuing with. When it was pointed out by a journalist yesterday that Labor introduced this measure, the member for Ballarat said, 'We did, and we will own that we did freeze rebates.' Thank you very much, member for Ballarat. However, as part of my consultations, it is clear the proposal for an optional $5 co-payment does not have broad support. The measure will therefore not proceed and has been taken permanently off the table. I look forward to having much more to say about the government's policy position as my national consultations continue, because those consultations have made one thing very clear, and that is that doing nothing is not an option. Medicare is growing at an unsustainable rate. Spending on Medicare has more than doubled in the past decade. The proportion of that spend that is being provided by the Medicare levy is falling every year. While the Leader of the Opposition refuses to acknowledge that Medicare is unsustainable, his shadow health minister actually has called him out.

This is Labor's year of doing nothing. They only ever take the easy way out. It is time for Labor to pull their heads out of the sand and get serious with the Australian public. Our approach is listening, consulting and working for quality and sustainability.

**Health Care**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:43): My question is to the Prime Minister. In June of last year the Prime Minister declared on *The Bolt Report*: I don't expect people to like the Medicare co-payment but I do expect people to support the Medicare co-payment. Isn't the decision to delay the GP tax all about the Prime Minister's job and nothing about the health of Australians?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:44): As the Minister for Health has just indicated, we have been engaged in a process of consultation over many months, starting under the former minister and continuing under the present minister. What is absolutely obvious is that we would not keep the broad backing of the medical profession for the health reform process if we attempted to cut the GPs rebate and replaced the cut with a co-payment. It was absolutely obvious after a period of consultation that that was the case. Madam Speaker, do you know what sensible governments do? Sensible governments respond intelligently to what they get from the community, and this is what we have heard from the community. What are members opposite suggesting? That we should not have changed? That we should not have consulted? That we should not have done this? Is that what you are suggesting?

*Opposition members interjecting—*

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left!
Mr ABBOTT: Really, Madam Speaker. The difference between members opposite and this government is that this government is determined to do the right thing by the people of Australia. This government is determined to give the people of Australia the best possible Medicare system, but we are going to do it in the closest possible harmony with the medical profession and the other great health professions of this country. That is exactly what the people of Australia expect. What they do not expect is what they are getting from members opposite, which is just jeering, sneering and smearing. They just can't help themselves—

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton!

Mr ABBOTT: They are wreckers in opposition. Despite all of that from the opposition, we are doing the job that the people elected us to do. We are improving the great institutions of our country. We are doing what is necessary to make our great Medicare system even better in the future than it is now. We are doing it in the closest possible harmony with the medical profession.

Health Care

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:46): My question is to the Prime Minister. At the G20 summit in November the Prime Minister told world leaders, including US President Obama, German Chancellor Merkel and Japanese Prime Minister Abe, that he wanted 'to inject more price signals into our health system'. Given the Prime Minister felt so strongly about the GP tax that he tried to sell it to the world's most powerful leaders, how can Australians believe that his unfair GP tax has really gone?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:47): To put the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's mind at rest, we consulted, we heard and we responded. It is as simple as that: we consulted, we heard and we responded—

Mr Hockey: They said that they hated Labor!

Mr ABBOTT: That is exactly right. It has always been open—

Mr Husic interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley.

Mr ABBOTT: It has always been open to members of the medical profession to charge a fee. I presume from their questions that members opposite propose to take away that right. What we are doing—

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton! The member for Moreton will leave under standing order 94(a).

The member for Moreton then left the chamber.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr ABBOTT: We do take Medicare seriously—unlike members opposite, who do not Medicare seriously and do not take this parliament seriously. Madam Speaker, we take Medicare seriously. We are very conscious of the fact that it costs us $20 billion a year now; it cost us $8 billion a decade ago; it will cost us $34 billion a decade hence. We take it seriously enough to want to protect it and preserve it forever. We take it seriously enough to
want to make it more efficient and more effective; we take it seriously enough to want to work hand-in-glove with the medical profession to make our great Medicare system better in the future than it has been in the past.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr ABBOTT:** Madam Speaker, I conclude this answer by indicating that if members opposite were serious about Medicare, we would not see this constant gigglining, this constant caterwauling. If they have serious questions, they will treat the answers with the seriousness that they deserve.

**Infrastructure**

**Mr COULTON** (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (14:50): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House how building the infrastructure of the 21st century creates jobs and strengthens the economy for the long term?

**Mr TRUSS** (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:50): I thank the honourable member for his question. This government understands the critical importance of building infrastructure for the 21st century. Our $50 billion plan not only will provide modern infrastructure to build a more prosperous economy but will also create tens of thousands of extra jobs. In New South Wales, the member’s home state, it would be apparent to him that the previous Labor government in New South Wales had starved the state of the infrastructure investment that it actually needed. That showed up on country roads and on city roads right across the state. The WestConnex project alone in Sydney will create 10,000 jobs and transform the traffic networks of the city. It will make a real difference by providing the infrastructure support that a growing city actually requires. Well, surprise, surprise—Labor is now threatening to cancel some or all of that project. They are threatening to cancel the project; not to allow it to proceed—10,000 jobs at risk. What about the Western Sydney Infrastructure Plan, which is building new roads for Western Sydney, and of course a second airport—about 8,000 jobs? That is also at risk under a Labor government. Labor has form in this regard, and New South Wales voters need to recognise that Labor has form. As soon as the Victorian Labor government was elected, it moved to cancel the east west project—a transformational project for Melbourne. Labor is prepared to spend $1.2 billion not to build a road. That is their approach towards infrastructure.

What about the new Queensland government that is turning down about $20 billion worth of infrastructure projects because they are not prepared to recycle existing assets? They are preventing tens of thousands of jobs being created in Queensland, including the Brisbane bus and train tunnel—a project that Labor says it supports, but now they are turning down the opportunity and declining to proceed with the commitment of the former Newman government to build this vital asset. That is the message that New South Wales voters need to be aware of. Labor might talk infrastructure, but when they get there they are not prepared to go ahead with the project. Jobs are lost and vital infrastructure is lost to our nation. Let’s let the Baird government get on with the task of building the vital infrastructure that New South Wales want, and we will cooperate with them to deliver it.

*Ms MacTiernan interjecting—*
The SPEAKER: The member for Perth will desist! I call the honourable member for Macquarie.

Infrastructure

Mrs MARKUS (Macquarie) (14:54): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline how the government is building jobs, growth and opportunity—particularly in construction. How does this assist all Australians, including those in my electorate of Macquarie?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:54): I thank the honourable member for her question and recognise that residential construction, particularly in Western Sydney, is hugely important, as is the construction of WestConnex with 10,000 jobs, as is the construction of a second airport, resulting in an additional 8,000 jobs. Labor wants to tear it up. Labor in New South Wales wants to stop the development in Western Sydney and close down WestConnex—immediately costing 18,000 jobs, just like they have just torn up contracts for 7,000 new jobs associated with east west in Melbourne. Why does Labor hate jobs? I do not understand it. We should be pleased today about the fact that we have building approval numbers that have increased in the last 12 months by over nine per cent for the year. We now have the highest apartment construction on record, and that is going to help to create more jobs right around Australia—and obviously in the member for Macquarie's electorate as well.

Last week, the Prime Minister and I announced a new regime for the policing and enforcement of existing laws in relation to foreign investment for residential real estate. We view it as very important that there be integrity around the foreign investment system in Australia. I reiterate that not since 2006, when the coalition was last in government, has anyone—not the Labor Party, not anyone—ever enforced the law. I can announce to the parliament today that just before question time I issued an order, under subsection 21A(4) of the Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Act, to force the divestment of a major residential property in the middle of Sydney held unlawfully by a foreign investor. They have 90 days to sell the property. We are very serious about enforcing the law. We are very serious about integrity in our foreign investment system. If someone breaks a law, we will enforce the law to its full. We welcome foreign investment. It is hugely important, but it is vitally important that every Australian knows that the rules relating to foreign investment are going to be enforced. They were not enforced by the Labor Party. They are being emphatically enforced under the coalition.

Health Care

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:57): My question is to the Prime Minister. It is a matter of record that the Prime Minister has committed to the GP tax on at least 53 separate occasions over the past 10 months. So when the Prime Minister says, 'never, ever' isn't it true that Australians can never, ever trust him again?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on both my right and left!

Mr Sukkar interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Deakin! The Prime Minister has the call.
Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:58): I have learnt, and what I have learnt is that the co-payment is dead, buried and cremated.

Health Care

Ms KING (Ballarat) (14:58): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to a report today that the Prime Minister told cabinet about the GP tax: 'This issue has been mishandled, it has been mishandled until now.' Was the Prime Minister reflecting on his own dismal performance, the whole government, or just that of the hapless former health minister who is sitting right over there?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence! The member for Ballarat has asked her question, and if she does not wish to stay and listen to the answer she will keep it up. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:59): The shadow minister who asked the question obviously has not been listening to my answers earlier today, because what I said earlier today was that, as a former health minister, I should have known better. I should have known better than to attempt health reform without the strong cooperation and support of the medical profession. I should have known better. What I well and truly learnt in my four years as a health minister was that, if you want to bring about effective health reform in this country, it is best done—in fact, often, it is only done—with the broad support of the medical profession. I accept chastisement, particularly given my experience as health minister, but it is much better to learn than to be obstinate. We have learnt, and that is why we are determined to improve the Medicare system. We are determined to make a great system better, and we are going to do so in the closest possible cooperation with the medical profession and the other great health professions of our country.

Australia Post

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (15:00): My question is to the Minister for Communications. Will the minister update the House on the financial performance of Australia Post? What is the government doing in cooperation with the company to ensure that postal services and post offices around the country are viable for future generations?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (15:01): I thank the honourable member for her question. Australia Post faces a real existential threat. Its letters business is declining year after year. We are now at the point where the losses in the letters business, which have totalled since 2008 over $1½ billion, will shortly overwhelm the profits in the rest of the business. If nothing is done to reform Australia Post, over the next decade the government will have to tip in nearly $7 billion of subsidies. So, plainly, there has to be change, and that is why the company has announced today two big reforms.

The first reform is that the service obligations will be changed so as to allow a two-speed letter service. There will be a regular service, which will be the regulated service, which will arrive generally two days later than it currently does. This will result in a very significant reduction in costs over time. There will be a priority service, which will be delivered under the current timetable but obviously at a higher rate. This two-speed service is comparable to what is already being used by 70 per cent of business customers. The second part of the reform is to increase the price of stamps. The company is seeking to increase the stamp price
from 70c to $1. Over the next three or four years, or thereabouts, the letters business should be able to get back into the black, which is exactly where it should be. This is absolutely critical, and I want to acknowledge the way in which the company has consulted widely on this.

Let me make two points about the stakeholders—firstly, the employees of Australia Post. There are 32,500 employees of Australia Post. Obviously there are implications for jobs in these changes. However, I note that the company has a Post People First program; and over the last few years, as jobs have gone from the letters business, 61 per cent of those people have been successfully redeployed elsewhere in the company. The company has a three 'R's policy—retrain, redeploy and then redundancy as a last resort. The company is working very, very closely with the union, whom I met only yesterday with the shadow minister, and is very focused on looking after its employees.

Finally, the licensed post offices, small businesses—there are 2,900 of them—have been doing it tough during this period. Let me say that the company and the government are absolutely committed to the LPOs. These changes, the company assures me, will put about $75 million of extra revenue into the LPOs—about $20,000 each per annum, a significant change. (Time expired)

**Mirabel Foundation**

**Mr SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:04): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the government's decision to cut $234,000 from the Mirabel Foundation, which provides services that help children abandoned by their parents due to drug addiction. CEO Jane Rowe says: 'These children have already been abandoned or orphaned by the parents. They won't be abandoned by Mirabel, but they can't be abandoned by their government.' Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and commit to funding the Mirabel Foundation?

**The SPEAKER:** I call the Minister for Social Services.

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Minister for Social Services) (15:04): Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Prime Minister for the opportunity to respond. The DHS grants program has been extended for existing front-line service providers that were subject to negative announcements at the end of last year for those who are continuing to provide service to the end of June this year. We are working through the process of ensuring there are no service gaps in front-line areas that are critical to ensuring that these communities get the services they need.

If there are members who have specific issues that they would like to raise with me—as many on this side of the House and also members opposite have done—I am very happy to receive their letters, or other ways they wish to raise these matters with me, including on this matter as well. This is the largest re-tendering of Department of Human Services grants that we have seen in 20 or 30 years. We want to make sure that, as we work through the process of transitioning from the old system to the new system, we keep necessary front-line services in place. If those opposite wish to raise specific cases with me, I would be very pleased to receive their representations.
Workplace Relations

Ms PRICE (Durack) (15:06): My question is to the Minister for Education and Training, representing the Minister for Employment. Will the minister inform the House how the government will maintain the rule of law in our workplaces. What obstacles stand in the way?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (15:06): I thank the member for Durack for her question. She, like me and like everybody on this side of the House, actually wants to end the thuggery, the intimidation, of the union movement in the workplace here in Australia—unlike the other side of the House, which has been prepared to tolerate that kind of behaviour from the union movement on worksites around Australia. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition wanted to 'bottle a bit of the spirit' of the Maritime Union of Australia last year. That is what he said about the way the Maritime Union of Australia behaves. He said, 'I wish we could bottle a bit of the spirit here,' at the conference he spoke to two years ago.

This side of the House actually takes thuggery and intimidation and illegal behaviour on work sites in Australia seriously, and that is why—

Ms Chesters interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Bendigo will desist!

Mr PYNE: we have initiated the reintroduction of the Australian Building and Construction Commission, opposed by the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Burke interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chisholm will desist!

Mr PYNE: That is why we initiated the royal commission into illegal behaviour—

Ms Chesters interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Bendigo is warned!

Mr PYNE: in the trade union movement, tepidly supported at the last minute by the Leader of the Opposition, who had to be dragged kicking and screaming to it. But we also have tried to protect and support honest union leaders by introducing the Registered Organisations Commission so that matters like the Health Services Union can never happen again. And last night in the Senate the Labor Party voted that bill down. Last night the Labor Party opposed the introduction of the Registered Organisations Commission, which would have supported the poorest workers, like those in the Health Services Union who were ripped off by their previous union secretary—

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left and right!

Mr PYNE: a former member of this House, the former member for Dobell, who was supported—

Mr Giles interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Scullin is not in his place.

Mr PYNE: steadfastly by the Labor Party throughout the 43rd Parliament. And that is not all. This Leader of the Opposition, in response to claims about thuggery and intimidation and illegal behaviour by the CFMEU, which we take seriously, said that—
Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith is warned!

Mr PYNE: if Melbourne work sites have bikies who are also members of the CFMEU, they should be discouraged from wearing their colours at construction sites. That was his response to thuggery and intimidation in the workforce. Plain-packaging thuggery was fine. That was fine, but the bikies associated with this criminal behaviour were not allowed to attend work sites with their colours on.

Last week the Maritime Union of Australia had some very bad times with one of their members attacking a journalist. The Leader of the Opposition's response was that he had not seen the story on the front page of *The Australian*. He had not seen this story—

The SPEAKER: No props! Put it down.

Mr PYNE: in a major daily newspaper of the News Limited stable in Australia. He had not seen it. I table it, Madam Speaker.

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

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on left and right!

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (15:09): I would like to advise the House that during question time today we had with us 18 members of the 2015 cohort of the Defence graduate program. We made them most welcome. I hope they were not too shocked at some of the behaviour here today.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (15:10): I am shocked by some of the behaviour in this place sometimes, Madam Speaker, I might tell you, so I hope they are not shocked.

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*.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Medicare

The SPEAKER (15:10): I have received a letter from the honourable member for Ballarat proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Government's unrelenting attack on Medicare and the damage it is inflicting on Australians.

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

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

Ms KING (Ballarat) (15:11): We saw it again on display in this question time. We know what the Prime Minister really thinks about this GP tax and what his plans really are for Medicare. He has said that he is committed to it. The new Minister for Health committed to
value signal, a price signal, on Medicare. The Prime Minister remains committed to the
destruction of Medicare. Over the past 18 months he has committed to his GP tax at least 53
times. He has defended it as good and decent policy and necessary for saving the health of
this nation. So the weasel words we are starting to hear from this Prime Minister, which he is
using today, to say that he has shelved his GP tax today have, of course, only one aim in
mind, and that is keeping his leadership on life support. Be in no doubt: that is the only
reason. This Prime Minister is not proceeding with the $5 GP tax, not because he cares about
Medicare, not because he cares about the health of this nation; it is because he cares about the
health of his numbers in the next Liberal party room split. That is what this is all about.

Be in no doubt: this government is not standing up for Medicare. It is not abolishing the GP
tax because it believes that it is the right thing to do by patients. It is doing so because there is
no way that Labor would allow this destruction of Medicare to get through the Senate, so it
knows it cannot get the policy through. And it has been at war with doctor organisations and
with patient groups across the country, and that remains so today. The government and those
backbenchers who are going back to their electorates today are kidding themselves.

What happened today is that the health minister got rolled. The health minister got rolled in
cabinet and has been unable to deliver to the doctors at all. She got rolled and was not able to
deliver to the doctors. She has had to ring them and say: 'I'm sorry. I'm sorry. The cabinet
didn't actually do what I wanted.' That is what she has had to do today, which shows just how
ineffective this health minister is in standing up against the Prime Minister, whose agenda is
to get rid of Medicare, a universal health insurance scheme which we all pay into according to
our means and draw down on according to our healthcare needs. If this minister thinks that
she is going to be able to keep bulk-billing rates at the rate they are currently, with the policy
she has just announced, a $1.3 billion continued cut to primary care, she is kidding herself. If
she thinks bulk-billing rates are going to stay exactly the same and that it is going to be a
system for people who are vulnerable, not just concession card holders—because there are
people who fall $1 short of becoming eligible for concessional cards who have chronic
disease conditions, who are trying to keep in marginal jobs, trying to keep an income, who
will be affected by the policy this government has announced—she is kidding herself. If you
think bulk-billing rates are going to stay at 82.3 per cent—and bulk-billing is important in
making sure we constrain costs in Medicare—then you are kidding yourself. The Prime
Minister, when he was health minister, presided over a collapse in bulk-billing rates. The only
reason the Prime Minister, as health minister, had to do something about it was because Labor
ran a very strong and effective campaign, and he was forced to do so. The then Prime
Minister John Howard came in and put in place bulk-billing incentives.

We are going to see again, under this government's policies, a collapse in bulk-billing. It is
happening already today. GP surgeries across the country—I have visited many, many of
them—are already today changing their billing practices, not just for general patients but for
concessional patients as well. They are saying that the government has sent them a very clear
signal that it does not value general practice. It does not value our primary care system,
because if it valued our primary care system it would not have tried to cut $3.5 billion out of it
and to transfer every one of those costs onto patients.

The only reason the government has been forced to back down on one element of its GP
tax is because Labor has stood up against it, and because the Prime Minister is trying to
salvage his job. He knows that this policy does not have popular support. It does not have doctors' support. And, now, it does not have the support of his backbench, because they have realised the damage it has been doing in their electorates to their own jobs and to their own votes. The damage that it will do to the healthcare system does not seem to have entered this government's mind one iota.

We have seen from this government several iterations of this GP tax. First we had the $7 GP tax. Then we had the policy that would have seen $20 ripped off doctors and passed onto patients—a $20 GP tax. Then we had the $5 GP tax and the four-year freeze to indexation, which the government is now continuing. This amounts to cuts to Medicare by stealth, now. The government is presiding over the destruction of our universal health insurance scheme. And be in no doubt: today that absolutely continues.

The Prime Minister, on no fewer than 53 occasions, said that he thinks it is an absolute priority for health policy. In fact this is the only health policy the government has. I admit the new health minister has only been in this job for six weeks now—or a little bit more than that. She has been brought in to try and salvage a bit of the mess that has occurred. I get that she is new to health policy. And I get that suddenly she is finding herself in a space that is really complex.

But they had six years in opposition. The came to government with no plan for health policy. How embarrassing! After 18 months in government members of the government are now saying, 'We're going to consult about health policy.' What were you doing in opposition for six years? What were you doing then, and what have you been doing for the last 18 months in government? For those 18 months in government you have been at war with doctors, trying to absolutely smash Medicare. The government continues to do that, not understanding the complexities of what they have done.

Let's have a look at what they have done across the entire health system. There have been major cuts, with $57 billion in cuts to public hospitals. Those cuts are already starting to hit in every public hospital in this country. There has been $300 million taken out of preventative health. Over $600 million has been taken out of dental health. And there has been an attack on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, transferring costs onto patients by increasing the PBS co-payment. That, again, is something we are standing against in the Senate.

What you have seen from this government is an attack across the entire health system. They have targeted $3.5 billion worth of cuts to primary care and to general practice but they have also cut billions of dollars across health. Now sitting on the table they have to find $800 million. There has been speculation in the newspapers today that they will be finding that out of the public hospital system. There is that $800 million, and a $1.3 billion cut still sitting there on the table.

Be in no doubt: what this about today is the Prime Minister trying to shore up his job. It is not at all about the health of this nation. We know that the Prime Minister has said on several occasions—53 of them—that this toxic GP tax is good policy. The health minister again today has said that the GP tax is good health policy. Be in no doubt: the government do not actually want to change this GP tax, and there is only one reason they are here today. If they had been able to get this through the Senate it would be in place today. Be in no doubt: this is exactly what this government wanted to do.
We know that this government has not learnt a single thing from its attacks on primary care. They still believe in the GP tax. Ridiculously, the Minister for Health is now calling it a 'value signal'. I can tell you this much: you do not value general practice by cutting $3.5 billion out of it. What sort of value signal do you think that sends to every single GP in the nation? I am sure the minister has been hearing it every time she sits down in a GP surgery across the country. In many of those small kitchens in GP surgeries they will be telling you, pretty loud and clear, that they have never been so angry at a government policy, and never so angry at a government.

The GP tax has been wrong. Why has it taken until today for the government to acknowledge it? It has been eight or 10 months since the budget. They have taken this long, because this is all about the Prime Minister's job. Be in no doubt: when the New South Wales election is over and the heat is off them in New South Wales, when the Prime Minister has maybe managed to shore up some of his numbers in this place—maybe he will manage; maybe he will not—he will do this again. There is no doubt. This attack on Medicare is in the DNA of the Liberal and National parties and they should own it every single day.

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (15:21): I listened with growing amazement to the shadow minister. There was a string of invective, nastiness, gossip and innuendo. If the shadow minister characterises doctors and medical professionals with a certain view why is she not quoting them? If people are saying these things, why is she not giving direct information? Why is she just saying, 'I'm reading it in the newspapers,' or 'This is what we know is in the DNA of the Liberal Party.' She is saying, 'This is what we think you should do.' There is a possibility in an MPI to have a constructive, real debate, and we should start it with Medicare itself, and we should start it by understanding the principles upon which Medicare was founded, and the principles by which we, as Liberals and Nationals, are determined to sustain Medicare. If you are in charge of a system of government spending that goes from $8 billion to $20 billion to $34 billion and has as its source of revenue, partly, the Medicare levy, which every year falls further and further behind in its contribution to that source of revenue, then you should ask, as responsible managers of economic policy, 'What should we do to keep the system sustainable?'

If we do not keep the system sustainable, it will collapse, and that is the last thing any of us wants. That is an area that the shadow minister and I actually do agree on. Sometimes it seems to me that Labor just wants to say, 'Hands off; we'll sit on our hands; no problem; everything will just be okay.' No, everything will not be okay, unless we work at this. And we have never said it would be easy. Nothing is easy when you come into government. The shadow minister asked what I was doing for six years. I was sitting over there on the opposition benches watching with horror and amazement while one Prime Minister followed by another Prime Minister followed by the same Prime Minister flung money out from carefully secured asset funds, secured by us, in government, by the Treasurer, attached to the Future Fund, meant for investments in the nation's long-term wealth. It was flung across the country in extravagant, unnecessary, poorly targeted projects. And I use that word with reluctance, because some of them barely did make the title of projects.

So, that is what we did while we were in opposition. And now we are in government, and I do not need to be lectured to by this Labor Party and this shadow minister about what it means to have to run an economy responsibly. Now, there are some areas that the shadow
minister and I do agree on, including that doing nothing is not an option. I thought that perhaps the shadow minister was running the line of her leader, which is that everything is okay with Medicare. But a couple of weeks ago, on Sky News, she actually said that the opposition would be kidding itself if it did not recognise that there were challenges in the budget and that savings needed to be found. The shadow minister then said that there is no area that is going to be exempt. So, everything is in scope, shadow minister, when it comes to your savings.

We are simply doing what good governments do: consulting, listening, hearing, learning and acting. That is what the public would expect of us. So yes, I did go out there to consult on a policy that involved a $5 cut to the rebate and an associated optional co-payment. I told it like it was, I talked to general practice, they talked to me, and we came away and revised our policy. I actually think I have a pretty good relationship with the doctors and health professionals of this country. The fact that you could not quote a single one bagging me out for this measure means, I think, that we are getting appreciation for doing this. Contrast that—

Ms King interjecting—

Ms LEY: Well, if you want to make policy by Twitter, you probably would not make very good policy. But let’s contrast that with the Labor Party. They brought in a tax that they never consulted anyone on, that they did not listen to the Australian people on. This is the electricity tax. They brought that in, and then when people said they did not want it they ignored them. They left it alone and it did untold damage until we got rid of it. That is Labor’s approach to listening, consulting and acting—that is, not doing any of those things. I am proud that we are a government that listens, consults and then acts. That is a good thing to do. That is what good governments should do.

The shadow minister also characterised the pause in indexation of the rebate to GPs and non-GPs, which I concluded today that we were continuing with, as a ‘sneaky attack on Medicare’ and ‘evidence that we want to kill off Medicare’ and ‘evidence that we don’t want Medicare to survive’. The shadow minister characterised the pause that will continue while we consult as a sneaky attack on Medicare. So, how does the shadow minister characterise her own statement, only a few days ago, when she said about the indexation freeze, ‘We did it, and we will own that we did freeze rebates’? That makes absolutely no sense. So, is the Labor Party now saying that it is carrying on a sneaky attack on Medicare itself? I do not know. It does not make sense.

This is a serious issue, and I want to address more remarks that the shadow minister made, and they were about bulk-billing. We are determined as a government to protect bulk-billing for the vulnerable, and I recognise, as the shadow minister has said, that there are people on low incomes who do not qualify for concession cards and for whom the cost of going to the doctor is difficult. I care about those people, just like you do. That is another area we agree on; we are finding a few more areas of agreement. Hey, we might be working together soon in some areas of public policy that matter to the Australian people! But the levels of bulk-billing for those who can afford to pay a modest contribution to the cost of going to a doctor are too high. More than seven out of 10 non-concessional patients are bulk-billed when they go to the doctor.

Ms King: No, that is wrong. You are confusing services and patients again. Services are not patients.
Ms LEY: Over 70 per cent of episodes of care to non-concessional patients are bulk-billed. What that tells us is that there is a cohort of people with the ability to pay a modest contribution to their medical services who are in fact paying nothing. Remember this: behind every bulk-billed consultation there is a government fee. There is a cost to government, and that payment to government is coming from a government increasingly constrained in our ability because of the national accounts left to us by Labor.

So, I say to the shadow minister: if you are comfortable with the level of bulk-billing for those who can afford to pay a modest contribution, then you should stand up and say that, because that is an unsustainability in Medicare that you as members of the Labor Party should not support. You are the party of means testing. You are the party that says that if people can afford to pay then they should. But you are now the party that is saying, 'It's okay; everyone can have a bulk-billed consultation.' When we say that Medicare is universal in coverage, that does not mean that it is free. But it does have built into it a strong equity argument, and that equity argument is an important one.

If we are to keep Medicare sustainable, equitable, simple to administer and universal in coverage, we need to understand that the cost of bulk-billing for those who can afford to pay is too high. Behind every one of those bulk-bill consultations lies a payment, and governments do not have money—

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms LEY: Shadow minister, I did not interrupt everything you said. I know it is a tactic of yours at the dispatch box—

Ms King interjecting—

Ms LEY: I said one thing—I said we had sat here and listened to you rack up debt—but I did not sit here and interrupt the way you have. I know that you are probably concerned because I might be about to reflect on your time as regional infrastructure minister. You are probably hoping that by presenting a wall of noise I will not get to talking about your time as regional infrastructure minister. Do you remember when the audit committee had a close look at the things you did and found that they were not quite right and that you used ministerial discretion in a way that it never should have been used in distributing funds to government projects and programs? You certainly did not do a very good job.

There is an important issue here. There are areas that the government and the opposition agree on—we do want to sustain Medicare, we have listened to the professions and we are committed to working with the professions. While, I admit, we paused the rebate, the opposition has determined that it will freeze the rebate, because it admits that it owns that policy. We are saying that we will pause it, we will consult, we will continue the discussions that we are having around the country, with one aim in mind—to make sure that the Medicare system, of which we are all so proud, is kept on a sustainable footing to protect the vulnerable and to make sure that those who cannot afford to go to the doctor are supported, as they should be, by sound government policy.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (15:31): Mr Deputy Speaker, you cannot imagine the excitement that rippled through the opposition benches when the Minister for Health stepped up to the dispatch box. We anticipated this was truly going to be a red-letter day—this was going to be the day when the Minister for Health unleashed the fourth health policy that the
coalition had put before the Australian people in no less than four months—that is right, four health policies in four months. If we wound it back to the election, it would have been the fifth health policy since they had occupied the Treasury bench. We all remember the solemn promise of the Prime Minister that there would be no cuts to health and no cuts to Medicare. That lasted until budget night in May, when the Treasurer stood over there and dropped the budget night bombshell that there was going to be a $7 co-payment. He argued for it passionately, as did his former minister for health. When we on this side of the House pointed out that this was going to have a terrible impact on pensioners and sick people and old people, the Minister for Health defended their policy saying, 'That's right—but we can't exclude them because pensioners and sick people and old people go to the doctor and if we exclude them we won't get the revenue from the GP tax.'

