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SITTING DAYS—2013

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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

Governor-General
Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC, CVO

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP, Mr Craig Kelly MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mr Brett David Whitely MP

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

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

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

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

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives
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<td>Denison, TAS</td>
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<td>Williams, Mr Matthew</td>
<td>Hindmarsh, SA</td>
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<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
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<td>Wyatt, Mr Kenneth George AM</td>
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<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
<td>ALP</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—B Wright  
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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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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<tr>
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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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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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CHAMBER
Thursday, 14 November 2013

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

**GOVERNOR-GENERAL’S SPEECH**

**Address-in-Reply**

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the following Address in Reply to the speech of Her Excellency the Governor-General be agreed to:

May it please Your Excellency:

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

The SPEAKER: Before I give the call to the honourable member for New England, I remind the House that this is his maiden speech in this chamber and we welcome him to it from another place.

Mr Joyce (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (09:01): My first memory of New England was the laminated bench that acted as the dinner table in the kitchen at Danglemah. It was put in by my father and rested on two pieces of pipe drilled into the wall. My highchair sat against the wall, between my father on the black wooden chair and my mother on the white one, then in ascending order Patrick, Anna, Christopher and Michael, who at that point in time looked like an Egyptian mummy being covered in bandages after a severe fall from his Malvern star bike whilst attending CBC in Tamworth. My younger brother Timothy was born later.

As a young infant, I longed for the affirmation that was attained by going to work with dad and the boys: dad on the big grey gelding, Chris on the chestnut mare, Pat on the bay pony, whilst Mike was away at high school. Mum was in the house making cakes, looking after the house and looking after the finances, and Anna was helping and in her spare time playing with her dolls, as young girls do.

Sunday was a reluctant but compulsory hour journey to church—in, at times, clip-on bow ties, which were very becoming—and then waiting in the car for about another hour after mass as my parents used the opportunity to catch up with the Kings and the McCormicks. It was the seventies but it felt like the fifties.

My family ran sheep and some cattle. It was mustering, drafting, dipping, shearing, fencing and sowing winter crops. This was not a job; it was a way of life. We initially had labour of one form or another to help: Gordon Macdonald, Cecil Casey, Bruce Salmon and Stan Blanch to name but a few. Later, with labour costs, it whittled down to just mum, dad and the boys. Life was simple but happy. The work was hard at times because the hills meant a vast proportion was physical labour: fencing with a crow bar and a shovel to dig post holes on the stony ridges; splitting stringy bark posts with wedges; catching and lifting lambs at lamb marking time and pulling them through the window for dad to mark; and dealing with the riddle of the sphinx, which was mechanics with second-hand tools.
I grew up in New England and my great grandmother was born in the same hospital as I was but only 100 years prior. New England is at the root of Australia's Federation. The state seat that included Tenterfield was held by Sir Henry Parkes and played a vital part in the unification of our continent under one single flag. If you want to understand Australian politics then Tenterfield is the place to go. It was the home of New South Wales's first Premier, Stuart Donaldson, as well as the third Premier of Queensland, Robert Mackenzie. It was also the home of JF Thomas, who defended Breaker Morant, resolving from that point forward that no Australian soldier would be tried by a British military court.

There is a strong nexus between New South Wales and Queensland in New England and I am proud to carry that forward. Dr Earl Page and John Hynes started the NSW Country Party in 1918 in New England, a party that is still proudly bringing the views of the country to the decision-makers' table and representing them in politics. The story of politics should have a chapter on New England, having produced the likes of David Drummond, who served in the NSW parliament for a period of time before being elected as the Country Party member for New England from 1949 to 1963. He was instrumental in the foundation of the University of New England, the first regional university in Australia, and bringing tertiary education to people in regional areas as a form of advancement.

Add to him, Ian Sinclair, former speaker of the House, who served New England and the nation in a 35-year career that saw him lead the party he renamed the National Party from 1984 to 1987 and retire from politics in 1998; then Stuart St Claire, who I believe may be here today who delivered the Black Mountain upgrade of the New England highway; and of course the Member for New England that I follow, Tony Windsor, who, no matter what else you might say about his choices in supporting the minority government, showed great determination to deliver for his electorate. I intend to build on these people and not detract. I intend to add to what they have delivered to the electorate and not deride what they have done.

New England has a long and proud agricultural tradition, producing just about everything that helped build Australia: cattle, sheep, grain, forestry and dairy as well as other products such as tin, coal, gold and gas. It runs from the rainforest near Urbenville to the western downs at Yetman. It runs from Jennings, where the railway line terminated to change gauges for Queensland, to Willow Tree in the south and includes the Breeza Plains, some of the best agricultural land in Australia. At its geographic centre is the university city of Armidale and in the south is the vibrant and growing economic hub of Tamworth. And I would like to welcome the deputy mayor of Tamworth, Mr Russell Webb, who is here today.

But its cultural heart is the land and it is a good life that is led on the land; it is honest. Your endeavours feed and clothe people and it is based around the family. Growing up on the soil gives a strong attachment to the country and it is integral to what the nation is. Those who may be dismissive of this statement as prosaic could possibly not have had the seminal experience of a life lived outside.

Cicero—and Mrs Primrose will tell me that it is pronounced 'Kikero'!—said, about 100 years before Christ: 

... of all the occupations by which gain is secured, none is better than agriculture, none more profitable, none more delightful, none more becoming to a free man.
Our farm supported our family, and the war memorials in every nearby town to me said that our district supported our nation. At Woolbrook Public School good people in three generations turned up to see the Christmas school play—which will be on again soon. Some of those families had been in the district for over a hundred years. Some of those families had been in the district for over 10,000 years. So my agricultural belief was based on a real economic experience.

My social belief, like most individuals’ social belief, was immensely affected by that same life experience. It was premised on the notion that people who work hard and live decent lives, producing a good that has real worth, should be fairly paid and fairly dealt with. A nation that does not defend these people has lost its more noble instincts. In China this week the ruling Communist Party announced greater property rights for farmers. So this belief is ubiquitous and current. The farming community has always had to live with the belief that we make sacrifices because things will get better, but the better never seems to happen.

Now our debt between government and private sectors is massive. Many major businesses in mining and agriculture are now foreign owned and gone. The family farm of the 1970s is generally unviable, and the deft hand of an external conscience has crystallised so that farm management practices have to conform to a view whose religion is a quasi-alternative environmentalism—of forms, of paperwork and of trees having attained an anthropomorphic character. We have evolved to the ridiculous extent where animal rights are interchangeable with human rights.

My initial introduction to the agriculture portfolio handed over by the previous Labor government replicated the industry. It has been usurped to a point where, in many instances, it is the mere ambassador for agriculture. Water and vegetation are with state and federal environment departments. Sale of many agricultural products and land is with Trade and Treasury. Even determination of the use of agricultural products is held by independent authorities within the agricultural portfolio, with no say by the minister. I commend the Prime Minister for his decision to put forward a white paper to investigate the ways our nation can better deliver an agricultural outcome. If we are solely reliant on mines, we will live in a boom-bust cycle. If our future is only in services then we must contend with lower wages—one click away on the internet—as anything that can be done on the computer can be done somewhere else by someone else at a cheaper rate. We need a strong, vibrant agricultural sector for the future of this nation.

The preparation for politics was at that same laminated bench in the kitchen and then extended, in a more formal setting, to Sunday lunch at the dining room table. Everything that was happening to us in our lives seemed to have a connection to politics. If the wharves were on strike and could not move the wool, that was a form of politics. If the road had not been graded, that was politics. If a chemical to treat flystrike in sheep was taken from the market, that was politics. If you were shut out of a market overseas, that too was politics. If interest rates went through the roof, that was economic policy linked to politics. If your vegetation rights had been taken from you, that was politics. If you had also taken from you the hydrocarbonaceous minerals that were assigned initially to the title and they had been transferred to the state, that was politics. And, if you cannot build Chaffey Dam because of the Booroolong frog and you cannot fix the road to Weabonga because of the same Booroolong frog 30 kilometres away, that is beyond politics—it is verging on barking mad.
So it was not such a quantum leap to go from a child growing up in Danglemah to wanting
to go into politics. When I attended Woolbrook Public School in the late 1970s, they asked
me what it was I wanted to do, and a fellow student, Nita Scott, who approached me at Wagga
airport the other day, stated that I said, 'I wouldn't mind being the Prime Minister.' For this I
ask some latitude for naivety. For what a 10-year-old was actually suggesting was a resolve to
be part of a solution, not merely the venter of problems. But by year 12, when asked the same
question for the year book—what did I want to do with my life?—I had tempered my
ambitions and reported I wanted to be a 'grazier and politician'.

The clarity to these views was attended to when, Odysseus-like, I took part in a journey
that took me and my family away from my home and now, 20 years later, has taken us back
again. This journey brought into focus the dry arts of commerce as I trained as an accountant,
ultimately owning and running my own accountancy practice. As part of this process, for five
years I worked in the banking sector with the Queensland Industry Development Corporation.
I worked with colleagues, such as Fergus Bell and Brett Prosser, at a grassroots level, as the
organisation moved toward a merger to become known as SunCorp Metway. Concerns that
were initially drilled into me by my family about debt were emphasised in the assessment of
people's capacity to repay debt on their credit paper. Overall debt is very easy to get and
extremely hard to pay back. As an accountant starting with Phil Maltby, who I think is in the
audience here today, I saw this from both sides in both assisting a client and assessing a
client.

I am deeply concerned to see the financial predicament that this country has been left in
because of where we are and the trajectory of where we are off to, and this trajectory could
have been anticipated, and I stated this anticipation back in 2009. To be a strong nation we
must be financially in control. To be a moral nation it requires selflessness in what we do
now, otherwise the circumstances we will leave for our children will be vastly diminished to
that which was handed to us. We must develop our capacity to get more which is of worth to a
venue that is willing to pay for it on terms and conditions that are to our greatest advantage
and has us, as a nation, negotiating that advantage from a position of strength. We must get a
better return back to the farm gate, and fighting to keep families on their own land must be the
core of agricultural policy. We must acknowledge the lesson that history repeats itself and the
human condition that underpins these motivations is consistent. No-one will tend the field of
our future in the way the persons who will reap from it will. No other nation will look after
us; in fact they will play to our weaknesses.

Rome was not interested in Egypt for the pyramids or Cleopatra or much that lay in the
deserts beyond the Nile. It was interested in wheat to feed Rome. For hundreds of years Egypt
was a major exporter of grain, with the government's main source of revenue derived from its
control and trade. Rome was only a minor customer for much of this period, but by 30 BC
Rome had conquered Egypt, in part to deny others access to the grain. Initially, more than
150,000 tons of Egyptian grain, which accounted for one-third of Rome's consumption totals,
travelled this route. Ultimately, Rome imported up to two-thirds of its grain from Egypt.
During the imperial era, the Roman navy patrolled the seas, not to conquer new enemies but
to protect the merchant fleet from pirates. Romans understood that political stability came
from a public that was fed. And, on a future stage, the British borrowed from this lesson, and
China is living it in a vastly more sanitised and politically correct form today.
The basic rule remains the same: look after your own. My family history is a case in point. My forebear, Mary Troy, who came to this great country in 1847 and whose name is etched in a monument at Macquarie Barracks in Sydney, had parents who starved to death—found dead in a hedge. Mary could read and write when she arrived, so it was not ignorance that brought about her predicament. There is indisputable evidence that huge quantities of food were exported from Ireland to England when people of Ireland were dying of starvation. Almost 4,000 vessels carried food from Ireland to the ports of Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool and London during 1847. At the same time, 400,000 Irish men, women and children died of starvation and related diseases. According to the book *Ireland Before and After the Famine*, although the potato crop failed, the country was still producing and exporting more than enough grain crops to feed the population. But that was a money crop, not a food crop, and could not be interfered with. This is the deadly hand of bureaucracy as defined by politics beyond your domestic control, and the reality of where power truly lies, especially when it comes to food.

Now, in the perfect world, there will be the free movement of goods across borders, and deficiencies will be supplied by excesses from other areas, seamlessly, and with requisite funds always apparent to conclude these transactions. And we will know when this day has arrived because all the armies will be gone and all the borders will be removed. The protagonist, who is currently excitedly typing this up from a room somewhere on the fourth estate, will say that this speech implies that Australia is heading to the Irish famine scenario. Far from it. Responsible foreign investment is essential. I do not oppose that, and I never have. I understand enough about this space to know that one must note the advice of Kipling when he said that you must be able to hear the truth you have spoken 'twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools'. Further to this, I am, on policy, guided by my university motto from Tacitus, which states: *ex sapientia modus*—from wisdom comes moderation. And that means that absolutes and both extremes are perilous. But we must not leave tasks for our children that we cannot bear for ourselves.

Now comes a confluence of a life on the land, training in accountancy, supporting a family, and experience in politics. This experience in politics has been blessed by two chapters, one that has returned me today to the place where I grew up and one that gave me a great honour as a foreigner to represent the state of Queensland as a senator. My colleagues gave me the honour to lead my party in the Senate, to be part of so many tasks that had such a great effect on our nation. And one of the greatest ones—and I see Senator Boswell here today—was when a minor party from the opposition benches moved to blocked the ETS and was successful. If this chamber can indulge me one form of boasting, it is that I have lived the experience of winning back a Senate seat from apparently a hopeless position, when it was said that the Greens would win it or my Liberal Party colleagues would win it or the Labor Party would win it or a Democrat would win it, and we could not even see our name mentioned in the dispatches as a possibility. Later, I won a lower house seat, which was held with a massive margin.

But, dispensing from that, what I take from this experience is this: politics in Canberra can get entangled in philosophical zealotry that has little to no connection with a general concern held on the street or in the country. There is a craving for politicians to understand the public's concern about their lives rather than re-announce the politicians' conceits about the politicians'
views. This building, evolved from the agricultural setting it was built in, has little connection to the struggles of small business and does not assist this process. It is great also to see Frank Zumbo here today, who has guided me so well on so many issues regarding small business.

From my observation, two things happen to you in this building: you gain weight, and you lose touch. The passion of the issues from the laminated kitchen bench from where you started become a memory and then an excuse. You get embroiled in the machismo of the debate in the chamber, which may collect the interest of your peers but not the respect of the public. It becomes a perverse form of mud wrestling in a suit—holding steadfastly to beliefs in the chamber that from a distance seem completely to lack logic and up closer bring no greater clarity as to where our nation's best interest lies and at the same time breeds contempt at the pub on a Friday night or on the street corner.

The National Party may collect sneering derision and muffled insults, but it is a vital component of the broader ventilation for those in the community who feel intimidated by the lack of breadth in the political machine. Politics has a highly centralised nature and impedes the capacity to move much beyond a single view—at most, two. Many Australians feel that the core concerns they hold are used only as a mechanism to insult them. This happens without delivering any real reason, and the life experience of the writer or the orator does not give any greater capacity as to why their views are more profound or emanate from a greater realm of wisdom.

However, far from being a dismal pursuit, politics is represented by good people on both sides of the chamber. Whether from a farming organisation, a rotary club or a trade union, there are always people who rise above the slings and arrows of ridicule or their own personal belief and do what is best for their nation. These people are not required to be saints. If you are looking for saints you are looking in the wrong building, because you will have little luck around here. Politicians are not here to save your soul; they are here to look after your country. The most important thing is to always stay in touch with those whose beliefs gave you the chance to represent them: Bill Taylor of Charleville, on a property between Charleville and Morven; Ruth Strang of Gunnedah; Lenore Johnson, who diligently always worked for the party but never asked for office; Rosemary Leitch, the former mayor of Armidale; Archie Cameron of Glen Innes; Peter and Jenny Bailey of Armidale; and the families who patiently deal with this peculiar enterprise—being a politician—that has taken you away from them.

The teachers, I also note, are so seminal in any person's experience. And in my Senate maiden speech I noted James Rogers, who taught me English; Mel Morrow, who showed me how to deliver it with passion; and Father Drake, who showed that brevity is the attribute of a well-remembered message—which I obviously forgot! For Philip Maltby, who trained me as an accountant, and to neighbours on adjoining properties who, when I was a child, delivered kindness and tutelage as I saw you progress through life: this was the experience and the attribute of a good nation.

I loved my time in the Senate, and I am truly humbled by being given this opportunity by my colleagues and my nation for further opportunities. I, with David Feeney and Matt Thistlethwaite, are political hermaphrodites, and we truly do know which chamber is best. I close with this, which is how I opened in my maiden speech in the Senate: I thank my parents, who brought me into this world; my wife, Natalie, and children, Bridgette, Julia, Caroline and
Odette, who support me through this world; and my God who oversees all and who hopefully I will meet in the next. I commend the speech to the House.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (09:22): I would like to acknowledge Mr Stuart St Clair, the former National Party member for New England, who is here to hear his successor but for one for the seat of New England, and also acknowledge distinguished Australian businesswoman Mrs Gina Rinehart, who is in the gallery today.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the following Address in Reply to the speech of Her Excellency the Governor-General be agreed to:

May it please Your Excellency:

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

The SPEAKER: I now call the member for Charlton and remind the House that this is a maiden speech and the courtesies of the House are to be extended to him.