That lasted from May until November, and at the end of November, after parliament had packed up for the year, we saw the November step-back. This was a lonely, orphan policy because it was the policy under which they were going to convert the $7 co-payment to a $20 slashing of the Medicare rebate. I say it was an orphan policy because nobody would own up to it. The health minister was pointing at the Treasurer, the Treasurer was pointing at the Prime Minister and all of them were saying they didn't own it, it was not their idea—it was somebody else's. It was an orphan of a policy, and little wonder that the health minister interrupted her sojourn to the Australian Open to introduce her own little foot-fault, the GP tax mark IV. This was a policy that lasted not four weeks—it did not have the stamina to last four weeks. He we are on this red-letter day when we were expecting the government to announce their fourth policy in four months, and still they have provided no detail to the Australian people and no detail to the Australian parliament.

It is quite clear from this sorry passage, from the last election to today, that, being as committed as they are to their GP tax, it is as difficult to dump as their own Prime Minister. We can imagine the hope that many of them had on the backbench—they thought that if they could not dump the policy because the Prime Minister was so wedded to it, perhaps they could put all of their faith in the Duke of York, the member for Wentworth—the Duke of York, the member for Wentworth, who so recently marched his troops up to the top of the hill and then marched them back down again on Monday. They had hoped that the Duke of York was going to rescue them, until they heard him say this:

I support unreservedly and wholeheartedly every element in the budget.

He went on, thundering to Alan Jones:

Every single one … I support every element, of course, including the Medicare co-payment.

There we have the Duke of York, the alternative Prime Minister upon whom the backbench based their hope that if they dumped the Prime Minister they could also dump the GP tax—but that was not to be, because he was as wedded to this horrendous policy as the current Prime Minister. Here we all were, thinking that today, on this red-letter day, after four goes at getting a health policy, they were going to provide some detail and some information. Our hopes were dashed. We got a preschool lecture from somebody masquerading as a health minister, and we are still waiting. We can imagine what is going through the minds of the people of Australia tonight—(Time expired)
Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (15:36): I would classify the speech of the member for Throsby as hypocrisy and the pot calling the kettle black. It was full of emotion, froth and bubble—it was more like a lather. I remind the House of a quote from a minister for health:

By targeting funding, prioritising spending and making tough but responsible decisions, we are ensuring that health spending is focused where it can be of greatest help to Australians most in need and at most risk.

Now, that was not us. That was the last minister for health, in the ALP’s 2013 budget, in which they took $160 million out of Medicare payments in the first year, then $664 million in the forward estimates, in their last budget. They introduced a pause in indexation, as was elegantly outlined by the current Minister for Health. On one hand they come in and have an emotional speech, rather than a logical speech, criticising the pausing of indexation, but then we realise that it was initiated by the ALP.

Not only have they attacked the Medicare system and had the hide to come in here and criticise our initiatives to fix the budget deficit and debt left to us as their legacy, they have a long history of attacking health management in the country. They attacked health insurance on many occasions. They means tested the rebate on private health insurance. They may have an ideological problem with it, but the reality is that it delivers health care for so many people. If these people were not in private health insurance, the public health system in the hospital scene would be absolutely swamped. Australia has a dual system—a mix of private care and public care. Yet, they keep trying to blow up one half of it. They means tested the rebate in 2009 and 2011; they also attacked the Lifetime Health Cover rebate. They changed indexation to attack private health insurance by stealth. Look at the PBS—one of the other pillars. They politicised the PBS and stonewalled decisions and recommendations by the PBAC. Since the coalition has been in power, over 388 drugs have listed by us. With medical research, which this country is extremely good at, in 2011 they tried to sneak $400 million out of the NHMRC. People were awake to that and, fortunately, it was shelved. But then they returned in 2013 and took $140 million out by clever accounting—by delaying payments for a month or two in the hope that no-one would notice. Talk about hypocrisy.

We have listened and we have consulted. There has been a change of health minister. There are no problems with that. Things like that happen in every government. The previous government had six ministers for small business, for goodness sake. So they have no credibility at all in talking about defending the Medicare system. Because we have listened, there has been a removal of the co-payment. When situations change, governments are meant to listen to their voters. We have certainly done that. We will continue to consult and take the Australian populace and the medical profession with us in these difficult times. We have inherited one almighty mess in the financial sphere. You cannot make any good decisions as a government unless you get your books in order. So we have to do that.

We value general practice. Every patient values what their general practitioner does. That is why we have listened. It was disturbing in a major way the business model of how most general practitioners work. We recognise that. There is no sin in that. That is common sense. We are all about delivering solutions. To get to the nub of it—

Mr Conroy: Real Solutions?

Dr GILLESPIE: Real solutions means managing to pay your way.

Mr Conroy: Show us your booklet.
Dr GILLESPIE: And, as a government, we have been living on— (Time expired)

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (15:42): The other day I was in the backyard with my little dog, Baron, and he was running around—all around the backyard—chasing after three tennis balls. Eventually, he got so excited he threw up at my feet. And then there was this pause—

Government members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr CHAMPION: There was this slight pause, and his ears went back. There was this look of shame as he ate his own vomit. Now, you cannot blame the dog for this. You cannot blame Baron for doing it because it is in his DNA. Just as it is in Baron's DNA to return to his own vomit, it is in the Liberal Party's DNA on health to attack Medicare—to hate Medicare. It is in their DNA. That is why in the Fraser years, in 1975, they promised to keep Medibank. In 1978 they charged a co-payment of $20. In 1981 they abolished it. In the 1980s Howard called Medicare a 'miserable, cruel fraud.' He promised to pull Medicare right apart. This is the hero of the Liberal Party. Fightback! We remember how Fightback!, on page 7, offered to end bulk billing unless you were a pensioner or a concession card holder—that is, a price signal. It was written in the document, there in black and white. Go and have a look at it.

Then, of course, we have Mr Abbott at the last election with Real Solutions. All those opposite went to the election with their little document. There was nothing about a $7 dollar co-payment in there. There was nothing about a $20 co-payment in there. No was nothing about a $5 cut to rebates in there. There was nothing about Medicare at all. But what do we have in government? We have it off again, on again. First, we had the $7 co-payment. And it was not just $7. It was $7 every time you go to a GP; $7 every time you get a scan; $7 every time you get a blood test—seven times seven times seven. That was what it was going to do. If you were diabetic, had asthma or some other recurring problem, you were going to be charged not $7 once but over and over again.

Eventually, the penny dropped in the Liberal Party and the panic set in. They worked out that the public was not all that keen on that. So what did they do? They went to the next phase. The next phase was, 'We'll just hack into the doctors' rebate. We'll just hit—

Mr Tudge: What has this got to do with the dog vomiting?

Mr CHAMPION: I will get to that. I will take that interjection. I will get to that. It is an interesting story.

To avoid the Senate, they did it by regulation. They said they would introduce it on 19 January. We all know that was an attack on fee for service. It was an attack on every general practice in the country. It was going to force GPs to be the bad guys. GPs were going to have to introduce a fee. They were going to have to collect the money.

Mr Tudge: What about the vomit?

Mr CHAMPION: I will get to that. So what we have is a God-almighty mess. It is in the Liberal Party's DNA. They have been at this for a long time—attacking universal health care, attacking Medibank and attacking Medicare. That is what they do. That is why we have had Prime Minister Abbott on 53 separate occasions saying things such as, 'It is right and proper to have a modest Medicare co-payment.' That was said in question time. He has said these things 53 times, I am informed. He asked 3AW, 'Why isn't it fair enough to have a modest co-
payment for Medicare?" This is what the Prime Minister says, and this is why the Liberal Party cannot be believed.

The members opposite ask what this has to do with Baron. Well, just like it is in Baron's DNA to go back to his vomit, the Liberal Party are going to come back to this co-payment. They are going to return to it over and over again. You may believe them at the next election when they promise to keep Medicare, but I can bet you this: if they are in government, then in 2016 or 2017 the co-payment will be back and the attacks on Medicare will be back. They have been at this for 30 years. They will do it again. (Time expired)

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (15:46): I think it was Paul Keating who used to talk about dogs returning to their vomit. What we have had is Keating-lite. The wannabe member for Wakefield somehow sees himself as the inheritor of that tradition. This seems to have escaped members opposite, so let me just restate it. It has been the Liberal Party's position for the last 20 years that we support Medicare, we support bulk-billing and we support community rating for private health insurance.

I noticed in the previous speaker's long discourse on the last 40 years that he completely ignored the 11½ years of the Howard government and its very strong record on health. Mr Champion interjecting—

Dr SOUTHCOTT: You mentioned the bulk-billing incentives, Member for Wakefield. We invented them. We invented the incentive for concession card holders. Who invented the concessions for children under 16? Was it Neal Blewett? No. Was it Brian Howe? No. It was the Prime Minister when he was Minister for Health and Ageing.

Also, elements in Medicare that we are strong supporters of are access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, free access to public hospitals and universal access to the Medicare rebate. I do not know how many speeches I have stated this in over the last 20 years. Not only did we strongly support Medicare when we were last in government; we improved it. We greatly expanded access in the area of mental health. What did the previous government do? What did the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government do? They started cutting back some of the rebate that we had given on mental health. We expanded the access for allied health professionals in the areas of team care arrangements and chronic disease management plans. It was also the Prime Minister when he was Minister for Health and Ageing who decided to expand Medicare to access dental services. He understood that people needed access to restorative treatment. That is one thing we did.

In question time, the Minister for Health said—and I think it needs to be restated—that we value general practice and we value primary health care. This is the important part of our health system. We have 43,000 general practitioners. It is very important that we continue to see general practice as a valued and rewarding path for medical students to go into.

A number of other similar countries to us, such as New Zealand, the UK and Canada, have looked at reorienting their system towards primary health care. I pay tribute to the previous government for initiating the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission. It published an enormous amount of work and a primary care strategy. The reform commission was chaired by Christine Bennett. All of this work was done and then what happened was that Kevin Rudd got it completely wrong and focused on hospitals and not on primary health care. It is very important that we reorient our system towards primary health care.
When you look at how we have performed over the last 25 years, you can see we have done very well on mortality rates, cancer survival rates and so on. We compare very well with other OECD countries. We are improving our rankings on all of those things. But the challenges we will face in the future will be in the area of management of chronic diseases such as diabetes and others.

This is a question I would pose for members. We have had a good debate here about Medicare, but we need to start thinking about what we are getting for our money. We need to be asking: how can we improve the system? I think there are a number of mechanisms through which we can improve coordination and care, such as through the new Primary Health Networks. If you look at New Zealand and the UK, they use these mechanisms very much. There are the blended payments with the practice incentive payments. Again, there are a number of mechanisms through which we can see improvement. We have a good primary health care system. There is no doubt about that. We have great health system in Australia. There is no doubt about that.

But there are a number of improvements we can make to face the challenge of chronic diseases and how we keep people out of hospital. (Time expired)

**Ms HALL** (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (15:52): The one thing that every Australian knows is that, when it comes to health, you cannot trust the Abbott government. The one thing they know is that, if there is a way to undermine Medicare, those on the other side of this parliament will find it. They have attempted to do so ever since they were elected. Their first attack came in the May budget, and they have had to back away from it now. The one thing that you know is that you cannot trust the Abbott government, or any Liberal government, when it comes to health. I will have to admit, the government’s attack on Medicare did achieve one thing. It actually united doctors, patients, pensioners and even children. It united all sections of the health system against this government’s mean, evil-spirited attack on Medicare—its failed attack.

Today, the government announced that it would not proceed with its unpopular Medicare tax. But who believes that? No-one on this side of the House believes that. All they have done is push the pause button.

**An opposition member:** That's right. The New South Wales election must be on.

**Ms HALL:** Yes, the New South Wales election must be on. They have paused it and they are going to wait until they have the numbers in the Senate or, alternatively, until after the next election, when they will try to sneak through a co-payment, a value signal, a price signal or whatever they want to call it. Those on the other side of this House do not believe in Medicare. They do not support universal health care and they will use any and every opportunity to undermine it.

When Tony Abbott was the health minister, he used to stand up in this parliament, at the dispatch box, smirking—literally smirking—saying that the Howard government and he himself were the best friends that Medicare ever had. We saw what sort of a friend he was. In the Shortland electorate, bulk-billing plummeted to under 60 per cent. You might ask what the bulk-billing rate was when Labor's term in government finished. It was 82 per cent—what a contrast. Can you ever believe a man that stands up and says he supports Medicare, when every action that he has ever taken has been an attack on Medicare? Now he thinks the Australian people will say, 'Hey, we've listened and we've learnt.' They know that at every single opportunity, those on the other side of the House will be back attacking Medicare.
An opposition member: That's right. It is in their DNA.

Ms HALL: It is absolutely in their DNA. They do not know how to support universal health care. They believe that only those people that are 'worthy' welfare recipients—make sure they are worthy though—should be entitled to go and receive bulk-billing from their local doctor. They do not acknowledge the fact that every Australian contributes to Medicare through the Medicare surcharge. We pay for Medicare. Medicare is an Australian institution. Medicare guarantees that all Australians can access health care when they need it, not when they can afford it.

Medicare is the backbone of our health system, and those on the other side of this House have only one agenda: to attack it and, finally, to reintroduce a co-payment or, as it really is, a GP tax—a tax on the sick, a tax on the chronically ill, a tax on the elderly and a tax on children.

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass—Government Whip) (15:57): I was going to resist the temptation to be too hard on those opposite, but there is frankly too much material that we have heard this afternoon and it is far too tempting. We heard the member for Wakefield who claimed to save Holden. But given five minutes to talk about how we might save Medicare, he spent about half of his speech talking about his vomiting dog—extraordinary! The member for Throsby, while the health minister was speaking, said that we should pay more attention to Twitter when it comes to healthcare policy. We should pay more attention to Twitter? I know that Twitter is a source of much progressive policymaking on the left of politics, and the member for Throsby obviously supports a Twitter-led approach to policy development, but 140 characters is superficial and unsatisfactory when it comes to the big strategic issues confronting our country. I was most interested to see the word ‘unrelenting’ in the motion by the member for Ballarat because she and members opposite have been unrelenting in their unwillingness to address the strategic problems confronting our country. Health care is one of those areas.

By any measure, health care requires urgent attention. There is an abundance of evidence to say that in the last decade, our spending on health care has more than doubled, from $8 billion to $20 billion. We have heard members opposite claim there is no problem with Medicare, but we only raise half of that through the Medicare levy—about $10 billion. There is a structural problem that we need to fix. Spending is projected to climb in the next decade to $34 billion. So when we say it is a strategic challenge deserving of strategic leadership, it is because of the unmistakable fact that the healthcare system we established in July 1975 no longer meets the needs of our community today and, more importantly, into the future. It is a challenge that deserves extensive consultation to understand the friction points of why that economic problem will persist into the future and to identify areas of waste, and how to ensure the future sustainability of the system. The Minister for Health, Sussan Ley, is doing a great job. She was in Launceston only a few weeks ago, visiting the Launceston Medical Centre, sitting in a room with a whole bunch of GPs in my electorate and having them tell her what they think the issues are. As Minister Ley says, quite correctly:

Doing nothing is not an option.

My message to those opposite is: enough of the shrieking—

Mr Champion interjecting—
Mr NIKOLIC: mendacious claims about the destruction of Medicare. It represents an appalling lack of composure from a party that once understood how important it was to address the big strategic issues of our country.

Mr Champion: Don't lecture us.

Mr NIKOLIC: And I say to the member for Wakefield—or 'the persistent interjector', as he is known in this parliament—if you are not going to listen to us, listen to Bob Hawke, Paul Keating and John Howard, who on 1 January this year, the start of the new year, said in *The Australian* that in the past, the not-too-distant past, both major parties of this parliament used to actually approach some of these big strategic issues in a bipartisan way. I say to the member for Wakefield and his colleagues: work with us to address the future sustainability of Medicare, to improve patient outcomes and to respond to the challenges of an ageing population.

The *Intergenerational report* is going to point to some of those challenges. I often use, as a canary-in-the-coalmine insight into what lies ahead for this country, what is happening in Japan, which has a major ageing-demographic problem. In Japan at the moment, the sale of adult nappies exceeds the sale of the baby variety. In Australia, the consequences for health care, the consequences for the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and the consequences for residential aged care are profound. To say we should not have to do something about that is simply burying your head in the sand.

People who can contribute to better outcomes in that area are in this room. The member for Wakefield and his vomiting dog, if he likes, can be part of that solution! People who can make a difference in that area are in our hospitals. My daughter is a young doctor and my wife is a career nurse; they can point to some areas of the healthcare system where we can really make a difference. People who can make a difference are in the GP practices and clinics.

I say to those opposite: if you don't like the coalition proposals to make health care sustainable, tell us what your alternative is. I am listening. We want to work together—*(Time expired)*

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (16:02): Before the election, this government said there would be no cuts to health, education or pensions. After coming to government, it proceeded to trash each of these election promises. Now the Prime Minister says he has changed his mind about the GP tax, the Medicare co-payment. Why? Is it because he has realised that you have to keep your election promises? No. Is it because he has realised that it is unfair to poorer and sicker Australians? No. The Prime Minister says it is because he has remembered—‘remembered’, if you do not mind—from his days as health minister that you cannot do anything without the support of the medical profession. This is a remarkable response. The only reason we do not have a GP tax right now is that Labor and the minor parties blocked this tax in the Senate. What a lame and unconvincing backflip this is. If it were in the sport of diving, it would be a complete belly whacker. If the government could get the support of Clive Palmer and the other crossbench senators, they would do it. Make no mistake about it; they would do it in a heartbeat.

The Prime Minister said in question time:
… the co-payment is dead, buried and cremated.
Now, where have we heard those words before? Yes, that is right; we heard them concerning Work Choices. But we know that the government are itching to bring back Work Choices. We hear a constant drumbeat from members opposite about penalty rates, individual work contracts and employers’ dismissal powers. Just as they want to bring back Work Choices, in their hearts they still want to introduce a Medicare co-payment, a GP tax. Just wait a few days. We will get the Intergenerational report—the member for Bass let the cat out of the bag here. The Intergenerational report will be a dodgy document where those who are digging a hole for Australia will ask to be given a bigger shovel.

Deputy Speaker, one of the things you will hear—indeed, we heard it this afternoon—is that our health expenditure is unsustainable and that consumers need to contribute more. But this comes from a government for whom Medicare and health spending are not priorities. Their priority is to cut corporate taxes. They could find more money by cracking down on multinational tax avoidance, as Labor would do and as we outlined in detail yesterday.

The government's attack on Medicare is not confined to the GP tax. They are in the process of cutting more than $57 billion from Australia's public hospitals and they have cut $368 million from preventative health programs to tackle obesity, smoking and alcohol abuse. According to the results of a global study into obesity rates published in the medical journal *The Lancet*, almost a quarter of the country's children and 63 per cent of the adult population are now deemed overweight. In my own community of Wills, diabetes is a major concern, with Moreland ranked fourth in metropolitan Melbourne, with 5.3 per cent of residents suffering the disease. Wills has been named by the National Stroke Foundation as Australia's 10th highest hot spot for strokes, with an estimated 106 deaths in 2014. The slashing of preventative health programs is short-sighted and shameful, and there is no prospect that, under this government, costs for patients will be contained. The Rural Doctors Association of Australia has said this afternoon:

… RDAA remains concerned about the Government's current commitment to maintain its freeze on the indexation of Medicare rebates paid to patients.

This 'Big Freeze' has the potential to increase costs for patients to a greater extent than the proposed co-payment, with the resultant restrictions and difficulties in accessing primary care services.

It will also put increased pressure on the viability of many rural practices.

Freezing indexation on these rebates is a one way road to nowhere and a seriously false economy… many practices will be forced to continue to raise their consultation rates …

I am proud to be a member of the Labor Party, which established Medicare over the strenuous objections of those opposite. We have continued to defend Medicare from the efforts of those opposite to subvert, undermine and white-ant it any time in the last 30 years when they thought they could get away with it. They never change. It is still our job to protect Medicare, and we are as committed to this task as ever.

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (16:07): It is quite an honour to speak on this matter of public importance on Medicare, but I am wondering where the shadow minister who brought it before the chamber is. If it is so important, where has she gone?

Opposition members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! On my left!

Ms SCOTT: Is she in her seat? No.
Ms Hall interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Shortland is being very disruptive.

Ms SCOTT: Is she at the despatch box? No. Where has she gone?

Mr Champion interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield might find himself out of the chamber.

Ms SCOTT: She wanted answers from the government. We are all here, ready and waiting to tell her, but she has disappeared.

Mr Nikolic: It is her matter of public importance!

Ms SCOTT: It is her matter of public importance. Is she at the despatch box? No, I don’t think so. Maybe she is back in her office with her feet up on the table, having a Tim Tam and a cup of tea. That is where the shadow minister for health is. It is a matter of importance to her but she is not in the chamber even to hear about it.

Mr Nikolic: The chamber is clear!

Ms SCOTT: In fact, the chamber is clear. There are only three opposition members left, plus a couple who are leaving. Clearly the opposition do not think this is an important issue. It is lucky that the government is committed to the sustainability of Medicare.

Medicare costs this country over $19 billion a year. In fact, Medicare has doubled in the last decade, from $8.6 billion in 2003-04 to $19.1 billion in 2013-14. Over the next decade Medicare will see an increase of about 80 per cent, with spending projected to reach $34 billion by 2023-24. If you average that out across every single Australian taxpayer—the first $2,000 tax you pay goes towards paying for Medicare. I think that that is a great thing, but it is a lot of money. Can we afford to continue to pay that amount in the future and then see that much of consolidated revenue go to Medicare? In 10 years time the $2,000 will have blown out to $4,000 a year for every single taxpayer. How are we going to look after the sustainability of Medicare for our children and our grandchildren? In fact, we are stealing from our children and our grandchildren.

If Labor is truly honest about Medicare they need to plan and tell us their vision for this blow out. How are they going to plan for the blowouts to Medicare as our population ages? It is crunch time. It is time for the responsible government that we are to make decisions to make Medicare sustainable well into the future.

Those opposite have already straddled us with what is projected to be a $300 billion debt cheque. Labor has made such a mess already of the budgets that we are cleaning up. We need to look at how we are going to support Medicare. We need to look at the health of future generations.

I commend the Treasurer, the Minister for Health and the former Minister for Health for establishing a medical research fund. In Western Sydney we are building a medical research facility. We are pairing with international institutions such as the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, with which we will be looking at how you can fuse Eastern and Western techniques. The medical research fund will provide Australia with the opportunity to have a healthy population and also to lead the world in medical research. It is important for Australia. It is important for jobs. It will create jobs for people right around our country. The
science park we have built in Luddenham will mean 12,200 jobs in the medical research space. There will be a further 10,000 students who will be studying medical research. Sydney Science Park in Werrington will create a further 6,000 jobs in medical research.

Those opposite are not interested in technology. They are not interested in looking after the country. They are not interested in how they are going to make Medicare sustainable well into the future. They are not even interested in their own MPI. Out of the entire opposition there are only three members in the chamber. This is their question. They wanted to know the answers. The government is here. The government is telling them exactly what it is working on. But those opposite are clearly not interested. All they are interested in doing is grandstanding and pretending they care, when what they are going on with is absolutely useless.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough): Order! The discussion is now concluded.

BILLS

Broadcasting and Other Legislation Amendment (Deregulation) Bill 2015
Returned from Senate
Message received from the Senate returning the bill without amendment or request.

BUSINESS
Rearrangement

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Trade and Investment) (16:12): I move:

That orders of the day Nos 2 and 3, government business, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2014
Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Regulatory Levies) Amendment (Designated Coastal Waters) Bill 2014
Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2015
Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Regulatory Levies) Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2015

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr GRAY (Brand) (16:13): This piece of legislation, the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2014, responds to a significant discovery last year of rocky formations off the Western Australian coast. In 2006, the government of the day began a process of mapping the seaward-facing shore of Australia
to better understand our boundaries and also, more importantly, to better understand the interaction of state boundaries and Commonwealth boundaries in a maritime context. That work commenced under the Howard government. It was extremely valuable work. It was overseen by the then minister for resources, Ian Macfarlane, and this change has also been implemented and overseen by Minister Macfarlane.

The changes are genuinely significant. To some extent, they have been already reported in the *West Australian*, in a piece that was insightfully published last year publicising the discovery of what was referred to as Golden Rock, a rock that is not much bigger than the table in front of me but that, through its location, has redrawn the boundaries of Western Australia. The newly identified high-water features around Scott and Seringapatam Reefs triggered a change in the dataset which is used to determine the maritime boundaries.

The features were identified by Geoscience Australia during a regular review of, as I say, the most seaward features that define the limit of Australia's maritime jurisdiction. The review was undertaken in accordance with the Seas and Submerged Lands Act 1973. The review was one that had produced, by 2008, a much celebrated image of the expanded national maritime boundaries. They expanded into the Southern Ocean and into parts of the Indian and Pacific oceans in a much celebrated expansion of Australia's maritime properties, territories and jurisdiction. The flip side of that was that the review continued into the coastal waters. In that review, when I was Minister for Resources and Energy in 2013, the features that had been identified in this current process were simply not known of.

The features that were identified on North Scott Reef affect the blocks comprising the Commonwealth retention lease WA-30-R and Western Australian retention leases R2 and TR5, which cover the Torosa gas field. In and of themselves, these are petroleum titles over the Calliance, Brecknock and Torosa fields, and they tend not to be very much in the public gaze. The importance of them here, and in this piece of legislation, is that the Western Australian parliament and government's capability to make decisions which influence the direct development options that might be chosen by the Browse oil and gas field operator Woodside is genuinely impacted. Why is that important? It is important because, over the course of the last three years, there has been a very substantial public debate in Western Australia about how those oil and gas fields should be developed, including whether they should be developed onshore.

I stress that the government of Western Australia tried very hard to get an onshore development for the Browse Basin oil and gas fields. It tried so hard that it invested its own money. It worked very hard with the communities of the Kimberley coast and worked carefully in concert with the then federal government and with the current federal government to try to get a good solution to an onshore development that could work. Unfortunately, the operator announced in April 2013 that an onshore development did not meet the commerciality test for the joint venture. Because it did not reach the commerciality test, it was then necessary for the joint venture to apply for a standard Commonwealth retention lease. Why was that necessary? It was necessary because, prior to that point, the retention lease had specified that the development of the Browse gas fields should be done onshore at James Price Point.

These changes provide to the parliament of Western Australia and to the government of Western Australia a great opportunity to make a decision that accelerates the development of
the Browse gas fields. That is important because, as we stand here today, on 3 March 2015, around our entire country there is not one single onshore LNG greenfield production plant being proposed—not one in any jurisdiction: not in Queensland, not in the Northern Territory and not, unfortunately, in Western Australia. The construction phase, which had grown to the point quite possibly of being overheated during the last five years, has now entirely ground to a halt. Unless we get a project sanctioned by an operator, we will enter an extended period where there is no greenfield onshore LNG project proposed anywhere in our country. We have not seen that since the LNG industry arrived in Australia with the North West Shelf in the 1980s. North West Shelf was a project first in so many different ways, not just because of the air-cooled nature of that facility, a world first, and not just because of the size of that facility—at North Rankin A it was, in its day, the world's largest offshore platform. It was constructed immediately after the Piper Alpha explosion in the North Sea and it was constructed in a way that responded to all of the learnings from that disaster in the North Sea. It was a first of its kind in so many ways. That project being so big, it absorbed the entire investment banking capability of the Australian banking sector. It renovated how our banking sector worked and it renovated the economy of Western Australia.

But now those sorts of developments are simply no more. They are no more because of project economics. The future lies in a better technology pathway. That technology pathway is almost certainly to allow the joint venture to make the most commercial decision that it can make to try to commercially develop these gas resources, and for the first time now the Western Australian government has real skin in the game. No longer can Canberra and Perth flip this ball between each other and point to each other for having failed or dropped the ball. This is now a game that very firmly has a Western Australian regulatory interest because Western Australia, for the first time, has the capacity to genuinely influence how this project progresses.

In the past year, we have seen in the parliament in Western Australia a couple of inquiries into floating LNG—and they were not particularly good inquiries. They tended to be inquiries where the answer was known before the question was even asked. The benefit that comes to Western Australia from floating technology is not just that it is easier to approve; it is not just that it has a smaller and contained environmental footprint; it is not just that it has a lower cap ex; it is also that it is literally the technology of the future. It is the technology that allows development in a capital constrained world; a world where oil companies are reducing their capital expenditure. We saw in recent weeks Wood Mackenzie, respected hydrocarbons analysts, announce that they could see a pipeline of $143 billion worth of oil and gas projects, which are now cancelled. Our Browse gas fields stand a chance of being part of that cancelled arrangement for future oil and gas investments, unless we can get these projects kicked off. That is why I was particularly taken by the terrific front page of our local paper, The West Australian, advertising the golden rock in a terrific piece last year titled 'Stony outcrops to reap billions in gas royalties for Western Australia'. I certainly know that, from the perspective of the Western Australian government, the Western Australian opposition and informed oil and gas observers in Western Australia, this legislation is both sorely needed and strongly supported. The support that this legislation will receive from our side of the House is given because we want to see these Kimberley coast gas developments move closer and be realised.
It is good news when both sides of politics see eye to eye, but this is good news particularly for Western Australia. The ‘golden rock’, as it has been referred to in The West Australian, is part of a newly identified high-water feature at Scott and Seringapatam Reefs. The passage of this legislation confirms changes in Western Australia's maritime boundaries. It means that the Western Australian government has a much bigger say and a slice of the Browse gas fields that are operated by Woodside energy. This is because the previously unknown rocky outcrops are in the vicinity of the Torosa gas field in the Browse Basin, and they are now known rocky outcrops. They have caused boundaries to be redrawn and legislation to be changed, because the offshore boundaries are set by reference to high water, low water, coastline, islands, rocks and the like—and they change.

When I was minister two years ago, as I said, I was advised that the WA interest in the Browse Basin oil and gas resource was as small as five per cent. Because of the discovery of these rocks near the Torosa gas fields, the WA interest is now big—it is very big. It actually gives the Western Australian government and parliament such a significant say in the development of this basin that in fact whether or not it does get developed is now very strongly in the hands of the Western Australian parliament. As I said, last year Geoscience Australia completed reviewing all of Australia's most seaward features, including the newly identified features around North Scott Reef and in the Browse Basin. When The West Australian reported the appearance of the golden rocks on its front page, and when Premier Barnett handed Woodside a framed copy of the front page at a dinner in June last year, the significance of the rock was understood—if not actually embraced—by all who were present.

Some feared that the gold rock would prevent the development of the Browse gas field. You may recall imprudent references to the Browse developments in the Western Australian parliament last year, as I referred to, and in even poorly conceived reports into FLNG. I advised many people at the time that these rocks, this discovery, could be the enabler the Browse oil and gas projects need to win approval from the Western Australian government and the parliament of Western Australia.

So debate about this Browse development is no longer a debate about empty rhetoric. It is no longer about people positioning themselves on local content. It is no longer about trying to seek a local, parochial political advantage. It is, literally, 'make up your mind' time. It is make up your mind time for the Browse operator and for the parliament of Western Australia. It is clear that with the passage of these bills achieved—I am very sure, with the unanimous support on both sides of two parliaments, here in Canberra and in Perth—that we have a clear Western Australian interest in a good and speedy development of the Browse gas fields. The fields, Mr Deputy Speaker, as you would be well aware, were discovered in the 1970s, in about 1974. They have not been developed, despite holding substantial reserves of condensate—some 300 million barrels—and something in the order of 14 trillion cubic feet of gas.

The benefit for Western Australia from the development of these fields is absolutely clear. The benefit to the Kimberley coast is absolutely clear, and it may well now include significant revenue streams for Western Australia's Future Fund, or for education, roads or hospitals. And it also means, most importantly, an abundance of clean, energy-dense export gas—liquefied, of course.
Western Australia, the Kimberley communities and Australia can no longer afford to have the Browse gas fields stalled. We need the development. We need the revenue. We need the high-tech jobs and the economic activity that come from the very best modern liquefied natural gas processing. A development in the Browse will bring great jobs. Those jobs will last 30 to 50 years. The commissioning of the North West Shelf Gas project in the early 1980s has seen that project operate, uninterrupted, for in the order of 25 years. And it will operate, in its silent, highly effective, extremely beneficial manner, for the next 25 years.

The jobs and the technology of the highly valuable fuel for the carbon constrained, energy hungry countries in Northern Asia can no longer be stalled. That is not in the interests of Western Australia. It is not in the interests of the Kimberley coast nor of Australia. Today, for the first time in a generation, without any greenfield onshore LNG developments around our entire country, we need to embrace the technology that can unlock the gas of the Browse Basin. If we do not do it, if we seek other development options that constrain optimising the benefits for the Kimberley coast and for Western Australia, it could be a blow from which Western Australia may not recover.

Let me explain what I mean by that. Our North Asian markets are already receiving negotiations and offers of gas out of Russia. The Chinese have already signed up a couple of 10-million tonne agreements with the Russians to supply pipeline gas into China. That pipeline gas is an ever present commercial threat to Australia's export LNG industry. That pipeline gas has the potential to remove these markets from Australia's reach for potentially the next 25 to 30 years. Such a development would not be in the interests of Western Australia, would not be in the interests of the Kimberley coast and certainly would not be in the interests of Australia.

Last week I had the great pleasure of attending the University of Western Australia Centre for Offshore Foundation Systems. This is a very interesting facility that exists at UWA and is funded by the great oil companies that operate in Western Australian waters. It is a facility that exists because it became apparent very early on in the construction of North Rankin A that we needed a better understanding of the subsurface, of the nature of the soils that are below the sea that separate the surface of the subsea from our oil and gas deposits. In the early days of the construction of North Rankin A, during the pile-driving process, whole structures were lost—simply pounded into the carbon structures in the seabed and lost—not able to be used as part of the support structure for North Rankin A. It then became apparent that a better study of those subsea structures was critically important. Out of that, at the University of Western Australia we now have world-leading technology to understand how these anchoring systems work.

This area that I describe off the Kimberley coast is more accurately described by meteorologists as cyclone alley. It is where cyclones form and it is where they come belting into the coast every season. Because of those extreme maritime conditions, knowing how vessels can be anchored becomes not just an academic interest but a critical industrial capability for Australia. At the University of Western Australia the work that is done on anchoring systems is not simply world-leading; the University of Western Australia has become the go-to academic institution for understanding how these anchoring systems work,
how to optimise these anchoring systems and, most importantly, how to design them for whatever kind of structure needs to be anchored.

We will have, in the course of the next couple of years, arriving into the Western Australian offshore environment, in Commonwealth waters, the Prelude floating LNG facility. It is 488 metres long and about 100 metres wide. It is the world's largest human-made floating structure. The size of this anchoring system is almost beyond belief. For those of us from Western Australia, it is almost as if one anchoring unit would be located in the suburb of Cockburn, another in the equivalent of the northern suburbs, up near Quinns Rock, and then another in Canning Vale. It is a structure that has a footprint of gargantuan proportions and an anchoring system that is able to hold in place the world's largest human-made floating structure, which needs to be held in place in a specific way so that hydrocarbons can be extracted efficiently, so that hydrocarbons can be extracted safely and so that hydrocarbons can be exported on time every time. That outstanding piece of engineering that grows from the excellence of places like Western Australia generates the real engineering jobs of the future. It generates the jobs that will be around in 25 and 30 years time. It generates the jobs in operations and production that will work every day, 24 hours a day, for 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 years. They are the jobs that will create for us the technical platform and future for our industry, that will create for us the status our nation needs in hydrocarbon.

Most of us who have oil refineries in our seats are aware of the massive cost pressures that our refineries are under, and we are aware that refineries are closing. Hardly a year goes by without a refinery in Australia closing. I am lucky: my refinery in Kwinana is not just open; it is a refinery in which BP is investing. But most refineries are under extreme pressure. In Queensland, one close was announced last year. Refineries in Sydney are closing. There are no refineries in Adelaide. Refineries in Victoria are under massive pressures.

The technologies that relate to oil and gas refining are technologies that support engineering schools in our universities. They are the technologies that support the most advanced manufacturing sector that we have. They are the technologies that create the transport fuels. They are the technologies that literally keep our lights burning, that keep our trucks and transport working and that keep our roads and airways operating. When that technology transforms to gas based technologies, what we will see through these floating technologies is again the pathway to the future, supported by outstanding academic research, supported by governments that genuinely support the pathway to the future in creating the technology options that our country currently does not have.

We are, by any measure, as I am fond of saying, a global energy superpower; but we need also to be a global energy technology superpower. To be the global energy technology superpower, our nation must embrace these new technologies. By doing that, we will generate industries based in Perth, in Darwin, in Geelong, in Melbourne, in Adelaide and in Brisbane that will support the great effort to extract our oil and gas and to export it in the most environmentally efficient, sensitive and capable way, in a way that means our oil and gas investments can more than compete on a global scale with every other hydrocarbons' province. We can do that because our regulatory environment has certainty. Our governments support these ventures and do not squabble about it—and we have seen some squabbling on this issue in this province over the past two years. We now have an opportunity to change that—and this legislation provides that opportunity. It gives to Western Australia an
unambiguous slice of the action and an unambiguous slice of the accountability. If we do not get this project up, and, if we do not see the development of the Browse oil and gas fields in a meaningful time frame, we will see an opportunity disappear for Western Australia. As our competitor countries in East Africa and in other parts of the globe take our markets with the very technology that I have described, we will see in East Africa the development of floating technologies that will deliver gas into our north Asian markets more cheaply and quickly. We will see pipeline gas out of Russia delivered into China more cheaply and quickly.

We have the capacity here and now to support the parliament of Western Australia and to support the government of Western Australia to take the brave decisions to support our future as a global energy superpower. These are decisions that will ensure that we can supply these markets from a close location with co-investment from our customer countries and with technologies that will develop the newer industries in Perth and drive our industry in an environmental, a sustainable, an industrially-ambitious and, most importantly, a nationally courageous way. This way would allow us all to be proud that, when we were asked in this place to vote on creating certainty for the tenure that exists in these oil and gas fields, not only did this place vote for it, but we voted for it unanimously—not only did they vote for it in the Western Australian parliament, but they voted for it unanimously. We need to keep the courage in place and allow and encourage the project proponents to invest in the interests of the Kimberley coast, Western Australia and our nation in a technology that will exist and continue to operate for future generations.

I commend Minister McFarlane for his incredibly hard work in bringing this bill to our table. I commend the parliament of Western Australia for the speedy manner in which they have dealt with this legislation. I commend also Geoscience Australia for doing its work in a tough environment, in a contested environment and in a way that makes us all very proud of that institution and the great skill and knowledge that it brings to the work that it does in supporting these decisions.

Geoscience Australia received the first draft legal advice on the appearance of these rocks less than a year ago. That advice confirmed that the high-tide features of Scott and Seringapatam Reefs did fall within the limits of the WA jurisdiction. Within less than a year, the government has responded. Within less than a year, the parliament of Western Australia has responded. Within less than a year, our parliament has responded and responded in an emphatic way to create certainty in this jurisdiction. This certainty underpins our view that these oil and gas fields should be developed for our national interest; to create the energy of the future for our North Asian markets; to create the jobs of the future for kids who are not yet at school in Australia; for our universities that have not yet developed the new technologies that will support the safe extraction of this gas; and to support the investors and the superannuation accounts of our country that will want to invest in an energy future that is Australian, that links to our North Asian markets and that gives Australian investors the great opportunity that this energy option provides.

There are professors and technologists that are not yet in schools. Those technologists and those professors, who will work to develop our maritime offshore manufacturing capability, are going to thank this parliament and the West Australian parliament for having the courage to do what it needed to do and to have done it quickly in order to create the certainty for this great project. I thank the government for bringing this legislation to us in a timely fashion. I
thank members on both sides for being prepared to support this legislation so quickly and without controversy to ensure that we are able to say: 'This was unanimously supported. Now let's get on with the job.' I commend this legislation to the House.

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (16:43): The Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2014 and related bills are very important, as the member for Brand has so aptly summarised. I not only support most of his observations, but I note that $134 billion worth of potential development that may be put on hold or put at risk is of great concern to everyone in this House—at least I hope it is—because it is this sort of investment that drives wealth for the nation, wealth for individuals, jobs, employment security, and energy.

We have had so much energy in our lifetime that people tend to take it for granted. It has been the delivery of energy which has driven so many of the things that we take for granted, whether it be a car, a mobile phone, a TV, or a video—all the electronics. They all come from minerals which have been dug out of the ground by the use of extensive energy. They have been smelted in furnaces that require enormous amounts of energy. All of that energy, along with lots of other inventions over the centuries, is what differentiates us from medieval times and times before then when people were energy poor and energy amounted to burning wood, or the use of kinetic energy, horsepower, cattle power—all the simple things.

As the member for Brand so aptly pointed out, we are blessed with natural gas and offshore gas in the north-west of the country, in the Browse Basin. He also mentioned that it has, unfortunately, been left in limbo because it did not pass the commerciality test. I thoroughly agree with him, but it is a very polite way of saying that it costs too much to get it processed on shore. That should be sending alarm bills all around people working in the industry in Australia. Basically, we have priced ourselves out of the market. Our researchers and universities helped deliver the LNG technology and floating platforms, but the exorbitant cost of developing the huge natural gas reserves on shore led the oil and gas industry to develop this technology. So not only have we helped in a pure scientific manner but also the costs of doing business in the LNG space in Australia have driven them to invent it. So it seems ironic that people are saying, 'All our LNG developments are potentially at risk or will not proceed.' It is a salutary lesson that you cannot cook the goose that laid the golden egg.

When there was a rush for gas and energy, a lot of terms and conditions were not what any reasonable person would have expected two or three years earlier. But our chickens have come home to roost and, now that the construction phase has finished in many of these major projects, we have had to have a wake-up call. As the member for Brand so politely mentioned, it did not pass the commerciality test. The bleeding obvious was also stated—that is, that Australia is not the sole repository of oil and gas or mineral wealth, for that matter too, and that there are huge areas to be developed in North and South America, in Africa, in Russia, in the Confederate States and in China. It is a competitive world.

When billions are being mentioned—like you or I would mention millions or hundreds of thousands—that capital has to get a good return. It is a very risky business. To build a huge LNG ship, float it out into the middle of the ocean and anchor it on the seafloor, you have billions and billions at risk. If we do not do it better here, those boats will float off and get it off for those millions of people in Asia and elsewhere around the world who need energy to keep warm, to have their electricity generated, to run their furnaces, to build cars, to build...
electronics and to build housing. People take it for granted. Energy has to come from somewhere, and the most concentrated form of it—whether we like it or not—is oil and gas. I am all for developing other sources of energy. We are blessed with coal as well and lots of sunlight and lots of wind, but the efficiencies of petrol, oil, diesel and gas in a concentrated form is the reason it is being used so much.

There are four bills before us and they have come about because of our very efficient Geoscience Australia people, who have identified two little outcrops—North Scott and Seringapatam reefs. They have altered the definitions of what are Commonwealth waters and what are state or territory waters, and unintended consequences have arisen. There is a lot of concern about the title and the regulation around these titles. In particular, it materially affects the Woodside Browse Basin and two licences in the Conoco-Poseidon joint venture, which have huge reserves of natural gas. Quite clearly, the state, the Commonwealth and the titleholders want to have security of tenure and they want to know the circumstances in which everything is going to operate. So it is quite urgent that we get this all sorted out, and that is what these bills are addressing.

The legislation will clarify the arrangements for how the two statutory authorities, NOPSEMA—the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority—and the National Offshore Petroleum Titles Administrator, NOPTA, regulate these titles and the levies. If the land is being transferred over to a state or vice-versa by virtue of these developments by Geoscience Australia, they will still be able to operate. What we do not want to see is a whole logjam of current development turned on its head because of some minor regulatory confusion. We want to have everything regulated in one place in one time so that the oil and gas companies that do want to develop these huge reserves for Western Australia, for Australia and for the world will be able to get on and do it—because, if cannot, they will go and do it elsewhere. So NOPSEMA and NOPTA will be able to regulate areas that are currently being regulated by them even though the areas are transferred over to Western Australia.

There are other legal issues at play here. Many of these titles, because they involve huge areas and huge amounts of money, are often held in several names. Currently, voluntary action can be taken by one of the parties of these joint ventures without notifying the other or, vice-versa, one party can remove themselves from it without notifying the others. This will streamline that process so that they can do things jointly and everyone knows what is going on. It sounds pretty straightforward, but, as you know, law is a complex animal and we are trying to make it simple.

I look forward to these areas being developed by companies here in Australia that use Australian technology and will pay their levies to the Australian government and to the Western Australian government. The royalties will flow through to the state and federal governments and the people of Western Australia and Australia will benefit. Schools and hospitals will be built, highways will be maintained and railways will be built because the states will have income from the natural resources that the nation is blessed with. But that will not happen if we are too expensive and we price ourselves out of the market. All this regulatory red tape, green tape and industrial relations tape can, as I have said so often, cook the goose that laid the golden egg. Not only is this cluster of amendments and legislation very
important; it has huge ramifications for the wellbeing of the oil and gas industry and development in Australia. I commend all the bills to the House.

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (16:53): It was obviously cause of great celebration in Western Australia when the golden rocks were discovered. The rocks—or islands, as they may officially be called—are about the size of a kitchen table. They are about three metres across and penetrate a mere one metre beyond the surface of the water. I have had some conflicting advice—whether it is a metre above the low water mark or a metre above the high water mark. It is probably the high water mark because that seems to be the reference point for making the determination on the territory of the coast surrounding them. It is very exciting that Western Australia's sphere of influence has now expanded quite considerably into the Browse Basin and, in particular, into the Torosa retention lease. There has been a great deal of celebration about the added benefits that this will bring to Western Australia financially if the project does indeed go ahead.

I am slightly less optimistic about the benefits that will accrue to Western Australia, because we know from the way that the Grants Commission works that for every additional cent that we receive in royalties we receive a direct reduction in our GST return. From the last figures I saw, we are down to giving about 32c in the dollar back from our imputed GST contributions. The actual benefit to Western Australians is going to be somewhat more muted than the headline 'Golden rock story' first implied. Certainly, there is some short-term advantage in that you get the money before you have to take your cut in the GST. There is a three-year rolling average process, so you have a small window of opportunity when you get the dough when you are not having your GST massively cut, but of course that has a problem at the back end, as Premier Barnett is now experiencing, where the royalty growth is drying up and the GST disbenefit is continuing. I just put this word of caution to those who see these rocks as golden: it may indeed be, in the immediate and direct royalty sense, something of fools gold.

However, as the member for Brand pointed out, very considerable benefit comes to the state government by way of being able to influence the manner in which these retention leases are ultimately developed. On the basis of the material that we are considering here today, in relation to the Torosa lease there will be a majority share in the hands of Western Australia. That will give Western Australia much more say in the determination of the technology to be used. The member for Brand described it as having 'skin in the game'. I point out again that the amount of the skin that one has is diminished very considerably by the GST arrangements and that the direct financial benefit is, in fact, very limited.

I go on to say that I do think that there has been a lot of wasted opportunity in Western Australia surrounding Browse. The insistence by the Premier that the development take place at James Price Point was a unilateral decision that he made—that it had to be an onshore development—and it saw us spend a hell of a lot of time and effort for very little gain. I agree with the member for Brand: you have to be prepared to go with the most cost-effective and environmentally sound technology. It is not reasonable for us to expect in this globally competitive environment that we are going to have a company proceed with a development that uses a technology, which some would argue has been superseded. Having said that, I would also say there is a hell of a lot more scope for us to insist in the development of FLNG that we have a much greater slice of the action in Western Australia. I do not accept that we
should accept without any critique the industry participation plans that have been proposed by Woodside around this project.

Before I go on to that, I should also mention that, in terms of the environmental impact, by about 2011 a very strong view had emerged in the Kimberley that they did not want to see a facility developed on the coast. They did not want to industrialise the Kimberley and they believed the offshore option was a much better option, but that is not to say that there was not a degree of diversity in opinion within the community. Over those years I was travelling regularly to the Kimberley and it was my very strong sense that the community on balance was in favour of a development proposal that involved the protection of the coast. That has indeed been borne out by the subsequent election results in 2013, when this was still a very contested issue. I think most of us realise that Woodside had probably already made its decision well before that election, though it did not share that decision with the community at that point.

As a project in this location, FLNG has great economic and environmental benefits. From my discussions with Woodside, I do believe that the analysis from the member for Brand about developing the anchoring technology for the first FLNG facility in Western Australian waters is sound. There certainly are benefits to be gained from that. I also think that we need to be far more vigilant in determining the way we lock in the requirement for this work to be done in Western Australia—the front-end engineering and design and the detailed design should be done in Western Australia. From reading the industry participation plan that Woodside put out through Browse, I am concerned that we have not demanded enough. I have in the past quoted, as others have, the experience of the Hebron development in Canada. There they specified in man hours—or person hours—the amount of FEED. From the top of my head, I think it was something like 25,000 hours of FEED—man hours that had to be directed towards FEED in Newfoundland. For their detailed design, it was over a million man hours.

I have to say that we have a much bigger problem here than we sometimes acknowledge. We have engineering schools producing young oil and gas engineers who cannot get an entry-level or a graduate job. The major companies are no longer bothering to turn up to careers days put on by engineering schools, because they are not offering any jobs. Unless we do more to insist that we get more of that detailed design locked in locally, our young people are going to miss out on getting those entry-level jobs. They are not going to get the jobs which go to Paris and Seoul. We have to be stronger on that point. There is a lot of concern that if other countries are providing the engineering design then they will also have an advantage in competing for the maintenance work. Unless we demand it, unless we lock it in and unless we make it part of these agreements, then we will not see those benefits go to Australia and, indeed, Western Australia. I hope that one outcome of this new arrangement is a greater focus on extracting the benefit. The benefit will not come from the royalty alone; that will be lost in GST. The benefit will emerge from ensuring that we get good jobs out of this. We are not luddites; we are not resisting—well, I am not—FLNG. We should be arguing for FLNG, but we have to do more than accept the expressions of best endeavours by the company to ensure that we bring home the bacon on this one.

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science) (17:07): I thank the previous speakers for their contribution to this debate. In
summing up, I will address each bill commencing with the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill. The Commonwealth government announced in February 2014 a new streamlined approach for environmental approvals for offshore petroleum activities, making the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority, NOPSEMA, the sole environmental regulator for these activities in Commonwealth waters. This approach has significantly increased regulatory efficiency in respect of petroleum activities in Commonwealth waters and continues to deliver clarity and certainty for industry participants.

Recognising these significant gains, the Commonwealth government is seeking to streamline regulatory arrangements in respect of all offshore petroleum activities. As part of this process, the Commonwealth is encouraging the states and the Northern Territory to confer functions and powers relating to matters of occupational health and safety, structural integrity and environmental management upon NOPSEMA in relation to those waters of the sea falling within their respective jurisdictions. However, the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act in its present iteration includes a number of legislative impediments to conferral. Therefore, this bill amends the act to permit conferral by the states and the Northern Territory across as wide as possible geographic area. This represents an important step towards the establishment of a single national regulator for all safety, structural integrity and environmental management matters in Commonwealth and coastal waters. It also underscores this government’s ongoing commitment to maintaining and improving Australia’s regulatory framework for offshore petroleum activities.

The bill also makes a number of technical amendments to the administrative framework relating to the taking of eligible voluntary actions by multiple title holders under the act and regulations in response to issues identified as a result of the implementation of the current framework. These amendments will clarify the operation of the process relating to the taking of eligible voluntary actions and provide an alternative option for multiple holders of a single title to take eligible voluntary actions.

The Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Regulatory Levies) Amendment (Designated Coastal Waters) Bill makes consequential amendments to the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Regulatory Levies Act 2003—the levies act. These amendments are necessary as a result of the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2014, which expands the geographical scope of the definition of designated coastal waters in the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006, the OPGGS Act, to facilitate the conferral of powers and functions upon NOPSEMA by the states and the Northern Territory in respect of all waters of the sea landward of the Commonwealth offshore area. The levies act, which recovers NOPSEMA's costs associated with its regulatory activities, defines designated coastal waters to have the same meaning as under the OPGGS Act. Expanding the geographic coverage of designated coastal waters under the OPGGS Act will therefore consequentially extend the area in respect of which levies might be imposed. To avoid the possibility of this extension resulting in the imposition of taxation that discriminates between the states, or parts thereof, on the basis of geographic location, this bill amends the levies act to limit the operation of the levy regime to the area constituted by the existing definition of designated coastal waters.
The Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2015 makes amendments to the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006, the act, to (1) ensure security of tenure for titles in Commonwealth waters where the boundary between Commonwealth and state or territory coastal waters changes; (2) ensure that the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority, NOPSEMA, can effectively perform regulatory functions when conferred with such functions under state or Northern Territory legislation; and (3) make technical amendments to further improve the act.

The most significant of these amendments relates to changes to coastal water boundaries. Last year, Geoscience Australia, in accordance with its responsibilities, announced changes to the maritime boundaries between the Commonwealth and Western Australia. This case prompted a closer look at how the offshore petroleum regime protects security of tenure for title holders following a boundary change. Currently, the act provides continuity of state or Northern Territory title over blocks that relocate to Commonwealth waters until that title ceases to be in force. However, once it ceases to be in force there is no present legislative mechanism that provides for the immediate granting of an equivalent title to ensure security of tenure. The government acknowledges that these title holders may have made considerable investments and efforts to obtain that title and conduct exploration activities. Therefore, it is critical that there is continuity of title within Commonwealth waters when the state or Northern territory title ceases.

These proposed amendments provide an automatic statutory grant of an equivalent Commonwealth title over affected blocks that relocate to Commonwealth waters following a boundary change. Considering that Geoscience Australia continues to make efforts to accurately define Australia's maritime boundaries, future boundary changes that affect title holders is a realistic prospect. Accordingly, these amendments will provide the exact certainty that title holders require, as they ensure there is a secure tenure for titles that fall into Commonwealth waters.

This bill builds upon efforts to streamline regulatory arrangements for offshore petroleum activities. The government recognises that streamlining improves regulatory efficiency and provides clarity and certainty for industry participants. To further this agenda, the states and Northern Territory are being encouraged to confer powers and functions on the national regulator, NOPSEMA. To this end, this bill further clarifies the conditions in which conferral can be made and finalises conferral cost-recovery arrangements for NOPSEMA.

This bill proposes some technical amendments to improve the administration of the act. These measures highlight the government's commitment to creating an effective regulatory framework that provides regulatory certainty, enhances investment and enables growth in the offshore petroleum industry.

Finally, the amendments in the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Regulatory Levies) Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2015 are consequential to the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2015. This last bill will provide that, where a titleholder holds state or Northern Territory title over blocks that relocate to Commonwealth waters, there will be an automatic statutory grant of an equivalent Commonwealth title over affected blocks when the title of that state or the Northern Territory ceases. Given that cross-boundary titles are granted automatically under
the statute instead of by the normal process of releasing acreage and receiving bids by prospective titleholders, when they are an exploration permit these titles will be provided with a specific name to differentiate them from other types of exploration permits.

The National Offshore Petroleum Titles Administrator is responsible for administering offshore petroleum titles and is funded on a full cost recovery basis. The titles administrator will undertake administration and compliance work in relation to an exploration permit granted as a result of a boundary change. That is similar to the work undertaken in relation to existing permits. So this bill amends the levies act to ensure the annual titles administration levy is imposed on a boundary change exploration permit. I commend these bills to the House.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science) (17:16): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Regulatory Levies) Amendment (Designated Coastal Waters) Bill 2014

Second Reading

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

Third Reading

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science) (17:17): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2015

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.
Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science) (17:19): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

**Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Regulatory Levies) Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2015**

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science) (17:20): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

**Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2014-2015**

**Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2014-2015**

**Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2014-2015**

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

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

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading the House notes that:

(1) the 2014-15 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook showed a $44 billion blow-out in the budget deficit over the forward estimates from the 2014-15 Budget, which represents a $202 million blow-out in the Budget deficit by the Government each and every day;

(2) Government debt is higher now than it was when the Government took office;

(3) the Budget bottom line in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook incorporates a series of broken promises, including: the introduction of the GP tax, increasing the petrol tax, cuts to pension indexation, $6,000 cuts to a typical Australian family, plans for $100,000 university degrees, cuts to the ABC and SBS, and a $11.3 billion cut from foreign aid;

(4) the Government continues to undermine business and consumer confidence with its unfair Budget, which are now below the levels at the 2013 Federal Election; and
(5) the Government's failure to have a clear plan for economic and jobs growth has led to the unemployment rate increasing to its highest level since August 2002, when the current Prime Minister was the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations."

Mr Wyatt (Hasluck) (17:21): I also want to reflect on the fact that the mismanagement of the economy over the last six years means that a Noongar cultural centre within my electorate will not be funded. If we think about the $1 billion we pay per month in interest, all of those initiatives that I have outlined could have been funded with that money in reality. So the aspirations of people in my community are dented by the fact that we do not have the capacity to move forward in the way that they had anticipated and expected. I look forward to a better budget and a better economic future for Australia under the Abbott government. I want to be able to deliver the programs that Hasluck wants and needs, for the constituents who live within my electorate. I look forward to a government with the benefit of hindsight and the establishment for the use of resources that come back into the economy that enables us to build those very things that are the fabric of any community in which we live. To me, mismanagement is an indictment because it has an outcome that is unpalatable. I would hope that Labor has learnt from those last six years and that whenever they come back to the benches they do not squander the opportunities for future Australians.

I commend these appropriation bills to the House. I certainly look forward to a future in which our economy prospers and grows, and in which the budget deficit accumulated over the last six years is reduced, and in which we move back, in the long term, to deficit levels that will enable initiatives in my electorate to be funded in the future.

Mr Snowdon (Lingiari) (17:23): I will not, as others will have in this debate, from our side of the House, lambast the government for its budget, although I probably could. I could even be critical of the previous speaker.

But I want to use these appropriation bills to talk about a single person who has had an enormous impact on the lives of many Australians, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but most importantly, Aboriginal people in my own electorate of Lingiari. I am talking about Kwementyaye 'Tracker' Tilmouth. Tracker was born in 1952, in the south of the Northern Territory as an Arrernte man. From the age of three, like so many others, he was taken away from his family and country with his brothers, William and Patrick—three years old, stolen from his family, taken from his country.

In Tracker's words, the 'lighter skinned' older siblings had been sent to Adelaide, which Tracker saw as a reason for us 'darker skinned ones'—himself, William and Patrick—to be sent north. They were sent initially to Retta Dixon home in Darwin for around six months. Tracker was a little unsure as to how long this was. Then he became a resident of Croker Island, which was run under Commonwealth authority by the Aborigines Inland Mission in 1956. Then at Minjilang, Croker, he stayed for quite some years, until his teens when he left. In 1963, he was taken to Somerville Homes, where he undertook secondary schooling in Darwin.

In the late sixties and early seventies, he returned to Central Australia. I am giving you this background because this man was a unique individual, and someone who, when the history books are written, will be seen to have had a significant impact on the way we think around issues to do with economic development on Aboriginal land—particularly in the Northern Territory—and most particularly, the place of Aboriginal people in this country.
When he arrived back in Central Australia, I am told that when he arrived at the airport, he and his brothers were there with a welfare officer, who introduced them to his father, then apologised that his mother had died—so much sadness.