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (09:22): Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an immense privilege to stand here as a member of parliament, a representative of the people of Charlton and a member of the Australian Labor Party. I am a beneficiary of an Australia that has been shaped by Labor governments. My mother and her mother survived on pensions first instituted by the Fisher government. My grandfather served in the Army and his prospects of surviving World War II were boosted by the brave and visionary actions of John Curtin. My father came to this country under the expanded immigration systems developed by the Chifley government. I received an education courtesy of the investments in universities by the Whitlam, Hawke and Keating governments. My brother's construction job was saved due to the Rudd government's decisive actions during the GFC. My daughter will come of age in a nation that has elected a female Prime Minister in Julia Gillard. These experiences are but one reason I am passionately committed to the Labor cause and drive my continuing involvement in politics.

I was raised in a family that emphasised the importance of the labour movement in making Australia great, not in an abstract sense but as a place for people to work and live fulfilling lives. My parents were union delegates throughout their lives and long-time Labor activists. I thank my mother and father for instilling in me the crucial Labor values of social justice, equity and fairness. I could not have grown up with better brothers than Chris and Matthew, and I thank them for their love and friendship. My deepest thanks are reserved for my darling wife, Keara. Meeting Keara was the most fortunate event that has ever occurred in my life. Keara's commitment to social justice and her compassion inspire me daily.

In May this year, Keara gave birth to our beautiful daughter, Rachel. Keara, with help from her mum, Gail, looked after Rachel as I won preselection and then fought the general election.
Keara, I will be forever grateful for the responsibility you carried during this period and for your unswerving support for this endeavour that inevitably places a heavy burden on you. For my daughter, Rachel, I apologise in advance for my absences. It is often remarked in parliament that it is our families that suffer the most. Rachel, I promise that I will be the best father I can be. Your smiles and laughs already enthral me. I commit myself to public service in the hope that I will make this country a better place for my daughter and for her generation.

I thank all the campaign volunteers that helped during the election. There are too many to name individually, but thank you to everyone. It was a remarkable effort given that I was not preselected till six weeks prior to the election. On that note I would sincerely like to thank all the Charlton branch members for placing their trust in me as their candidate. Branches are the heart and soul of the Labor Party, as I am sure everyone on this side would agree with, and I look forward to working with them in the years to come. I thank my campaign team of Yasmin Catley, Adam Schultz, Heather Robinson, Nicholas Mowbray, Melissa Cleary and Deahnna Richardson for their efforts and good spirits. It is often remarked that having an adviser as a candidate is a very dangerous thing, and they certainly experienced that.

I would also like to thank all my friends and family who travelled considerable distances to help. In particular I would like to thank my Young Labor mates Melissa Collins, Jason Kara, Liam Hogan and Joel Conomos who went above and beyond. I am also intensely grateful to the unions who provided support during the campaign and still embody the highest and greatest labour values. I particularly acknowledge the mineworkers, the MUA, United Voice, AWU, AMWU, SDA and the IEU. As a union organiser I travelled to many regional communities and have seen the impact a unionised workforce has on the workplace and the local community. These communities are fairer and more harmonious places because of union activism. I am proud to be a unionist.

I believe that empathy—putting oneself in the shoes of another—is a crucial quality to have. Recognising that the accident of birth gave me a great advantage over other people in our society and in other countries has driven my passion for politics. It leads to questions such as: what would my life be like if I were born to parents less interested in reading or in a nation without a quality public education system? Where would I be if I were born in a country where there was no government assistance to diagnose and treat the comparatively mild childhood disorder I had? Not only would I have not realised my potential; my contribution to society would be reduced.

This approach was deeply influenced by my mother's experiences as a single mother in the late 1960s. She was one of the early campaigners for single mother's pensions and feminism. My mum then became a social worker and eventually an electorate officer. Growing up, I remember watching my mother help many people struggling with poverty, abusive relationships and mental health issues. This shaped my approach to politics and life in general. I firmly believe we have an obligation to improve society and leave the world a better place than we found it.

I am passionate about politics because of the power of governments to improve people's lives. We are not isolated organisms that succeed or fail solely because of our individual efforts or genetic inheritance. We succeed when society is fair, when a child has a chance to fulfill their potential based on hard work and ability, not based on their parents' wealth. That is why I joined the Labor Party and have taken the opportunity to become a parliamentarian.
Labor embodies that reforming progressive spirit of the nation. Labor has never been content to sit idly by, smugly sanguine that an invisible hand will make it better. Labor governments have instituted most of the significant reforms that Commonwealth governments have made. Whether it is the social safety net, modernising our economy, supporting fair working conditions, investing in infrastructure, protecting human rights and the environment or advancing our sovereignty, it is Labor that has done the lion's share.

Labor's reforms are driven by fundamental values that are the golden thread that run through our history—equity; social justice; fairness. These values were expressed in the policy priorities that drove the last Labor government. The Labor Party should be proud of its record in government. The response to the global financial crisis was a great example of Labor values in action. The government's response was timely, temporary and targeted. It ensured that, while most developed nations suffered high unemployment, Australia was saved from the massive economic, social and personal damage that mass unemployment brings. I have witnessed the impact of mass unemployment. It is a cancer that eats away at the soul and it must be confronted wherever it exists.

The National Broadband Network, which is the greatest nation-building initiative since the Snowy Hydro scheme, is a Labor reform through and through. DisabilityCare and the Better Schools Plan will have a deep and meaningful impact on the lives of most Australians. These are all practical manifestations of Labor values and they embody the reforming spirit of the nation. These values must drive our approach to economic policy. If we are to prosper we must have a strong economy—an economy that delivers well-paid, secure jobs for all Australians; an economy that attacks inequality rather than perpetuates it; a mixed economy that has a strong role for government and the community sector, as well as the market. Neoclassical economics is not the solution to all our economic challenges and when blindly applied can cause incredible damage to both societies and economies.

As in the 1930s, the global financial crisis proved that Keynesian economics is the only solution in a time of economic crisis. Nations whose leaders ignored the lessons of the Great Depression and instituted austerity measures are those paying the greatest economic and social cost. Every Australian should have the right to a well-paid, secure job. My family has experienced the debilitating effect that long-term unemployment has on individuals and our loved ones. It destroys self-esteem and rips apart families. I am passionately committed to fighting for more jobs in Australia and it will be the central cause of my political life upon which everything else will rest.

A Keynesian macroeconomic approach must be coupled with policies focused on increasing productivity and innovation. This is the only way Australia can compete in the 21st century and it requires an active and engaged government, not an absent government. Productivity during the Hawke-Keating governments grew very strongly. We also saw strong growth in labour productivity in the last years of the Rudd-Gillard governments. For too long some in the coalition and some of the more simplistic elements within the business community have blamed industrial relations for stagnating productivity. Nothing could be further from the truth. If the new government focuses on reducing workplace rights as the path to productivity they are making the same mistake the Howard government made. This is the low road that leads to stagnant productivity and declining competitiveness. The path to higher productivity is through a cooperative workplace culture, strong capital investment,
solid training, dedicated political and industry leadership and a commitment to innovation. The last two Labor governments were very focused on these five factors and Australia is stronger for it.

I am proud to be closely associated with policies developed to boost innovation, principally through the $1 billion Plan for Australian Jobs. This plan had at its heart a half-a-billion-dollar initiative to promote the growth of industry precincts or clusters. I urge the new government to continue this plan. It is a plan driven by the tripartite manufacturing taskforce and represents the culmination of learning from experiences both in Australia and internationally. If we are to have the industries of the future, government must play an active role.

Another great challenge for the Australian economy is how to compete in a low-carbon global economy. This is a neglected segment of the climate change debate. I firmly believe that those opposed to combating climate change are not only condemning future generations to a deteriorating natural environment but also condemning Australia to become a rust-belt economy. The science of climate change is decided. No other government in the world questions the science; no other Prime Minister calls the science ‘crap’.

We have a responsibility to play our part in combatting climate change, and an emissions trading scheme as legislated by the last government is the best way of doing this. Despite the disgraceful exaggeration of those opposite, the implementation of the carbon price was smooth. The inflationary impact was modest; nine out of 10 households were compensated; 140,000 jobs have been created since the carbon price began; and the stock market has grown by 32 per cent. And guess what—our emissions are at worst flat, if not falling.

Over one billion people now live in countries or provinces where there is a price on carbon; by 2016, there will be around three billion people. Do those opposite really think we can do nothing? Do they not think our trading partners will demand that we take action? Do they really think that the US and China will be fooled by their expensive Direct Action fig leaf? I have sat in negotiations on this issue with our trade partners and it is clear to me that the government is kidding itself if it thinks Australia can get away with doing nothing.

Beyond the danger of trade retaliation, it is in our economic interest to decouple our economic growth from carbon pollution. Other nations such as China and Germany understand the huge opportunities associated with developing the industries that find solutions to climate change. The countries that develop these clean technologies will prosper the most in the 21st century. Every previous industrial revolution has demonstrated that. We can be part of the low-carbon industrial revolution or we can condemn Australian industry to being the rust-belt of the Asia-Pacific. For the sake of my daughter and her generation I will fight for Australia to be part of this industrial revolution while the current government is delivering the latter scenario.

It is sad but true to say that the new government's approach to climate change is entirely consistent with their wider belief in a do-nothing government. They proudly proclaim that government should get out of the way and not that government should promote equity, fairness and social justice. Just as Prime Minister Howard ensured that the Liberal Party was truly a conservative party, the current Prime Minister has ensured that it is now the Democratic Labor Party reborn. The new government's policy priorities are defined as reaction and opposition to progressive policy. They have made the transition from the most
negative opposition in Australian political history to the most negative government. Whether it is attempting to stop Australians getting a fair share of super profits from the mining boom, repealing the carbon price or pulling the plug on the NBN, this government has no vision for the future besides a pathetic yearning for a mythical past. 7 September was a victory for reaction, not liberalism. The party of Deakin is no more.

I am reminded of a saying of Franklin D Roosevelt, which I paraphrase: 'A conservative is a man with two perfectly good legs who, however, has never learned to walk forward. A reactionary is a sleepwalker walking backwards.' I would submit that the policies and beliefs of the new coalition government embody the worst aspects of both conservatives and reactionaries.

Labor will always be positive in government and in opposition we will hold coalition governments to account and present our superior vision for the nation. This approach, driven by values and a commitment to progressive reform, will drive me as I represent Charlton. I am acutely conscious that I follow in formidable footsteps in Charlton. Areas now in the electorate have been represented by giants of the Labor movement, notably Matthew Charlton, Doc Evatt and most recently Greg Combet.

I had the honour of working alongside Greg in the labour movement for many years before I became his principal policy adviser after the 2007 election. I have never met a more fundamentally decent human being. Greg is a man of great integrity, patience and compassion.

I learned much from him, not the least to stay calm under pressure, to patiently evaluate the facts before making a decision and to never forget that serving as a member of parliament is a great privilege, a privilege that should never be taken for granted and a privilege that must always be used to improve society.

Greg entered parliament with a lifetime of achievement behind him, a record within the labour movement perhaps only matched by Bob Hawke and Bill Kelty. He built on this with his achievements in government, including putting a fair and effective price on carbon; developing a $1 billion industry policy; and reforming defence procurement. I wish Greg all the best in the next stage of his life, including every possible happiness.

If I can turn to the electorate I represent: Charlton is made up of the western suburbs of Newcastle and west Lake Macquarie. There is a large Indigenous community in Charlton and I extend my respects to the traditional owners of the lands within the electorate: the Awabakal people and their elders.

New residential estates in areas such as Minmi, Cooranbong, Morisset and Wyee will significantly boost the number of young families living in Charlton. This presents challenges and opportunities. As the local federal MP, my focus will be to help the community maintain and grow the Charlton economy; build the necessary infrastructure to accommodate this growth; find solutions to the increased demand for health and aged-care services; and deliver the best quality education for all children.

The project I am most passionate about is the completion of the Glendale Transport Interchange. This project has been identified by the 11 combined Hunter councils as the most important infrastructure requirement in the region. Already close to $40 million has been invested in this project to upgrade and build new roads in the Stockland precinct and Cardiff...
Industrial Estate. I am incredibly proud that the last Labor government, along with the then Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, the member for Grayndler, funded this project. This project will bring thousands of new jobs and residents into the western suburbs of Newcastle. It will cement Glendale as the geographic and economic heart of the lower Hunter, linking the Hunter Valley with the town of Newcastle. However, to realise the full economic benefit of this project the Pennant Street Bridge and a railway station must be constructed.

The New South Wales government is planning to privatise the Port of Newcastle, potentially raising up to $1 billion, some of which is earmarked for infrastructure investment in the inner city of Newcastle. Without endorsing this privatisation, if the port is to be sold then it is crucial that funds be allocated to finish the Glendale Transport Interchange.

It is the people of the broader Hunter region who work and produce the wealth conveyed through this port. The interchange is the most important infrastructure for the region and, if it goes ahead, should be funded by the proceeds of the sale.

The Charlton economy is quite diverse, with a mix of traditional and new industries. For example, we house John Hunter Hospital, the only trauma hospital between Sydney and Brisbane. Hunter New England Health is the biggest employer in the region. Labor funded the Hunter Medical Research Institute, which is undertaking groundbreaking research that will help future generations. At the same time, we have a very significant heavy engineering and manufacturing industry. We make trains, supply the ADF, support the mining industry and export around the world.

Fundamentally, however, this is a region built on coalmining and energy production. I am proud to say that in Charlton we have six coalmines still in operation and Australia’s largest power station. Coalmining began as soon as European settlement began and it permeates every aspect of life in the Hunter.

This diverse economy presents many challenges, challenges which mirror those confronting the nation and which I am passionate about confronting. Principally, how do we ensure the continuing prosperity of traditional industries such as mining and manufacturing while embracing new industries that can grow and provide new employment such as medical research and clean technologies? This is a challenge I will pursue in my time in this place.

I want to finish by thanking everyone who has helped me become the person I am. I was very fortunate to have worked for and with great contributors to the labour movement. In particular, can I thank Greg Combet; the member for Grayndler, Anthony Albanese; Senator Doug Cameron; George Campbell; Dave Oliver; Jan Primrose; Luke Foley; Rod Hilton; Damian Ogden; and Jason Kara. Beyond the examples they have set, I have always appreciated their wise counsel.

In years to come I hope that all my actions in this place will be consistent with the values that I have just espoused. Anything I achieve is shared with those who have shaped me and who have made sacrifices for my career.

To my family: my achievements will be your achievements. Madam Speaker, I thank you and commend the motion to the House.

Debate adjourned.
BILLS

Grape and Wine Legislation Amendment (Australian Grape and Wine Authority) Bill 2013

First Reading

Bill—by leave—and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Joyce.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (09:42): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Grape and Wine Legislation Amendment (Australian Grape and Wine Authority) Bill 2013 creates the Australian Grape and Wine Authority, which will commence operation on 1 July 2014. The new authority will be the result of a merger of the Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation and the Wine Australia Corporation. It will take on the roles and functions of these two corporations to become the single statutory authority for the wine industry.

The reform has come about at the request of industry, following discussions raised over the last 20 years. It is finally being made a reality following a proposal submitted by the industry peak bodies, the Winemakers’ Federation of Australia and Wine Grape Growers Australia.

The Australian wine industry is a wonderful success story for our agricultural know-how and initiative. The industry is valued at approximately $3.4 billion annually and is a major contributor to the economy of rural and regional Australia. The industry suggests that more than 22,000 people are directly employed in grape growing and winemaking activities, with many more employed in associated industries such as tourism and hospitality.

There are more than 2,500 wine producers in Australia, and almost 6,000 wine grape growers. Wine grapes are grown in all states and territories of Australia, except the Northern Territory.

The Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation had revenue of $22.8 million in 2011-12, of which the Australian government provided $10.4 million through its matching funding arrangements.

With these funds the corporation was able to produce key outcomes that deliver real productivity gains for the industry. This has included partnering with the CSIRO to develop new rootstocks with characteristics including the ability to tolerate drought and salinity and to be resistant to phylloxera, a potentially devastating pest. Its investment in water use efficiency has contributed to the level of water use per hectare in the wine grape industry dropping from nine megalitres at the end of the 1990s to well under six by the mid 2000s.