He returned back to Central Australia, and among his first jobs was sweeping a floor at a meatworks in the abattoirs. He worked as a stockman at Angas Downs station, and then went off to work at Uluru—Ayers Rock then—at the petrol station. He worked in a garage there. Later he went back to Alice and worked in the building industry—I think probably with his brother Patrick—as a painter and roofer. It was in this period that he became engaged actively in the world of Aboriginal affairs and, as he was later to do, became employed with the department of Aboriginal affairs, I think, probably as a field officer.

He was instrumental in working with others as a founding member of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, an internationally renowned healthcare organisation delivering primary health care to Aboriginal people in Central Australia, and of the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service. He was very much a part of the foundation of these two organisations. He became employed by the department of Aboriginal affairs and he worked in places as far-flung as Docker River and Urapuntja—or Utopia—to the east of Alice Springs, which is the region where his family was from, as it happened, and where he made contact with his relations and later was recognised as a traditional owner of Alcoota, to the east of Alice Springs.

He was a man of great intelligence. This is a young Aboriginal bloke who had been stolen by the state, sent to Croker Island and back to Darwin, and then came back to Alice Springs. He was a man of innate intelligence and creativity who knew that he needed to learn more. During the late eighties, he was sent away again, on his own volition this time, to Roseworthy college in South Australia, where he got a bachelor of agricultural science. That opened up a whole vista for him around areas to do with land management, and gave him a better and deeper understanding of things he innately knew about country. When he arrived back from his degree, he was a bit of a pest around the Central Land Council, I am told.

I actually think I met Tracker in the late seventies or early eighties, when I was working in Central Australia for the Australian National University in a remote part of the north-west of South Australia, mostly, and through Alice Springs. I think it was then that I met Tracker and I suspect he was probably a field officer. In any event, he came back to Alice Springs with a fire in his belly and he went into the Central Land Council and then, because of his perseverance but also because of his intelligence and his background, he was appointed assistant director, between 1990 and 1994, and became the director, from 1994 to 1999.

He then moved on, after 2000, and moved back into Northern Australia, west of Darwin, where he pursued what was a long-term goal for him, something that had germinated while he was at Croker. He had imagined people getting fish and other seafood without hassle. That was new to him, being involved in fishing. From around 2003 onwards, Tracker was involved in the purchase of land and embarked on establishing an agricultural prawn farm. He gained the permits, built the ponds and a home, and grew his first crop—no mean feat. Remember his background. Remember his background.

But during all this period—I have given you a bit of a potted history of his employment—he was engaged in the public debate. He was engaged in holding governments to account. He was engaged in making sure that Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory became aware
of issues that were of importance to them. He did many things. He was involved in developing a land management system for Aboriginal people living on their land. In 1992, a GIS was developed with him, with help from the CSIRO, for the Central Land Council departments to use in pastoral land management, fire strategies and other program areas. He was involved in negotiations with mining companies in the CLC region that set national benchmarks for such agreements. In 1994, he renegotiated the Mereenie gas agreement to include 15 per cent Aboriginal ownership. In 1995-1996, he was involved in the Granites gold mine agreement and had a previously unheard of level of Aboriginal employment and training successfully implemented for close to 20 years. He was a man very much before his time, asserting the rights of Aboriginal people to a place in this country, and a place in their own countries, around economic development and through the exploitation of resources.

He restructured and refocused the operations of royalty associations for traditional owners in Central Australia. In 1998, significantly, he gained the financial, land, human and other resources required for the development of Centrefarm in Central Australia, a means of Aboriginal employment and investment in the horticultural industry, something that is still operating today. Between 1989 and 1997, he planned and oversaw the purchase of five pastoral leases for Aboriginal traditional owners. He was an enigmatic figure but he had a real passion for getting people involved in employment.

Tracker organised constitutional forums for Aboriginal people to plan for their futures. In 1998, he was instrumental in developing the Kalkaringi statement, which came out of such a forum. It was instrumental in the successful opposition to statehood proposals for the Northern Territory that did not constitutionally enshrine Aboriginal land rights. He was absolutely imperative and really fundamental to opposition to reform proposals by the then Howard government through the Reeves review of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act and prevented those reforms going ahead by working with the countries and the Aboriginal owners of those countries in the Northern Territory to oppose the proposals.

There are many other significant things that Tracker did during his long working life. He made a difference—he made a serious difference—to the way we see and work with Aboriginal people. I am proud that he was a mate of mine. Occasionally he gave me a bit for my corner, and that was all well and good. But he did not spare me and he did not spare many others when he was of that mind.

In 1998, he had the opportunity to enter the Senate. Bob Collins had retired, and the national executive was to appoint a new person to take that position. Tracker was approached. Kim Beazley, the Labor leader, was in his corner. The then national secretary, Gary Gray, was in his corner. Laurie Brereton was advocating very strongly on his behalf. It was Tracker's if he wanted it. Sadly, and to the shame of some, his position was undermined by people inside the Labor Party who were spreading vicious rumours about him, and he decided not to do it. Then he made some very serious and very funny, I think, assertions about the Labor Party and its ability to contemplate looking after the interests of Aboriginal people. But he should have been a senator, and the world would have been a different place, let me tell you. It would have been an interesting ride with Tracker in the Senate. I do not know what he could have been, really, but it would have been a very interesting ride and I am certain, if he had been there, he would have been a minister—no question. He was that sort of person. He was self-depreciating and he used acerbic language, but he was really one out of the box.
I want to just quote a couple of his mates, one of whom was Jack Ah Kit. In an interview with the ABC this morning, I think, he said: 'Tracker would support his arguments. While he may be viewed as controversial, he always stood by what he was saying and he needs to be remembered for being a strong-willed person with a great sense of humour. Tracker was a role model, a mentor, a strong advocate and a self-confessed mongrel,' which he was. Another friend, a very close, lifelong friend said this:

He was larger than life, irreverent to the nth degree, funny as Larry, a shit stirrer and a lunatic rolled into one. He was a green eye charmer and the most faithful of friends to us even though we fought one another most of the time. God threw away the diecast after he was born and there'll never be another character like him who could simultaneously mix with the elders in remote communities; camp with them for weeks and speak their language; muster their cattle with them; then move back to his house in upper suburbia (golf course Alice Springs); a card-carrying member of the CFMEU; a Palestinian one day, an Israeli the next; one who could mix with his coalition mates; revert back to an avowed Labor supporter when it suited him, or be the epitome of an anarchist the next 'the nigger on the back verandah'; he helped many whitefellas to become rich (I'll remind a few of them that at the funeral), was forever scheming (just days before he died) to try to become the first Aboriginal billionaire.

He was the ultimate chameleon and his motto as he said to me should have been "I can be what you want me to be". He was, to steal a song – "A walking contradiction, partly truth, partly fiction."

He was a legend and we loved him (still do) and he'll never be forgotten.

To his wonderful wife, Kathy, and their beautiful children, Amanda, Shaneen and Cathryn, can I say he was a much loved person—you know that—but above all else, he loved you more than anything.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (17:38): Mr Deputy Speaker Goodenough, on indulgence, I just want to associate myself with the words of the member for Lingiari. He was an incredible man. Thank you.

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (17:38): It is my pleasure to rise to speak in this debate on the appropriation bills that give all of us in this House an opportunity to talk broadly about the budget issues and, as we just heard, talk broadly about any other issue of public importance. The member for Lingiari showed in his moving speech the broad nature of this appropriations debate. Although we are on the budget bills, technically, convention of course allows members to speak on any topic at all.

This afternoon, I want to speak about the budget, not so much from a national perspective, as important a focus as that is for all of us—and we will have heightened focus on that later in the work with the release of the Intergenerational report—but for the residents of the electorate of Casey about some of the local initiatives that we pledged prior to the last election and that are being rolled out now across the Casey electorate. From a local perspective, I was determined to pursue local policies that would build a safe community, a stronger local economy and a stronger community. I took those pledges to the last election. It is very fitting that my friend and colleague the member for Mayo and Assistant Minister for Infrastructure is in the House. He has been responsible for implementing each of the initiatives that we took to the election. He has been out to the Casey electorate, and I have discussed the timing of the funding of so many of the pledges. It is fitting that he is here at this hour, because the appropriation bills, the budget bills, which fund all of the big programs that we argue about and debate in this House, also fund the very local things that are community priorities.
I wanted to do what I could with the community to build a safer community. That has entailed funding that has been provided by the minister at the table on behalf of the government for security cameras in the town of Lilydale and the installation of security cameras for the first time in Healesville and Yarra Junction. All in all, $250,000 is being provided. Those cameras are set to be installed throughout the course of this year.

There are two local school communities crying out for funding for car parks. Both schools are right near Warburton Highway, which runs out through the Yarra Valley. For parents dropping off and picking up children it was becoming very hazardous. For the Launching Place Primary School and the Woori Yallock Primary School funding was provided for the construction of new car parks at both of those schools. Those works are due to commence around the middle of this year and will be completed after just a few months.

In the heart of the Casey electorate we have a not-for-profit driver-training centre, Metec, which I have spoken about before. It is based in Kilsyth. It has done so much for so many local residents learning to drive. It provides a safe off-road environment for those who are about to get their licence or may have just got their licence to learn to drive in a safe environment, in fact, to learn in a safe environment what to do when they lose control of a car. The electorate of Casey is very like the electorate of the minister at the table, the member for Mayo. They are probably the two most similar electorates. The Yarra Valley and the Dandenong Ranges in the electorate of Casey and the minister at the table representing an electorate of similar size through the outer suburbs and the Adelaide Hills. So many young residents learn to drive and get their licence. The very first night they can drive into the country in hazardous weather conditions. Over more than 30 years, Metec has provided important courses. It is great that we have contributed $100,000 so they can extend what they call their car control area, which to the rest of us is known as a skidpan, where young drivers can learn what to do when they lose control of their vehicle in the wet.

There are a number of initiatives that are being rolled out to strengthen the community—four Green Army projects in particular. The first has already commenced, at the end of last year, in the Yarra Valley, broadly from Healesville, Yarra Glen, Steels Creek and a number of other towns. That is underway. I had the pleasure of meeting the team of 10 doing that great work. They are working for six months for a wage to improve the local environment. Three others, in Mount Evelyn, in Monbulk and along the Warburton trail, will commence later in the year. They will do great work and it will provide a great opportunity for those 18- to 24-year-olds who are signing up for that important project.

Of course, sporting facilities are very important to all of our electorates. They are also so often a community hub. That is why there was priority funding for the Don Road sporting pavilion in Healesville, as well as the Queens Park oval, also in Healesville, where junior sport is played. Works on those projects will commence towards the end of this year. The Monbulk netball club required a court resurfacing and new shelters. This was something that they had been wanting to do for a long period of time. In partnership with the council, with a federal grant, I was pleased to be out there just the other week to see works commencing. Those facilities are due for completion in April this year. The Mount Evelyn Football Netball Club, as so many clubs experience, had no change rooms for the netballers. With an innovative project involving the northern metropolitan institute of TAFE and partnering with the council, funding has been provided for the construction of those change rooms. They are
being built at the TAFE and they are due to be installed in the coming months. Similarly, for the Yarra Valley netballers, where a new 24-court facility has been built, funding was provided to shelters for those courts, which was a priority for the Yarra Valley district netball association.

The smallest grant of all was to the Warburton Millgrove football club. The member for Mayo, who is in the chamber, as a very intelligent football fan, supporting the same football team as me, will appreciate this. The club required new goalposts because they had never had professional goalposts fitted. In fact, they had concrete posts that had been fitted some decades ago. So a $10,000 grant has provided them with some goalposts, which will enable that country town to host finals and will have a good effect on the local economy. The Yarra Junction Football and Netball Club will get funding to upgrade their change rooms and provide a new storage area and a gymnasium for the cricketers, footballers and netballers. At another local level at Healesville, $55,000 was provided for a case study to examine the feasibility of the hospital becoming independent. That study is underway now.

I mentioned programs to build a stronger economy. I want to focus particularly on two. One is the Yarra Valley tourist railway. The minister very quickly executed this important contract. In fact, he came to Healesville to sign the contract with the council. That is providing just over $3.5 million to reconstruct the old railway between Yarra Glen and Healesville as a tourist railway. This is something that has the support of all of the local chambers of commerce and the business community, who were all there when we had the signing of that contract. At a tangible level, it will boost tourism numbers and boost the local economy, not just in Healesville but right across the Yarra Valley. Tourism is vitally important in the Yarra Valley—to get day tourists to stay the night and to get more international tourists into the area. That was a priority for me that will boost the tourism industry. It will build jobs; it will provide more opportunities in the job market for young people just starting out in particular. It will help every business in the town and across the Yarra Valley once it is operational. Work is well underway and I look forward to going to their open day in just a couple of weeks.

In conclusion, in the brief time remaining I want to focus still on tourism. I want to focus on the Victorian economy and infrastructure. The Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development has done a number of these projects, as I mentioned, but the biggest project in Victoria is one that the Labor state government is refusing to proceed with. That is the East West Link. The federal government has provided $3 billion to build the East West Link and the state Labor government is refusing to build it. It is contemplating spending nearly $1.2 billion on compensation not to build it. It will be the biggest amount ever spent not to build a road.

For the people of the outer east and the Yarra Valley this road is absolutely vital. You have heard here in question time, from the minister, about the absolute necessity for this road to relieve traffic congestion, to reduce commuter times. Let's focus on the punishment to the tourism industry in the Yarra Valley and the Dandenong Ranges of that road not being built and the punishment to the horticulture industry trying to get their products to market. Time is money. We are not alone in thinking this. The Leader of the Opposition once thought this, and as the minister has pointed out, he thought it before he entered parliament when he put in a submission with the Australian Workers Union, and he thought it again as soon as he became
a member of parliament when he put in a joint submission with three other members of parliament, a submission that said doing nothing is not an option. Both of those submission strongly supported the East West Link for all the reasons I have outlined.

Our $3 billion is there for the road to be built. It is not too late for 'do nothing Dan', the Labor Premier, to build the road and to see common sense. It is not too late for the Leader of the Opposition to show some leadership, as a leader of the Labor Party, but also as a Victorian member, on what is best for the Victorian economy. Back when he put these submissions in, he was 'Build it Bill', but what he has become is 'Roadblock Bill', and he is road blocking the outer east and the Yarra Valley from a better future. (Time expired)

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (17:53): I too rise to speak on these appropriation bills, and will focus in my contribution about the impact of this government's very cruel and unfair budget, and what it means for the people of far northern New South Wales in my electorate of Richmond. I will be particularly focusing on many of their broken promises as well. There is certainly a lot of anger in the community about the impact of these broken promises upon the people of the North Coast of New South Wales. In fact, here we are, many months and months after the budget, still talking about how unfair it is and how it has impacted. We have had 18 months of the government's broken promises and policy failures across a whole range of different issues, and it has indeed impacted everyone across the nation.

But in terms of those broken promises, they have been very severe for those living in rural and regional Australia. People there have really felt some of the impacts of these harsh policies. Before the election, we had the Prime Minister and all the members of the Liberal and National parties out there saying there will be no cuts; no new taxes; none of this will happen; none of these changes will be there. I know in areas like mine, the North Coast of New South Wales, he had members of the National Party out there running around saying that to everyone. That is why now no-one trusts the National Party in my area, because it was those representatives that were out there saying now cuts, no new taxes—yet that is precisely what happened when they got into government.

We will have a look at some of those measures and how they are impacting on people, particularly things like the GP tax, which we know has just been paused for a little awhile—we know that it is still on the table. It really is a tax on the very sick and vulnerable. We see things like the $100,000 university degree stopping kids from regional areas actually getting to university. We see the petrol tax pushing up the cost of living. We see cuts to the age pension robbing our older Australians of $80 a week. We see cuts to community services, youth services and family payments. We see cuts to schools and hospitals, and cuts to the ABC. For regional Australia, this is indeed another betrayal by the National Party, because these cuts will be devastating to regional areas like mine. You can call these broken promises, what you like—deception, untruths, whatever you want—but one thing is very clear: the Prime Minister and the Liberal and National parties, with this absolute trail of broken promises, just cannot be trusted.

We will start first with the doctor tax. Hasn't that been interesting? Today we hear that it has just been paused for the moment. What we saw, essentially, in this government's first budget was them declaring war on Medicare and universal health care. We know that is on their agenda: to destroy bulk-billing and get rid of it. I think this was perhaps one of the worst broken promises ever, again, for regional areas. We had the doctor tax plus the PBS hike.
Department of Health data show that people in these regional and rural areas will be hardest hit by the Abbott government's more than $1 billion hike in PBS medicines. The top 12 electorates that will pay the highest out-of-pocket expenses for PBS medicines are in regional and rural areas—that is a fact. So they are getting a double whammy. They will have the cost of this GP tax, in whatever form it may be—we have seen so many different forms of it so far—and they also have the PBS increases. So that will increase the total out-of-pocket expenses to patients.

We have all this on top of the cuts we are seeing from within NSW, from our Liberal-National government as well. We saw that government slash funding when it comes to health and hospital services. They slashed $3 billion, and that has had a really big impact on the hospitals in my area on the North Coast—there is Tweed Hospital, Byron, Murwillumbah Hospital and Mullumbimby. All of these have been severely impacted by this state-wide slashing of funding by $3 billion. Those $3 billion in cuts includes $2.2 billion in program and operating costs, and $775 million from hospital staff budgets. In fact, New South Wales now has the longest elective surgery waiting list times in Australia.

What we are seeing now is this state government going around making lots of false promises to people—in fact, blackmailing them—saying, 'We might pretend to fund something,' but what they are going to do is sell off the electricity network. I can tell you, there is a lot of opposition to that in my area. People are seeing through it. They are seeing their state Liberal-National government for what they are—that is, a government that is trying to bribe and blackmail people to vote for them, saying, 'You might get this, but we will sell off your electricity network.' But what happens when that is sold off? We know their prices will go up. People are very much aware of what they are trying to do. But those severe health cuts by that state government, added to the Abbott government's cuts as well, have really been devastating for people in regional areas, and particularly within my area.

If we turn to the GP tax, we have seen so many different rumours and have heard about so many different actions that they may or may not be doing. We know it will be coming back. We know the Prime Minister is committed to it. We know the Liberal and National parties are committed to a GP tax in some form, because they are committed to destroying bulk-billing. That is their agenda. But if we look at some of the things that we have previously heard the Prime Minister announce—he had a $7 GP tax, a $20 cut, then a $5 GP tax, then four years worth of cuts to Medicare rebates—what is next? We heard the health minister saying that it was a pause, but we also heard her say at a press conference today that 'the policy intent was, and remains, a good one'. So we see that there is a strong commitment to having it; we will just wait to see what form that it comes back in. The one thing that we do know is that on at least 53 occasions the Prime Minister has supported the GP tax as good or decent policy and one that he is committed to. He has said on many, many occasions that he thinks it is good policy. And we have seen all this on top of the $57 billion cut in hospital funding. We are seeing a whole range of health and hospital measures that are devastating to people right throughout the country.

We can move on to issues like the petrol tax. That is an incredibly fair one for people in the regions—indeed, in my area, they call it the 'National Party petrol tax', they are so angry about it. The reality is that people in regional and rural areas have to drive further to access a whole range of activities. Of course, they also read what the Treasurer said in relation to that
issue—that poor people don't drive, which really does reflect how out of touch he is. Indeed, all those opposite just do not understand people in regional and rural areas at all.

Their education policies are one of the main areas that highlight how out of touch they are, particularly when it comes to higher education. The fact is that a university degree should depend on your capacity and ability to work hard and should depend on the marks you get, not on your bank balance. This government has put university out of the reach of so many people. What people in my electorate tell me is that it is just not something that their children will be able to achieve; the costs make it too difficult. We saw the government recently continue its attack on regional and rural students through its Higher Education and Research Reform Bill. I spoke in the House to condemn this attack on young people wanting to go to university and their families. That bill contained $1.9 billion in cuts to universities, which is a huge amount. People in my electorate really object to these massive cuts, they object to $100,000 degrees and they oppose the Americanisation of our world-class university system. It really highlights the unfairness of this government when it comes to education.

We have also seen from this government cuts to youth programs. These cuts have been devastating in my area. In the budget we saw the Abbott government completely cut all three youth unemployment prevention programs: Youth Connections, Partnership Brokers and National Career Development. This cut was made despite the programs delivering excellent results since they were established by Labor in 2010. In my area, the Byron Youth Service, which does an outstanding job of providing services for young people, have spoken out about the impact of cutting programs like Youth Connections. Youth Connections has a truly impressive success rate in finding alternative ways to help people finish year 12, with over 80 per cent of participants in work or study 18 months after completing the program. It is a great program that makes a huge difference.

We also saw some very unfair cuts to community service grants. It was on Christmas Eve last year that many community service organisations in my electorate were informed that their funding would be cut—another bad decision by a bad government. In regions like mine they blame the National Party for these cruel and heartless cuts. We saw $270 million being slashed from some of the most important front-line services across the country, from organisations that are the backbone of communities. They provide services to often our most vulnerable people—services like emergency relief, financial counselling, parenting programs, housing and homelessness organisations and youth support. I have spoken in the House before about the impact of some of these cuts on programs like the wonderful REALskills program, which provides such great support and life skills for young people. That is another cruel and unfair attack by the National Party in our area.

The North Coast branch of the St Vincent de Paul charity has said that the federal government has cut its emergency relief budget by 70 per cent. That is a huge amount in terms of the emergency services that they provide. There is a huge amount of distress right across my electorate when it comes to the cuts to these community services. People desperately need them. I implore the government to make sure these services are put in place. People need these every day. These are emergent situations, and people do require these services. There is so much chaos and confusion surrounding all of these cuts. I really implore the government to put all of those services in place.
I have spoken in this House many times before about this government's environmental vandalism. We see it at a federal level and we have also seen it at a state level. That has been highlighted recently in our area. I have said many times that the North Coast of New South Wales is such a great place to live—the best part of Australia, in fact. As locals know, there is a threat posed to everything we have, and that is from harmful coal seam gas mining. Our community's view is very clear: they do not want that on the North Coast. That has been shown through a variety of ways over the years. Whether it be thousands going to demonstrations, signing petitions, lobbying all levels of government, people are very vocal about this. I, of course, have made my position very clear: I do not support coal seam gas mining and other unconventional gas-mining activities within our region.

With the coming New South Wales state election, I am very pleased that New South Wales Labor's election policy is very clear. In fact, New South Wales Labor leader Luke Foley has reiterated that Labor will ban harmful coal seam gas mining and unconventional gas-mining activities across the North Coast. It will absolutely be banned.

In contrast to all of this, we see a very shameful policy from the North Coast National Party representatives. They have come out and announced their support for a pro-fracking gas plan. The National Party's plan is harmful to communities, water resources and farmlands. In fact, the National Party's coal-seam gas policy puts at risk existing clean and green businesses like tourism, agriculture and food production, businesses that are at the heart of our local economy on the North Coast. It really is shameful that all those National Party MPs and candidates in the Liberal-National government have this pro-CSG expansion policy that will put CSG wells into our valleys, farmlands and villages. The National Party policy will see rural families being forced to live some 200 metres from CSG wells. That is why people are so opposed to the National Party's expansion of coal seam gas mining.

Under the National Party's plan it is business as usual in existing licensing areas for risky CSG and other unconventional gas-mining activities. It is particularly because of this plan that people do not trust the National Party. The National Party reissued all of those licences on the North Coast in September 2012. They have this gas plan, and they are absolutely committed to expanding it right throughout the North Coast. It is for this reason that people are holding them to account, because without a doubt the vast majority of people on the North Coast of New South Wales oppose harmful coal seam gas mining and other unconventional mining.

We can see from both the federal government perspective and the state government perspective that many of their harsh policies are quite devastating for the people of the North Coast of New South Wales. From the federal perspective, we have a government in complete chaos. We have a government of broken promises, a government of unfair, cruel budget measures that are really impacting people. We have the ongoing saga of the GP tax. We will see what form it takes in the next few days. We know it has just been paused for a short while. We have the petrol tax, which, as I said, is really devastating for people in my area. We have $100,000 university degrees, making it completely unaffordable for people from regional and rural areas to even think about accessing higher education. We also have cuts to pensions and family payments.

The cuts to the aged pension and family payments are very distressing for many people in my electorate, particularly those older Australians. It will be devastating for them. For people who are living week-to-week, those increases in costs of living will be very difficult. This is
compounded by state government cuts as well, which are making life very difficult for them. They have many concerns, as I have said, about the fact that the Liberal-National state government wants to privatise electricity networks. This will mean we will have electricity prices going up on top of all of these other harsh cuts and new taxes. All of that will increase the cost of living expenses for locals as well.

At the end of the day, for areas like mine, it is the National Party who are seen to be responsible. It is the National Party who will be held to account for all of these harsh measures. They are very much part of this government and part of this decision-making process. They are out there talking about these policies, and they will be held to account. It is because of the National Party’s actions that we are now seeing people being severely impacted. I believe that at both state and federal levels we will see people holding them to account and making it clear that they do object to the very harsh policies that are devastating our region and, I imagine, many regions throughout the country. I think rural and regional Australia have really given up on the National Party, because the National Party gave up on them a long time ago. They do not represent the interests of regional Australia. It is only Labor that will stand up for those people in regional and rural areas, whether it be on health, on education or, in my area, on harmful coal-seam gas mining.

Dr STONE (Murray) (18:08): I rise tonight to speak on Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2014-2015. Irrigation feeds the nation—at least that is what my bumper sticker says. I celebrate the new irrigation development in Tasmania. It is the way for them to go. It is a way for us to harness our water resources across Australia and to be the maximum food production nation that we can be.

Unfortunately, piece by piece, the miracle of engineering that was once the great Goulburn-Murray Water irrigation system is being dismantled. The state-owned agency, Goulburn-Murray Water, is in a serious financial situation. The Victorian Auditor-General’s Water Entities report 2011-12 said the financial results of Goulburn-Murray Water are ‘unsustainable and overshadow the results’ of the remaining water entities in that sector. In 2010-11 the entire Goulburn-Murray Water board resigned and a number of senior managers departed. You would have hoped for better things! But, sadly, for irrigators, the food producers in my electorate, the latest report of the Auditor-General shows a further deterioration of Goulburn-Murray Water’s financial position. The 2013-14 Water Entities results of the Victorian Auditor-General reported:

Goulburn-Murray Water was unable to service the finance costs associated with its existing debt from the cash flows generated by its day-to-day activities. It had to draw on new borrowings to pay operating costs.

The Auditor-General was of the opinion that this financial position was unsustainable. So what is the problem? Why is this the case? For one thing, Goulburn-Murray Water has 757 effective full-time staff to deliver 2,108,000 megalitres of water to about 14,000 irrigators. Let us compare those numbers with the operator in New South Wales—Murray Irrigation Ltd.

Murray Irrigation is not a state-owned and public-service run entity. It is a highly efficient irrigator-owned cooperative. This agency delivers half the volume that Goulburn-Murray Water does, but with only 136 effective full-time staff. If you double the number of staff to deliver the same volume as Goulburn-Murray Water to 272 full-time staff, Murray Irrigation would still have only about 36 per cent of the staff of Goulburn-Murray Water. Obviously,
they would not double their staff to deliver twice the water. I am just using this example to show how grossly inefficient Goulburn-Murray Water is with a workforce of a size that cannot be justified, and with levels of efficiency and activity that are just a disgrace when compared with any other water-delivery agency in Australia or the rest of the developed world. All of those staff—very few actually operating in the field—do not produce a satisfied customer. The goal for achieving customer satisfaction was set at 82 per cent in 2011. Goulburn-Murray Water reported that their overall customer satisfaction reached 56 per cent in that year. In 2013, when Murray Irrigation in New South Wales surveyed the overall satisfaction of their customers it was at 96 per cent.

Irrigator constituents come to my office in despair. They come into my Shepparton electorate office sometimes so distressed that they are thinking of ending their lives. They complain about their unfair treatment, the unconscionable behaviour of the water authority, the litigation, which they have become embroiled in, that has taken up all of their cash and any possible future the next generation has in farming. They talk about the water costs and fees that have broken them. They talk about the poor maintenance of the system, the never-ever promises that have been made to them about when their turn for the modernisation project work will come to their farm. They talk about the fact that they cannot actually apply for on-farm water use efficiency grants, because they have not as yet been ‘done over’ by the modernisation system. They have to wait in a queue—one year, two years. It is not unusual for five years to be the waiting period for these farms before they get the attention of Goulburn-Murray Water in the food bowl modernisation project.

These irrigators are the ones who typically are on the spurs, not the main channel system. They are in the process often of being forced to convert from irrigation to just stock or domestic-only water supplies. That means they can no longer be the highly productive food producers they once were. These are the victims of the government-endorsed Goulburn-Murray Water policy to reduce the irrigation system footprint by about a third to a half. Why, you say, would anyone in their right mind deliberately set about to destroy a magnificent irrigation system, which has often been described as the most efficient gravity-fed system in the world? The problem is that, even though there is growing demand for the dairy, fruit, cereals and meats that our food bowl produces, there was a recent tragedy—the worst drought on record.

During that worst drought on record, the people of Melbourne began to seriously fear that they would not have enough water to hose their cars and their concrete drives. The Bracks-Brumby Labor government said: ‘We will take 75 gigalitres of irrigators’ water a year out of the Goulburn system. We will pipe it over the Great Divide. But—oops! We can’t just do that without some savings being found in the irrigation system so we can justify taking their water.’ So they said: ‘What can we do to save all this water? Should we plastic-line the channels or replace all the Dethridge wheels with meters?’ Smarter people said that would not do it. So then they said, ‘The way to save all that water is to shut down half of the irrigation systems. That’s a good plan; we’ll do it.’

They scraped together a billion dollars from the Victorian system to pay for the first tranche and they named the new project the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Program, NVIRP. But NVIRP was abolished in July 2012 after a damning report by the Victorian Ombudsman which found that it was grossly mismanaged, with insider trading, inadequate or
absent business planning, poor value for money and various other gross incompetencies. The CEO of course resigned. But the project was then rolled back into Goulburn-Murray Water to manage—and you will recall how I have just described the management capacities of Goulburn-Murray Water. So Goulburn-Murray Water have continued on with this so-called reconfiguration program, but with another $1 billion from the federal government to finish off the job.

In 2009-10 there were 1,135 non-water users in the Goulburn-Murray Water system still being charged fees for what they now call delivery shares. Today there are 1,927 non-water users in the system. That is a 58 per cent increase in four years. That is how many irrigators are being knocked out of the business of irrigating but are still trapped on dry, less productive farms or are just depending on stock and domestic water and still paying exorbitant fees and charges, which in many cases is breaking them.

But as if that were not sufficient to be heartbreaking, despairing and grossly distressing for all of my irrigators who are finding themselves trapped by this policy, we also have the water trading problem. Because about half of my dairy farmers were forced out of the business of dairying during the worst drought on record, when the irrigation system failed, Penny Wong, then Minister for the Environment, used this opportunity to offer to buy their water for the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder for the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. Of course, if the bank has its foot on your throat and says, 'Sell up your farm or sell your water'—which you can now do separately—many farmers did just that. They sold their heifers to China and they sold their water to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, thinking that perhaps they could keep on going with just temporary water purchases into the future or they would walk away altogether.

Three years ago, the temporary water price per megalitre was $20, last year it was $70 and this year it is $140. It is now beyond the price for dairy farmers to pay and still make a living on their dairy properties. What is the problem? The problem is that most of the water now—the vast majority of megalitres or, rather, gigalitres of water—in the whole of the Murray-Darling Basin is owned by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder. While the act allows the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to consider temporary trading, the entity has only done this once. That is because the trigger in the act says that trading might only occur if there is an environmental benefit or if there is no way that the environment can be served that year by an environmental release. That makes sense, except I would argue that there is also a triple bottom line enshrined in the Water Act which the minister of the day made sure was there—very rightly. That triple bottom line, surely, can have us then look at the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder's water and say, 'Can't there be a triple bottom line benefit from releasing some of that environmental water which serves the environment and the ecosystem?' It could be a wetland filling. It could be watering a forest. It could be simulating fish or bird breeding. But that same environmental water can also serve an irrigation or consumption capacity further downstream. That is the nature of water—it flows down the system. It is not all consumed by fish and frogs; it moves along.

Unfortunately, the act also says that the only use that may be made of the funds generated by selling temporary water is to buy more water from the irrigators. That of course sends shudders up and down the spines of every food and fibre producer in the Murray-Darling Basin, because we already have a cap on further water buybacks in the system—which is
1,500 gigalitres. Much of that water has already been found for buyback. I have to say that Victoria is already oversubscribed for its volume of water buyback into the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder's coffers.

This is now in active debate across the basin. It is something that we have to think about seriously. The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder regulations must be reviewed so that the water can be sold temporarily to bring down the extraordinary prices now being demanded—or able to be commanded—in the temporary water market. The problem is that there are now many profiteering non-irrigator entities who are simply speculating in the temporary water market and making a very nice profit—thank you very much—including Melbourne Water itself, who still has 74 gigalitres a year to play with in the temporary market.

But it gets worse again. You would think that that is enough despair, worry and sick-making for anyone to try to survive as an irrigator in the Murray-Darling Basin, but it gets worse. We also have a constraints strategy. This was a political solution thrown together by Julia Gillard's government in its dying days when they coupled with Greens to say, 'How can we get the South Australian Premier, Mr Weatherill, onside to sign up to the Murray-Darling Basin agreement?' Weatherill had said, 'I'm going to take you to the High Court. I'm going to challenge your right to have a Murray-Darling Basin plan unless you give South Australia more water.' So thrown into the House in around November or December 2012 was the Water Amendment (Water for the Environment Special Account) Act 2013. This was an extraordinary act. It said that, for another 450 gigalitres—somehow got out of the irrigators' pockets—the mouth of the Murray would be flowing for 95 per cent of the time, without the aid of dredging, and there would be higher levels in the Lower Lakes and less salinity. But then they acknowledged that there was a catch. The rivers—the Murrumbidgee, the Goulburn, the Gwydir and especially the Murray—simply could not take that extra volume of water pushed down to keep the mouth of the Murray flowing. It could not be done. It would overflow and flood everybody out, which is environmentally a very bad thing to do besides being economically devastating for the towns and cities like Wagga Wagga, Shepparton, Mildura, Albury-Wodonga, Corowa, Cobram—and the list goes on.

So the Gillard government said, 'Oh dear. Yes, this is a problem. We'll put $1.77 billion aside over about five years and we'll use that money to remove the constraints in the system. We'll build the levies higher. We'll buy easements and we'll put covenants on places. We will build up the railway bridges and the ordinary bridges, so that when all the flooding occurs—about every 2½ years—there'll be less damage done to the human settlements.' Then they tried to con us with their constraints management strategy. In their report, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority said, 'Of course, people don't tend to build near the rivers and streams. It is mostly forests. So not that many people will be hurt.' Do you know that, in my part of the world, in the Mid- and Upper Murray, we have all built and developed along the rivers and streams because that is where the water was and still is, that is where the best soils are and that is the best way to make a living.

We now have the constraints strategy, which would be laughable if it were not so terrifying. We have to put a halt on it because, as the authority itself says, 'We just don't know what will happen. We don't know the full costs. We don't know how to ameliorate the damage which we acknowledge will happen. But it might be okay because waterlogged soils are
good.' No, they are not. We get salinity problems, you know. We have a very serious problem of potentially high saline water tables throughout the Upper and Mid-Murray. If you waterlog that country, you will bring death to your magnificent native species—the beautiful river gums, box trees and various other endangered things. We have to stop this nonsense as soon as possible. *(Time expired)*

**Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR** (Gorton) (18:24): I just want to touch upon a couple of issues that have significant impact in my electorate in relation to decisions by the government to provide particular services. In particular, I want to raise the issue of the headspace centres, which has been, in the main, a bipartisan approach. The former minister, the member for Port Adelaide, is at the table and was someone who, on behalf of the former government, enhanced—indeed, multiplied—headspace locations around the country to the point where we reached about 90 headspace centres, providing really important services for young people who are in need of such services. Providing services, whether it be in large urban centres or in regions, has to happen over time, but the concern I have as a local member is that there has been a very credible and compelling submission made by organisations in my electorate, in the municipality of Melton and, indeed, the municipality of Moorabool. Unfortunately, there was a response from the government to not provide support for the construction of a centre.

As a result of the engagements by those organisations with the government and, indeed, my own letter to the former Minister for Health, the honourable Peter Dutton, we believe we had a very good chance to see a positive response from the government. The reasons we put forward included that other headspace centres were quite far away from the growing community of Melton. The closest was in Werribee or Sunshine in Melbourne or they would have to go to Ballarat in the case of Moorabool, and we believe that this is just too far for many young people to travel, particularly those in need of headspace services. Like other areas of the country, there is a pressing need for a headspace located in Melton as the area, as I said, is rapidly increasing in population and is one of the fastest growing areas in the country. Unfortunately, with this expansion, the area is also seeing increasingly high levels of social disadvantage and its young people are experiencing significant mental health distress. We certainly made submissions to the minister and to the government. Some of that information substantiated the fact that Melton was also, on top of the things I have just raised, an area of low socioeconomic status. Young people in Melton are less likely to finish school than in other areas of the country. Youth unemployment is relatively high. There is an above-average rate of alcohol and substance abuse among young people. All of these factors contribute to mental health issues in young people of the area. We put our case to the government, to the former Minister for Health.

On top of that, we also indicated that Melton is a prime place for headspace because there was already the physical space and established services ready to proceed with a headspace centre. In other words, in terms of co-contribution or being able to quickly establish a centre, we thought Melton and the organisations that were making submissions to create a centre were providing the groundwork, if you like, for such a centre. Key local service providers and two local councils have joined together in a consortium with a view to providing an integrated response to the issue and working cohesively together. A lot of work was done locally. So it was disappointing to see the response by the incoming Minister for Health, the Honourable Sussan Ley, indicating that, in reply to my letter to Minister Dutton, there would not be a
centre established. I will quote some of the letter: 'The Australian government is committed to improving the lives of Australians with a mental illness and their families. On 8 October 2014 Minister Dutton announced the locations of the final 15 headspace centres, bringing the total number of announced headspace locations to 100 across Australia.' The previous Labor government increased it to 90. It doubled the budget of the centres and, in the main, we would say that these matters were done in a bipartisan way. The minister went on to say:

Young people in communities that do not have a headspace centre are encouraged to use eheadspace, which provides free, confidential and anonymous telephone and web-based support services to young people between the ages of 12-25 …

The response was very disappointing for my constituency and the organisations that had made very comprehensive submissions and very compelling arguments. Through their actions and their words, they showed why Melton was an appropriate place. It would be fair to say that disappointment turned to anger and frustration with the government when it was disclosed in Senate estimates that 15 locations were determined by the minister and only one of those 15 sites was within an electorate not held by a coalition MP.

I want to make it very clear that I am not suggesting that those 15 sites do not have a reason to have a centre, though it does seem very odd that only one site was identified in a non-government seat. It beggars belief that it was purely down to the meritorious submissions made by local communities. We would like to get an answer on why Melton was not considered good enough and why the government could not provide resources to Melton, to the two councils involved and to the organisations which provide services to the community. We would like to examine the reasoning behind the government's decision. If there is even a perception that something as important as providing such services to young people is done in a partisan manner—given the history of Headspace and given the historical bipartisan approach—I think it sets a very low bar and it taints what has been a great initiative.

It is fair to say that the inception of Headspace occurred under a coalition government and we continued that work. We are happy to see an extension of Headspace into 100 localities; and we would like to think that all young people have access such services. To think that, since the election, 15 sites have been identified and only one of those is in an electorate not held by the government does call into question the integrity of the decision making of the minister and the government. It is a very disappointing outcome. I do think that my constituency deserves an explanation as to why they were not sufficiently placed and why they do not have a compelling case just have resources provided to them—given all the things we outlined in our submission. Melton is an area that faces significant challenges and where youth unemployment is relatively high. It has an increasing population—it is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in the nation, not just Victoria. Given all that and given that it does not receive any support and then to learn that only one of 15 sites is in a non-government constituency, then the government should review its decision.

The incoming health minister has taken a different tack on the significant issue of the GP tax. There are probably many reasons for that. Given that there has been a change of minister and given that the government is seeking to re-engage, or perhaps engage, with the Australian people, this may be the opportunity for the incoming minister to review the decision of allocating the sites made by her predecessor. Was due diligence done in determining the sites? Was that decision based on merit? Are there sufficient resources within the portfolio spend
either to increase the allocations to include a Headspace centre from Melton or to give some undertaking that the proposed centre for Melton might happen sometime soon? These are some of the things that the incoming minister might contemplate. I would ask her to do so because there is a very disappointed community that feels it has been ignored by this government. It is a community that deserves support; it is a great community to represent; it has great people. All they are asking for is a centre that will enable young people to get mental health support when it is needed.

At this point I cannot accept the reasoning of the government in denying Melton this very important resource, for all the reasons I have outlined. I do not believe there is anything more important than providing support for young people who might be dealing with such challenges. As the shadow minister for employment, I would also make the point that there is a correlation on occasion between marginalisation, disengagement and not earning or learning and compounding problems that young men and women might face. It is very disappointing that we have not been able to convince the government. I will write again to the incoming minister outlining my concerns about the way in which these decisions have been made, raising the questions about the efficacy of the decision making of the previous minister in relation to the 15 new sites for Headspace centres. I would hope to get full and frank answer. Hopefully, upon examination of this issue, a rethink by the incoming minister on what she might be able to do to provide services and support to young people in this great part of Melbourne. If indeed the minister is not in a position to do that, then I think it is incumbent upon the opposition to continue to pursue the basis for the decision making of establishing these centres when it was so skewed towards government constituencies vis-a-vis those held by opposition, or independent members of parliament. Because the last thing anybody would want—I would hope—is that something as important as providing mental health services to young people in need will be tainted by the notion that it is determined by who holds the seat—not on who needs such care, how many might need such care and why they are deprived of such services.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (18:38): It is always a pleasure to rise in this place and talk about not only the achievements of this government but also more importantly the achievements of some of our local community leaders and volunteers. Before I speak on the Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2014-2015, as I would ultimately like to reflect on some of the achievements of this government over the past 18 months, I would firstly like to take a few minutes to reflect on the achievements of some of the wonderful members of our community, because without their efforts our communities would not be what they are today.

I recently had the pleasure of attending the Enable Dux Dinner. Now for those unfamiliar with this term, I am not speaking about the quacking kind, but rather the strategic leadership coalition of 13 state high schools in the Logan Albert Beaudesert and Boonah areas—otherwise known as Queensland's fastest improving educational region. I represent six of the 13 schools making up the coalition; including Beenleigh, Loganlea, Marsden, Shailer Park, Park Ridge and Windaroo Valley state high schools. Founded in 2007, Enable has grown into a dynamic educational network supporting educational leadership, research and best practice. Through working in different layers of collaboration, the Enable coalition is able to consistently provide professional development opportunities and deliver high quality programs to various school leaders, teachers, auxiliary staff members and most importantly
students. Their efforts have resulted in a number of milestones, including significant improvements in academic performance of students; increased student retention and completion rates; as well as a sharp rise in the number of students graduating with vocational qualifications, their QCE and entries into tertiary education. I am very proud to support the Enable coalition and would like to acknowledge the Forde high schools duxes for their involvement; including Cecelia Liu, Maia Hokianga, Madison Elliot-Hicks, Joel Forrest, Amy Wigan, Lorenzo AH Siu, Taylah Magee and Nicholas Alcorn for their wonderful efforts.

Another event I recently attended was the Soroptimist annual changeover dinner in Beenleigh. Soroptimist's are one of our wonderful community organisations, along with Rotary, Lions and Quota International. The members of Soroptimist International in Beenleigh are one of our busiest organisations in Forde and are an absolute credit to our local community. A snapshot of some of the activities and events that the members participated in during 2014 include: raising awareness of settling genuine refugees into the local community, working on increasing awareness of domestic violence in the community through their Walk the Talk event, the Dating Game bookmarks and their photo exhibition. They started a reading program at Beenleigh Primary School, which initially was held once a month and has subsequently increased to a regular fortnightly basis. They have been assisting the Beenleigh ASDAN students with some funding work towards their travels to Canberra and helping state TAFE students with bursaries. They also introduced a sewing program last year for the grade 7 girls and they shared with me how much success and enjoyment those students got out of learning how to sew.

Sadly, last year, one of Soroptimist's oldest members, Stella Richoff, passed away at age 93. In her memory, Soroptimists will be giving out an award in her honour to a local woman within the Beenleigh community—a person who is an unsung hero. This person will be presented with this award at their next changeover dinner. Until then, I have no doubt I will be catching up with Soroptimists regularly through one of their many events that they have planned for the next 12 months.

I would also like to recognise the wonderful efforts of Queenslander of the year, and Bravehearts' founder, Hetty Johnson, who is a constituent of the electorate of Forde and who was recently honoured with the highest local accolade for Logan residents, becoming the 16th inductee on the Logan City Council's Wall of Acclaim. The Wall of Acclaim recognises outstanding achievement, or a demonstrated commitment to excellence and outstanding contribution to our community. Hetty is a most worthy recipient of this recognition and a credit to not only the wider Logan community but also the entire country for the advocacy she has shown in championing on behalf of the most vulnerable in our society.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend two of Logan's biggest advocates who were recently named Logan City Council Goodwill Ambassadors. Local businessman, Barry Lane and school principal and Rotarian, Tim Keeler, were both recognised for their commitment to our local community. Barry is a longstanding Logan businessman. He was recognised for his contribution to the local economy and his commitment to local schools, charities and community organisations and, in particular, his beloved Logan Chamber of Commerce, where is recognised there as a life member. Tim was recognised for his development and promotion of Logan through his roles in the Logan Rotary and the Logan Refugee Welfare Committee.
I think all of us in this place would reflect that one of the honours here is to be able to stand in this place and speak about the achievements and successes of those who contribute so positively to our local communities. I have been able to mention just a few today, but there are plenty more positives stories that I will have the privilege of continuing to share in this House in the future.

At the outset I mentioned that I would like to reflect on some of the achievements of the coalition over our 18 months in government. Firstly, I would like to reflect on some of our local achievements. This is particularly important because we made a number of local commitments during the election campaign that I can now proudly say have been fully funded and delivered or are in the process of being delivered.

Firstly, we committed $83 million to an upgrade of the Beenleigh CBD in conjunction with funding from the Logan City Council and the state government. This project is well underway, with about six months to go before reaching completion. We committed $1 million in funding for CCTV cameras in Beenleigh, Loganlea, Waterford West and Shailer Park. That project is also underway. The project at Beenleigh is being done in conjunction with the CBD redevelopment. We also committed $20,000 towards grants for our local SES to upgrade GPS units and education and recruitment resources. I had the pleasure before Christmas of attending a function to celebrate the receipt of those funds and that new equipment.

We also had a Green Army project on the Pimpama River, which I visited last week. The people taking part in that project actually graduated last Thursday. They thoroughly enjoyed the project that they undertook on the Pimpama River and should be thoroughly congratulated for the work that they did. In addition, they lost a member along the way because he picked up a full-time job as a result of his involvement in that particular Green Army project.

Additionally, we announced during the recent state election that we would partner with the Queensland state government to provide $10 million in funding towards an upgrade of Exit 54 in Upper Coomera. This is one of the biggest issues facing residents living in the southern part of Forde on the northern Gold Coast. But unfortunately the interchange at Exit 54 is not the only problem. There are a number of interchanges along the M1 between the Albert River and the Coomera River—Exits 38, 41, 54 and 57—which will need to be upgraded to deal with the increasing population growth on the northern Gold Coast using the Upper Coomera-to-Beenleigh corridor.

In addition to these interchanges, I have been working with my government colleagues and the Queensland state government to find a solution to the single biggest issue in the Forde electorate—and that is the congestion on the M1 between Loganholme and Daisy Hill. I have held a number of meetings with stakeholders in relation to securing the funding needed to widen the motorway. It is an issue that will continue to be at the top of my list of infrastructure projects. With a change of government in Queensland, I hope to establish a positive relationship with the minister responsible at the state level to ensure this project continues to be given the priority it deserves not only for people living in Forde but for the many thousands of commuters from the Gold Coast and other parts who travel that section of road every day.

It is fair to say that the bulk of the issues in the Forde electorate are centred around infrastructure failing to keep pace with the growing population. In order to address these infrastructure needs in the future, we need to fix the budget. That is what this government has
spent the past 18 months been focused on. I think it is worth reminding the House of the problem that we inherited when we came into government. Labor's legacy to Australia was some 200,000 more unemployed, gross debt projected to rise to some $667 billion, $123 billion in cumulative deficits over their six years in government, more than 50,000 illegal arrivals by boat and the world's biggest carbon tax.

Labor's debt, which we inherited, has resulted in us being left with an interest bill of $1 billion a month. That $1 billion a month could be used for the upgrade of the M1 between Loganholme and Daisy Hill four times over let alone pay for many other infrastructure projects around this great country. No country can go on paying the mortgage from the credit card.

In that vein, I think it is also worthwhile looking at some of the other government achievements and plans that we have in place for the future of this great country. We all well know that we worked assiduously to get rid of that world's biggest carbon tax. We had the work that Scott Morrison did when he was immigration minister. That work and the work of the government as a whole succeeded in dealing with the issue of people arriving illegally by boat, thereby preventing deaths at sea and saving significant costs in the budget.

We scrapped the mining tax. Importantly, in view of my recent comments about infrastructure, we sought as a key plank of our budget last year to create the largest infrastructure package in this country's history. Part of that is being invested in Queensland with significant upgrades to the Bruce Highway and the Gateway Motorway and a number of other large projects. All of these will go directly towards our primary goal as a government, which is to create jobs, create investment and improve productivity so that we can compete in the global marketplace that we now face. Additionally, in approving over $1 trillion worth of major projects in terms of environmental approvals, we have started to create the opportunity for business to get on and do what it does best—that is, build the future of this country, free from government interference, red tape and roadblocks. We have cut some $2 billion of red tape to further enhance that.

For our business sector, we have succeeded, after 10 years, in achieving free trade agreements with our three largest export partners, who represent over 50 per cent of our exports—Japan, Korea and China. This means the opportunity for Australian businesses to compete in Asia, lower prices for consumers and better markets for our producers, such as our farmers and manufacturers. We continue to work towards dealing with environmental issues through our Green Army projects but also through our Direct Action Plan.

We are a government that is focused on the future of this great country. We recognise that we need to leave this country in a better environmental and economic shape for the future generations because that is an important responsibility of the current generation.

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (18:53): I also rise to add to the debate on the Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2014-2015. I am entering now my 17th year in this place, and I am quite frightened about that—when I say that number I am not quite sure where they have all gone. Having just got off the phone with my 15-year-old, I am reminded that all of her life I have been in this parliament. I was also trying to add up how many appropriation bills over that period I may have spoken on, but really could not do the sum because there are lots of them. But this would have to be, without doubt, the first time in those 17 years that we are going into a budget cycle still talking about the last budget. Never in my time in this place have we still been
discussing the previous budget, going into the next budget cycle, nor have we ever seen a budget that has not been passed in this amazing fashion in those 17 years. Usually, a budget has about a six-week cycle and then it is gone, done and dusted—as Keating would say, 'The dogs have barked and the caravans have moved on'—but we are still talking about the last budget.

These appropriation bills are another shining example of the Abbott government's continued deceitfulness and disregard for the basic notion of fairness, which is hurting the community in my electorate and across the country. The focus of the government's cuts has been the most vulnerable and those least able to afford it, and that is why we are still discussing this budget and why it has not been able to progress. Members opposite ran a deceitful election campaign, promising to improve living standards and fix the so-called 'budget emergency' simply by delivering 'no cuts to education, no cuts to health' and 'no cuts to the ABC or SBS', and also promising 'no new taxes'. They also promised adult government and no chaos. When is that good government going to start? When are we going to actually see the adults in charge?

Now, almost 18 months into the life of this government, with one leadership spill down, a leaking cabinet and a backbench in open revolt, we are still debating over the stalled measures of an almost one-year-old budget and additional appropriations of $1.7 billion to pay for the government's election promises and economic mismanagement. It is no wonder that the community has completely lost faith.

After waging a fear campaign of debt and deficit during the election, the first act of the Abbott government in office was to borrow more money and increase the deficit by tens of billions of dollars—almost $9 billion for a Reserve Bank loan that the bank did not request or need. Before the election, the 2014-15 deficit was projected to be $24 billion and net debt to be $212.1 billion. As a result of the policies and actions of the Abbott government, the 2014-15 deficit is $40.4 billion—almost a doubling of the deficit—and the net debt stands at $244.8 billion, an increase of more than 15 per cent.

Every dollar is the responsibility of those opposite—the government of this day—and caused by broken promises and the sheer chaos and dysfunction they created by pursuing a strategy of axing revenue raising measures such as the price on carbon and the mining tax, increasing spending measures and then pursuing ideologically motivated, savage and brutal cuts.

They have cut $11.3 billion from the foreign aid budget in an act of base politics that robs money from the world's poorest people and reduces Australia's commitment to foreign aid to a measly 0.2 percent of GDP—a mammoth way away from the Millennium Development Goal of 0.5 per cent. It will be to our eternal shame that we clearly have not reached a bipartisan consensus on quarantining the foreign aid budget, as other successful democracies have—one who are actually facing economic crises in their countries. That shame will be borne out in our neighbouring Pacific regions on the faces of the 2.2 million children who may not get to enrol in school, the 3.7 million who may not be vaccinated and the 4.7 million who may not be able to access safe drinking water. This government has cut foreign aid at every opportunity, and now we stand here debating an increase of $1.7 billion in government expenditure, because robbing the world's poorest people has not been enough.
But this government has not just taken from the poorest people overseas to fund its broken promises; $270 million has been ripped from community organisations across the country. I have spoken previously in this place about the government's rank hypocrisy of lauding Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, and her campaign to end domestic violence while also cutting vital funding to the community legal services, which are the primary defenders of women and children experiencing domestic violence.

Sadly, they are not the only worthy organisations to be hit with extreme cuts—organisations who are doing important work in our community to improve lives and help those in need, such as the Mirabel Foundation. Rather than simply paraphrase, I would like to share with those opposite an email I received from a resident in Mount Waverley, in my electorate, about her devastation at the government's cut to Mirabel. She writes:

This is the first time that I've felt the need to write to you and bring your attention to a matter that is of utmost importance to the residents of Chisholm. I have lived in your electorate for more than 15 years and have worked for the highly respected children's charity, The Mirabel Foundation (Mirabel), for 11 of these years. As a resident, I have benefited directly from the many community services available in Mt Waverley for individuals and families in need. I am, however, alarmed that one of these essential services, provided by Mirabel, will no longer receive financial support from the Australian Government. Mirabel is a children's charity that assists the innocent victims of parental drug use. Mirabel provides essential support and a wide range of programs for children who have been orphaned or abandoned and are now living with their extended family. These families, who are usually grandparents, give up everything so that they can help raise these children in a stable and loving environment.

The need for Mirabel continues to grow with 9 new children being referred for urgent help every week. To date, Mirabel has assisted more than 3000 children and their 5000 grandparent carers. The loss of federal funding totalling $234,000 will have a crippling effect on Mirabel and a dramatic impact on the disadvantaged families in our neighbourhood. It is incomprehensible that such a decision would be made at a time when our community is faced with rising child abuse notifications and a worrying surge in ICE use.

I want to thank my constituent for being so brave and for writing to me for the first time on an issue that is of great concern. I have had interactions with Mirabel over the years, dealing with some of the children that they have supported and assisted, and I know that this is a phenomenal organisation and it would be devastating to see these cuts progressed. It is astounding that any government or any member of this place could think that such a funding cut is acceptable or that the immense damage it does to our society could ever be equal to the relatively small amount of money that is being taken away. This is an insignificant amount of money in a budget overall but a massive amount to this organisation and the children and families it assists.

But it is symptomatic of everything that is wrong with this government which has cut $878 million out of science and research funding, cut $80 billion from our schools and hospitals and cut the Newstart payment for anybody under the age of 30. These cuts are having a devastating impact on my electorate, particularly on the largest employers in my electorate, who are Monash University; Deakin University; CSIRO Clayton, one of the largest of the CSIRO sites; and Box Hill Hospital. All these institutions are facing enormous cuts and uncertainty. And it is not just devastating to those who work and study in these places; it is devastating to our future because these are the engine rooms of our future: science, research,
medical research. These are the drivers of the jobs of the future. Taking money out of them now is sheer short-sightedness. It is just nonsensical.

This is a government who manufactured a budget crisis when in opposition and attempted to use that dishonest crisis as a cover for an ideological crusade. Even today, as the health minister finally—finally—dumped one of the worst measures in the failed, unfair 2014 budget, the GP tax, she defended it, unambiguously stating, 'The policy intent was and remains a good one.' So, despite all the evidence and the vocal concern of the entire medical community, this government is determined to attack the fundamental universality of Medicare. It does not accept the objective evidence that increasing the out-of-pocket costs of accessing primary health care is just bad policy, plain and simple. Instead, all we have is an acknowledgement of the obvious reality that nobody supports the policy. There was not even a glimmer of recognition by the health minister or this government of the reason why nobody supports their attempt to destroy the foundation of Medicare. Instead, the minister is opting to destroy universal access by a thousand cuts, cutting $1.3 billion by freezing indexation of the Medicare rebate and threatening doctors to come up with alternative cuts or endure the freeze permanently.

The government's attacks on Medicare have nothing to do with saving the budget bottom line. They are motivated purely by a desire to permanently and irrevocably degrade the principles of universal access to health care. Medicare is sustainable without cuts. Its costs have not spiralled out of control. In fact, health spending is at record low levels. Health expenditure in Australia was 9.5 per cent of GDP in 2011-12, compared to 17.9 per cent in the United States—a country with an expensive and inequitable health system that this government is so desperately keen to emulate. A decade ago, expenditure on GP services accounted for 0.3 per cent of GDP; today it accounts for only 0.4 per cent of GDP, and that is with a considerably higher bulk-billing rate. But this higher rate is not because people are abusing going to the doctor but because we have had an increase in our population. Indeed, actual attendance at the doctor is not at a high rate. Universal health care is a service that we can afford, it is sustainable as it stands, and we cannot allow any erosion of or increase in out-of-pocket costs for patients.

If this government were actually serious about addressing our long-term societal and economic issues, it would recognise that increased investment in primary health would help reduce the more expensive hospital costs by ensuring that we have a healthier population. By investing in preventative care, in primary care up-front, we can ensure people do not end up in hospital. It is hospital costs that are spiralling out of control, not GP visits.

There are many, many avenues that can be explored in this space. But that would take time, energy and a bit of intelligence, which the other side seems to be wanting in! Such a policy would require a level of understanding of the value of fairness and equality that those opposite seem unable to achieve. They demand that families 'stop leaning and start lifting', while continuing to allow large corporations to exploit tax loopholes and shirk their responsibilities, pandering to the interests of the big end of town. They cut funding from the poorest people in our society and remove services from the most vulnerable, while they cut taxes for the most profitable corporations and quietly mull over the next plan to slash penalty rates and erode the rights of workers.
They bleat: what would the opposition do? The Labor Party will defend Medicare, as it always has done. We will protect the rights of workers and we will not restore a budget to surplus by attacking the family budget.

I am pleased to be a member of a party that will close the loopholes exploited by multinational corporations to avoid paying tax in this country and send their money overseas. This measure will recoup $1.9 billion to the budget and do so without cutting hundreds of millions of dollars from essential community services and legal aid, without cutting billions from foreign aid, with no $1.3 billion cut to Medicare, without pushing up the price of a university degree to $100,000 and without cutting funding to our schools.

The government is forever talking about intergenerational debt and theft from the future. What greater theft from the future is there than denying people the ability to see a doctor, the ability to get a university education and an environment to live in in the future? That is what this government is doing, now.