The research and development program continues to invest in vineyard sustainability and production techniques that look to continually improve the consistency and quality of Australian wine, while at the same time improving the bottom line for our wine grape growers and wine producers.
The Wine Australia Corporation had revenues of almost $12 million in 2012-13 from industry levies and contributions. These funds underpin a sophisticated marketing and export compliance regime that promotes the quality and reliability of Australian wine across the world. Australian wine holds significant market share in countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and our premium wines are gaining an ever-growing foothold in the important Chinese market.

With the help of Wine Australia, the premium, higher profitability segment of the wine market continues to grow in key East Asian markets, like China. The Chinese market has grown from $57 million in 2007 to $250 million today, to be our third biggest by value. Australian bottled wine exports into the United States at the higher, above $7.50 a litre, segment grew by 16 per cent in the year ended 30 September 2013. This is an exciting new growth opportunity for the industry. Wine Australia also continues to engage internationally, through groups like the World Wine Trade Group, to deliver sensible trade reforms that make exporting wine simpler and more cost effective.

The wine industry is a great example of a progressive Australian agricultural industry and the wide support industry has shown towards the proposed merger is yet another example of this.

The proposed merger is consistent with the government's deregulation agenda and will ultimately result in efficiencies through combining the administrative resources of operating two statutory bodies into one. This will consequently result in improved service delivery to industry. The opportunity has also been taken to reduce red tape where possible, such as removing the requirement for ministerial approval of annual operational plans under the new authority.

A single wine industry statutory authority will support the industry by providing links between the investment initiatives and functions of the Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation and the Wine Australia Corporation.

This bill proposes amendments to the Wine Australia Corporation Act 1980 to establish the new authority and renames the act as the Australian Grape and Wine Authority Act 2013. Although the bill amends the existing Wine Australia Corporation Act, these amendments are significant and the merger is not a takeover of the Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation by Wine Australia. This is a strategic merger of the two statutory corporations on an equal footing.

This bill is divided into two schedules.

Schedule 1 amends the Wine Australia Corporation Act to create the authority.

Schedule 2 covers matters arising from the transition from two statutory corporations to the authority. It covers matters such as the transfer of staff to the authority.

Schedule 1 is divided into two parts.

Part 1 of schedule 1 commences on the day after royal assent. This part amends the Wine Australia Corporation Act 1980 to establish a selection committee to select and nominate to the Minister for Agriculture, possible directors of the board of the authority. The bill gives the Minister for Agriculture an alternative option of appointing a first board of the authority for a 12 month period without reference to the selection committee.
Part 2 of schedule 1 commences on 1 July 2014. This part provides amendments to the Freedom of Information Act 1982 and the Wine Australia Corporation Act 1980. This part establishes the authority and provides the governance framework for its operation.

Schedule 1 provides the research and development functions, including provisions for the Commonwealth to match research and development levy funding dollar for dollar.

The authority will be required to spend research and development levy money and government matching funds on research and development activity. Industry has highlighted the importance of this issue for the new authority and I want to make it clear to the industry that its R&D levies will be spent on R&D purposes only. It is also important to the government to ensure that Australian government money appropriated for research and development is used for this purpose.

The bill does not include any changes to the structure or the amounts of the levies that currently fund both statutory corporations, or to the existing regulatory, marketing and compliance roles of the Wine Australia Corporation.

The bill transfers definitions of research and development from the Primary Industries and Energy Research and Development Act 1981.

It establishes an authority with a skills based board of five to seven directors selected and nominated by a statutory selection committee and appointed by the minister.

The board is led by a chair appointed by the minister following consultation with industry.

The authority is required to prepare a five-year corporate plan to outline the authority's strategies, policies and priorities to achieve the objectives.

The authority is also required to prepare an annual operation plan but, unlike those of the two statutory corporations, this plan is not required to have the minister's approval.

Schedule 2 provides for the transition of the Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation and Wine Australia to the authority, including that the operations, assets, liabilities and staffing conditions are transferred to the authority.

The bill allows the Minister for Agriculture to select the first board directors after royal assent. The board will commence on 1 July 2014. Between the date of appointment and 1 July 2014, the minister can engage the future board directors as consultants to assist with preparations for the authority's commencement, including making preparations to appoint a chief executive.

The boards of the two statutory corporations will continue to exercise their powers and meet all statutory responsibilities until 30 June 2014.

Before 1 July 2014 the future directors, in their role as consultants, could not make decisions that would bind the authority. However, it can be expected that any recommendations they make would be considered for ratification by the board at its first meeting.

The costs of the consultants will be met by the Commonwealth through the Department of Agriculture. Once the authority commences, any and all Commonwealth funding provided for the purpose for engaging consultants will be refunded by the authority. As the consultants are the future board directors acting in the interests of the authority, it is reasonable for the authority to reimburse the Commonwealth for the costs of the consultants.
The bill ensures that all employees of the Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation and Wine Australia are transferred to the Australian Grape and Wine Authority along with all employee entitlements.

The bill also provides for a number of amendments to be made to outdated sections of the Wine Australia Corporation Act 1980, and introduces modernised language to bring it up to date with current terms.

The wine industry has a unique regulatory structure with the Wine Australia Corporation enforcing the Label Integrity Program, licensing exporters and maintaining Australia's wine geographical indications system. These important roles are not affected by the merger.

The Australian Grape and Wine Authority will therefore have a strong focus on controlling exports and developing domestic and international markets for Australian grape products, along with investigating, coordinating and funding grape and wine research and development. The authority will be responsible to report its progress on these matters to the parliament or minister and representative organisations.

Two companion bills are being introduced alongside this bill that propose minor amendments to the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Act 1999 and the Primary Industries (Customs) Charges Act 1999 to enable levies collected to be paid to the new authority.

The creation of the Australian Grape and Wine Authority is a natural progression by the industry in continuing to reform to meet future challenges. The benefits of replacing the existing two statutory bodies with a single authority will come at no additional cost to winemakers or grape growers. Instead, this reform will deliver efficiencies while enhancing links between the industry's research and development and marketing activities—which are the key to future industry competitiveness and profitability. Through this reform the government wants to ensure that the levies and fees that industry contributes to these efforts has the best opportunity to keep delivering for the industry in the future. It is with great pleasure that I introduce this bill to make this important reform a reality.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Primary Industries (Customs) Charges Amendment (Australian Grape and Wine Authority) Bill 2013

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Joyce.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (09:54): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

The Primary Industries (Customs) Charges Amendment (Australian Grape and Wine Authority) Bill 2013 is a companion bill to the Grape and Wine Legislation Amendment (Australian Grape and Wine Authority) Bill 2013.
The companion bill provides consequential amendments to replace references to the Wine Australia Corporation in the Primary Industries (Customs) Charges Act 1999 with 'Australian Grape and Wine Authority' to reflect the Australian Grape and Wine Authority Act 2013 that will govern the new authority.

The change will allow for levies collected to be paid to the Australian Grape and Wine Authority.

The bill also repeals clauses that provided for Wine Australia, following an annual general meeting, to make recommendations to the minister about the levy rate. The government has a process for consulting with industry about levy rates that provides for consultation, a vote of industry and an objections process. The bill provides that the process for changing wine industry levies is consistent with other industries.

I commend the bill to the House.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (09:55): Madam Speaker, it did not occur to me when I last rose that that was the first time I had approached the dispatch box since your elevation to the high office of Speaker. I congratulate you on your election to the position. I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Question agreed to.

Debate adjourned.

Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Australian Grape and Wine Authority) Bill 2013

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Joyce.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (09:56): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Australian Grape and Wine Authority) Bill 2013 is a companion bill to the Grape and Wine Legislation Amendment (Australian Grape and Wine Authority) Bill 2013.

The companion bill provides consequential amendments to replace references to the Wine Australia Corporation in the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Act 1999 with 'Australian Grape and Wine Authority' to reflect the Australian Grape and Wine Authority Act 2013 that will govern the new authority.

The change will allow for levies collected to be paid to the Australian Grape and Wine Authority.

The bill also repeals clauses that provided for Wine Australia, following an annual general meeting, to make recommendations to the minister about the levy rate. The government has a process for consulting with industry about levy rates that provides for consultation, a vote of industry and an objections process. The bill provides that the process for changing wine industry levies is consistent with other industries.
I commend the bill to the House.
Debate adjourned.

**Australian Research Council Amendment Bill 2013**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Pyne.
Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Minister for Education and Leader of the House) (09:58): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Australian Research Council**

This bill to amend the Australian Research Council Act 2001 is an essential item of housekeeping to ensure that the ARC can continue to support and serve Australia's vibrant research community. The ARC is fundamental to the support of both blue sky and applied research, and its peer reviewed competitive funding schemes are the lifeblood of many of the most significant research endeavours in the country.

This appropriation bill increases the ARC's funding caps in line with inflation and ensures that government support for thousands of research projects does not weaken. If we are to address the great challenges of our time, to improve the quality of people's lives, to support the development of new industries and to remain competitive in the global knowledge economy, then we need a strong research community and this bill is underwriting that strength.

The ARC is the most significant single source of funding for new, breakthrough, investigator driven research that covers all disciplines in Australia. This funding has underpinned the life work of so many of our greatest researchers that it is hard to know where to begin, but I will give a few examples, just to give a taste of the variety of the research that this funding supports.

Professor Rick Shine, at the University of Sydney, is one of Australia's number one experts on cane toads. As we all know, the cane toad was brought in to solve a problem, beetles in sugarcane, and the solution turned out to be far worse than the original problem. It is an example of good science fighting the mistakes of the past—and of how scientists are using new research to find practical solutions to a serious invasive pest. Professor Shine and his research team, supported by an ARC Laureate Fellowship of over $2 million, are a fundamental part of Australia's effort to combat this poisonous exotic species. Professor Shine has said that his research career would not have been possible without the Australian Research Council. Perhaps his efforts will help rid Australia of the cane toad forever.

The ARC's Future Fellowships scheme is coveted by researchers throughout Australia as it provides the funding boost that can change the course of a career, and enable them to make a crucial contribution to solving major problems. Targeted at a critical time—the mid-career—a Future Fellowship frees a researcher to focus on a topic of great interest and importance. The ARC's value here is in its flexibility—for the ARC works in all disciplines. Take for example the Future Fellow Professor Martina Stenzel. Although her background is in chemistry, she has taken her breakthrough work in nanoparticles into the hospital, to help cancer patients.
Her unique platinum project, to develop nano-sized drug delivery containers for the targeted delivery of platinum containing anti-cancer agents, bridges a gap between chemistry and medicine in a way that perhaps only an ARC fellowship can effectively support.

Of the five recent recipients of the 2013 Prime Minister's prizes for science, a function at which I was present, three have had significant ARC funding during their career. Statistician Professor Terry Speed—who received the overall Prime Minister's Prize for Science for his outstanding achievements in applying statistical techniques to genetics—previously received funding as a Partner Investigator with the ARC Centre of Excellence for Kangaroo Genomics, a centre which was funded with over $5 million beginning in 2003. ARC Centres of Excellence are powerhouses of Australian research, and their value as proving grounds for the great researchers of tomorrow cannot be underestimated.

Also announced as part of the Prime Minister's prizes, the winner of the Malcolm McIntosh Prize for Physical Scientist of the Year, Associate Professor Andrea Morello, is housed at the ARC funded Centre of Excellence for Quantum Computation and Communication Technology, which is receiving over $24 million from 2011 to 2017. This centre is making major inroads into making quantum computing a reality, which, it is expected, will radically transform the security and capability of computing around the world. There are very few people in the world like Professor Morello who can actually explain how quantum computing works let alone excel in it. We can be proud to have an ARC funded centre here in Australia which is making very significant breakthroughs in quantum computing technology and which is getting frequent accolades on the world stage. There is said to be potential here for a breakthrough just as great as the breakthroughs we have witnessed in conventional computing.

It is significant that both Associate Professor Andrea Morello and Professor Terry Speed have been associated with ARC Centres of Excellence, and it speaks volumes for the role that these centres so often play in the research careers of our best and brightest, both at the formative stages and at the pinnacle of their career.

Associate Professor Angela Moles from the University of New South Wales' Evolution and Ecology Research Centre was recipient of the Frank Fenner Prize for Life Scientist of the Year and has spoken of the inestimable role of ARC funding in kick-starting her breakthrough research in ecology. Associate Professor Moles visited 75 different ecosystems around the world as a part of the World Herbivory Project, collecting and interpreting ecological data. She has received funding from two ARC Discovery Projects grants, ARC Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities funding, an Australian Postdoctoral Fellowship in 2004 and a 2009 Queen Elizabeth II Fellowship. Her work has challenged conventional wisdom in global ecology, transforming our understanding of where to look for natural plant compounds of medicinal value.

These are just some examples of how ARC funded research has played and continues to play an important role in improving the lives of Australians. There are thousands of stories like these to tell.

But the ARC is not only the most significant source of funding for innovative, investigator driven research in Australia. It is also a significant source of knowledge about the research community, including through running the Excellence in Research for Australia—or ERA—assessment of research.
The challenges of a changing research sector are also being tackled by the ARC through its new open access policies, closely watched by the research sector. These policies seek to ensure that publicly funded research is made publicly available, as part of a new worldwide drive towards openness, and an unlocking of the doors of traditional research storehouses. The ARC’s consultation on measuring research impact, and its ongoing role in attracting international researchers to our shores are other examples of how significant it is to the health of Australian research and our universities.

It is clear that ongoing funding for the ARC is essential to the vitality of the Australian higher education system.

The peer review system managed by the ARC is an important driving force in keeping our research sector innovative. Peer review is a cornerstone of the process of scientific advancement, and is fundamental wherever research is free to be practised throughout the world. The ARC uses peer review to establish research merit across the spectrum of disciplines. Peer review by experts, experts drawn from all over the nation and abroad, is at the heart of both the ARC’s Excellence in Research for Australia program, and the awarding of the ARC’s grants and fellowships. Every proposal, every research output, is judged by experts in the field on its merit.

I will briefly mention two other ways in which the ARC is helping to diversify the research workforce. The ARC plays an important role in attracting and supporting Indigenous Australians to engage in research, through its Discovery Indigenous scheme. This is of great importance to untapping the research potential of Indigenous Australians, and to enriching our national research effort.

Women in research are also supported by the ARC, and will benefit from this amendment bill, which supports among other things two Australian Laureate Fellowships specifically for women: the Kathleen Fitzpatrick Australian Laureate Fellowship for a female candidate from the humanities, arts and social sciences disciplines, and the Georgina Sweet Australian Laureate Fellowship for a female candidate from the science and technology disciplines. Named after great Australian women who were research pioneers, these fellowships have an ambassadorial role, and will support the role models for our next generation of female researchers. The ARC also seeks to ease the transition for women returning to research following career breaks. The ARC’s Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) measures enable assessors to take into account any career interruptions, including those for childbirth and caring responsibilities.

Through these initiatives and through the whole National Competitive Grants Program, the ARC is helping to reduce research career barriers and ensure the nation reaps the benefit of all of its research talent.

The government's strong support for research and specifically for the Australian Research Council was reflected on 8 November when I announced $522 million in ARC grants and fellowships, supporting 1,177 research projects on diverse topics throughout Australia arising from the competitive peer review processes of the ARC.

Supporting the ARC through this amendment bill is fundamental to the continued health of our research sector. It is good to reflect on the role that the ARC plays in nurturing and
sustaining the research community, working to solve great challenges which face us, and strengthening the world standing of our higher education sector.

I commend this Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) Bill 2013
First Reading
Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Pyne.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading
Mr PYNE (Sturt—Minister for Education and Leader of the House) (10:10): I move: That this bill be now read a second time.

Introduction

Today I introduce the Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) Bill 2013.

The construction industry provides many jobs for workers in small business, large enterprises and contractors. It is critical to a productive, prosperous and internationally competitive Australia. The coalition government recognises the importance of an industry that is vital to job creation and essential to Australia's economic and social wellbeing.

This bill re-establishes the Australian Building and Construction Commission, a genuinely strong watchdog that will maintain the rule of law to protect workers and constructors and improve productivity on building sites and construction projects, whether onshore or offshore.

This bill will reverse Labor's changes to the laws which underpinned the Australian Building and Construction Commission before it was abolished in 2012.

The bill prohibits unlawful industrial action, unlawful picketing, and coercion and discrimination. Penalties that are high enough to provide an effective deterrent will apply to breaches of these provisions. A wide range of effective remedies such as injunctions will also be available to the ABCC and persons affected by unlawful behaviour.

The need for the Australian Building and Construction Commission to be re-established

For many years, the building and construction sector provided the worst examples of industrial relations lawlessness. Then workplace relations minister in the Howard government, the Hon. Tony Abbott MHR, was prepared to tackle this longstanding bad behaviour and in 2001 established a Royal Commission into the Building and Construction Industry. The final report of that royal commission provided compelling evidence of the need for reform in this industry. It found consistent evidence that building sites and construction projects in Australia were hotbeds of intimidation, lawlessness, thuggery and violence. Projects were delayed, costs blew out and investment in our economy and infrastructure was being jeopardised.

Central to the royal commission's findings was industry lawlessness. It concluded that the standards of commercial and industrial conduct exhibited in the building and construction industry represented a significant departure from that in the rest of the Australian economy. Witnesses reported criminal conduct, unlawful and inappropriate conduct, including breaches
of the relevant workplace relations and work health and safety legislation and a disregard for Commonwealth and state revenue statutes. Inappropriate conduct was defined by the royal commission as 'behaviour that infringes the Workplace Relations Act 1996, a person's right of choice or other conduct which departs from recognised norms of civility and behaviour'.

The royal commission's findings publicly established what everyone in the industry had known about for years but previous governments had been unwilling or too intimidated to tackle. The Howard coalition government was prepared to step in and make the tough decisions required to clean up this sector. The establishment of the Australian Building and Construction Commission in 2005 provided a genuinely strong watchdog, dissolving the 1970s-style practices that plagued this industry. It was a strong, specialist regulator that enforced the rule of law applying to the building and construction sector.

While the ABCC existed, the economic and industrial performance of the building and construction industry significantly improved. For example, a 2013 Independent Economics report on the state of the sector during this period found that:

- building and construction industry productivity grew by more than nine per cent;
- consumers were better off by around $7.5 billion annually; and
- fewer working days were lost through industrial action.

The former Labor government came under sustained pressure from building and construction unions to abolish the Australian Building and Construction Commission and the Building Code that supported its work. The Labor government procrastinated for five years before the then workplace relations minister, now Leader of the Opposition, gave in to union demands and abolished the organisation in 2012 and replaced it with a regulator with significantly reduced funding and powers. This saw the 'bad old days' return—wildcat stoppages, militant protests, demands from unions that their mates be employed on projects ahead of non-unionists and an increase in construction industry disputes to a seven-year high.

No-one needs reminding of the scenes we saw late last year, merely weeks after the Australian Building and Construction Commission was abolished: violence on the streets in the city of Melbourne, with militant union protestors intimidating the community and their supporters attacking police horses. We had workers on the site purchasing an advertisement in the Herald Sun with an open letter to their own union bosses asking for the blockades to stop. Images of these protests were seen on television screens around the world. What message did that send to national and international companies about investing in building and construction projects in Melbourne or Australia?

We saw the CFMEU grossly bullying nonmembers by creating posters labelling them—amongst other things—'scabs' and advocating that they be run out of the industry, in open defiance of the Fair Work Act and Supreme Court orders to end the protests.

We saw a violent dispute at the Little Creatures Brewery site in Geelong, where union picketers were accused in court documents of making throat-cutting gestures, making threats to stomp heads in, workers who wanted to get on with the work being told they were 'dead', and shoving, kicking and punching motor vehicles.

We saw union protestors threatening people with 'Columbian neckties' at City West Water in Werribee, where the dispute was so heated that workers had to be flown in by helicopter.
The term 'Columbian neckties' came from the Columbian Civil War of 1948 and involves slashing a victim's throat horizontally and pulling their tongue out through the open wound.

And just last month, we saw CFMEU officials threaten to stop work on a Lend Lease project in Adelaide if a union flag was not moved to a more prominent position.

The previous government was well aware of this type of behaviour in the building and construction industry and so was understandably reluctant to abolish the Australian Building and Construction Commission, despite strong union pressure. It contracted Justice Murray Wilcox to review the industry, to buy time. Justice Wilcox recognised the need for, and the benefit provided by, the Australian Building and Construction Commission, stating in his report that 'the ABCC's work is not yet done' and 'it would be unfortunate' if the ABCC's replacement body 'led to a reversal of the progress that has been made'. But that is exactly what we have seen.

The Labor government, led by the now Leader of the Opposition, set up a severely curtailed version of the ABCC called the Fair Work Building Industry Inspectorate. As well as having its powers substantially curtailed, it faced significant reductions in funding and staffing of around 30 per cent. The inspectorate was hampered by quite novel restrictions on its ability to initiate or continue with proceedings if matters the subject of litigation had been settled by the parties. These amendments were introduced without any prior notice or forewarning by the Leader of the Opposition when he was the responsible minister. They are equivalent to a person running a red light and causing an accident and then police being unable to charge that person with any offences, including running the red light, if that person has settled with the other person involved in the accident. These provisions are certainly contrary to former Prime Minister Gillard's views while she was the responsible minister in 2009. At that time she said, in relation to misbehaviour in the building industry, that 'each and every breach of the law is wrong and each and every breach of the law should be acted upon'.

These provisions in the Labor government's legislation were heavily criticised by the Law Council of Australia as giving primacy to the interests of private litigants over the application and enforcement of laws of the parliament. The Law Council of Australia urged reconsideration of this provision and the community can be reassured that there is no such provision in the coalition government's bill.

**The election commitment**

In the government's Policy to Improve the Fair Work Laws, the coalition government committed to re-establishing the Australian Building and Construction Commission to once again ensure the rule of law and productivity on commercial building sites and construction projects, whether onshore or offshore.

We took this commitment to the 2010 and 2013 federal elections as a key policy. So important did we see this commitment that we also committed to re-establishing the Australian Building and Construction Commission within 100 days of the parliament first sitting. This government was given a clear mandate by the Australian people to make this change.

The coalition government is committed to ensuring that the rule of law is maintained and that workers in the building and construction sector can go to work free of intimidation and harassment. As the Cole royal commission concluded a decade ago, the behaviour that we too
regularly see in this industry marks it as singular. It is an industry in which conventional standards of commercial and industrial behaviour do not apply. Like in the textiles, clothing and footwear sector, special circumstances require special laws.

We also promised that a re-established Australian Building and Construction Commission will administer a code that will govern industrial relations arrangements for government funded projects. This step will ensure that taxpayers’ dollars are used efficiently. We also promised we would work with state governments to ensure consistency with guidelines introduced by those governments who saw the urgent need to set up their own schemes in response to the Gillard government’s abolition of the ABCC, led by the now Leader of the Opposition. A new statutory code is being developed that is intended to commence at the same time as the re-established Australian Building and Construction Commission on 1 January 2014.

**Description of the bill**

The main object of this bill is to provide an improved workplace relations framework for building and construction work to ensure that it is carried out fairly, efficiently and productively for the benefit of all building industry participants and for the benefit of the Australian economy as a whole.

The bill aims to improve the bargaining framework so as to further encourage genuine bargaining at the workplace level. Enterprise bargaining negotiations must be harmonious, sensible and productive and should be tailored to the particular workplace.

The bill upholds and promotes respect for the rule of law and ensures respect for the rights of all building industry participants. The bill contains provisions to ensure that unlawful action, including unlawful industrial action and unlawful pickets, are dealt with appropriately. The bill includes the ability for the courts to impose significant penalties for individuals and organisations that participate in unlawful action.

The bill provides effective means for investigating and enforcing the law. The Australian Building and Construction Commissioner will be able to exercise their power to obtain information quickly and effectively without being hindered by unnecessary bureaucratic red tape around the issue of examination notices. However, to ensure accountability and transparency, the use of these powers will continue to be reviewed and reported on by the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

Importantly, this bill encourages productivity and the pursuit of high levels of employment in the building and construction industry. It will ensure that the government's policy to deliver the infrastructure of the 21st century is delivered on time and on budget. This bill will create jobs and investment by ensuring employers and workers in the industry can get on with the job without fear of intimidation.

**The definition of building work**

The definition of building work in the bill includes off-site prefabrication of made-to-order components for parts of buildings, structures or works. The definition of building work also includes the transporting or supplying of goods to be used in building work. This is a change from the previous ABCC legislation and is included to ensure that large resource construction projects cannot be indirectly disrupted through coordinated 'go-slow's' on the supply of materials to those projects.
The extension to the Exclusive Economic Zone and continental shelf

The bill extends the geographic limits to the Exclusive Economic Zone and land above the continental shelf. This extension will bring the legislation into line with the Fair Work Act.

The structure of the ABCC

This bill will re-establish the Australian Building and Construction Commission to ensure the rule of law is enforced in the building and construction industry. The Australian Building and Construction Commission will be led by its commissioner, who will have the critical task of monitoring, promoting and enforcing appropriate standards of conduct by building industry participants and referring matters to other relevant agencies and bodies as required.

The Australian Building and Construction Commissioner will also be responsible for investigating suspected contraventions of the law by building industry participants. They will also institute or intervene in proceedings in accordance with these laws; and, provide assistance and advice to building industry participants on their rights and obligations under designated building laws.

The Australian Building and Construction Commissioner will be supported by deputy commissioners, and by a statutory agency, to be known as the Australian Building and Construction Commission, comprising persons engaged under the Public Service Act 1999. The Australian Building and Construction Commissioner will be the head of that statutory agency. The agency will be properly funded to ensure it can do its work—the funding taken away by the Labor government, led by the current Leader of the Opposition, will be restored.

Penalties

Changing the lawless culture of the building and construction industry requires strong regulation, a strong regulator and a level of penalties that will act as a deterrent to unlawful behaviour.

Higher penalties are justified in an industry that is so critical to Australia’s economic performance. Building and construction organisations are well resourced and some show a blatant disregard for court orders and shrug off fines as 'simply part of the cost of doing business'.

Unlawful action

The bill makes it clear that unlawful action will not be tolerated and there are significant penalties for taking unlawful industrial action, or for engaging in, or organising, an unlawful picket. Safeguards are built into the legislation that ensure that the commissioner is able to separate unlawful and organised picketing aimed at disrupting building and construction work from legitimate protests.

The bill also reinstates civil remedy provisions in relation to coercion and discrimination and makes it clear that project agreements are unenforceable where the intention is to secure standard employment conditions relating to a particular site or sites covering employees from different enterprises. These types of project agreements inhibit genuine enterprise bargaining.

Coercive powers

The bill enables the Australian Building and Construction Commissioner to compel witnesses to attend an examination or to produce documents where he/she reasonably believes that the person has information or documents relevant to an investigation into a suspected
contravention of workplace relations laws. These powers are needed to ensure the Australian Building and Construction Commission is able to carry out its investigations effectively and is a key tool for breaking down the historical and unacceptable ‘culture of silence’ in the sector. These kinds of powers are not novel and are also granted to a range of other Commonwealth regulatory bodies such as the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, the Australian Securities and Investment Commission, the Australian Taxation Office, Centrelink and Medicare.

The bill does, however, contain appropriate and effective safeguards to ensure due process and transparency in the use of these powers. The bill requires the Australian Building and Construction Commissioner to provide the Commonwealth Ombudsman with a report about the examination along with a video recording and transcript of the examination. At the end of each financial year, the Commonwealth Ombudsman is required to prepare and present to the parliament, a report about examinations during the year. This will ensure public transparency and accountability and give the community confidence in the work of the ABCC.

Federal Safety Commissioner and the Australian Government Building and Construction OHS Accreditation Scheme

The government is committed to using its influence as a funder of large building and construction projects nationally to lead the way on improving work, health and safety standards and culture throughout the building and construction industry. For this reason, the bill retains the role of the Federal Safety Commissioner and the Australian Government Building and Construction Industry WHS Accreditation Scheme.

Conclusion

The coalition government is committed to doing all that is necessary to reform the building and construction industry and to reinstitute the rule of law in this sector.

The coalition government wholeheartedly believes that workers deserve to be able to go to work each day without the fear of being harassed, intimidated or the subject of violence.

The former Labor government, led by the Leader of the Opposition, undermined confidence in the building and construction industry. Abolishing the Australian Building and Construction Commission has seen a return to lawlessness and an increase in the number of days where work is simply not being done in the industry.

Australia cannot afford to have a building and construction industry which is inefficient and unstable. The restoration of the Australian Building and Construction Commission and the code which supports its work is a critical reform for Australia. The contents of this bill reflect this commitment and I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.


First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Pyne.

Bill read a first time.
Mr PYNE (Sturt—Minister for Education and Leader of the House) (10:31): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.


This bill deals with consequential and transitional matters relating to the re-establishment of the Australian Building and Construction Commission and other matters set out in the Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) Bill 2013.

This bill will ensure a smooth transition from the institutions, functions and powers created by the Fair Work Building Industry Act 2012 to the new regime established by the Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) Bill 2013. This bill also deals with residual operation of the Building and Construction Industry Improvement Act 2005 where necessary. I commend this machinery bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Bill 2013

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Pyne.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Minister for Education and Leader of the House) (10:33): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Introduction

The government is committed to improving the Fair Work laws so that we can build a more stable, fair and prosperous future for Australia's workers, businesses and the economy.

Unions and employer associations who operate in the workplace relations field play a critical role in workplaces and the economy, and their members invest a great deal of trust in them. The community expectation is that these registered organisations must operate to the highest of standards. These organisations are given special legislated rights. With rights come responsibilities.

The government believes that the majority of registered organisations do the right thing and in many cases maintain higher standards than those that are currently required. However, the recent investigations into the Health Services Union illustrate that, unfortunately, financial impropriety can occur under the current governance regime for registered organisations.

The charges and allegations against former ALP member of parliament, Craig Thomson, and former ALP national president, Michael Williamson, in their capacity as officers of the Health Services Union are shocking and unacceptable. Mr Thomson was arrested in respect of more than 150 fraud related criminal charges and is facing allegations that his 2007 federal election campaign was partly funded by siphoning union money without authorisation. Mr Williamson has pleaded guilty to misusing almost $1 million of Health Services Union members' funds. Mr Williamson has also been accused of destroying documents and hindering investigations. Members of the Health Services Union are asking how this gross
breach of trust could happen. Questions have also arisen with numerous other registered organisations. Members of registered organisations are asking whether this could happen in their organisation.

The government believes the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Bill will provide the certainty and high standards of operation that members of registered organisations are entitled to expect.

The bill introduces a suite of legislative measures designed to see governance of registered organisations lifted to a consistently high standard across the board. A more robust compliance regime will deter wrongdoing and promote first-class governance of registered organisations.

The recent HSU scandals also revealed that the current processes for investigating wrongdoing and ensuring accountability are clearly inadequate. The Fair Work Australia investigations into the Health Services Union took far too long and the ensuing legal proceedings remain ongoing. A KPMG review into Fair Work Australia’s investigations into the Health Services Union identified shortcomings in the conduct of those investigations. Members of the union and the community not only want a strong regulatory regime to give them confidence in their registered organisations but also want swift action taken when standards are breached. In order to do this, it is necessary to have a robust regulator in place with appropriate powers and resources, together with meaningful sanctions that can be applied when wrongdoing is revealed.

To improve oversight of registered organisations, the bill will establish a dedicated independent watchdog, the Registered Organisations Commission to monitor and regulate registered organisations and provide it with enhanced investigation and information-gathering powers.

The new commission will have the necessary independence and the powers it needs to regulate registered organisations effectively, efficiently and transparently.

The commission will be headed by the Registered Organisations Commissioner (the commissioner), who will be appointed by the minister.

The commission will have stronger investigation and information-gathering powers than those that currently apply. These will be modelled on those available to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, which will further enhance the ability of the commissioner to provide strong and efficient regulation of unions and employer associations. The commission will have the power to commence legal proceedings and refer possible criminal offences to the Director of Public Prosecutions or law enforcement agencies.

The bill also ensures that there are appropriate sanctions against efforts to hinder or mislead investigations. This will give all members confidence that, should they make a complaint to the commission about a registered organisation, that organisation and its officials must comply with the requirements of the investigation process or face sanctions. Members can also have confidence in the fact that, under the new legislation, a person convicted of particular offences will not be eligible to be an officer of an organisation or to stand for election to office.

The commission will also educate, assist and advise registered organisations and their members in relation to the new obligations and ensure members are aware of their rights.
The commission will be established within the Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman. While located within the Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the commissioner will have independence in the exercise of the relevant functions and powers under the law, and the authority to direct staff in relation to the performance of those functions.

A special financial account will also be established for the commission to ensure financial independence, and the commissioner will have responsibility for day-to-day management of the account.

The commission will be required to report to the Minister for Employment annually on its activities, and that report will be tabled in parliament. The commissioner will appear at Senate estimates.

The activities of the commission will also be subject to the same oversight by the Commonwealth Ombudsman as Commonwealth agencies. This will ensure the appropriate level of transparency and public accountability.

As is common with statutory office holders, the minister will be able to give directions of a general nature to the commissioner. These directions must be in writing and will be disallowable instruments. For the avoidance of any doubt, I want to be absolutely clear that the minister will not have any powers to give directions as to a particular matter or investigation.

The bill also provides for information sharing between the Fair Work Commission and the Registered Organisations Commission to the extent that is required for both organisations to do their job effectively and efficiently. This is required, as several administrative tasks relating to registered organisations will continue to be the responsibility of the General Manager of the Fair Work Commission.