The government has spent almost a year trying to sell and implement its budget, and it has done so because every measure in it, every single one, is unfair and unjustified. It has also had the effect of making our economy worse. Consumer confidence is at its lowest ebb and unemployment is at 6.4 per cent, higher than at any time under Labor. Sadly, these bills offer no plan to fix these problems or signal any intent by the Abbott government to govern fairly and in the best interests of the community. We need to better. We can do better.

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (19:08): In speaking to these important pieces of legislation, it is important to see them in the overall context of our budgetary and policy agenda. Many here would recall the six years of week-in and week-out chaos of the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments as one of the worst periods of budget and economic management in our nation's history.

At the end of 2007, when the coalition left office, the previous Labor government's debt had been repaid. There was $25 billion in the bank and a $75 billion Future Fund had been established, along with multibillion dollar perpetual funds for communications and higher education. The Howard coalition government was also able to deliver record investment in infrastructure and regular tax cuts and created families and seniors initiatives.

By the time the Australian people threw out the Labor-Greens-Independent government in 2013, the money in the bank had been spent and debt was forecast to grow to $667 billion, based on Labor's spending trajectory. The task for the incoming coalition government therefore was to fix the mess that the Labor Party had created and begin implementing policy decisions that delivered greater efficiencies within government, reduced red tape and delivered overall confidence in the economy, so that businesses could grow and more jobs could be created.

As we anticipated the changes in the Senate in the lead up to the first budget, there was an expectation that, with a change in the Senate composition with a few more people who had actually had some life and business experience, there would be a greater understanding of the risk and of the task confronting the government on behalf of the people of Australia. The risk being the huge debt that we had inherited.

It was with this expectation that the government pursued the passage of a legislative program necessary to rein in the budget deficit as part of the overall plan to repay Labor's debt.
and eliminate the projected $20 billion annual interest bill on that debt. There are varying
degrees on how we could implement such a program, but through critical analysis and
through discussion with senators there is the ability to deliver good policies and reform to get
our country moving.

We have succeeded in abolishing the carbon tax and the mining tax. We have stopped the
people-smuggling racket which saw hundreds, probably at least 1,200, of people die at sea.
We have begun rolling out our $50 billion infrastructure package. We are fixing the initial
botched rollout of the NBN and are actually delivering it. We have opened up many new
business opportunities for Australia in securing three new free trade agreements. We have so
far abolished up to $2 billion worth of red tape. We have already been able to achieve some
significant savings in the budget through the passage of over 80 per cent of our budget
measures, but there is still much more to be done, and this legislation is important to the
overall task.

Recently, the Prime Minister announced a plan to build on our efforts to deliver growth and
jobs, and this year's budget will assist in that process. Coalition MPs are working on a range
of policy initiatives throughout the 15 portfolio committees to address many of the challenges
confronting the budget. These policies will be announced and implemented throughout the
remainder of this term. The Abbott-Truss coalition government is also focused on developing
a broader strategic plan for growth in key regional areas. These strategies will be based on
sound, evidence based policies informed by a broad suite of white papers, including: the
White Paper on Developing Northern Australia, the Agricultural Competitiveness White
Paper, the Energy White Paper, the tax reform white paper and the White Paper on the
Reform of the Federation.

There is so much to be done. Just as it did under the Howard coalition government, our
policy agenda will take time to implement, but I am confident that, as our policy work
continues in tandem with our budget work, we will see significant improvement to our
economy, delivering hope, reward and opportunity for all Australians.

In my electorate of Lyne, since the election, we have had a number of local achievements,
with the federal coalition government delivering funding for a range of projects, including
$10 million towards the replacement Dyers Crossing Bridge on Wallanbah Road and
Dickenson Bridge on the Moto Road, and upgrades to Manning Point Road from Old Bar
Road to Bohnock Bridge and Gloucester Road from Boundary Road to Dollys Flat Road,
Killawarra Station Road to Killawarra Bridge and Bo-Bo Creek Bridge for one kilometre
south. Over $17 million towards the Bucketts Way upgrade between Taree and Gloucester.
This year, Greater Taree City Council will receive $7.45 million, Port Macquarie-Hastings
Council will receive $8.89 million, Gloucester Shire Council will receive $2.21 million and
Kempsey Shire Council will receive $5.62 million for local infrastructure and services in the
Manning Valley under the federal Financial Assistance Grant scheme. A further $7.1 million
has been secured for the Manning, $7.4 million has been secured for Port Macquarie-
Hastings, $2.4 million has been secured for the Gloucester Shire and $4.9 million has been
secured for the Macleay Valley in Roads to Recovery funding to improve the local road
The Gloucester High School Metal Industries Trades Skills Centre received $920,000 in federal funding, which will help to give students qualifications including the certificate I in Manufacturing Pathways and the certificate I in Engineering.

The federal coalition government is delivering on its plan to improve the rollout of the NBN. We are rolling it out cheaper and faster than the previous timetable. Many areas in my electorate of Lyne would have been waiting for at least 10 years under the old plan. But since the election, and over the course of the next 18 months, a further 15,000 premises will be able to access the NBN throughout the Manning Valley, Gloucester and parts of the Hastings Valley—in particular, Camden Haven, Wauchope and Harrington.

Wingham Scout Hall has received $50,000 towards its refurbishment.

There is $820 million for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway between the Oxley Highway and Kundabung and another $230 million for the section between Kundabung and Kempsey. That will improve travel times and safety. It will reduce the travel time from the Manning to Brisbane and bring new tourists and trade to our area more cheaply. There will be 1,000 direct jobs created by the civil works and 3,000 indirect jobs created in the region as a result of this $1 billion in spending.

The Cundletown Soccer Club has received $25,000 towards the upgrade of its facilities, which has already been achieved. The federal government has directed $75,000 towards the upgrade of Taree Motorcycle Club’s complex.

In black spot funding for safety improvements, $300,000 has been spent from The Lakes Way to Seven Mile Road on the Pacific Highway.

The federal government has spent $2.97 million as part of a $4.25 million upgrade at St Paul's High School in Port Macquarie. We have spent $1.05 million on the operations and training centre of Surf Life Saving New South Wales. There has been $15 million of federal money contributed to the $30 million spent on the Sancrox Interchange and $2.8 million has been allocated to the Port Macquarie Regional Indoor Stadium upgrade, which I am looking forward to being delivered.

We have supported a new aged-care complex in Gloucester, which sorely needs this development. Nambucca Valley Care is progressing with plans to build the new complex. NSW Health currently holds many of the federally funded aged-care places and has recently put out an expression of interest for the places. I am hoping that Nambucca Valley Care, which has the same aspirations, will be successful in negotiating for those places.

Wherrol Flat Hall is the recipient of $4,600 to improve its honour board. There is funding for a number of other important veterans’ and Centenary of Anzac projects, including $11,550 for the Wingham RSL Sub Branch, $6,920 for the Manning Valley Historical Society, $8,295 for the Friends of Wingham Town Hall, $4,000 for the Taree RSL Sub Branch to improve the Taree War Memorial Clock, $3,900 for the Harrington Crowdy Head RSL Sub Branch and $12,585 for the Taree RSL Sub Branch.

In the electorate of Lyne we have a local Work for the Dole program being rolled out in a number of community projects. There has been $2.4 million spent on the Wauchope Hospital palliative care unit. There has been $3,612 allocated to restore the Harrington Memorial Hall and Literary Institute's First World War honour board and install a Centenary of Anzac commemorative sign. There has been $75,000 allocated to the upgrade of the Tinonee...
Memorial School of Arts Hall. There has been $292,000 allocated for closed-circuit television in Taree's central business district—throughout Victoria Street and to the cenotaph east of Macquarie Street. There has been $9,500 allocated towards the construction of new, accessible paths and handrails for a classroom building at the Manning Valley Anglican College.

A number of Green Army projects have been announced in the Lyne electorate, with $22,000 going towards the Crowdy Bay National Park post bushfire Bitou Bush Control Landcare project and to undertake environmental restoration at the Cattai Wetlands in a weed control project. The Green Army Healthy Kooloonbung Creek project has been announced for Port Macquarie.

There has been a federal government contribution of $969,000 for the expansion and redevelopment of St Peter's Primary School in Port Macquarie.

This year, in the aged-care sector, there have been 10 extra residential aged-care places allocated to Old Bar's Banyula Lodge and 11 home-care places for Taree's Storm Retirement Village.

We are cutting the small-business tax burden on 1 July this year from 30 per cent down to 28½ per cent. Axing Labor's carbon tax is saving average households $550 a year.

The Gloucester High School P&C Association has received $45,000 in federal funds for the purchase of a new bus. There has been $90,000 contributed from the federal government towards the $125,000 upgrade of the Port Macquarie Tennis Club fencing and lighting, as well as access pathways and ramps. Eighty-five thousand dollars has been allocated for the Birpai men's shed in Port Macquarie.

One point five million dollars of federal funds has been used very wisely at the Port Macquarie Private Hospital, in Lake Road, where Ramsay Health Care have delivered a $4½ million project to multiply the effects of the $1.5 million grant. The Gloucester Project has received $4,000 to assist in its work in Gloucester.

Five thousand, seven hundred and thirty-one dollars has been allocated to the War Veterans' Remembrance Drive project. The association is going to install memorial plaques for 12 local schools along the Wingham to Wauchope Remembrance Drive. There are so many other things that I would like to announce. (Time expired)

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (19:23): I rise to speak on Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2014-2015, Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2014-2015 and the Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2014-2015. Let me start off by correcting some of the conjecture we have seen from the other side, trying to put this budget debate in history. We have seen some glowing tributes to the performance of the Howard government, including their ability to pay down debt. The simple fact is that, yes, they paid down $96 billion of public debt, but they did it by selling $100 billion of assets. It is the equivalent of selling your house to pay off your mortgage. That is fine; your mortgage is gone, but so is your house.

Most of the contributions from the other side also forget about the global financial crisis, the most significant period of economic turmoil around the world since the Great Depression of the 1930s. They also omit the fact that, since coming into government in September 2013, the Liberal-National coalition government have doubled the deficit. They have seen a massive deterioration of the budget. Despite the bluster and shiftiness of the Treasurer, you must treat
all assessments of the budget position by using the Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook as the key baseline. That is a document signed off by the Secretary of the Treasury and the Department of Finance, and that is the key document that you must compare everything through.

These bills constitute the next pieces of legislation continuing the budget process from this government, and they build on the budget of broken promises and lies that we saw delivered in May last year, which represented a gross betrayal of the Australian people. These bills propose $1.7 billion in appropriation funds and reflect decisions made by the government in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook as well as the machinery-of-government changes. MYEFO shows a $44 billion blow-out in the budget deficit over the forward estimates, compared to the May 2014 budget. It is a budget bottom line that has blown out despite some of the most harsh and cruel savings measures seen in recent times.

This is a government that has embarked on a suite of savings measures that will disrupt and harm many people for very little economic gain. This is a government and a leader that are less concerned about enacting lasting and responsible changes to the structure of our economy and more concerned about a program of reform based on pure ideology. It is an ideology that favours the big end of town over the vulnerable and the voiceless, an ideology that places a higher tax burden on workers than multinational companies, an ideology that destroys equity in our health system and our education system and, above all, an ideology that is incredibly short sighted.

I turn to unemployment, which is the most significant concern for my electorate of Charlton and, I would submit, the nation as a whole. The most recent labour force statistics show that we have an unemployment rate of 6.4 per cent nationally. To put this in perspective, that is the highest rate since the middle of 2002, higher than at any point of the last Labor government, despite the challenges associated with the global financial crisis. Seven hundred and ninety-five thousand, two hundred people in this country are now unemployed, and in January alone around 34,500 people joined the jobless queue. All up, around 100,000 people have become unemployed since this government was elected, and around a third of those were young people. Whilst in New South Wales the figure is marginally better than the national average, at 6.3 per cent, unemployment in the Hunter region, my home region, is an alarming eight per cent.

However, it is those under the age of 24 years that are the most affected, with the jobless rate amongst young people in the Hunter region at a shockingly high 18 per cent. There can be no misunderstanding about this. With around 300,000 young people out of work, Australia is in the midst of a youth unemployment crisis. This is particularly pronounced in the area I represent, where the future opportunities of young people are being undermined through a combination of cuts by the federal and state Liberal governments.

I turn to education. This government cut $30 billion from education in the budget. This represents the biggest cut in school funding in Australia's history. The government abandoned the Gonski reforms by dumping the funding for years 5 and 6 of the program and refusing to guarantee funding for years 2, 3 and 4, and the state Liberal governments have done nothing to save it. Despite professing his support for Gonski, and despite being a personal friend and surfing buddy of Tony Abbott, Premier Mike Baird has failed to influence the Prime Minister
in any way and have this decision reversed—a fact that voters will be likely to remember when it comes to the New South Wales election this month.

The Hunter Valley Research Foundation's most recent research paper shows that, whilst year 12 completion rates in the Hunter have steadily improved over the past decade or so, as have postschool qualification rates, we still lag behind the state and the nation in both areas. This may go part of the way to explaining why the youth unemployment rate is higher in the Hunter than elsewhere and why young people as a subset are finding it more difficult to find work.

As policymakers, we should be doing more, not less, to encourage young people in the region to obtain higher qualifications. This has been made harder by this government's heartless cut to the trade training centre program, which means that seven schools in the electorate of Charlton will now miss out on this kind of support to incorporate trade skills into their learning programs.

I recently opened the trade training centre at the Yula-Punaal Education and Healing Aboriginal Corporation in Mandalong, which offers pre-trade courses in hospitality, horticulture and land management. This is a fantastic facility and, through their tailored mentoring program for Indigenous students, the centre is catering for young Aboriginal people from across the Hunter and Central Coast who find themselves disengaged at school or unable to succeed in mainstream learning environments.

I am also looking forward to seeing the new trade training centre in engineering and metal fabrication being built at Lake Macquarie High School—a trade training centre that will replace a metal workshop that is 50 to 60 years old. When I visited it last year I saw metal anvils still being used. This kind of initiative—the opening of trade training centres—does not fit into the Liberals' agenda, and so no more funding will be forthcoming to support trades training.

I will turn to higher education. This government will also punish those young people who seek higher education. With their plan to deregulate universities, the Prime Minister and the government are making it abundantly clear that they do not believe in a fair and accessible university system. Despite their failure to pass the reforms through the parliament already, last week they reintroduced legislation to cut university funding by 20 per cent and deregulate fees to allow universities to charge whatever they want. Worse still, they have also embarked on a $15 million ad campaign to spruik it.

If these cuts go ahead the University of Newcastle, for example, in my home region, will have almost $160 million ripped out of its budget over the next four years. All the evidence suggests course costs will increase significantly as a result of this deregulation policy, and there remains a very real prospect of fees in the order of $100,000 for some degrees.

Of course, higher university fees mean more student debt, and this is a particularly disturbing prospect for rural and regional graduates, where income levels are lower across the board than in metropolitan areas. More than 6,000 students graduate from the University of Newcastle each year, and it is an unfortunate fact that most will move out of the region to pursue meaningful career options. Policies such as this are counterintuitive when it comes to addressing this so-called brain drain, and will do little to drive the economic growth necessary for the region to respond to the mining downturn.
Of course, not every student wants to go to university, but this government has proposed similarly severe cuts to trades and skills training. The vocational education and training sector is vital to our community, and TAFE continues to play an important role in ensuring we have the skilled workforce for the jobs of today and of the future.

Over a quarter of residents in Charlton have a TAFE qualification, ranking us in the top five in New South Wales for this kind of participation. And that makes the government's cut of over $1 billion-worth of skills programs even worse. This is a massive blow to young people wanting a trade or workers looking to learn new skills, and will of course have an adverse effect on young people.

Among the cuts are cuts to the popular Tools for Your Trade program, leaving apprentices to either find extra money or go into debt to cover the cost of the tools they need for their work. The Australian Apprenticeships Access Program, which helped people find a career that suits them and helped to get people ready to work has been cut. The Australian Apprenticeship Mentoring Program, which provided help and support for apprentices and employers, has also been cut.

In New South Wales there is a perfect storm brewing. The state Liberal government has taken an axe to TAFE, with funding cuts, mass sackings, cuts to courses and massive fee increases. Glendale TAFE, in my electorate, has had cuts to the tourism, hospitality, welding and metal fabrication courses, and students enrolling this year are paying up to $1,000 more in tuition fees. Soon, our TAFE system will be unrecognisable. It is being systematically undermined by a Liberal government that favours private providers over the needs of students or industry. I welcome New South Wales Labor's plan to cap fees and limit the level of privatisation in TAFE, and I remain hopeful that Labor will be elected to government in New South Wales later this month and can enact this recovery plan.

The government has also scrapped support for low-income workers. The government is planning on scrapping the low income superannuation contribution from 1 July 2017, and this will see over three million low-paid workers lose a yearly tax refund of up to $500. The government will also further delay the increase of the superannuation guarantee for seven years, which would have seen a person aged 30 today, on average full-time earnings, retire with an extra $127,000 in superannuation savings. This hits those who are working part-time—which many young people do—at a time when every extra cent invested in superannuation has the greatest impact on their retirement savings.

Unemployment is increasing, despite the Prime Minister's promise to create a million new jobs in five years, and there is no doubt this is as a result of the government's short-sighted approach to industry and innovation policy in general. These appropriation bills include $188.5 million in funding to establish the Industry Growth Centres program. While this is a paltry amount compared to the $500 million innovation precinct policy of the former government, I support this initiative because it aims to lift competitiveness and productivity, and I continue to call on the government to establish an industry growth centre in the Hunter region.

My region is built on manufacturing and mining, but it is no secret that the economy is in transition. Cost-cutting in the mining sector is resulting in high redundancy rates and, alongside this, the opportunity for apprenticeships in these traditional industries has also declined. The Hunter's manufacturing industry is well placed to exploit supply-chain networks
and to incorporate innovative processes. And whilst the lower Australian dollar is helping, and will continue to help, manufacturers, this will be of no consequence if the industry is not in a position to compete. I have spoken at length in this place about the ‘valley of death’ in the shipbuilding sector, which is one area where the government can, and should, intervene.

The previous, Labor government set in place a defence acquisition program that would have seen continued employment in the shipbuilding sector, including supporting the 900 jobs at Forgacs in Tomago. It is completely indefensible that this current government has refused to bring forward the construction of naval supply ships, which would have saved hundreds of jobs in the Hunter and thousands across the country.

And it is utterly shameful that the government continues to fuel uncertainty around the construction of our defence submarines, despite the latest ABS statistics demonstrating that the biggest increase in unemployment was in South Australia. This government gave a cast iron promise before the last election to build these submarines in Adelaide, with accompanying work being supported by shipbuilders around the country, including in my region. This broken promise is another betrayal of the Australian people, a betrayal that was cemented two months into their government by their wilful destruction of the automotive industry—a wilful killing by withdrawing $500 million of funding for the automotive industry that will result in a direct termination of 50,000 jobs and an impact on another 200,000 jobs in the downstream and upstream industries.

The truth is that this government is all rhetoric about industry support. It is all rhetoric about supporting jobs. I have serious doubts about whether they will get even close to their stated aim of creating one million jobs in five years. We are already experiencing a decade-high unemployment rate of 6.4 per cent. We are experiencing a very high youth unemployment rate—a youth unemployment rate that is in danger of producing a generation of young people who are excluded from the labour force, a generation excluded from the rewards of full-time work, the rewards of safe and secure work and the rewards of work whereby they can take out a mortgage, have a family and plan for their future. I am deeply worried about this impact. I am deeply worried about the future of young people around the country and in my region in particular, and the government needs to and should do more about this.

But unfortunately this is a government that bases policy decisions on pure ideology. The government is embarking on an agenda that is particularly harmful to young people. The Prime Minister says that young people must ‘earn or learn’, but he will not provide any support for employment or training that is meaningful. He is giving up on young people, especially those in the Hunter, at a time when they need responsible decisions from the government and more support to shape their future success. It is myopia that will have a long-lasting impact, and the government must be condemned for it.

WYATT ROY (Longman) (19:39): It is always a great pleasure to follow my good friend and comrade the member for Charlton. Tonight he seems like a glass-half-full sort of bloke, so I might try to inject some optimism back into the appropriations debate, which is always a great opportunity to paint a vision or a picture of the important things that are happening locally in the electorate and the great things that the federal coalition government is delivering in my local community. And I thought there was no better place to start than with the fact that, when you drive around our local community, everywhere you go you can see NBN
workers out there putting in fibre so that locals in my community can have superfast broadband. This is happening a year sooner than it would have happened under the Labor government. By the middle of this year there will be 37,000 premises across the electorate of Longman—in Caboolture, in Caboolture South, in Upper Caboolture, in the northern part of Morayfield, in Elimbah, in Wamuran, in Bellmere, in Bribie Island, in Woorim, in Bongaree, in Banksia Beach, in Bellara, and in White Patch—that will all have superfast broadband, a year sooner than they would have had it under the Labor government.

We have also announced the second tranche of the rollout, which means that the good people of Beachmere, of Godwin Beach, of Ningi, and of Sandstone Point are all allocated to have the construction of the NBN start by June next year. Those 37,000 premises, plus the other ones I identified to start by the middle of next year, will have speeds of up to 100 megabytes download and 40 megabytes upload, which is about 25 times faster than current ADSL. It is fast enough internet to stream 10 high-definition TV shows into your home at once and upload a three-minute YouTube video in about 42 seconds. These are areas that had some of the worst internet connections in the country and that by the middle of this year will have incredibly fast internet a year sooner than they otherwise would have had it.

I think the key difference on the NBN between this side of politics and that side of politics is that we want to see the people who had the worst connections in the country have access to at least decent internet, while the Labor Party spent billions of dollars ensuring that people who had good internet had really, really good internet, at an extreme cost. And I want to commend my good friend the Minister for Communications, Malcolm Turnbull. He has done an amazing job turning around the NBN. When he came to government, nobody who was delivering the NBN had any experience in the telecommunications sector. He changed that. He changed the board. He commissioned the myBroadband review, which went about measuring everybody's internet access speeds across the country, and that is where we identified the areas of highest need. We provided that review to NBN Co and said, 'Target the areas that have the worst access to the internet first and make sure they get the best possible upgrade as soon as possible. As part of that process we are trialling the construction techniques of fibre to the node. That is where we get our 37,000 premises locally. And the next step is that NBN Co, using that information, will develop the next rollout maps for the NBN and by the middle of this year we will see the next rollout strategy for the next three years and beyond. So, we are very much getting the NBN rollout back on track. It means that thousands and thousands of premises across our community will have access to incredibly fast internet years and years sooner than they otherwise would have. No matter where you live in the electorate of Longman, we will have incredibly fast internet years sooner, at a lower cost to taxpayers and more affordably for the customer. I think that is an enormous win.

One of the other local issues I want to talk about is the very important issue of Boundary Road at Narangba. This is a huge congestion hot spot in the electorate. In the last Queensland state election campaign I was really proud to go out to the Boundary Road overpass with my colleagues the member for Petrie, Luke Howarth, and the member for Dickson, Peter Dutton, and promise that if a coalition government or an LNP state government was elected the federal coalition government would put $84 million on the table, and the state LNP team was going to put $20 million on the table, funded through their Strong Choices plan. Unfortunately that was not to be. A Labor government has been elected in Queensland.
Throughout the campaign, the Labor Party never made any commitment on this very important congestion hot spot locally. They made no funding commitment; they made no promise.

Since the government has been sworn in in Queensland I have been in contact with the Premier and with the local members and suggested that they might want to try to find this $20 million, because it is an incredibly important road. The coalition government in Canberra has $84 million sitting on the table. Our region really deserves this vital infrastructure upgrade, and I really worry that our good friends in the Queensland state Labor government have absolutely no plan to deal with not only this road but any infrastructure upgrades across Queensland. Effectively, as of today, we have an infrastructure freeze in Queensland and we cannot build these vital pieces of infrastructure, so I urge the Premier of Queensland, I urge the Labor state members of parliament, to pick up the phone, find the money, tell us how you are going to fund it, and get stuck into this vital piece of local infrastructure so that the residents in Narangba and North Lakes and everyone who uses the Bruce Highway can have a bit of relief and spend less time in their car. We have $84 million on the table from here in Canberra to help with that upgrade.

We do not always want to be so pessimistic, so let me talk about another overpass over the Bruce Highway, the Pumicestone Road upgrade. To the credit of the former government, they started some allocation of funding for the upgrade of Pumicestone Road. We came to government and increased that funding for the upgrade of the Pumicestone Road overpass, and I am proud to say that that has just opened up to traffic and people now have much easier access across the highway at Pumicestone Road. This is part of a much bigger package that the coalition government is delivering on the Bruce Highway. We are spending $195 million to upgrade the interchanges from Caboolture to the Sunshine Coast and we are spending just over $3 billion on the Bruce Highway from Pine Rivers all the way through to Gympie. We are spending over $8 billion on the entire Bruce Highway. For those commuters going south, we are putting over $1 billion into the Gateway Motorway. So we have upgrades on the Bruce and on the Gateway Motorway. From the strong action that the federal coalition government has taken, we will see very significant improvements on the Bruce Highway, which will make the life of so many commuters in my electorate so much easier. I am proud to be part of a coalition government that is delivering these very significant upgrades on the Bruce Highway.

With this next issue, again I am a bit worried about a Labor state government in Queensland—I think many people in my community are becoming very worried as well. At the last state election the then LNP MPs, Darren Grimwade, the member for Morayfield, and Lisa France, the member for Pumicestone, promised to upgrade the Caboolture hospital car park. As everyone who goes to the Caboolture hospital knows, there is a huge parking problem there. It is at crisis levels. The former state LNP government promised to deliver 100 extra parking spaces. At the state election Labor promised nothing, they had no plan, and unfortunately now, with the state Labor government in Queensland, there is a big question mark about what will happen with the Caboolture hospital car park. Again I have contacted the Queensland Premier, as well as local Labor members Rick Williams and Mark Ryan. I know they do not have any funding for this, I know they do not have a plan, but I urge them, please, in the interests of the community, to talk to the Premier of Queensland, find the funding and fix what is an absolute crisis at the Caboolture hospital car park. Our community
has wanted this improvement for a very long time, and anybody who visits the hospital deserves better car parking. Come on guys, our community deserves this so let us see what you can deliver.

Another issue I want to talk about is the bridge across the Caboolture River on Morayfield Road. As many people in the community know, the bridge is over 90 years old and just about every time it rains the bridge floods. Morayfield Road is a completely state government road but at the last election the coalition government took a Bridges Renewal Program to the electorate to upgrade these really old bridges across the country. Even though the bridge on Morayfield Road across the Caboolture River is a state government road, we committed at the request of the former state LNP government $8½ million to upgrade that bridge—a bridge that must be upgraded because it is well over 90 years old. It is a fifty-fifty funding split—the coalition government is putting $8½ million on the table to upgrade the bridge and I have been in contact with the local state Labor MP, Mark Ryan, who to his great credit is very keen to work with us on this. But if we are to replace this bridge surely common sense would say to us let us not just replace it, let us upgrade it so that it does not flood every time it rains. I have spoken to the new director-general of transport and, as I said, I have spoken to Mark Ryan, the local member, and I would hope that the state government, given that the commonwealth government is putting on the table $8½ million that it would not usually give for a state government road upgrade, can find a little bit more money and make sure that we upgrade this bridge not just by replacing it but by making it flood proof so that we do not have to travel a different route every time it rains.

Another issue I want to talk about is the D'Aguilar Highway. This is a tragedy of a road. For years and years we have seen death after death, accident after accident, on the D'Aguilar Highway. Once again, this is a state government road—when I was elected in 2010 there was a state Labor government and I lobbied them to upgrade the road. They chose not to do that. The coalition was elected in 2013 here in Canberra and, despite this being a state government road, we committed $16 million for the upgrade of the D'Aguilar Highway. The design and geotechnical work has been almost completed and very soon we will see an upgrade worth $16 million, which will go after those worst black spots on the D'Aguilar Highway. This work is long overdue. It really should be the responsibility of the state government, but I want to thank my colleagues here in Canberra for stepping in and providing extra funds to ensure that this road is safer, and that will ultimately save lives. We will need further upgrades and I encourage the state Labor government to do something on this road but at the very least, thanks to the coalition government here and after years of lobbying, very shortly we will see work begin on that $16 million upgrade to the worst black spots on the D'Aguilar Highway.

The next issue is youth mental health in the electorate of Longman. It is an absolute tragedy that in my electorate we see rates of youth mental health issues that are much higher than the national average. Some social workers tell me that, tragically—I know this from talking to locals as well—we have youth suicide rates of twice the national average. Many of us have been affected by this, and many of us are affected by mental health issues—one in five Australians are affected by a mental health issue every year, and one in two are affected by a mental health issue during their lifetime.

After years of lobbying, I am really proud to say that the federal coalition government will build a headspace facility, or site, in Caboolture, which will provide an amazing opportunity
and resource to young people across our community to go and get the help that makes such a big difference in their lives and to find the social worker or the youth worker, or the mental health clinician, who can make a very big difference in the lives of young people. It has been a long process to get to where we are today, but when I reflect on my time in this place delivering a headspace site for Caboolture is probably one of the best things that I could possibly do with my time here. I really want to thank my colleagues for helping to make our community a better place and for giving a new start to so many young people who are dealing with some very difficult issues.

One of the other things I want to talk about is remembering our veterans. I am very proud to say that, having never had a war memorial, the communities of Burpengary and Narangba will soon, in time for the centenary of Anzac commemorations this year, have their very own war memorial. This is a very dignified and special place to honour our men and women who have laid down the ultimate sacrifice for our country. As somebody who has gone to Afghanistan twice, and also to Iraq, I want to say that, as we approach the centenary of Anzac, we have really seen a century of sacrifice from our diggers. There is $80,000 on the table from the federal government to deliver this very moving war memorial. (Time expired)

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (19:54): Just as the member for Blair said when speaking on this appropriations debate he was going to speak widely and wisely, so am I. I am going to reflect on some expenditure that I will not say was deliberately misspent, but I do not think these monies were spent wisely by the Australian Federal Police, by the Department of Finance and by the courts. Some of the things I say will be unpopular, particularly with members of the government, but they have to be said.