Transitional arrangements have been included in the bill to ensure any ongoing matters being dealt with by the Fair Work Commission relating to registered organisations can be dealt with by the Registered Organisations Commission.

As well as establishing a strong, independent regulator, the bill introduces reporting and disclosure requirements and enhanced penalties for wrongdoing.

Many registered organisations control assets worth millions of dollars—they are effectively dealing with the cash flow and investments similar to those of large businesses.

That is why the bill introduces financial and operational reporting requirements for registered organisations that align with those in the Corporations Act. This will strengthen existing financial reporting, disclosure and transparency obligations for registered organisations and officers.

It is entirely appropriate to expect a high standard of financial reporting from our registered organisations, given the trust members place in their unions and employer associations to operate honestly and to use the funds derived from their membership fees to represent their interests rather than for ulterior purposes. Registered organisations have substantial economic, legal and political influence. It is clearly inconsistent with community expectations for such organisations to operate to lower standards than those that apply to corporations or other comparable bodies.
Registered organisations will need to disclose remuneration paid to their top five officers in the head office and any branches. Officers will be required to disclose their material personal interests to all members. This means disclosing the personal interests of officers and their relatives, and declaring any payments made to persons or entities in which an officer has declared an interest. This aims to prevent individuals from improperly benefiting from their role in the organisation—for example, by an officer procuring goods or services from a company they hold some interest in without disclosing that interest and an appropriate and transparent process not being followed.

Registered organisations will be required to provide a summary of this information to members in an 'officer and related party disclosure statement' and lodge it with the commission.

While the Corporations Act only requires directors to disclose conflicts of interest to their fellow directors, the government believes that officers of registered organisations should be required to disclose such matters to members, as they are elected by members to represent their interests. Members deserve to know who is in control of their money and where any conflicts might exist.

Mr Thomson and Mr Williamson have shown us that the existing regulation does not sufficiently protect members' interests. Unfortunately, there will always be less scrupulous individuals who will seek to take advantage of their positions when standards of accountability and the risk of getting caught are low.

In the face of this kind of behaviour, a strong message needs to be sent to discourage wrongdoing by officers and to rebuild the confidence of members and the community. Enhanced reporting and disclosure requirements and a strong and efficient regulator will have little impact if the penalties for wrongdoing are not high enough to act as a deterrent.

Currently, registered organisations and officers do not face the same consequences as companies and directors for wrongdoing. That is why the government is introducing significantly higher civil penalties and a range of criminal penalties for those registered organisations and officials who do the wrong thing. These penalties are in line with those facing companies and directors who break the law.

In relation to civil penalty breaches, the maximum penalty for serious contraventions will be 1,200 penalty units for an individual or 6,000 penalty units for a body corporate. This will apply to serious contraventions. What will constitute a serious contravention is defined in the bill. Other breaches will be exposed to a maximum civil penalty of 100 penalty units for an individual or 500 for a body corporate. By way of comparison, the current maximum penalties for even the worst misbehaviour are only 60 penalty units for individuals. The Federal Court will also have the power to disqualify an officer from holding office where a civil penalty provision has been contravened and the court is satisfied that disqualification is justified.

Criminal penalties are being introduced for serious breaches of officers' duties as well as offences in relation to the conduct of investigations under the Registered Organisations Act. The maximum penalties in these areas are 2,000 penalty units or five years imprisonment or both.

Broadly, these offences relate to officers and employees of registered organisations who fail to exercise their powers or discharge duties in good faith and for a proper purpose. It also
applies where an officer uses their position to gain advantage for themselves or someone else or uses information gained while an officer or employee to gain an advantage for themselves or someone else.

Criminal sanctions will also apply where an officer does not comply with the Commissioner's new investigation powers. These sanctions align with the penalties that apply to noncompliance with an ASIC investigation and will ensure that officers of registered organisations take their obligations and the directions of the commissioner seriously.

Some registered organisations have indicated concern that the new penalties will mean that they will have difficulty persuading people to take on official responsibilities. The government does not agree.

The only people who have anything to fear are those who do the wrong thing. A rigorous structure and processes will be in place for investigation and prosecution of alleged wrongdoing. Officers who are operating within the law, which is the overwhelming majority of them, will have no reason to fear taking on official responsibilities. The overwhelming number of officers who are already doing the right thing should be comforted in knowing that the unlawful behaviour will be dealt with, thus ensuring ongoing member confidence in registered organisations as a whole.

The coalition government firmly believes that there should be no difference between the penalties levied against a company director who misuses shareholders' funds and a registered organisations boss who misuses members' money.

I recognise the broad community consensus for the government's amendments, including from one of Australia's most prominent union bosses, Mr Paul Howes of the Australian Workers Union, who told the ABC on 26 November 2012:

I actually believe there is a higher responsibility for us as guardians of workers' money to protect that money and to act diligently and honestly.

The reality is I do not have any issue with increasing the level of requirements and penalties on trade unions for breaching basic ethics like misappropriation of funds.

That was what Paul Howes said.

The government's intention is to see the Registered Organisations Commission begin operation from early 2014, with new disclosure and reporting obligations, higher civil penalties and new criminal sanctions coming into effect from 1 July 2014.

This timing aligns with the reporting obligations on a financial year basis and will provide registered organisations and officers with time to become familiar with the new obligations and the penalties associated with those obligations.

In developing the bill, the government consulted with National Workplace Relations Consultative Council members through the Committee on Industrial Legislation, including employer and employee associations. The government made a number of key changes to the bill, as well as several minor and technical amendments, in response to the feedback we received. The government thanks these committee members for taking the time to review the draft legislation.

I understand that some members suggested that the bill should be delayed. The government believes there is no time to lose in implementing these important safeguards for the operation of registered organisations and their members.
Again, the only people who have anything to fear by these amendments are those who are doing the wrong thing. Anyone in this place who has a regard for the members of registered organisations and their money will support this bill.

Any political party that refuses to support this greater accountability and transparency for registered organisations is voting to give the green light to more of the same behaviour that we have seen from Mr Michael Williamson and Mr Craig Thomson. It is simply no longer tenable to argue that the present system is adequate to deal with or discourage this kind of behaviour.

The government believes the bill sets a suitably high standard for the governance and regulation of registered organisations. It responds to the legitimate concerns of members of registered organisations and the community as a result of the shocking behaviour of certain Health Services Union officials. Only those officers who do the wrong thing have anything to lose from these changes. Members of registered organisations and the community have everything to gain. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

**Customs Amendment (Anti-Dumping Commission Transfer) Bill 2013**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Macfarlane.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr IAN MACFARLANE (Groom—Minister for Industry) (10:51): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This is a government that strongly supports genuine free and fair trade and an open and dynamic market economy. An effective trade—remedies regime is integral to a robust international trading system. It is also critical to our broader plan to boost the competitiveness of Australian manufacturing, as outlined in our August 2013 policy statement.

We are not talking about protectionism but about creating and maintaining a level playing field for all industry in Australia.

Australia’s current regime for combating injurious dumping and subsidisation is transparent and complies with our obligations under the World Trade Organization agreements. But there is clearly room to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the system—and that is exactly what we plan to do.

To show we mean business, we are moving responsibility for antidumping matters to the Industry portfolio. This will allow those considering requests for antidumping action to benefit from the considerable experience and knowledge held across the Industry portfolio. It will also free up the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service to concentrate on other matters of importance to this government.

Processes have already been put in place to ensure that I, as Minister for Industry, have the power to make decisions on antidumping matters. However, under current Customs legislation, the administrator of Australia’s antidumping system—the Anti-Dumping Commission—remains part of the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service.
This bill contains the changes to Customs and other legislation needed to separate the Anti-Dumping Commission from the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. This will allow the commission to transfer to the Department of Industry, where it will be better placed.

Speedy passage of this legislation will ensure that the transfer of the antidumping function to the Industry portfolio is completed as soon as possible.

The transfer of antidumping to the Industry portfolio is only the first step in our plan to strengthen Australia's antidumping system. We are committed to further improvements to the system that will boost the competitiveness of Australia's manufacturing sector, enabling it to better perform its critical role in our economy. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS
Aviation Safety Regulation Review

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (10:54): by leave—Australia has an enviable record in aviation safety—our safety performance is among the best in the world—and it is built on a strong regulatory system and the commitment to safety that is shared amongst the thousands of companies and the tens of thousands of individuals who make up our aviation industry.

Aviation is an essential part of our economy—it links our regions to our cities, our cities to the world. The industry employs tens of thousands of Australians and supports investment and innovation, but it is also an enabler for broader economic activity, particularly outside of our major population centres.

Our aviation industry is growing strongly—and is expected to double in size in the next 20 years. We are also witnessing a myriad of changes:

• the growth of new routes and markets with resulting changes in risk;
• new air traffic management technology;
• the introduction of new aircraft types and larger aircraft, with more sophisticated technology on board, and more complex support requirements on the ground;
• the rapid growth of emerging segments of the industry such as recreational aviation;
• increasing difficulty for the general aviation sector to cope with a more complex regulatory system; and
• increasingly, an industry that must be able to compete internationally.

Any regulatory system must evolve to keep pace with the industry it regulates. Given the speed with which the aviation industry evolves, the need for continued improvement in the aviation safety regulatory system is even more critical than in many other sectors. So now is the right time to reflect and take stock of how our safety regulatory system is placed to deal with this economically important industry. The coalition government is determined to make sure that we do everything we possibly can to make our safety system even better.

Today, I am pleased to inform the House that the Australian government has met its commitment and commissioned an independent review of aviation safety regulation. This is a key element of the aviation policy we took to the last election. The review—to be undertaken by a panel of three eminent and experienced members of the international aviation
community—will examine how well our regulatory system is positioned to ensure we remain at the forefront of aviation safety globally. This review will consider the structures, effectiveness and processes of all agencies involved in aviation safety, and the relationships and interactions of those agencies as they work together in one system. It will consider the outcomes and direction of the regulatory reform process undertaken by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, and it will benchmark our safety regulations and regulatory systems against other leading countries. Safety will always remain the government's highest priority in aviation policy. That will never change.

In delivering on that unwavering commitment we can, and should, make sure we are regulating in a smart and efficient manner. The government has a clear policy of reducing the cost of regulation to business, and this goal will be part of the review. If there are ways to improve our safety outcomes and reduce the regulatory burden and the costs imposed on industry, then we can create a win-win outcome for the Australian economy overall. In doing this, I acknowledge the concerns being expressed by some sectors of the aviation industry, in particular, general and regional aviation, about the costs of regulatory compliance and how outcomes of the current aviation safety regulatory reform program compare with regulatory approaches in other countries.

The review will also consider matters raised in the report of the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Inquiry into Aviation Accident Investigations. That inquiry, with its long and detailed examination, highlighted a number of issues with our air safety regime that warrant further consideration. The committee's report will be a valuable perspective for the review panel.

I am very pleased with the breadth and depth of expertise that we have secured to conduct this review. Mr David Forsyth, a respected aviation engineer and former airline executive, current chairman of Safeskies Australia, and former chairman of Airservices Australia, will chair the review panel, bringing over 30 years of experience in safety management and aviation business. Made a Member of the Order of Australia in 2013 for his significant service to the aviation industry, Mr Forsyth will bring his leadership and safety experience to this important task.

To deliver an international perspective, he will be joined on the panel by Mr Don Spruston from Canada and Mr Roger Whitefield from the United Kingdom.

Mr Spruston was, until recently, Director-General of the International Business Aviation Council. He is a former Director-General of Civil Aviation and Transport Canada and a former adviser to the International Civil Aviation Organization, where he helped develop the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Program which is now used across the globe as a means of assessing the health of national safety oversight systems.

Mr Whitefield combines over 30 years experience as a pilot and senior executive with British Airways with 10 years experience as a board member on the UK Civil Aviation Authority, giving him insights into both the regulation and the operation of civil aviation internationally. He was an external adviser to the Qantas Safety Board for six years and is Chairman of Air Safety Support International.

Together, the panel brings together a broad and complementary range of aviation experience across technical, operational, regulatory and management roles in both the public
and private sectors. The panel will also be supported, as required, by specialist advisers to assist on specific aspects of the review. The specialist advisers will ensure that the perspectives of different sectors are heard.

I recognise that it is particularly difficult for the diverse general aviation sector to have its voice heard in a review like this and so I have asked Mr Phillip Reiss, President of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association of Australia, to take a particular responsibility as a specialist adviser to ensure that the concerns of general aviation and regional operators are well aired. His experience will provide valuable insight and technical expertise to the panel. But this panel, no matter how expert, could not take forward the review process without listening to the views and input of the aviation industry and members of the Australian community, and I would expect that many people will wish to contribute their views to the review. The review panel will engage with industry and other stakeholders, with a period of public consultation to take place over the coming months. Further details will be available on my department's website in the near future.

The review I am announcing today will be systemic and strategic in nature. It will not be reopening previous air safety investigations nor will it be a forum to resolve individual complaints or grievances. It is about the future regulatory challenges and growing our industry.

This government is determined to make sure that we do everything we possibly can to make a good safety system even better. I have moved quickly to establish this review and, to maintain momentum, I have asked the panel to report its findings to me by May 2014.

The aviation sector in Australia is vitally important for our economy and for the wellbeing of Australians. We must ensure that we foster an aviation industry that is dynamic, growing and overseen by a regulatory system that delivers the highest level of safety.

I table the ministerial statement and the terms of reference for the review. I ask the House for leave to move a motion to enable the member for Grayndler to speak for 8½ minutes.

Leave granted.

Mr TRUSS: I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the member for Grayndler for speaking in reply to the minister's statement for a period not exceeding 8½ minutes.

Leave granted.

Mr TRUSS: I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the member for Grayndler for speaking in reply to the minister's statement for a period not exceeding 8½ minutes.

Question agreed to.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (11:03): Labor welcomes the minister's statement and the announcement of a further review into the regulation of aviation safety. As the minister said, this country has an enviable record of aviation safety, the result of governments of either political persuasion taking a nonpartisan approach to this issue, as is entirely appropriate. During the period in which the current minister was the shadow minister, when it came to safety and security issues they were dealt with in a manner above politics, and I intend to adopt exactly the same approach. It is absolutely critical that safety not be an issue which becomes part of the political contest.

It is also the case that, when it comes to aviation safety, we can never be too cautious. Continuous improvement must always be our aim, and our pursuit of the best possible aviation safety framework must always be beyond politics. When I became the minister, I
commissioned significant reform to the aviation sector through a properly planned green and white paper process. That was the first time that Australia had put in place a comprehensive plan for aviation that went to safety and security, regulatory issues, workforce-planning issues, the general aviation sector and international agreements, so it was a comprehensive plan, not for just a year or two; it was a comprehensive plan for decades ahead.

All the recommendations on safety and security were put in place by the government. We had a process for a strategic plan, including accelerating the modernisation of Australian regulation. I would hope that this review takes it to the next stage. We introduced a board of governance for CASA, chaired by Allan Hawke—a process that received the support of the parliament. In terms of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, we improved its governance structures as well by having commissioners and by extending the ATSB's responsibilities to also look at rail and shipping, so that you had a comprehensive approach to transport safety issues.

I think this plan has got it right by looking forward and making sure that it looks at the strategic framework and the balance that must be there between appropriate safety, regulation and costs. The minister referred to that and I would agree with that. I would say this, though: there should be no compromise in terms of safety being the absolute priority—something I am sure that the minister agrees with.

I also welcome the appointment of David Forsyth to chair the review. I know David well. I appointed him to chair the board of Airservices Australia in 2008, a position he held with great distinction until last year. Under Mr Forsyth's leadership the board led a major program of investment in critical safety infrastructure, air traffic services and training of skilled personnel.

About $1 billion is being invested in upgrades for air services. We have seen new air traffic control towers. I have opened them not only in capital cities such as Adelaide but also in regional centres such as the Sunshine Coast and Broome. The air traffic control process is also being streamlined to achieve greater cooperation between defence systems and the civil aviation sector.

I am also pleased that the coalition has appointed overseas experts to this review because, in an industry that is by definition international, it is critical that we consider overseas experience.

In fact, just before the recent federal election, I welcomed the ATSB's decision to invite the Canadian Transportation Safety Bureau to undertake an independent review of the ATSB's investigation methodologies and processes.

That review commenced in August. It aims to provide the ATSB with valuable insights about possible improvements in the conduct of investigations. It is due to report to the minister next year, and I look forward to discussing that process with him. I am pleased that Mr Forsyth will be joined in this new review by Don Spruston from Canada and Roger Whitefield from the UK. Both men are indeed highly qualified.