In the ACT Supreme Court, on 25 February, Judge John Burns exonerated the former Speaker of this parliament. He said, quite rightly, that having lunch with staff could be considered parliamentary duties, given the definition was so wide. The failure to apply to former Speaker Slipper the Minchin protocols by which all of us in this place are able to repay taxi fares or travel expenses that are undertaken mistakenly or not properly notified is something that led to a whole series of misallocation of resources. These included the cost of Slipper’s prosecution by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions over this $954. Defending himself cost him more than $150,000 personally. These events cost him his reputation and his marriage, and nearly cost him his life and his mental health. And it cost the Commonwealth, in its various manifestations, at least $400,000 to $500,000 to get one member’s taxi receipts. Was this a wise expenditure of public money?

When Peter Slipper accepted the speakership he insisted that he would not be party to maintaining Labor in office. He felt that the Labor government was going to stay in office whether he accepted the speakership or not. Slipper being made Speaker, of course, made it a little easier for Labor on the floor of the House, but the Labor government was able to survive when Mr Jenkins was Speaker before Slipper and with Ms Burke after Slipper. He was a very good Speaker. I remember, to the surprise of the coalition, he sat then Treasurer Wayne Swan down in his seat. There was praise for him in the media at the time as a person who knew the procedures and the rules. There was an article by Geoff Kitney in the Financial Review which was typical of this.

Also related to this miss-spending, in my view, of public moneys was the Federal Court’s refusal on 9 February 2015 for Mr Ashby’s applications for costs in this case. These costs are
estimated at $3 million. The Federal Court added the Commonwealth's costs to Ashby's costs and his lawyer's costs. The Federal Court's judgement made clear that Ashby's sexual harassment claims were never vindicated, as he had claimed subsequent to the judgment of Justice Rares being invalidated by the Federal Court. When Ashby withdrew the sexual harassment case, on 14 June, he stated that he believed the Federal Court's decision to grant an appeal had indirectly suggested harassment had, in fact, occurred. The Federal Court judgement makes it explicitly clear that that was not the case. The final paragraph of its finding says:

But for the discontinuance of his claim, Ashby may well have been tested about why the primary proceeding was instituted in the terms it first appeared, and on a range of matters raised by Slipper arising in his summary dismissal application and in his defence of the claim.

It is true the Federal Court made a two-to-one decision to overturn Justice Rares, giving Ashby the benefit of the doubt for reasons of procedural fairness. They wanted to let him proceed with this case even though Justice Rares had made a very strong judgement against them.

Remember, these were allegations that transfixed Australia. They led to 12 front pages in The Daily Telegraph, including the former speaker being portrayed as a rat with drawings all around him. Lady Di only got nine front pages. Justice Rares, who examined the case most comprehensively, said it was an abuse of process. The judge skewered Mr Ashby's solicitors, Harmers, for a strategy that was designed to:

… to expose Mr Slipper to the maximum degree of vilification, opprobrium, sensation and scandal and to cause maximum damage to his reputation to the political advantage of the LNP and Mr Brough.

Mr Brough being his opponent in the electorate.

Harmers are an important solicitor for all of us members of parliament to remember because what happened to Slipper could happen to any of us. Sensational public allegations could be used by legal firms on a no win, no fee basis, as they did in the David Jones case, which is probably the reason Harmers were brought into this case against Slipper. This is a very dangerous precedent, a slippery slope. Legal firms interfering in the political process like this could, as I say, happen to any of us and to people more popular than the then Speaker.

Rares found the claim made by Ashby was an abuse of process. Judge Rares said:

… Ashby's predominant purpose for bringing these proceedings was to pursue a political attack against Mr Slipper and not to vindicate any legal claim he may have for which the right to bring proceedings exists.

He stole his employer's diary. I wonder if Mr Katter, who is in the chamber, would like one of his staff to steal his diary and give it to The Daily Telegraph. It is an absolutely unethical thing for any employee to do. To introduce the 2003 allegations about a sexual relationship and assertions about Cabcharge 'had no legitimate forensic purpose', the judge said.

They were not included in the originating application to advance any bona fide cause of action that Mr Ashby … had against … the Commonwealth or Mr Slipper. The effect of their inclusion and, I find, the purpose … was to further damage Mr Slipper in the public eye and politically and to attract to him significant adverse publicity …

After dropping his allegations in mid-2014, Ashby appeared on 60 Minutes. It was recently re-shown, in January. On that program, he claims to have been induced by Liberal MPs, prominent members of the government now, into making his sordid claims. What he told 60
Minutes about these alleged inducements directly contradicts what he put on oath in a sworn affidavit to the justices who overthrew, in a 2-1 judgement, Rares's judgement. I wonder, if the judges had seen what Ashby said on 60 Minutes, whether they would have indeed overturned Rares's forensic view of Ashby's activities. I am sure they would not have.

Accordingly, after the program, I wrote to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, inviting him to investigate whether perjury had occurred and whether the appeal judges were misled by the affidavit. At the very least, Ashby's claim of inducements, made on national television twice now, in July and January, should have been available to the appeal judges when they reviewed Rares's judgement. Perhaps millions of dollars spent chasing Slipper's $900 taxi fares—the millions of dollars spent by the Department of Finance and the AFP and in the courts—might never have had to have been contemplated if we had known this in the beginning. Regarding these Cabcharge fares, it was silly to go beyond the boundaries of Canberra for lunch with staff, but they were still ultimately found by a judge to be possibly 'parliamentary business'. If we had known that, as Mr Ashby now claims on television, he was offered inducements, the judgement of Judge Rares would have been clearly vindicated.

I am reluctant to believe anything that Ashby says, even if is politically convenient for my side of politics or me personally to believe. If he told the truth, however, to 60 Minutes, there is a powerful message to all MPs from this: the politics of personal destruction, even for a member as unpopular as Peter Slipper, engineered by the member for Warringah and the member for Sturt and carried through with the obscenely expensive royal commissions that they have now launched into prime ministers Rudd and Gillard, has no proper place in Australian public life. The admission by Mr Brough, the current member for Fisher, Mr Slipper's electorate, on 60 Minutes that he had directed a G Gordon Liddy style black-ops misappropriation of the Speaker's confidential diary is one that the Prime Minister has already reasons to carefully consider. The old warning 'Be careful what you become in pursuit of what you want' should be ringing in the ears of members of the government after this disturbing 60 Minutes broadcast.

I witnessed—and I want to record this for the Hansard—on a daily basis, in the months of February, March and April 2012, what appeared to me when I went into the Speaker's office an entirely professional relationship between him and his constituent adviser. Strangely excluded from the 60 Minutes program was Extra Minutes, a special that 60 Minutes broadcast online. In Extra Minutes, it is very odd that Mr Ashby, who claims to have been repulsed by the Speaker's approaches, made it clear that the last straw for him in his betrayal of his employer was that the then Speaker would not take him on a first-class trip to Hungary. As David Marr argued in The Guardian:

A few days later, under Brough's direction, Ashby began scouring Slipper's office records for damaging details of travel expenses to be fed to Telegraph journalist Steve Lewis.

I will not go into all of the details, as I planned to, about the role of the Murdoch press in all of this, including The Daily Telegraph, or the securing of him in a safe house in Sydney. I just want to conclude with some points about how this was used for the destruction of the Gillard government and the terrible destruction of one individual. Slipper was a competent Speaker. Slipper is an eccentric character. Slipper probably said stupid things, sexist things, to his staff member. Let us all remember this: the texts that were introduced into this parliament

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by the member for Curtin were made between Ashby and Slipper two years before Ashby was in his employment. What would any of us think of a person who was a prospective employee of ours who recorded our conversations, personal texts between us, with a possible view to blackmail? You inveigle yourself. You try and become popular with the person.

I know the case of Slipper. He married a younger woman, Inge, a lovely person who convinced the then Speaker to take a more modern view of a gay man, Ashby. They took him into their bosom. They took him into their office, and their confidence and their trust were abused in the most foul play. I saw that man in his office all the time, working happily with the Speaker. Only when his overseas trips or the prospect of bringing down the government and getting vast amounts of cash suggested to him that he could take another course, did he betray the couple that had looked after him so well.

There are other people who have guilt in this matter too. The former Attorney-General, my friend Nicola Roxon, should never have made a different standard for the then Speaker than what had been made for all leading members of this parliament. He should have had a legal defence. Now, we all have insurance to protect ourselves, each of us, from an employee doing a similar thing to us. That is justified. The former Special Minister of State is an excellent person who foresaw this problem, not just for Labor but for all sides of politics, and introduced these insurance schemes.

It was also dishonourable that his solicitors, the firm of Maurice Blackburn, abandoned Slipper on the edge of court after the Commonwealth unwisely made its separate deal with Ashby for $50,000—a deal which, if it would have waited, Justice Rares would have invalidated. The Cabcharge thing has been invalidated in a Canberra court, and we would have known, via 60 Minutes, that this was all done because of prospective inducements.

Some people affectionately refer to me as the ‘member for lost causes’ in this parliament because of my support for Tibet, Darfur and the Baha’is and various other groups. I never imagined that I would become a friend or defender of a National Party member from Queensland, but this is not over. If the CDPP recommends, after advice from the Federal Police, that these inducements be looked at, this is not over.

Mr HOGAN (Page) (20:09): I rise to speak in support of these appropriation bills and the amendments. Deputy Speaker Jones, you probably remember when we won government about 18 months ago that there were four basic premises that we said we would do, and I want to concentrate on one of them in this. We said we would cut the carbon tax—which we have done. We said we would stop the boats. We said we would repair the budget. The other thing we said, and one that would be one of our major focuses, is that we wanted to be an infrastructure government. I want to pick that point up at the start of what I am going to say, because the infrastructure government is exactly what we are proving to be.

I want to talk about one specific infrastructure project to begin with—that is, the dual duplication of the Pacific Highway. To complete the dual duplication—and it is obviously an important thoroughfare between Sydney and Brisbane, and there are about 140 kilometres still to go—will be very expensive. It is going to cost around $7½ billion to finish that dual duplication. Why is this a priority? It is a priority for many reasons, not least that the dual duplication of highways, as we know, saves on fatalities. There are still far too many fatalities on the highway, to the great distress of all in my community. The other reason, obviously, is that it is an economic boom while you are building it. At any particular point of time there
could be up to 3,000 people working on that infrastructure project. When you add in the indirect jobs that that can create, it is an economic boom as it is being built. Thirdly, Deputy Speaker—as a man who I know understands commerce—when you build infrastructure like that it brings, once it is completed, an economic benefit. Already, where that highway has had a dual duplication it brings more tourism and it makes it easier for business to operate in those communities because of transport improvements and cost improvements, if they want to do that. There are many good reasons why you would want to do this.

But it was interesting, because at the last election, with these appropriation bills that we talk about where we are allocating this type of money, there was a vast distinction between the two major parties on this project. At the last election, the previous government wanted to revert to a 50-50 funding formula on this infrastructure funding. They were funding it at 80 per cent—for the projects that they had completed in the recent years. They then wanted to revert back to a 50-50 funding split, which, obviously, the state government did not necessarily agree with. What was going to happen if they had won government? There was going to be an argy-bargy contest and a fight over who should be funding what. And what would have been the ramifications of that? It would have been a political fight; the dual duplication would have been delayed, and we would have had to wait for all the benefits that I just spoke about.

I am very proud that our government, as an election commitment, said that we would maintain the 80-20 funding split. What that meant is that we put $2 billion more onto the table than the previous Labor government was going to. They were going to put on about $3 billion. They wanted the states to put that balance on. We said, 'No, we'll put on an extra $2 billion.' So we are going to put on over $5 billion to complete that dual duplication, and the state only has to pick up the rest. One of the first privileges I had in this job as the new member for Page was when we announced a contract, within weeks of winning government, to build a bridge over Emigrant Creek near Pimlico. We turned the sod on that within a couple of months of winning government, to complete this dual duplication.

Again, we are getting on with the job that we said we would. We wanted to be in infrastructure government, and we are. I have just been looking around at a few other things going on in the community, with this notion that we want to build and we want to be an infrastructure government. There are hospital upgrades going on that we announced—that we said we would do if we won government. There are $4.5 million for the Ballina hospital upgrade and $3 million for a new Casino emergency department. Southern Cross University, a very important institution in my electorate, has been successful in obtaining millions of dollars in grants from this government. There has been $5 million for different skill training centres across five high schools, which I announced early last year as well.

Very recently in Page we announced $5.5 million for new aged-care and in-home care places. Mr Deputy Speaker Jones, as a man who is in tune with your community, you would know that, with an ageing community, home care packages are especially important. It was with great pleasure that I went to Casino and announced a number of those, which mean that people can spend more time at home before they go to retirement villages. In Grafton we announced over 50 new residential care packages. One benefit of having more aged-care beds is that it creates a mini job boom. The construction of those facilities is creating, in one instance, 60 jobs in the construction phase. Once they are built, not only are there care places
for nurses and aged-care workers; extra cooks, maintenance people, gardeners et cetera are needed on an ongoing basis.

There is much more. There will be major upgrades to the Grafton hockey clubhouse, which we funded under the Howard government. It was a two-storey building and we funded the downstairs part of it, but for six years the upstairs was just a shell. We said, 'If we win government, we will finish the upstairs for you.' That will be completed soon. We will have CCTV cameras in Casino, where there is a lot of crime. In conjunction with good lighting, CCTV cameras have been shown to improve crime statistics.

We have an $800,000 program to encourage disadvantaged high school students to attend university. This is a program that we are funding very much in the Clarence Valley, and it is already proving to be a great success. There is also a seat belts in school buses program and there are carer respite programs and a lot of cultural programs. So a lot is happening. We are an infrastructure government and we will continue to be a building government.

I also want to highlight the free trade agreements we have negotiated. There are two large private employers in my electorate. Northern Co-operative Meat Company employs over 1,100 people. Before the election they told me that they were at a competitive disadvantage with some of their competitors in exporting meat, especially into Asia. Some of those countries have free trade agreements. In one instance the US was exporting meat and their tariffs were being lowered more quickly than ours. We have signed three free trade agreements, with China, Japan and Korea. Eighteen months to two years ago, China was buying a negligible amount of chilled and frozen boxed beef from Casino. Upon completion of these free trade agreements, along with other measures, they are now the biggest customer of that product. The jobs of the workers at the meatworks in Casino have been secured by those free trade agreements. The meatworks are now as competitive, if not more, than their competitors exporting into Asia. It has been a great success.

The second biggest private employer in my region is a dairy cooperative called Norco, who employ around 600 people. They make a great ice-cream. I think it is public knowledge: the home brand product in Coles is probably made by Norco. It is a great ice-cream made with fresh milk. Because of these free trade agreements, they are now exporting fresh milk into China. The volumes are quite small at the moment. The product is obviously a clean product, and they are getting anything from $7 to $9 a litre, which is a great return for them. We have helped them with protocols so that they could get their export licences. There were a couple of issues with the first shipments, with storage and making sure the product got onto the shelves quickly enough. They have been ironing out those issues. They have good management, as does Northern Co-operative Meat Company, which I mentioned earlier. Because of the work this government has been doing, the two biggest private employers in my electorate are very happy.

There are others, like the macadamia nut industry. Do you like macadamia nuts, Mr Deputy Speaker? Most people do. My area is the home of macadamia nuts. Tariffs on macadamia nuts have been lowered as well. You might say, 'That is all fine and good, but you are just talking about agriculture—is there anything else?' Well, there is. You may have heard of Kimberley Kampers, based in Ballina, who make very high-value, high-end campervans. Because of the free trade agreement that we have signed with China and other countries, their campervans are now more competitive and they have started exporting them to many
countries around the world. In fact they made their first sale the other day in the Middle East, in the United Arab Emirates. I saw the van before it went and it was very impressive—a bit more high quality than my Jayco that I take to the beach every year!

There is more. When I walk around my community, people are thankful for much of the work this government has been doing. Infrastructure projects have been creating real jobs—direct jobs and indirect jobs—in the community. The private employers in my community are happy because of the growing number of customers they are exporting to. Many people are coming up to me—I am sure you are hearing the same thing, Deputy Speaker—and saying, 'Thank God you have started to repeal the red tape, because red tape is real money and a real cost to our businesses.' Even those in the non-profit sector have been coming up to me and saying that. My local university have said they have noticed that. Some of the aged-care facilities have been saying that, as well as, obviously, small business. Somebody told me that they had a person who had been doing an administrative job but that half of their job has now been freed up. They can now do real things to make real wealth for that company, real money, rather than just filling out forms that really did not need to be filled out in such detail. So the things I have been talking about relate to infrastructure, red tape and free trade.

The other thing is we wanted to create a budget that was sustainable. We often talk about sustainability in many facets. Some people on the other side will often talk about—and with good merit—things in the environmental space, and they always mention the word 'sustainability'. We have to be sustainable—and they are right. We do have to be sustainable in agriculture, in farming and with our environment. But we also have to be sustainable economically—and what we are doing with our budget repair is making sure that is the case. You do not have to turn on the nightly news too often to see many cases of unsustainability, with the most recent being Greece—and there have been others.

It is very easy as a politician when you have money that you can hand out to projects or for infrastructure—and I have given you a few examples. It is wonderful to do that. But it has been proven that many, especially Western governments, have had a tendency to be a bit too giving—a bit too unsustainable. The easy road is to say: 'There you go. There is some money.' It might be very popular in the short term, but if you are not doing it in a balanced, sustainable way, you get unsustainability. Many countries in Europe, and elsewhere in the world, are now having austerity forced upon them by their creditors. The issue is: if you are running a debt or a deficit, you owe money to somebody. We all know, whether it is your own home or whether you run your own business—like I and many people on this side have—if you owe your bankers a lot of money, they then become your boss. As we see right now with many countries around the world who have been running unsustainable programs, their bosses are now their bankers. That is why we are focused on what we have to do so that Australia is always a sovereign nation in control of its own finances.

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (20:24): I rise to speak on Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2014-2015. I want to talk tonight about the budget in the context of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, and what perhaps might be seen as some dishonesty in the budget in dealing with ARENA. I also want to talk more generally about the work that is being done with ARENA and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, and how this government is fortunately being stymied in their attempts to destroy these very important institutions which are driving
forward Australia's efforts in renewable energy and our capacity to participate in this very important 21st century industry.

It is incredible to note just how ARENA has been able to hang in there despite being under the Damoclean sword of the Abbott government. It is very interesting that the budget papers tell us that the government is going to save $1.3 billion over five years from 2017-18 by abolishing the Australian Renewable Energy Agency. However, as we know, they have not been able to convince the wise people in the Senate of the merit of this, so we have the ARENA surviving—and not only surviving. The legislation, the ARENA act, which was enacted as part of an arrangement made with the crossbenches, incorporates ARENA's entitlements for the five-year period that the budget claims it is making savings on. We have a piece of legislation which has enshrined in its text the fact that this agency is entitled and capable of spending over $1.3 billion, and yet the government is claiming in its budget that it is making savings of that sum.

We have had the budget. We then had the failure to be able to execute ARENA—and then we had MYEFO. But it is interesting that in MYEFO there is absolutely no mention of the fact that this $1.3 billion worth of savings has been unable to be delivered because of the legislated protection for ARENA. It calls into question the very basis and credibility of this budget. If such a very obvious saving has not been able to be delivered, because it has been subsequently enshrined in legislation that it will be forthcoming, how is it we can have the budget review process completely ignoring that fact? Yet this is what we have had.

I note in MYEFO there is a table on climate spending. It is acknowledged in the text accompanying the table that there has been an increase in climate spending, but not because of the ARENA. The ARENA expenditure is not mentioned and presumably was not taken into account. Again, the failure of the government to be able to deliver on another one of its destructive promises—that is, the dismantlement of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation—has budget consequences. There has been the acknowledgement that they have had to increase their climate spending because of that. I also want to acknowledge, on a positive note, that there is also an increase in that expenditure over the forward estimates because of the $200 million that was committed to the UN Green Climate Fund.

We know that the Prime Minister was not keen on this particular project and that he tried to stop the Minister for Foreign Affairs from attending the Lima conference. When she insisted that she attend, he sent the trade minister in to ride shotgun to ensure that she did not make any embarrassing statements that would have suggested that Australia was indeed part of the 21st century modern world. It appears that the Minister for Foreign Affairs has been able to extract a modest sum, which has contributed to that fund. We must acknowledge and celebrate when there is something good happening in this space because, by and large, what is happening or what the government is hoping to happen is very, very destructive.

Why anyone would celebrate wanting to destroy the Australian Renewable Energy Agency is beyond me. This agency, chaired by Greg Bourne, a very esteemed Australian, has been doing truly extraordinary work. At the moment it has over 200 projects on the go. Of those, 33 have been completed. The really interesting thing about ARENA is that it is a very flexible organisation. It can fund projects that are at one end pure research, and that probably constitutes a relatively small proportion of its funding, through to providing assistance for early commercialisation—what is generally described as the valley of death—right up to
providing financing for generally smaller projects that are fully fledged and commercially ready to go. ARENA leverages an enormous amount of private sector funding in that process. It requires that all recipients have to be prepared to share the knowledge, so that all of the learnings that come from proceeding with a project which ARENA assists in is then fed back into the universities, the businesses and the industry generally to increase and enhance the intellectual property across the board and enhance the understandings of the commercial realities.

Some fantastic projects are being delivered. One that I have been involved in for a long time—and it is great to see that the first phase of this project has been completed—is the CETO Wave Energy project. This is a $32 million project which has delivered a Western Australian, an Australian and a world first—that is, it is the first wave power plant that is feeding energy into a grid. So on Garden Island we have a plant that is creating energy from wave power and that is being fed into the grid, and it has a power procurement program with the Department of Defence.

I first came across this project in around 2005 in its very early days, and it is fantastic to see it having come from that very early stage—building up from the demonstration level through the various phases of the project—to now, where it is actually out there and producing substantial quantities of power going into the south-west interconnected grid. That was given $13 million worth of assistance from ARENA. I think the price at the moment is coming in at around 25c per kilowatt hour. With the next phase of the project—when they go to the next stage of this technology—they believe they will be able to bring the price down very, very considerably, to a point where it is getting somewhere near commercial parity. But it is not going to happen if we do not provide that assistance.

Providing this early assistance and getting these projects off the ground enables us to keep ahead of the bell curve in terms of invention and development and commercialisation of the creativity. Unless we have agencies like ARENA—smart agencies seriously being able to assess, mentor and guide these projects and get them off the ground—we are going to be left being technology takers and not technology makers and we will lose any competitive advantage that we have been able to build up by being involved in this process early on. That would be a very, very great tragedy. Despite the government's best endeavours to kill off this very excellent organisation, it has managed to stay there battling on and being able to fund these projects.

Another very exciting project is the Supercritical solar project, which provides very temperature combined with high pressure solar functionality. There are other projects that get water up to the 520 degrees Celsius that we see in this supercritical, but the point here is that this is the first project that, at the same time, is able to get the very high pressures coinciding with that. That is a new frontier for power generation. It is really taking solar power into the next generation. To quote the CSIRO's energy director, Alex Wonhas:

It's like breaking the sound barrier; this step change proves solar has the potential to compete with the peak performance capabilities of fossil fuel sources.

I just wish that this stuff was more generally known. We had the member for Page here earlier talking about how renewable energy is nice, but it is never, ever going to be able to do the job of fossil fuels; it is never going to be able to have that calorific value, that power, that you get with fossil fuels. What we see in the work being done through our own agencies, through the
CSIRO, the University of Newcastle and ably assisted by ARENA, is that we are rapidly getting to that point. Why would we not want our society, our community and our industry to be there at the forefront of this new generation of technology? Why would we want to try to dismantle the agency that is kicking such tremendous goals across the whole spectrum of renewable energy projects?

The budget papers show the government claiming that it is going to save $1.3 billion from axing this incredible agency. I am pleased to say that they cannot do that. These provisions, these allocations, have been included in the ARENA Act and the board and the organisation are working to that act. I want to place on record my admiration of Greg Bourne and the agency and the tremendous work that they are doing.

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (20:39): I also would like to talk on Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2014-15 and related bills. In particular, I very much want to focus on my electorate of La Trobe. For those who do not know, La Trobe covers up to the Dandenong Ranges and down to Berwick, Officer, Boronia and the basin. It is a rather large electorate which covers both rural and residential areas. It is great to be a local representative in La Trobe. During the election campaign we made a number of commitments.

I was very pleased to work with the Emerald sporting clubs and in particular Bill and Robyn Kuys. I have known them since 2007. That is when I first made a commitment to fund $500,000 towards the Emerald sporting complex. It was only ever going to be a coalition government which would support this project as the Labor Party would never match this. The great news is that they have their $500,000. The funding has been delivered and now they are in the planning stage. I very much look forward to the opening. At the same time, the South Belgrave Football Club received $250,000 for a pavilion. This is a great asset for the local South Belgrave residents which will be widely used by the community.

The basketball centre at Emerald Primary School, with the Emerald Lakers, received $1 million. That is something I am very proud of. Again, the Labor Party did not match this funding in the last election campaign. It is so important for young people to be involved in sport. I congratulate the principal, Mark Carvar, for his dedication and perseverance in making this project a reality. I have already been at the opening of the lights at the Olinda Reserve. As a former player with the Olinda cricket club and football club, I was very proud to be involved—not that I was a good football player, but it was great to see the lights being used. I acknowledge the great work of Steve Scott from HillTop and all his committee. This facility is used by so many sporting areas in the hills. That is what this is about. It is making sure that we not only fund football but cricket and netball and get them all working together. Again, the focus is on young people.

The Rythdale-Officer netball club received $380,000. Again, that supports young people in sport. It is such a very valuable and important aspect of their lives while they grow up, but it also helps deal with issues such as depression and it builds teamwork. It is basically a great project to be involved with. Then there is the Upwey-Tecoma Community Recreation and Sporting Hub. We committed $500,000 towards that project. On Sunday morning I was out with Andrew Peterson and all the people from the Upwey community. It was a fantastic morning. We must have had 200 or 300 people there. I have a message for the Yarra Ranges Shire Council: we want to make sure that this project goes ahead with the agreed terms, where
the club is looking at having a pavilion and toilets upstairs. We want to make sure that this project and this building last for 30 years, not 30 minutes.

We also had the building of the Toomah Centre in Officer—a very fantastic organisation in Windermere. I congratulate the CEO, Lynette Buoy, and her team. They do so much fantastic work in the local community, helping families in times of crisis. That is something I was very pleased that we announced under the coalition: to provide this funding. It is pretty tough out there on the ground and we want to make sure that we give our families the best services they can possibly receive in the local area.

Also, $500,000 went to the Ash Wednesday memorial at Cockatoo. This is one of the projects for which it looked like the funding would be cut, but I am so pleased that we are able to ensure that they receive that funding. For those who can go back in time to 1983 and the Ash Wednesday bushfires, Cockatoo was savaged in those fires, as were surrounding suburbs. I recall as a student at Ferntree Gully Technical School, at the age of 16 when the fire started that day, a large plume of smoke came from Belgrave South. This is the only memorial of its type in Victoria that recognises the tragedy of the Ash Wednesday bushfires. The Cockatoo kindergarten in particular was an area where so many people stayed during the fires. Those residents are very lucky to have survived. This is a way of not only remembering and honouring those who passed away but also recognising that CFA members put their lives on the line every bushfire season. That is what they do: they go in front of a large fire and tragically nearly every year a CFA member gives their life in protecting others. Again, it is another worthwhile project. Through the capital grants program, we upgraded the Dandenong Ranges Steiner School—a $500,000 commitment. We also built a general learning area and administration block for St Thomas Aquinas Primary School for $1.8 million. We made a contribution to three general learning blocks for Rivercrest Christian College for $600,000.

Minister Hunt has been a great friend to La Trobe and a great ambassador for the environment, and especially the Dandenong Ranges. There has been a wide range of projects, not only addressing weed management but also bushfire fuel reduction. This year we have been lucky in the Dandenong Ranges; to my knowledge there have not been any fires, but the danger is always that the next fire season is just around the corner. The Community Weeds Alliance received $5500. The southern Eastern Dandenong Ranges Protection program, which involves habitat protection and restoration on the significant biolink between Mount Dandenong and Bunyip, also received $5,500. The Community Weeds Alliance of the Southern Ranges Environmental Alliance's Green Tracks program—which involves habitat protection, restoration, vegetation management along the all-important Puffing Billy railway line—received $6000. Again I would like to acknowledge the volunteers at Puffing Billy who do such a tremendous job. If you are coming to Victoria, you must visit Puffing Billy—it is truly a fantastic Australian icon.

The Cardinia Creek Neighbourhood Restoration project by Landcare Australia received $20,000 from the coalition government. We are delivering 30,387 trees over three years through the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater to improve the habitats of the Helmeted Honeyeater and the Leadbeater Possum, which are endangered species. They received $99,000. Funding the eradication of wandering trad in conjunction with the CSIRO's study in biocontrol was an election commitment I made 2007, 2010 and finally a coalition government delivered funding of $450,000 for wandering trad. Back in 2007 Malcolm Turnbull, when he
was environment minister, committed $450,000 to the eradication of wandering trad. For those who do not know, wandering trad is a weed that gets into creeks, sucks up all the water, stops the platypuses and basically clogs up entire creeks. The sad reality was that once Labor came to government, Peter Garrett, as environment minister, scrapped the funding, but now we finally have had that funding delivered. We are also working very closely with scientists at the CSIRO to beat wandering trad—it is doing enormous damage in New Zealand. The only real way to beat it is with a biological control, which is being developed at the moment.