In conclusion, the aviation sector injects some $7 billion into the Australian economy each year. Australia has an enviable record of aviation safety, but we should not be complacent at any time. We need to ensure that we keep our personnel appropriately trained and skilled and be prepared to provide proper resourcing.
In 2010, I was very proud that Labor announced an additional $90 million in funding over four years to provide CASA with long-term funding stability. That was not an easy process to get through our cabinet, but people recognised that this was a priority. I would say to the minister that it is important that the resourcing from government to these organisations in charge of safety and security also be kept up. This extra assistance that we provided has allowed the authority to better meet the demands of a growing and ever more complex domestic and international industry.

The proliferation of low-cost carriers, the huge growth of fly-in fly-out airline and helicopter services, and the emergence of unmanned aerial systems are just some of the big challenges facing aviation safety. Others include new aircraft types and the wider use of satellite based technologies. There is always a balance to be struck between safety regulation and cost. This balancing is best done by experts, not politicians.

I welcome the minister's acknowledgement today that Australia's safety performance is among the best in the world and that it is built on a strong regulatory system. The opposition will follow the review and carefully consider its recommendations when they come forth in May.

I say to the minister that I believe it would be appropriate that there be a confidential briefing given to the opposition before the release of the recommendations. I have committed to him, publicly as well as in private, to ensure that these issues continue to be held as those not the subject of political debate. As I say, I pledge cooperation with him on this matter and give credit to him for the way in which he dealt with difficult issues such as the introduction of body scanners here in Australia, which was introduced without political rancour and with bipartisan support.

**BILLS**

**Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Consumer Protection) Bill 2013**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Turnbull.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (11:12): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Consumer Protection) Bill 2013 introduces important amendments to reduce the administrative burden of telecommunications legislation on industry; enhance consumer protections; and ensure the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman scheme is periodically reviewed and updated to meet best practice standards.

In a rapidly changing communications environment it is essential that the codes under which the industry operates can be readily updated in response to new technology and changing service standards and that Australian consumers can have problems with their telecommunications services quickly resolved.
I note that these legislative measures were introduced in a very similar form by the former government prior to the September election and that the earlier version of this bill received bipartisan and industry support at the time.

This bill contains several key measures.

The bill enhances the operational efficiency of the Do Not Call Register Act 2006 by clarifying the meaning of 'cause' in that act in relation to the party responsible for making a telemarketing call or sending a marketing fax.

Approximately nine million telephone numbers are listed on the Do Not Call Register, including two-thirds of Australian households with a fixed line home telephone and close to four million mobile telephone numbers.

Amendments included in this bill will provide the Australian Communications and Media Authority with the ability to undertake more effective enforcement action in relation to unsolicited telemarketing calls and marketing faxes.

The amendments being made will also clarify responsibility for unsolicited marketing calls and faxes so that a party contracting with an intermediary that makes telemarketing calls or sends telemarketing faxes cannot evade responsibility for compliance with the Do Not Call Register by using intermediaries of that kind on their behalf.

The proposed amendments to the Telecommunications Act 1997 included in this bill will simplify the process of updating the body of industry codes that form the basis of the telecommunications industry's self and co-regulatory framework.

These codes cover, among other things, consumer protections, technical matters, operational and inter-operator arrangements. They are registered—and when necessary enforced—by the ACMA.

Under existing legislation, making changes to a registered code has required that the entire document be opened up for formal revision—a process that at times has entailed more than a year of work by multiple stakeholders.

These amendments will allow code developers to maintain robust and dynamic industry codes by enabling them to be varied or amended, rather than being replaced in their entirety, subject to the approval of the ACMA.

Additionally, the amendments:

- extend the reimbursement scheme for developing consumer related industry codes to also apply to variations of those codes; and
- improve the transparency of code development by requiring draft codes and most submissions to be published on the code developer's website.

The telecommunications industry has welcomed the proposed amendments to the Telecommunications Act which will also facilitate a planned program to reduce the co-regulatory burden on the sector by streamlining and consolidating requirements where these are duplicated within multiple codes.

Such measures will complement this government's broader efforts to reduce the red-tape burden on all sectors of the Australian economy which we intend to lead to savings of $1 billion per year.
Lastly, the bill also introduces amendments to provide greater regulatory clarity around the role of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) and its expected standards of operation. These amendments were developed in response to recommendations from a 2012 review of the TIO scheme.

The bill achieves this objective by requiring the TIO scheme to comply with standards determined by legislative instrument made by the minister.

The bill also requires the TIO scheme to be independently reviewed and provide for consultation with the public and the ACMA. The TIO will be required to publish a final review report on its website and respond to any review recommendations within a specific time frame.

These amendments will ensure the TIO scheme continues to operate as a best practice alternative dispute resolution service—a great example of the industry solving consumer problems rather than relying on government regulation.

The various amendments in this bill are not contentious and have the support of industry, regulatory authorities and consumer representatives.

There is no doubt the communications landscape is entering a critical phase where changes in technology are making traditional regulatory frameworks either inefficient or redundant. This bill removes certain regulatory rigidities while preserving transparency and accountability for telecommunications consumers.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Submarine Cable Protection) Bill 2013

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Turnbull.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (11:18): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Submarine cables are a vital part of Australia's telecommunications infrastructure. They carry almost all of the international internet traffic in and out of Australia. They are a vital link for Australia to the global telecommunications network and the global digital economy.

Submarine cables have been in use for telephonic and telegraphic purposes for over 150 years, beginning with submarine telegraph cables laid across the English Channel in 1851 and then, after several failed attempts, across the Atlantic Ocean in 1866. The first connection between Australia and the rest of the world by submarine cable was the Java to Port Darwin telegraph link in 1872. This in turn was connected to the southern capitals by the iconic Overland Telegraph Line built by Charles Todd.

These first submarine cables carried telegraph messages only. The signal attenuation over the long cable runs would not permit voice traffic, let alone the transmission of images. The early cables did not have the technical ability to amplify their signals, so it was not until the
introduction and development of coaxial cable and in-cable amplifiers and repeaters in 1956 that voice traffic over submarine cables was possible. Until then, from the 1920s, international voice traffic was carried over radio.

I should note, by way of reflection, that the cost of transmission on the first transatlantic submarine cable in 1866—when a dollar was really worth a dollar—was $5 a word. It is interesting to reflect on the vast amounts of data that are transmitted from one end of the worth to the other at no cost or very negligible cost to the consumer, particularly relative to the past.

In the 20th century, submarine cable technology evolved—first, as I said, with the repeaters and coaxial cable technology in the fifties and then, most significantly and momentously, in the late eighties when fibre optic cables became available and enabled the transmission of vast quantities of information. Modern submarine cables typically provide multiple terabits per second of capacity when deployed and can be further upgraded, positioning them to meet future traffic demands.

As an island nation, Australia and its economy is especially dependent on submarine cables. As such, damage to submarine cables can have a significant impact. There are currently seven international submarine cables connecting to Australia that are in operation. The main players are Southern Cross Cable Ltd which operates the Southern Cross Cable, PIPE International which operates PPC-1, Telstra which operates APNG-2 and Telstra Endeavour, and Singtel and Reach which operate the SEA-ME-WE 3 cable.

It is worth noting that prior to the late 1990s, globally, cables were constructed by consortia of carriers. They typically were called club cables. It was first in the late 1990s that private cables started to be built by companies like Level 3, Global Crossing, Tyco and others—PSInet, for example. Indeed, there was a boom in the cable construction business in the late 1990s, and it is worth reflecting that it was said at the time that many of these cable proposals had business plans estimating that they would get 60 per cent of the market share. Given that so many were being constructed at the same time, that was obviously not achievable. Many of them went into bankruptcy, but the assets remained. Creditors lost most of their money, but the assets remained, and, over time, demand has caught up with the extraordinary increase in capacity. I remember this period very well, because I was a director of the Telstra/PCCW cable company called Reach, which was operating the merged international cable assets of Telstra and Hong Kong Telecom.

In Australia, all of the cables were consortia cables, or club cables, until 2008. Beginning then, a number of private cables, including PIPE International's, for example—at that time it was headed by Bevan Slattery—started to be built, and there are more in the pipeline, if you will forgive the pun, in the future.

There are very considerable risks associated with submarine cables. When you consider that it is estimated that 99 per cent of the world’s international internet traffic is carried on these cables, the House can see the dependence we have on them. Their breakage, their interruption, can have enormous consequences. This is why the physical placement of these cables is of considerable importance. There is a single-point-of-failure issue if too many cables are located in the same pathway and go to the same access points. The most notorious example of this was in December 2008 when the cable station off Alexandria in Egypt saw an anchor cut three of the four cables connecting Europe to the Middle East. Those three cables
carried over 90 per cent of all of the internet traffic between Europe and the Middle East, and, for example, India lost up to 80 per cent of its connectivity, the Maldives lost 100 per cent, and the impact on all of the countries of the Middle East and further east was very considerable. So, protecting the security of submarine cables is a very serious issue.

Most cable breakages are accidental. This is also true, by the way, of fixed-line terrestrial networks. The engineers talk about the dangers of shovel strike—over-zealous gardeners and backhoes cutting through cables. But with these very important subsea cables there is also the risk of deliberate attack. Cables were cut by the combatants in the Second World War—the British cut the German cables and the Royal Australian Navy cut Japanese telegram cables off Indochina during the Second World War. There is a vulnerability, not just in times of war, but to terrorist attack. It is a point of vulnerability that the House should be very conscious of.

Fortunately, the previous coalition government was very well aware of this and, in 2005, it established a regime for the protection of international submarine cables landing in Australia, in the form of schedule 3A of the Telecommunications Act 1997.

The regime gives the industry regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority, or the ACMA, the power to establish protection zones around international submarine cables of national significance. In protection zones, certain activities are prohibited or restricted from taking place including some kinds of fishing, trawling and mining.

The regime also establishes an installation permit system. Carriers seeking to install an international submarine cable that will land in Australia must apply for a permit to install the cable.

To date, the ACMA has declared three protection zones—the north and south Sydney protection zones and the Perth Protection Zone. Since the introduction of the regime, there have been no reported incidents of cable damage in Australian waters.

Australia's regime has been praised by both the International Cable Protection Committee and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation as a global best practice regulatory example for the protection of submarine cables.

In 2010, the ACMA undertook a statutory review of schedule 3A. Based on feedback received from industry, the ACMA made several recommendations to improve the operation of the regime.

These recommendations form the basis of the amendments proposed in the bill, along with other proposals that have been identified by the government and stakeholders that will further enhance the regime.

The amendments fall into five categories.

First, the bill will ensure consistency between our cable protection regime and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, also known as UNCLOS. UNCLOS sets out coastal nations’ rights and obligations in relation to the seas and oceans, including Australia's right to regulate foreign ships and persons beyond its territorial sea.

While it has not been a practical issue to date because the ACMA is required to consider UNCLOS when it exercises its powers, some concerns have been expressed that the regime may seek to regulate foreign nationals for certain actions in waters of the exclusive economic zone or continental shelf in a manner inconsistent with international law, including UNCLOS.
To the extent that the regime is used as a model by other jurisdictions, this carries the risk that other jurisdictions may replicate this model.

The bill addresses this by modifying the regime's application, including criminal and civil enforcement options, to foreign ships and nationals in the waters beyond Australia's territorial sea.

Second, the bill will provide a structured process for the consideration of matters within the Attorney-General's portfolio in relation to submarine cable installation permit applications by:

- requiring the ACMA to consult with the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department on installation permit applications; and
- giving the Attorney-General power, after consultation with the Minister for Communications and the Prime Minister, to direct the ACMA to refuse a permit on security grounds.

During the consultation period, the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department may make a submission on the permit application, which may include a recommendation about the conditions that should be specified in the permit.

These are mechanisms to enable matters including security, international law and native title that may affect submarine cable installations to be considered.

The changes formalise existing practice. The proposed provisions are based on the current carrier licence application provisions under the Telecommunications Act and are familiar to industry.

Third, the bill will enable significant domestic submarine cables—that is, cables that connect two places in Australia—to be brought under the regime and be suitably protected under the regime if appropriate. The bill will give the Governor-General power to specify in regulations that a domestic cable or route warrants protection. The ACMA would then have discretion to decide whether a protection zone should be declared around that cable or route.

Consultation would be required before any regulations were made and any new protection zones specified. Carriers will also be able to install domestic submarine cables in protection zones by applying for a permit to do so. This is something not currently possible under the regime as currently in force.

Fourth, the bill will streamline the installation permit process so that:

- carriers only need to apply for and obtain one type of permit to land a cable in Australia (whereas now they could require two applications, one for a permit zone and one for outside it);
- the default timeframe for processing a non-protection zone permit application will be reduced from 180 days to 60 business days; and
- processes under the regime that duplicate existing processes under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 are removed.

These amendments will reduce red and green tape—a key focus of our new government and something I will have a lot more to say about in the coming months with regards to the telecommunications sector.
Fifth, the bill will make several administrative and technical amendments to enhance the overall operation of the bill. This includes:

- expanding the list of authorities the ACMA must notify when it declares, varies or revokes a protection zone to include relevant authorities involved in sea monitoring, offshore law enforcement and management activities; for example the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service;
- permitting minor deviations to the routes of submarine cables;
- requiring permit applicants to notify the ACMA of any changes to their application;
- permitting the ACMA to publish a summary of a proposal to declare, vary or revoke a protection zone in the newspapers and the electronic Commonwealth Gazette, while ensuring the full proposal to be published on its website;
- requiring the ACMA to provide reasons if it declares a protection zone that is different to the original request; and
- clarifying that prohibited or restricted activities in a protection zone do not include activities associated with maintenance or repair of a submarine cable.

To support the legislative framework, the government continues to work with stakeholders both domestically and internationally to increase the resilience of submarine cables to disruption. Australia is the first government member of the International Cable Protection Committee, a peak international body that brings together submarine cable owners and operators and national governments to discuss issues associated with submarine cables.

Australia is one of only a handful of nations that has a dedicated regime for the protection of submarine cables. The bill will ensure that Australia's regime continues to be a best practice regime and the protection the regime affords to this vital infrastructure is maintained.

Submarine cables ensure our connectedness to the rest of the world. They are vital components of our telecommunications infrastructure.

The private sector has responded well to growth in the demand for international submarine cable capacity, and is well aware of the potential for future traffic growth. Further investments in cables, especially on the Perth to Singapore route, have been announced by the Nextgen Group, SubPartners and Trident. The SubPartners proposal, I notice, involves a plan to also have a connection through to Jakarta. Several cables off the east coast of Australia have also been announced. SubPartners and Hawaiki Pty Ltd have announced proposals to construct cables connecting Australia and the United States. Telstra, Vodafone NZ and Telecom NZ have recently announced a joint venture to build an additional cable between Australia and New Zealand.

But connectedness is not just about ensuring our submarine cables or satellite links or even backhaul fibre are of a high standard—it is just as much about ensuring that Australian mums and dads, school kids or small business people can take advantage of the resources and opportunities of the internet.

That is why the government is delivering a better NBN. Our NBN will deliver fast internet sooner to Australians at less cost to taxpayers and at a more affordable price for consumers.

Unlike Labor, we have committed to prioritising the NBN rollout in areas with the poorest services so that those who currently cannot connect, or have the poorest speeds, get fast
broadband sooner. Under Labor many areas with poor broadband services would have been waiting for 10 or more years—and we will learn more about that when the strategic review is completed—before being connected while many with access to fast broadband received further upgrades ahead of those in need.

I note that only last week I inspected an area in Blacktown where the NBN fibre rollout is proceeding. In those streets where the fibre was being deployed there was available not only Telstra HFC cable but Optus HFC cable. So the residents of those streets are able to acquire, without the NBN, a 100-megabit service from Telstra or indeed from Optus; but no doubt for reasons of electoral rather than telecommunications priorities the NBN was being rolled out in that street.

By rolling out a more affordable NBN with greater potential for competition we will also ensure that more families will be able to afford a home internet connection. We have to recognise that the biggest barrier to accessing the internet in Australia is not actually poor technical facilities. That is a factor for many households, I grant you, but the biggest single barrier is affordability. So ensuring that a broadband network is built speedily and cost effectively will ensure that it is affordable. An overexpensed, overcapitalised National Broadband Network will only result in more Australians on low incomes being locked out of access to the digital economy. That is something we will not countenance.

The coalition's approach to broadband and to the internet is absolutely embracing the whole excitement of global connectedness, whether it is in Australian households, schools and businesses or under the oceans. I am delighted that this bill will strengthen the laws related to the submarine cables that connect us to the world, just as I am excited about our plan for a better NBN which will mean that more Australians will be able to connect to and take part in the digital economy than ever before. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2013

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Hunt.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (11:40): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me begin by congratulating you on your appointment. It is a great honour and a well-deserved one.

This bill makes amendments to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) (the EPBC Act) and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975 (Cth) (the Marine Park Act).

The EPBC Act provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places.

More specifically, the EPBC Act protects Australia's native species by providing for the identification and listing of species, the development and use of conservation advice and
recovery plans for listed species; and criminal offences relating to certain activities, including the killing or injuring of listed species without a permit.