The big one we have is the creating the Dandenong Ranges Environment and Bushfire Fuel Reduction program, worth $2 million. The reason the funding is so significant is that fire is a great danger to all the residents of the ranges. I am very proud we have made that commitment. The Bullen Bullen Bush Tours was granted $150,000 to develop its bush tucker and medicine tours. We are in the process of getting people involved to get the project off the ground. Through the Black Spot program we received $88,000 to paint the median strip island and raise reflective pavement markers on the notorious McNicol Road in Belgrave. All these projects are being delivered by the coalition government.

Through the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, the government has committed to upgrade the Wally Tew Reserve at a value of $69,000. For the Hills Hospitality Trade and Training Centre for Belgrave Heights Christian School—and what a fantastic school it is—we have committed $1.3 million. I always say to Andy Callow, the principal, and his fantastic team: 'Are you embarrassed by how much the government has given schools in La Trobe?' That is what it is all about: we really care about educating our students because they obviously are our future. The hospitality centre is so important because young people learn the skills so that they can walk straight out and get a job in hospitality. Instead of walking into a cafe or a restaurant and being asked about their experience and having to say they have none, they can say: 'Well, I've undertaken a program at Belgrave Heights Christian School in hospitality.' The owner will say, 'Well done. Come through the door.'

Another project I am so proud that the government has funded is the Insight Education Centre for the Blind and Vision Impaired. I must make special mention of Minister Greg Hunt and Senator Mitch Fifield here. This is the only blind and visually impaired school in Victoria. I was talking to some students here earlier today and said, 'Imagine being blind and going to school and not be able to read Braille.' Sadly, most teachers do not have that qualification. When Alan Lachman told me his daughter was blind, he asked how she could fit into a mainstream school. Like everyone else in this place would say, I had to say that it was totally wrong. I was so proud to be involved in the opening of that school and the commitment of funding the government made. That commitment was made on the Thursday night before the last election campaign. Why was that significant? It was one of those rare days when the media was not there. I must congratulate Prime Minister Tony Abbott because this project was ticked off by his office before the election. I am so pleased that that became a reality.

With the Anzac Centenary grants, we have had 12 local projects totalling $126,000 dollars. I am looking forward to next Wednesday, 11 March, when we will have the official opening of the Emerald RSL Anzac Walk by the Governor-General himself. I must congratulate Peter Maloney and all the guys up in the Emerald RSL for the fantastic work they have done. It has been a very good year for the residents of Latrobe with regard to the election commitments
being honoured. Although, the one they are very frustrated with is the East West Link—it needs to be built. It makes no sense to pay up to $1 billion—

Mr Husic interjecting—

Mr WOOD: I hear the Labor Party member supporting that the money be paid in compensation—what a disgrace! He does not even live in Victoria. In the City of Casey, 72,000 residents per day use the road. The crying shame about the Labor Party is that they like throwing money away. You do not mind borrowing $100 million every day for interest to be paid by the Australian taxpayer. We want to see the roads in Victoria keep moving—not like the Labor Party. They do not mind if the residents get stuck in traffic. It is an absolute disgrace. Shame on Labor. We need this road to be built for all residents of Victoria.

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (20:54): In rising to speak this evening on Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2014-15 and related bills, I would like to take the opportunity to add my voice to the conversation about fairness that we, as a country, must have and that must be heard at the highest levels and seep into the consciousness of every man and woman in Australia. Can I say how disappointing and frustrating it is that on Australia's budget situation it is the Labor clamour, the left-leaning media and the tweeting keyboard warriors that are drowning out the real and dire situation that we have here. The fact is that we must make changes if we want to have anything resembling our current standard of living in future years and for future generations. It has been said before, and I will say it again, that in 2007 I was a proud member of the Howard government and we had a very strong and sustainable budget with a $20 billion surplus and $50 billion in the bank. That is something that you guys on the other side would have no concept of what that really means. After six years in a Labor government the deficit has blown-out to $50 billion and gross debt was heading towards $660 billion. Yes, Labor faced the GFC in 2008, but they also had the massive benefit of a resources boom that could not last and it was squandered. They caused this debt with a mining tax that raised a minimal revenue but cost the budget $15 billion in kickbacks to voters. They caused this debt with the pink batts scheme that killed one of the installers, young Mitchell Sweeney, in Far North Queensland, which is up in my area. They caused it through the school halls that cost taxpayers $16 billion. They failed to meet value-for-money requirements. Also, let's not forget the digital set-top boxes for old TVs, which cost hundreds of dollars more than if they had been bought independently. And, of course, the introduction of the NBN blew out from $44.5 million to well over $43 billion, and it is still going northward.

Our problem now is that our taxes are too low and government spending is too high. Taxes are spent on interest payments rather than on the range of services that our communities expect, and there is nothing left for a rainy day when the next global economic shock inevitably occurs. When this happens, the solutions that we will have to undertake will be far worse than those that we are trying to undertake now. As the PM recently said, 'Standing still on reform means going backwards on living standards.' The public backlash against the government's reform attempts over the last nine months has been staggering, leading to our Treasurer and Prime Minister acknowledging that they tried too much too fast, despite the fact
this government has tried to bring in far fewer budget reforms than the first budget of John Howard and Peter Costello, the former government of which I was a member in 1996.

It saddens me that this national conversation that we need to have about reform is being hijacked by the wilfully deceptive alliance of Labor, PUP and the Greens, and with a good dose of biased media coverage on the side. My colleague the member for Higgins, the new Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, made a very good speech last month to the Centre for Independent Studies on the concept of fairness. She acknowledges:

Much of the public conversation since the 2014 budget has been about fairness. That is not surprising given that a fair go is a key part of the Australia psyche. Frustratingly, Labor and the Greens have turned this sophisticated concept into a one-word slogan. In their view, fair means that the budget measures should take more from those with higher incomes than enjoyed prior to the budget and/or give more to those with lower incomes than they enjoyed prior to the budget. As the member for Higgins says:

We need to engage the Australian public in a conversation about the many other dimensions to fairness than the redistributive dimension. That will be critical to prosecuting economic and social policy reform successfully.

Thinking about fairness, let’s look at some figures. ABS data show that households on the lowest income quintile rely on around 55 per cent of their income. At the other end of the scale, households in the highest income quintile receive less than one per cent of their income from government. Looking at the income tax alone in 2011-12—

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (20:59): Order! It being 9 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Calwell Electorate

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (21:00): Today I would like to talk about two major community sporting events that took place in my electorate just recently. The first is the Keilor Gift and the other is the Iraq Unity Cup. This year I had the pleasure of attending the annual Keilor Gift, which took place on 14 February. The gift is recognised as a premier athletic sporting event in the electorate and, indeed, it has grown over the years into one of Melbourne’s top athletic meetings on the professional running circuit, often used by athletes as a lead-up to the major events later in the season. The Keilor Gift is a big drawcard in the local and wider community, and this year we saw some 3,000 people attend, 670 athletes participate in the running heats and 120 wood choppers take part in the wood-chopping contests. There was more than $30,000 in prize money awarded to the champion runners of the day.

The Keilor Gift has a long history that dates back to the 1930s. It began when the Keilor Sports Club, led by councillors Frank Milburn and Norm Woods, approached the Victorian Athletic League in 1932 for registration of an athletic meeting to be held in Keilor in February each year. So it was that on Saturday, 11 February 1933, the first Keilor Gift meeting was held.
This year's Keilor Gift, held on 14 February, was as usual a great success and I would like to congratulate the 2015 Keilor Gift committee for organising the event. There are a number of very dedicated volunteers who work very hard to ensure that the annual Keilor Gift is a success, so on behalf of our community I would like to thank them. I would like to thank: Chairman Hayden Kelly, Secretary Barry Curley and committee members Denis Brown, Anton Mahoney, Malcolm Berg, Garry Stewart, Lee Falke, Brian Bulluss, Phil Davies, Ken Anstey, Paul Glushenko and Blake Meyer.

The Keilor Gift is very much a community effort and, for this reason, I would also like to thank and congratulate the following local organisations for their great work and dedication: the Keilor Football Club, the Keilor Cricket Club, Little Athletics, Keilor Scouts, the local SES, the local police, the Australian Axemen's Association, the Victorian Athletic League, Keilor Primary School, St Augustine's Primary School, the Rotary Club of Keilor, the Keilor Life Activities Club, the Keilor Bowls Club, the Keilor Tennis Club and the Keilor Sports Club. The Keilor Gift is a true family event, and I and the rest of the community look forward to attending an even bigger and better event next year.

I also want to speak about the Iraq Unity Cup. It is an event which is now in its third consecutive year in my electorate. The Iraq Unity Cup is an annual soccer tournament which this year took place over a period of one week, with the final taking place on 22 February. I want to congratulate my very special and dedicated constituents of Walid Hanna, members of the Upfield Soccer Club, as well as the Unity Cup's auspicing body, the Chaldean Federation of Victoria, who so generously host this event each year.

This year's soccer tournament was very successful and, as a result, I am very pleased that it will continue to be an annual fixture on the local Calwell community sporting calendar. I was pleased to have been given the opportunity to conduct the kick-off for the final. It was a great experience for me despite Melbourne putting on a very, very hot day. I was very pleased to welcome constituents of the member for Murray to my electorate, and I want to congratulate her as the team from Shepparton won 2-1 against the Sydney Stars.

Mr Husic: Ah!

Ms VAMVAKINOU: My commiserations to the member for Chifley. Shepparton defeated the Sydney Stars, with sportsmanship and goodwill being the overwhelming message of the day.

Many of the players were newly arrived refugees from Iraq who came here under the refugee humanitarian program. I was particularly thrilled to meet some of the former refugees who came here as unaccompanied minors and who spent some time in the Melbourne immigration transit accommodation centre. It was very pleasing to see that they have gone on to make new lives in Australia and that many of them are highly talented soccer players.

The Iraq Unity Cup is the perfect example of how sport can create a level playing field for all. The Iraq Unity Cup brings together Iraqis of Chaldean, Assyrian Christian, Sunni and Shia Muslim faith and backgrounds. Its purpose is to provide an opportunity for all Iraqis living in Australia to come together in unity, free of the sectarian violence and divisions that have plagued and continue to plague their country of birth.
Ingham Institute

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (21:05): I rise today in support of International Women's Day 2015 and the important work of the Ingham Institute in south-west Sydney. The Ingham Institute is a not-for-profit research organisation located at Liverpool Hospital in south-west Sydney. The institute was established to undertake medical research that specifically addresses and can be applied to the needs of the local population and wider Australia. As a charitable organisation, the Ingham Institute relies on donations and sponsorship to continue its important life-saving work. It has been fortunate enough to receive the long-running support of some great Australians, including founding benefactor Bob Ingham AO, a visionary man, and major supporter Lady Fairfax AC OBE.

It operates as a unique partnership between the South Western Local Health District, the University of New South Wales and the University of Western Sydney, with its research team exploring new medical approaches to a range of critical diseases, including cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, infectious and inflammatory diseases, community and population health, childhood health, injury and rehabilitation, and mental health. The Ingham Institute is now home to more than 35 research groups and more than 200 of Australia's leading researchers and senior clinicians who are at the forefront of some of the most advanced medical breakthroughs and clinical outcomes relating to key disease areas affecting Australians.

Officially opened in October 2012, the Ingham Institute's research precinct in Sydney's south-west comprises a state-of-the-art research building and the Ingham Institute Clinical Skills and Simulation Centre, which is a high-tech training centre run by the University of New South Wales providing hands-on training to clinicians, nurses, allied health professionals and students. Another component of the precinct is the institute's research bunker, containing the MRI linear accelerator, a highly advanced cancer therapy technology that will improve radiotherapy treatment for Australia's cancer patients. The MRI linear accelerator is one of only three in the world, and an Australian first. The new technology will be installed and operational by the end of this year, and is set to improve the precision and accuracy of radiotherapy in this country.

The Ingham Institute is also home to NSW's first ever circulating tumour cells facility, which is a specialised cancer scanning technology that measures single cancer cells in the blood of the cancer patient. Welcoming the new technology in May 2013, CTC measures single cancer cells so that researchers can isolate and study their genetic make-up. These findings then provide clues to various questions researchers have including why some cancers spread and others do not.

This Friday, I will be attending the Ingham Institute's luncheon celebrating International Women's Day, along with leading researchers and special guests at the Camden lakeside golf and country club, in my electorate of Macarthur. The Ingham Institute's inaugural International Women's Day luncheon was held last year at Harrington Grove Country Club, that is also located in Macarthur, and centred on women's cancer research programs whilst honouring top female research scientists. The luncheon was attended by more than 200 community supporters and was headlined by Channel 9's Today Show co-host and Ingham Institute Ambassador Lisa Wilkinson, as master of ceremonies, raising nearly $45,000. It is hoped that this year's event will be even bigger, with TV personality Denise 'Ding Dong'
Drysdale acting as a special guest and MC, along with Monique Wright, co-host on Channel 7's Weekend Sunrise and The Daily Edition.

This year's Ingham International Women's Day luncheon will once again be supporting an important cause: women in science. International Women's Day is a global day, celebrating the economic, political and social achievements of women. It is also a day to reflect on how far women have come in their struggle for equality, peace and development, and to celebrate the courage and determination of women who have changed history.

I would like to thank the Ingham Institute for their significant contribution to the International Women's Day cause. I would also like to congratulate committee members Adriana Care, Sophia Cooley, Natalie Herd, Lyn Ingham, Lisa Luff, Emma Macfarlane, Tracey Roberts, Leanne McNamara and Irene Vitocco, for organising yet another wonderful event this year, and celebrating International Women's Day 2015. I look forward to joining the Macarthur community in supporting this cause.

**Cycling**

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (21:09): Last Friday, Melbourne received some devastating news. Alberto Paulon, a young man who was engaged to be married and was starting a new life in Australia, was killed when an opening car door knocked him off his bike and into the path of a truck. Alberto was on his way to work. This happened on Sydney Road in Brunswick, an area that until recently was in my electorate. Sydney Road is a narrow road and a major commuting route, where a large and growing number of cyclists ride between parked cars and heavy traffic. I extend my deepest sympathy and condolences to Mr Paulon's family and loved ones.

It is now time that we have a serious conversation in Melbourne, and in Australia, about doing what it takes to make cycling safe. Car dooring is probably the biggest threat to cyclists in my electorate. Along with St Kilda Road, Collins Street is one of the state's worst dooring black spots. There are over 100 recorded dooring incidents a year in inner Melbourne, but with unreported hits or near misses this is clearly just the tip of the iceberg.

Many drivers may not be aware of the danger posed by car doors. I say now to drivers that we have a responsibility to understand this danger and to take action. Just as we would look while we are reversing because there might be a child behind us, we must look in the mirror when opening a door because it might save a life. There is a simple step that could be taken that would help save lives. One step that all drivers can take is get into the habit of opening their car door with their left hand when they get out. It makes you turn your head, look into the mirror and then potentially see any cyclists approaching behind you. Also, often cyclists will move out onto the road to avoid the so-called door zone. This is done for safety. When passing a cyclist, I encourage drivers to understand that this extra space is needed and to adjust accordingly.

Just as road users must take responsibility so must governments. I joined Victorian Greens leader Greg Barber and Greens state member for Melbourne Ellen Sandell in calling on the Victorian government to fund a TAC style public awareness campaign on the dangers of dooring. There are huge benefits to cycling. It eases congestion and keeps our city moving. It is good for the environment and it is good for health, and it is a great way to get around quickly and cheaply. There is genuine pleasure and freedom in starting the day with the wind...
bracing you as you ride through the city. We need more people on bikes if Melbourne is to have a sustainable and liveable future.

There has been a massive increase in the number of Melburnians who have gotten on their bikes in recent years as a reflection of all of these benefits. Currently, more than 16 per cent of all vehicles travelling into the central city during the morning peak hour are bikes, exceeding all official predictions from a few years ago. There would be many, many more people who would love to join them if they felt the right infrastructure was in place to keep them safe. So, here, in Australia's parliament I call on governments to invest in a safe and integrated bike lane network that goes where people need to go. When will we finally separate cars from riders and have dedicated, safe and prioritised bike lanes? There has been great work done by local councils in my electorate of Melbourne to push for safe and effective bike routes, with Greens councillors leading the way.

The City of Melbourne has been a pioneer in Australia with separated Copenhagen bike lanes on Swanston Street and La Trobe Street. Copenhagen bike lanes simply mean putting the bikes between the parked cars and the footpath rather than making the bikes have to go between the parked cars and the traffic. Council has now budgeted for Copenhagen lanes on other major bike routes—Flemington Road, Royal Parade and St Kilda Road. The council is waiting for VicRoads to approve their design. Premier Daniel Andrews and the state government must work with the City of Melbourne to get these lanes built.

The City of Yarra has also been a leader in creating safe and prioritised lanes. Thanks to the activism of community groups and Greens councillors, they will now build fully separated, Copenhagen style lanes on Wellington Street in Collingwood—a major commuting route. Still, the state government needs to fix the gaps in the off-road, shared path network in Yarra, including by finally fixing the stairs at Gipps Street on the main Yarra Trail, which governments of both Liberal and Labor persuasions have failed to address, despite bicycle user groups crying out for over a decade.

Governments, including the federal government, have a responsibility to build good, safe cycling infrastructure. If we make cycling safe and accessible, more and more people will get on their bikes and we will have that critical mass to build the cycling infrastructure we need to create a liveable Melbourne.

Dobell Electorate: Centenary of Anzac

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (21:14): This year marks the Centenary of Anzac—100 years since that fateful landing at Gaba Tepe, now known to us as Anzac Cove, which forever altered our national identity and place in the world. On 25 April, across Australia we will pause and remember the service and sacrifice of those who have proudly served our nation, those who gave their tomorrow for our today. The Anzac Centenary will be one of the most significant commemorations to take place in our lifetime. Anzac Day goes beyond the anniversary of the landing at Gaba Tepe in 1915. It encapsulates and embodies the human qualities of courage, mateship and sacrifice, qualities valiantly displayed by Australians over the years in times of war and conflict and in peacekeeping operations.

Since my election, I have had the great pleasure of working with local RSL sub-branches, historical societies, surf clubs and local councils to ensure the Dobell community is well represented in and benefits from the array of commemorative activities. The Dobell
Centenary of Anzac committee considered many exceptional proposals that captured both the significance of the centenary and the importance of community involvement in the commemoration.

The Wyong Family History Group has designed pull-up banners that celebrate the values of courage, mateship and sacrifice, and honour local young men who fought in World War I. Mr John Selwood from the Wyong Family History Group said that the banners will be 'an account of our local community's war service and sacrifice that will be displayed throughout the local area at various venues. The banners will provide an opportunity for people to learn about and reflect upon Wyong's contribution to the Great War. I recently visited the Wyong Family History Group to congratulate them on their efforts and I was most impressed by the degree of detail contained in the banners.

The Centenary of Anzac affords us the opportunity to impart the significance of the ANZAC legend to future generations of Australians. The Toukley and The Entrance-Long Jetty RSL sub-branches have developed projects that will ensure that the legacy and significance of the ANZAC legend will be passed on to younger Australians. It is imperative that our children understand the service and sacrifice that forged our nation's destiny on the world stage.

The Toukley RSL Sub Branch will install commemorative stones and bronze plaques at each of the 10 schools within their area, a lasting memorial and recognition of the ANZAC legend. The president of the sub-branch, Mr Bob Wilson, said: 'Our sub-branch wanted to share the legacy of the ANZAC in our local schools and ensure that their sacrifice has an everlasting place in our local community.'

The Entrance-Long Jetty RSL Sub Branch will supply specially designed medallions to primary school students within their area as a lasting reminder of the special occasion. Sub-branch president Mr Alan Fletcher OAM has been working closely with local schools to ensure that their students are part of the commemoration. I recently attended the official opening of the Anzac Centenary display at The Entrance-Long Jetty RSL Sub Branch museum. It is anticipated that thousands of students and members of the public will visit this display in the coming months, in the lead-up to Anzac Day. I want to acknowledge and thank the volunteers who run and maintain this museum for their dedication and effort.

In addition to local services and the aforementioned projects, Dobell residents also plan to commemorate the centenary abroad. Members of the Soldiers Beach Surf Life Saving Club are marking Anzac Day by participating in a commemorative event on the Gallipoli Peninsula, with support from the Toukley sub-branch and the Doyalson-Wyee RSL Club. The event is a commemorative row by Australian and New Zealand surf-lifesaving clubs, retracing the path of the original British flotilla which was the precursor to the Gallipoli landings. The row proceeds through the Dardanelles, around the Gallipoli Peninsula, and finishes south of Anzac Cove on the eve of the 100th anniversary of that fateful landing. The boat used by the Soldiers Beach Surf Life Saving Club will be donated to the Turkish surf-lifesaving movement on the Gallipoli Peninsula as a gift from the Soldiers Beach community. It should also be acknowledged that the Central Coast rowers are direct descendants of people who have served in numerous Australian campaigns. The row is a mark of respect to their relatives' contribution to our nation.
I am extremely proud to be working with a community that is so passionate about and dedicated to ensuring the Centenary of Anzac is commemorated by all. I would like to personally thank the members of the Dobell Anzac Centenary committee for their time and assistance in ensuring that our local community benefits from the best possible projects to mark the Centenary of Anzac. I also want to thank the many members of local organisations who have volunteered their time to develop these projects on behalf of the broader community. This will be a hugely significant moment for all Australians and a time that we will reflect upon for many years to come.

Throsby Electorate: New South Wales State Election

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (21:19): When you live in a region for most of your life, you get a sense of what makes it tick and what is on people's minds. As I look south from the region that I represent, I am increasingly in despair at the poor level of representation of the people of the South Coast of New South Wales in particular. They feel let down by their state and federal representation. They have been misled, they have been taken for granted and they have been cheated out of decent services. Now they are being told that, if they want decent services, they are going to have to sell their electricity network. It does not stop there but goes on to health, education and taxation. In fact, it is impossible to find an area of public policy where the people of New South Wales, including those of the South Coast of New South Wales, have not been let down by their Liberal representatives.

In the seat of Eden-Monaro, we have a case in point. The member for Eden-Monaro went to the last election promising to deliver better health and education services to people on the front line, and I have here a copy of Mr Peter Hendy's pre-election campaign material. He supported $100,000 university degrees and the Americanisation of our university system. He said in this chamber:

… I strongly endorse the reforms of the Minister for Education. They are far-sighted …

That is a speech that he would not have mailed out to his electorate, Deputy Speaker, I can guarantee you. He also supported the GP tax, the very tax that was going to deliver $4.7 million in increased medical costs to the constituents of his electorate. It is a long way from the glossy pamphlet that I have here that promised his electorate better health and better education services if he was elected. I put it to you, Deputy Speaker, and I put it to the people of Eden-Monaro that they have been let down by their federal member. It is a long way from the tax cuts when you look at the fact that he voted for the increases in the petrol tax.

I move to state representation. There we look at the current Speaker of the Parliament of New South Wales, Ms Shelley Hancock. Much of Eden-Monaro is covered by the New South Wales seat of South Coast, which is represented by this member. The member for Eden-Monaro should be watching closely what happens with the seat of South Coast in four Saturdays time, because the member, Shelley Hancock, infamously signed a TAFE pledge. She pledged to 'increase permanent teaching positions' and to 'ensure that everyone in New South Wales has affordable access to a TAFE education'. But what did she and the Baird government do? They slashed over $800 million from TAFE and the jobs of TAFE teachers in that state. So it is little wonder that one former TAFE teacher, Ms Fiona Phillips, who is doing an outstanding job of taking the fight up to a Liberal MP in what is thought to be a safe Liberal seat, is absolutely nailing her on all of these broken promises. Fiona has been out on the hustings doing an outstanding job. I say to the people of the South Coast: look very
carefully at what is on offer. If you want a local champion, look to Fiona Phillips, because she will stand up for TAFE, for your local hospitals and for the services in your electorate.

I have also had the benefit of having a close look at the Labor candidate for the seat of Kiama. In Glenn Kolomeitz you have a man who has served his country and who now wants to serve his community. This man has had an illustrious career in the Australian Defence Force, in our Army. He has served as a police officer. He has an apprenticeship and has served an electrician. He now works, mostly on a pro bono basis, defending the rights of veterans, and there are many veterans in the seat of Kiama and on the Far South Coast, to ensure that they get their rights and entitlements before the veterans appeal tribunal. This is a bloke who has fought for his country and who now wants to fight for his community. I say to the people of Kiama: have a look at the credentials of Glenn Kolomeitz. This is a guy who is willing to put his life on the line for the country and he will do what it takes to get a better deal for the people of Kiama, and it will not be electricity privatisation, closing down the TAFE system or massive cuts to income assistance. (Time expired)

Tasmania

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass—Government Whip) (21:24): About a year ago I stood in the House and spoke of the dire situation in my home state of Tasmania after 16 years of Labor government. A year later, I stand here much more optimistic about the future, and can report to the House that there have been some welcome improvements.

In Tasmania, the Hodgman Liberal government in Hobart, working with the Abbott government in Canberra, is finally making inroads into the key problems holding Tasmania back. As Premier Will Hodgman says, Tasmania is open for business, our economy is growing and the eyes of the world are upon us. Lonely Planet ranks us as one of the most desirable places in the world to visit, and our clean, green, fresh produce is in increasing demand around the world. Last year, the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, and Madam Peng visited Tasmania, and we are working hard to leverage the benefits of the three free trade deals negotiated in 2014 with China, Japan and South Korea by the Minister for Trade and Investment.

A new Department of State Growth has been established by the Hodgman government, and a new Coordinator-General is promoting economic growth and working to secure new investment. The Coordinator-General is located in my home city of Launceston, alongside the federally funded Major Projects Approval Agency, which is currently talking to project proponents with around $700 million of investment in mind.

We are working closely with the Tasmanian state government to invest in critical infrastructure, including major irrigation projects, to transform agriculture. One of these irrigation schemes, in Scottsdale, in my electorate of Bass, will be a strategic enabler of north-east Tasmania's future prosperity. These irrigation schemes will help us grow more and sell more to the rapidly growing middle classes, from India to Asia. By some estimates, that middle class grouping will grow from 500 million people to 1.7 billion people in the next decade. I congratulate the Tasmanian Liberals on their vision to grow the farm gate value of agricultural industries to $10 billion a year by 2050.

The irrigation schemes I mentioned, which the Prime Minister announced in Northern Tasmania just a few weeks ago, are a partnership of $60 million in federal funding and $30
million from the state government coupled with around $27 million from the private sector. They are a genuine partnership with our farmers. This investment will secure 95 per cent water certainty, helping unlock huge agricultural opportunities and the conversion of marginal farmland into something much more productive. We are putting the Labor-Greens dam phobia behind us, to transform our landscape, enhance our agricultural capacity, stimulate on-farm investment and, most importantly, create more local jobs. There are also major infrastructure programs underway. Six major traffic upgrades have commenced on the Midland Highway, founded on the $400 million in federal funds committed to this project.

Since the Tasmanian state election, nearly 7,000 jobs have been created, and employment levels are the highest since December 2008. So I have a much better story to tell about unemployment than was the case a year ago. Tasmania's unemployment rate has fallen to 6.6 per cent from 7.4 per cent this time a year ago. We are finally off the bottom of the national unemployment tables, with unemployment now at a 28-month low. Labour force participation is the highest in three years, meaning that more people are returning to the workforce, with hope about the future. Gross state product is increasing, construction and building activity is booming and retail trade has just had its strongest year.

I congratulate the state Liberal government for driving these improvements in such a short period of time. It has abolished headworks charges, which has doubled development and building assessments in the first six months of operation. The local benefits test championed by my state colleague Adam Brooks has seen over 200 contracts awarded to Tasmanian businesses in the first eight months of operation, almost double what it was in the eight months prior. There is a spring in our step when it comes to the economy, with businesses reporting growth in business confidence that is the highest in the nation. Will Hodgman and his team are doing what they promised in fixing the budget mess left by Labor.

I am proud that with my colleagues Eric Hutchinson and Brett Whiteley, supported by our hardworking Senate team of Eric Abetz, Stephen Parry, David Bushby and Richard Colbeck, we are focused on reinvigorating Tasmania's economy.

**House adjourned at 21:30**

**NOTICES**

The following notices were given:

**Mr McCormack**: to move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: AIR7000 Phase 2B Maritime Patrol Aircraft Replacement.

**Mr McCormack**: to move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: AIR9000 Phase 7 Helicopter Aircrew Training System Facilities.
Mr McCormack: to move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: Multi-User Barge Ramp Facility at East Arm, Darwin, Northern Territory.

Mr Zappia: to move:

That this House:

(1) congratulates the Australian researchers at Monash University and Amaero Engineering Pty Ltd who created the world's first 3D printed jet engine;

(2) recognises that:

(a) Australia has a history of punching above its weight when it comes to research and development; and

(b) huge opportunities are available to create new advanced manufacturing jobs and industries with the right government support for our science, research and manufacturing sectors; and

(3) condemns the Government's shortsighted approach to science, research and industry policy, where it has:

(a) cut $878 million from science and research, including $115 million from the CSIRO;

(b) recklessly undermined the Australian auto manufacturing sector, risking the loss of millions of dollars annually of investment in research and development;

(c) failed to support the shipbuilding industry by refusing to guarantee that the 12 future submarines will be built in Australia which would lead to millions of dollars of investment in research and innovation; and

(d) introduced enormous uncertainty for innovative businesses conducting Australian research and development, with retrograde changes to the Research & Development Tax Incentive that sees the removal of the benefit for expenditure over $100 million and a reduction in the rate of the offset by 1.5 percentage points for all firms across the board.

Ms Marino: to move:

That this House acknowledges that:

(1) small and medium businesses are the engine room of the Australian economy and employment;

(2) all Australians, including small business people, should have access to fast, affordable and reliable broadband;

(3) regional small businesses often encounter greater difficulty accessing broadband and often receive a lower standard of broadband service; and

(4) the Government has a plan to prioritise getting areas of most need connected to fast reliable broadband sooner, especially in regional areas.