The Marine Park Act also provides for the conservation of protected species through zoning, issuing of permits and implementation of plans of management. The Marine Park Act includes aggravated civil and criminal offences for killing or injuring a protected species which includes listed threatened, marine or migratory species under the EPBC Act.

The EPBC Act and Marine Park Act are well acknowledged for achieving a high level of protection for the environment. Nevertheless, the need for improvements has arisen as a result of recent case law and, separately, concerns were raised with me by the member for Leichhardt, the Hon. Warren Entsch, and others about ongoing illegal poaching and trading of turtles and dugong.

This bill amends various sections of the EPBC Act and Marine Park Act including:

- amendments to provide legal certainty for decisions that require the minister to have regard to approved conservation advice for relevant threatened species or ecological community; and
- amendments to provide additional protection for turtles and dugong under the EPBC Act and the Marine Park Act.

These amendments will provide legal certainty to industry stakeholders and strengthen environmental protection for turtles and dugong.

**Conservation advice amendments**

Approved conservation advice contains information on key threats to a threatened species or ecological community and actions needed to aid the recovery of the species or ecological community.

The EPBC Act currently provides that the decision maker must have regard to approved conservation advices in making certain decisions under the EPBC Act, for example, when making a decision about whether to approve an action.

The need for the amendments has arisen as a result of a recent Federal Court decision (Tarkine National Coalition Incorporated v Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities [2013] FCA 694). In that decision, the Federal Court declared an approval for a project invalid because the court found that the decision maker did not have regard to a relevant approved conservation advice.

The bill makes amendments to the EPBC Act to provide that decisions would not be invalid on this basis.

Importantly, the requirement to have regard to a relevant approved conservation advice has not been affected in any other way.

The amendments apply retrospectively to ensure that past decisions are not put at risk of being invalid. This will provide certainty for industry stakeholders with existing decisions and the projects that rely on those decisions. The amendments will also apply to future decisions to avoid similar issues arising.
**Turtle and dugong amendments**

Turtles and dugong are highly regarded by Australians for their ecological value as well as their cultural and spiritual importance.

All six species of marine turtles found in Australian waters are listed as threatened under the EPBC Act, with loggerhead, leatherback and olive ridleys listed as endangered; while green, hawksbill and flatback turtles are listed as vulnerable. Dugongs and turtles are also listed as both migratory and marine species under the EPBC Act. Further, turtles and dugongs are protected species under the Marine Park Act.

The EPBC Act currently contains various criminal offences relating to the killing, injuring, taking, trading, keeping or moving of turtles and dugongs where they are a listed threatened, migratory or marine species. Likewise, the Marine Park Act currently contains criminal offences and civil penalty provisions which apply to the taking of, or injury to, turtles and dugongs where they are a protected species under that act.

Concerns have been raised with me that the current penalty provisions in the EPBC Act and Marine Park Act are not high enough to protect turtles and dugongs from the increasing threats of poaching, illegal hunting, and illegal transportation and trade.

Accordingly, on 15 August 2013 the government announced our 'Dugong and Turtle Protection Plan' which aims to protect the dugong and turtle population of Far North Queensland and the Torres Strait Islands. I acknowledge the considerable work that has already been undertaken by Indigenous communities, and in particular by Indigenous rangers, to ensure the protection and sustainability of turtle and dugong populations. I especially want to thank Indigenous leaders, such as James Epong, Larissa Hale, and the dugong and turtle task force, and Melissa George, who is the chair of the government's Indigenous Advisory Committee and a board member of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, for their work.

As part of the Dugong and Turtle Protection Plan, we made a commitment to 'within six months … introduce federal legislation tripling the penalties for poaching and illegal transportation of turtle and dugong meat.' We also committed to support a specialised Indigenous ranger program for marine conservation along the Far North Queensland coast and for strengthened enforcement and compliance. I particularly thank Colin Riddell, Kenton Campbell and Bob Irwin for their advocacy and leadership in pushing for a dugong and turtle protection plan.

The Dugong and Turtle Protection Plan forms part of this government's Reef 2050 Plan to ensure that we have long term and sustainable management of the Great Barrier Reef.

The bill implements this policy commitment by amending the EPBC Act and the Marine Park Act to increase criminal and civil penalties for:

- killing, injuring, taking, trading, keeping or moving a turtle or a dugong in a Commonwealth marine area; and
- taking or injuring turtles and dugongs within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The increased penalties will deter people from committing offences or breaching civil penalty provisions under the acts, thereby providing additional protection for turtles and dugongs from the threats of poaching, illegal hunting and illegal transportation and trade.
Under the Native Title Act 1993 (Cth), native title holders have a right to exercise native title rights to harvest marine turtles and dugongs for the purpose of personal, domestic, or non-commercial communal needs. These native title rights will not be affected by the bill.

This bill demonstrates the Australian government's commitment to the conservation of turtles and dugong and, as part of the government's Reef 2050 Plan, strengthens our capacity to preserve the Great Barrier Reef as an important feature of national and world heritage for future generations.

I thank all of those involved, particularly within the department, as well as the Indigenous community and the North Queensland community, for their work, for their advice and for their advocacy. I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

**Tax Laws Amendment (Research and Development) Bill 2013**

*First Reading*

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Ciobo.

Bill read a first time.

*Second Reading*

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (11:50): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your ascension.

This bill reintroduces a measure that was introduced by the previous government but lapsed when the last parliament was prorogued.

The measure targets access to the research and development (R&D) tax incentive to the small and medium sized entities that are more responsive to increasing their R&D spending as a result of government incentives. In other words, it reduces waste by ensuring that government incentives for R&D are applied in a more effective way.

It does that by limiting the R&D tax incentive to companies with aggregated assessable income of less than $20 billion. Companies that have aggregated assessable incomes of $20 billion or more will apply the normal income tax rules to their expenditure on R&D activities.

The measure will apply to income years starting on or after 1 July 2013 and is estimated to produce a gain to revenue of $1.1 billion over the forward estimates period.

The bill also makes a consequential amendment to the Industry Research and Development Act 1986 to ensure that very large companies are still able to claim their overseas R&D activities for income years in which they fall below the $20 billion threshold. This allows the tests for eligibility of R&D activities conducted overseas to continue to operate as intended.

Full details of the measure are contained in the explanatory memorandum. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.
COMMITTEES
Selection Committee
Meeting
Mr PYNE (Sturt—Minister for Education and Leader of the House) (11:52): I move:
That so much of Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent:
(1) the Selection Committee:
   (a) meeting on or after today, if necessary by teleconference, to determine the order of consideration of matters and the times allotted for debate on each item and for each Member speaking, for private Members' business and committee and delegation business, for Monday 18 November 2013;
   (b) communicating its determinations to all Members of the House prior to that Monday; and
   (c) reporting its determinations to the House following prayers on Monday 18 November 2013;
(2) the Selection Committee's determinations being shown in the Notice Paper for that Monday under 'Business Accorded Priority' for the House and Federation Chamber; and
(3) in the absence of a fully constituted Selection Committee, that the arrangements for private Members' business for Monday 18 November 2013 provided for in paragraphs (1) and (2) of this resolution be determined by the Speaker, Chief Government Whip and Chief Opposition Whip.

To briefly explain, this motion ensures that the Selection Committee can meet before next week to list private members' business, reports et cetera for the parliament; otherwise that would be delayed further. Obviously, it is the beginning of a new parliament and, therefore, there is no business for them to conduct. This will allow them to start the process of meeting and debating important matters.

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS
Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders
Mr PYNE (Sturt—Minister for Education and Leader of the House) (11:53): I move:
That standing order 215 be amended to read:
215 General purpose standing committees
(a) The following general purpose standing committees shall be appointed:
   (i) Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry;
   (ii) Standing Committee on Economics;
   (iii) Standing Committee on Education and Employment;
   (iv) Standing Committee on the Environment;
   (v) Standing Committee on Health;
   (vi) Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs;
   (vii) Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications;
   (viii) Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs; and
   (ix) Standing Committee on Tax and Revenue.

(b) A committee appointed under paragraph (a) may inquire into and report on any matter referred to it by either the House or a Minister, including any pre-legislation proposal, bill, motion, petition, vote or expenditure, other financial matter, report or document.
(c) A committee may make any inquiry it wishes to make into annual reports of government
departments and authorities and reports of the Auditor-General presented to the House. The following
qualifications shall apply to these inquiries:

(i) Reports shall stand referred to committees under a schedule presented by the Speaker to record
the areas of responsibility of each committee.

(ii) The Speaker shall determine any question about responsibility for a report or part of a report.

(iii) The period during which an inquiry into an annual report may be started by a committee shall
end on the day the next annual report of the department or authority is presented to the House.

(iv) If a committee intends to inquire into all or part of a report of the Auditor-General, the
committee must notify the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit of its intention, in writing.

(d) Each committee appointed under paragraph (a) shall consist of ten members: six government
Members and four non-government Members. Each committee may have its membership supplemented
by up to four members for a particular inquiry, with a maximum of two extra government and two extra
opposition or non-aligned Members. Supplementary members shall have the same participatory rights
as other members, but may not vote.

This was raised yesterday in the parliament. It pertains to the new names and organisation of
committees of the House of Representatives. The opposition did not have time to consider it
before the debate on standing orders yesterday, and the debate on standing orders yesterday
had to occur when it did because it affected question time. It is an important matter but less
time important yesterday, so we deal with it today. It was placed on the Notice Paper and is
quite uncontroversial.

Question agreed to.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the following Address in Reply to the speech of Her Excellency the Governor-General be
agreed to:

May it please Your Excellency:

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

Mr PIT (Hinkler) (11:53): I rise to speak in reply to the Governor-General's address,
made earlier this week at the opening of this the 44th Australian Parliament, and I
congratulate you, Mr Deputy Speaker, on your election.

I stand before you with a great sense of duty, purpose and humility as the newly elected
representative of the place of my birth: the outstanding electorate of Hinkler. It is a diverse
region, known for its heavy red soil and clear blue waters. From the fishing villages to the city
centres, from the country towns to the beachside communities, Hinkler is an electorate of
great beauty, immense diversity and major opportunity. We are truly blessed to have so many
local assets—whether it is watching whales making their annual migration through Hervey
Bay, simply enjoying the sounds of the waves gently lapping on Woodgate Beach, seeing the
loggerhead turtles lay their eggs at Mon Repos, fishing in the Burrum River, gazing on the
rolling red and green hills around Childers or savouring some freshly caught local seafood,
like the world renowned Hervey Bay scallops. It is no wonder so many retired Australians move to the region to relax when their working days are done.

However, there is no denying that Hinkler also has its challenges. It would be remiss of me to stand in this place on behalf of the people of Hinkler and not mention the natural disasters of 2013. On the Australia Day weekend, Hinkler was hit by the remainder of Tropical Cyclone Oswald. Widespread flooding and several tornadoes ravaged the region. Streets, homes, businesses and farms were destroyed. The events proved that Dorothea Mackellar's assessment of Australia is as true today as it was when she first wrote _My Country_ in the early 1900s. She told of a 'land of droughts and flooding rains—her beauty and her terror!' Those haunting scenes will forever be etched in our minds. And how could they not be?

For some, the Australia Day weekend was the second time their business or home had flooded in three years. You would not blame them for throwing in the towel, putting their hands up and saying, 'I give up.' But that is not the Australian way. That is not the Hinkler way. Our residents are a resilient and determined bunch. Throughout the electorate, people worked for days in the muck and filth, to help clean up. Neighbours helped neighbours; strangers helped each other. Bakers worked 24/7 to supply food to their local townships. Truckloads of donated goods just continued to show up. Countless Australians donated money. Our armed forces and emergency service personnel rallied together.

The member for Warringah, Prime Minister Tony Abbott, and the member for New England, Minister Barnaby Joyce, were there too. They, and their staff, rolled up their sleeves and set to work without hesitation. As we made our way down some slippery, muddy stairs with our now Prime Minister and a large wooden wardrobe, I recall making a joke about the possibility of a leadership spill. To this day, I still think it was funny, but it went down like a brick-and-tile glider with the local volunteers! The clean-up was colossal and a true representation of the Australian spirit. I could not be prouder of the people in my electorate. As a community, they put in an almighty effort.

While we are truly grateful for the support and goodwill we received in the days and weeks after, there is still much work to be done. The television cameras have moved on, but Hinkler's need is still great. We understand all too well that, without the images of devastation on the evening news, it is easy for Australians to forget that the recovery continues. I speak on behalf of all Hinkler residents when I say our thoughts and prayers are with all people affected by the many other natural disasters that have occurred in recent times, both here and abroad. Through you, Madam Speaker, I ask members to keep natural disaster victims in their thoughts well after the events. What we do here, in this place, can make a difference to their lives. I will be doing everything in my power to ensure the Hinkler region does more than just recover.

The greatest thing we can do to help communities prosper is provide Australians with hope and opportunity—opportunity for education, opportunity for training and opportunity for employment. Employment gives people the ability to pay their own way and provide for their families. The people of this great nation should be able to depend on their elected representatives, but that does not mean we should be building a nation of dependence.

Members on this side of the House understand that governments do not create jobs—businesses do. If we are to create opportunities for Hinkler residents, we must make it easier, not harder, for people to do business in Australia. Repealing the carbon tax will be the great
first step in helping Australian farmers to flourish. Electricity costs incurred by irrigators, for example, skyrocketed with the introduction of the tax. Cutting red and green tape will also save businesses time and money. In recent years, Hinkler producers have struggled to receive a fair return for the risk they take. Even those producers willing to persevere through bad weather have lost the ability to prosper. Australia's farmers deserve better than to just break even.

Put simply, here in Australia regulation is high. Input costs are high. Labour costs are high. The Australian dollar is high. And yet—unsurprisingly—profits are low. Under Labor, we were at risk of losing our global competitiveness. A root and branch review of competition laws, as promised by this government, will ensure large and small businesses have an even playing field. We need a supermarket code of conduct with teeth, to ensure small- to medium-sized suppliers are getting a fair go.

Small businesses are the backbone of regional Australia. They employ about 50 per cent of all Australians working in the private sector. In Queensland, small businesses account for 96 per cent of all businesses in the state. That is why we must remove the bureaucratic shackles now, so that our businesses are ready for any opportunities that come their way. And there will be opportunities.

As household incomes increase in India and Asia, so too will the demand for reliable, safe and fresh Australian produce: sugar, sweet potatoes, avocados, mangoes, macadamias, capsicums, tomatoes, strawberries—the list goes on. Hinkler has a proud history as one of the nation's food bowls. Named after the great aviator Bert Hinkler, the Hinkler electorate is also known for innovation, from the mechanical cane harvester to beverages like the famous Bundaberg Rum and Bundaberg Brewed Drinks. The Hinkler region has always punched above its weight and I am proud to say manufacturing is alive and well in Hinkler. As our lives become increasingly busy, demand for convenient, value-added products—like those produced by AvoFresh, Jakes Candy, Macadamias Australia and Farmfresh Fine Foods—will continue to grow. With its access to quality produce and proximity to Brisbane, Hinkler's manufacturing sector is facing a period of enormous potential. If there is one thing people should take away from this, my maiden speech, it is that we have a lot to offer in the Hinkler district and we are open for business.

Well-planned infrastructure, delivered in a timely manner, is vital to helping businesses get their products to market. It also facilitates service delivery to regional Australia, and provides long-term employment and opportunities for training and development. The Hinkler electorate is ideally situated for a container port to service Central and South-East Queensland, without impacting on the Great Barrier Reef. The port could be constructed for much less than the cost of planned expansions elsewhere. Development of the port would attract investment to the region and create jobs. Sinking a wreck in Hervey Bay would attract divers from around the world, and give our local tourism operators a much needed boost. A bridge over the Burrum River would link the Hinkler electorate's tourism centres, provide an alternative route for critical transport and take pressure off the Bruce Highway. I am proud to be part of a team that understands the benefits infrastructure can bring to regional Australia. Together, over the next ten years, the Abbott and Newman governments will spend $8.5 billion upgrading the ailing Bruce Highway.
I also look forward to this government delivering on its commitment to establish a National Stronger Regions Fund. Councils and community groups will be able to apply for grants for capital works projects that will regenerate the community. Regions with a higher than average unemployment rate, like Hinkler, will be the priority.

Sadly, like so many regional communities, one of Hinkler's greatest exports is its young talent. Hinkler is renowned for its sensational climate, affordable land and comparatively low cost of living. Doctors, nurses and allied health professionals have worked hard to improve the reputation of local health services, to the extent that they have successfully reduced hospital wait times and significantly improved patient outcomes. The region also has some fantastic schools. It really is the ideal place to raise a family. But if we are to hold on to our young people, we need to provide new opportunities: real jobs with real outcomes. Ensuring that our primary producers are appropriately rewarded for their efforts will make our agriculture sector an attractive career prospect once more. We need to give our young people the incentive to undertake a trade. We need to give them a reason to return once they have finished their university studies in the big cities. Our workforce is losing critical skills through a decline in interest and an ageing population. In the past, skills have been learned and passed on. Today, we find ourselves in a situation where we need skilled migration to this country because we simply have not trained enough of our own people.

In Hinkler, aged care is another sector that presents enormous opportunity for young people starting a career in nursing or allied health. As the local population ages and more retirees move to Bundaberg and Hervey Bay to enjoy the lifestyle, the demand for in-the-home care, retirement villages and nursing homes is going to increase. Australians who have already paid their dues, and their taxes, deserve to live out their remaining days with dignity. There is no doubt that this will come at a significant cost to Australian taxpayers, but it is worth remembering that, in constructing these facilities and developing new, innovative models for service delivery, we will be creating jobs for future generations. The business opportunities and economic benefits, both direct and indirect, should not be underestimated.

Through you, Madam Speaker, my message to the young people in my electorate is simple: if my parents can work their way out of poverty through sheer determination, and if I can be here, in this place, representing the people of Hinkler, then you can do anything. You just need to have the will. In my capacity as the federal member for Hinkler, I will do everything I possibly can to give young people hope and opportunity. The Hinkler electorate has afforded me great opportunity, and I want the same for my three young children.

Growing up in the Woongarra district, I was one of four boys who spent every waking moment outdoors, riding motorbikes, playing cricket and fishing. Before leaving home I joined the Bundaberg and the Elliott Heads surf-lifesaving clubs. It concerns me that today Hinkler has some of the highest rates of diabetes and obesity in the nation. People are spending more time indoors on their computer and less time getting some fresh air.

Social media will be the great challenge of this generation. While it presents incredible opportunity, it is complex, far reaching and constant. It can envelop every waking minute, preventing victims of bullying and abuse from getting any respite. Social media's greatest threat is to our children, not because of the medium itself but because you can never be sure who is on the other end. Our challenge as elected members of parliament will be to find the delicate balance between free speech, the right to information and protecting the vulnerable.
My parents, both of whom are here today, blessed me with three gifts, which at the time seemed a lot like punishment but turned out to be some of the greatest things a parent could give to their child. Firstly, they taught me a work ethic. Work was part of life from a young age, whether cutting sleepers in the bush, at home in the vegetable garden or working on machinery. Secondly, they built self-confidence, a belief that you can do anything if you are willing to work hard and pay the price. In my home there was no such word as can't. Kepnock State High School's motto has stayed with me throughout my adult life, and that is that success is earned. And, in third place, there is gratitude and humbleness. It is amazing the difference that a simple thing like braces can make to life, particularly when it is provided at a time when money is more than tight. This type of process was new and the results were uncertain.

I am fortunate to have worked as an apprentice, a tradesman, an engineer and a farmer. I have been an employer and an employee, a worker and a manager, a business owner and a student. I have had many mentors throughout my life, and I thank them profusely because, without the opportunity to learn, you lose your ability to succeed.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my campaign team; party members and supporters; campaign manager, Lenny Fehlhaber; and of course my family: my wife, Allison; son, Liam; and daughters, Ruby and Elisabeth. I am grateful for the support of state MPs Ted Sorensen, Anne Maddern and Stephen Bennett and Minister Jack Dempsey. I have had the absolute privilege to receive advice from two former members for Hinkler, Brian Courtice and Paul Neville, federal members from opposite sides of the House but both concerned for their region and its future.

There is one baton in particular, passed on to me by Mr Neville, which I will pick up. Long Tan legend Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith is still with us. Through you, Madam Speaker, I give Harry this commitment: we will find a way to recognise his soldiers. As a nation, we are indebted to Harry and to his team. We live our lives in this wonderful country because of their sacrifice. If there is a way to help Harry and his team to return to Long Tan for the 50th anniversary of the battle, I will do my utmost to find it.

Most importantly, I would like to thank the people of Hinkler for putting their faith in me. I will repay their support by putting their interests first. In closing, I would like to recall part of a speech given by former prime minister John McEwen at the opening of John McEwen House in 1968. He said:

It's a fact, a trite truism, that politicians get the limelight. Whether for good or evil they get the limelight. But behind the politicians, in every political party, you will find there is a tremendous mass of loyal, believing people, who stand behind them and whose loyalty and whose confidence gives confidence and a willingness to carry on to the politicians. It is in the days when we are under attack, either as political individuals or as a political party. The day when we are unpopular, when it is the knowledge that we have behind us the believing confidence of thousands of people that gives us the strength to carry on.

Madam Speaker, I stand before you today in the knowledge that I will never stand alone in this place whilst I represent the great people of Hinkler. Thank you.

Honourable members: Hear, hear.

The SPEAKER: Hear, hear. Before I call the honourable member for Batman, I would remind the House that the honourable member is making his maiden speech in this chamber,
and we welcome him from another place. I would ask the House to extend to him the
courtesies that we have just extended to the previous member.

Mr FEENEY (Batman) (12:12): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I
congratulate you on your ascension to that important office.

It is my great honour to rise for the first time in this House as the member for Batman. Being an enthusiast for Australian political history and particularly Labor history, I well appreciate what a privilege and duty it is to represent this constituency. I am the 11th member for Batman since the division was proclaimed in 1906. Only twice in more than 100 years has Batman returned a non-Labor MP to stand in this House. Students of history will know that Sam Benson, a former captain of the Royal Australian Navy and MP for Batman from 1962 to 1969, was re-elected in 1966 as an Independent following his expulsion from the ALP for his refusal to resign from the Defend Australia Committee, a body then proscribed by the ALP national executive. I look forward to this fate not being visited upon me! The division of Batman has remained loyal to Labor because of the essential values of Labor that resonate throughout the diverse communities of the electorate. Labor values around justice, a fair go for all and the continuing task of building a more egalitarian society have an eternal currency in Batman.

Batman is an inner metropolitan electorate in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, largely found between the Darebin and Merri creeks. The suburbs of Batman include Alphington, Croxton, Fairfield, Northcote, Preston, Reservoir, Thornbury, Westgarth and Clifton Hill. The electorate is often described as being diverse, and for very good reason. It has long been home to immigrants to Australia, and today older and established communities of Greek and Italian migrants are joined by newer Australians from Lebanon, China, India and Asia. Nearly half of Batman’s population speak a language other than English at home, and some one in 10 are not fluent in English.

I acknowledge the history and contributions of the various communities, migrants and refugees that have settled in Batman and made it their home. Their endeavours have enriched the economic, social, cultural and artistic character of our community and created a cosmopolitan locality where variety and difference are welcomed and encouraged rather than suppressed and shunned. Batman is home to people of diverse races, ethnicities, faiths and beliefs, abilities, talents and aspirations, age and occupations, income and lifestyles. I will cherish this diversity and value it as an important civic asset. I will endeavour to promote, encourage, foster and harness this diversity and encourage an environment in Batman where diversity is celebrated, acknowledged and respected. Our social cohesion must not be taken for granted; rather, it must be defended.

Batman is among the largest and most diverse communities found anywhere in Victoria. With a population of over 136,000, over 52,877 speak a language other than English at home including African, Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese, Croatian, Italian, Greek and Nepalese.

In considering Batman, one could well characterise the electorate as being a tale of two cities. The northern parts of Batman could be described as possessing the attributes of a traditional Labor electorate, with working people whose priorities for themselves and for their families are better job opportunities, better housing, stronger educational options for their children and support for the aged. A comparatively high number of these people are found in unskilled, low-skilled or traditional blue-collar trades. Many are retired or pensioners. For
these Australians—for the most part loyal Labor Party supporters—a key contemporary concern is jobs. The decline of jobs in manufacturing, most notably in the automotive industry, is of great concern. Education and vocational training, the creation of new job opportunities in light manufacturing and the need to grasp new opportunities in new industries are all of critical importance for the people of Batman.

The northern portion of Batman is also home to La Trobe University, the third oldest university in the State of Victoria. La Trobe has been one of Australia's pioneering universities for 40 years, renowned for its excellence in innovation in relation to the big issues of our time. Home to some 34,000 students, La Trobe's founders aspired to create a university that would bring quality tertiary education to the northern suburbs of Melbourne. La Trobe University lives by its mandate and provides access to quality education for those from many disadvantaged communities, transforming the lives of its students and playing an important and leading role in our local community. It is a university which keeps faith with its original mission.

The southern reaches of the electorate of Batman have witnessed significant demographic change over recent years. The proximity of Northcote and its surrounds to Melbourne centre, its amenities and its ambience have all seen housing prices steadily rise. Southern Batman has been marked by the departure of many of its older working-class inhabitants and the influx of new populations of highly educated and high-income people, often young professionals and families. Today, High Street is hip. Political, progressive and informed, the inhabitants of Batman's southern suburbs often have differing priorities from their northern neighbours. Here issues such as action on climate change, the importance of investment in public transport, planning issues and fair treatment of asylum seekers often take the fore. But here, too, Labor's values and record of achievement resonate powerfully. Labor is the party of justice, the party which has consistently sought and delivered action on climate change, the party which is now opposing the flamboyant $8 billion east-west tunnel of Premier Napthine and instead is seeking meaningful transport solutions for our community.

I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor, the Hon. Martin Ferguson, former member for Batman. He was and is a giant of the ALP and of the wider labour movement. A former ACTU president and a Labor frontbencher from the moment he arrived in this place in 1996, Martin played a central role in the restructuring of the economy in the 1980s and 1990s, championing the accord between government and the ACTU and sharing in the accomplishment of rises in family payments targeted to low-income earners, higher school retention rates, compulsory superannuation and the proper vocational training for our unemployed. Later, as Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism, Martin was justifiably proud of his record in micro-economic reform, in facilitating the biggest pipeline of investment ever seen in Australia, of Tourism 2020 and an expanding tourism market for Australia in Asia.

Perhaps less well known in this place, Martin also enjoyed an unrivalled reputation as a local MP. As I have visited schools, childcare centres, churches and community groups throughout my electorate, I have consistently found that he was very highly regarded, well known and respected. As the MP for Batman he was no absentee landlord, but rather an active and passionate local member, connected to his electorate and its diversities. They are big shoes to fill and I shall continue to rely upon his counsel.

CHAMBER
I had the honour of serving as a senator for Victoria from July 2008 until the September general election. For that reason, this might be said to be my second first speech. I have in recent days carefully re-read my first speech, as you might imagine, and the sentiments, content and heartfelt thanks found therein are as relevant for me today as they were when first articulated in 2008. That is why I am taking the liberty in this speech and on this occasion of talking about my particular interest, my policy passion if you will, which is Australia's defence and national security. My interest in defence and national security policy is longstanding. For those who have known me a long time—and many here meet that qualification including old university friends Bill Shorten, Richard Marles and Bernie Ripoll—this policy area has always held my keenest interest. For this reason, my appointment as Parliamentary Secretary for Defence in September 2010 was a particular joy for me.

Newspoll regularly asks the question: which one of the ALP, coalition or someone else do you think would best handle the issue of defence? Typically the coalition has outperformed Labor on this poll measure by around two to one, bearing out the fact that it is a truism that the conservative side of politics enjoys defence credentials of what might be described as a brand attribute. Only in the years 2008 and 2009, in recent times, did the coalition and Labor enjoy parity on this measure. Yet, the coalition is defence lazy. The simplistic notion that right-wing parties will always be stronger on national security policy does not bear scrutiny. The notion that the coalition is strong on defence policy actually emboldens the coalition to do little or nothing. In recent times we have seen the coalition use its defence credentials to avoid articulating any meaningful defence policy and to avoid presenting detailed or even coherent defence policies. Instead, the coalition has followed Labor in supporting Force 2030, has followed Labor in aspiring for a defence budget of two per cent of GDP and has followed Labor in supporting a maritime strategy for Australia's national defence.

The Australian Labor Party has always been the party of defence and national security. There are powerful reasons why Labor is and remains the political party best able to manage the national security interests of our nation. The ALP has always conceived most clearly Australia's place in the world. The ALP has always been a party of internationalists. This was true in 1942 and it is true today.

It is Labor that perceives Australia as a free, independent, middle power with a free, independent foreign policy. Australia's interest is to promote a rules based world order marked by multilateralism and by ever-strengthening international and humanitarian law—nations operating in a rules based system. It is in this way that the great crises and tragedies of mankind's greatest century of violence, the 20th century, can be avoided and never repeated. This is why Labor politicians were found playing a leadership role in the formation of the UN. It is Labor that conceives of Australia as a self-reliant nation. It is for these reasons that Labor has always supported Australia's possessing a strong and capable Australian Defence Force, one that is capable of acting independently and effectively across the threat spectrum in support of our unique national interests, our freedom and our ability to work multilaterally with our friends and allies to protect and defend critical sea lanes and the global commons that support our extensive trade—a defence force that gives substance to our claim to be a middle power. Labor has never envisaged Australia or its defence forces as mere auxiliaries for other nations and other interests. It is Labor that conceived of Australia as a member of the UN Security Council rather than as a mere deputy sheriff.
The A in ALP—Australian—is a signpost to the strong vein of patriotism and national identity that is found in Labor's DNA. We are a party that pride ourselves on our history. No other Australian political party celebrates its history as we do. For over a century it has been Labor that has built the institutions and values that today form such a central place in the Australian identity—the fair go at work, Medicare, the age pension and enshrining the notion that there should be equality of opportunity for every Australian. So too does the ALP celebrate its successful history in the field of defence policy. It was Labor politicians who ensured the Royal Australian Navy had the capability and wherewithal in 1914 to dominate the South Pacific and sweep German colonial power from our own region. It was Labor that provided the leadership of Australia during the darkest days of World War II. It was Prime Minister Curtin who moved Australia into close alliance with the United States of America. And it was Labor that brought Australian soldiers back from the Middle East to confront the threat of Imperial Japan in Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific. It was destined to be the ALP that most clearly saw our nation's path in 1942.

So it is today. At a time when long-held assumptions about national security are changing and the rise of China is changing forever relations between the nations of the Indo-Pacific it is Labor that is focused on reshaping our alliance with the US, on maintaining Australia's edge in our neighbourhood and on strengthening multilateral institutions in our own region. It is no mere accident of history that it was Labor that recognised the People's Republic of China in 1972. Nor is it an accident of history that in recent times we have seen Labor further strengthen our relationship with China. Labor's capacity to navigate Australia through changing international environments is longstanding and remains one of the great attributes of our party. Every nation as it forges its identity and its character looks to formative events in its history. The War of Independence and the Civil War are central to understanding the contemporary US and its values and mores. For the United Kingdom it is its history as an empire upon which the sun never set. For France it is the French Revolution, Napoleon and the bloody sacrifice of World War I. So it is for Australia: for our young nation and our story of how we evolved from a collection of colonies into an ever more confident nation, the Anzac legend has always held pride of place in the formation of our national identity. Of course, militarily, Gallipoli was a defeat, perhaps even a fiasco. Yet, as a campaign it is sacred for us. The reason for that is not its military accomplishments, but rather what the sacrifice of our soldiers meant and came to mean. The crucible of war has always played a central role in forming our Australian identity. The Anzacs at Gallipoli and later the soldiers, sailors and airmen of Tobruk, Milne Bay, Kokoda, Long Tan, Tarin Kotw and innumerable other places all embody our cultural notions of mateship, larrikinism, independence, practical ingenuity and self reliance. The Australian Defence Force is a uniquely Australian institution. Australians take great pride in its history, instincts and values and in the loyalty and sacrifice of its people.

From the moment that Martin Ferguson announced his retirement from this place on 28 May 2013 my life has been a blur. The process of an ALP preselection immediately followed by the federal election in September meant that I found myself confronting in very quick succession innumerable challenges.
Mr FEENEY: In meeting those challenges—and defying the recalcitrance of my colleagues—I relied upon the friendship, dedication and acumen of innumerable friends, both old and new. Of course, firstly I would like to acknowledge Martin Ferguson. His enthusiasm for my candidacy and outspoken support for me was powerful, and I will be ever thankful for it. It is also true to say that Batman has a Robin. Robin Scott MP, the member for Preston, has always been a source of great support and counsel for me. So too has Nazih Elasmar MLC, the member for Melbourne north province. I also acknowledge Fiona Richardson, the MP for Northcote, and her husband Stephen Newnham. There are many local ALP activists upon whose support, efforts and insights I will continue to rely, including Alison Donohue; Dr Stanley Chang, local GP and Chinese community leader; Andy Mylonas and his daughter Ana Sarakinis; Adele McBride; Peter Putnam and Matt Candelers. They are all emblematic of a thriving ALP community, whose member I have the great prestige and honour of being here in this place.

As everyone here knows, we come to rely upon our staff enormously. They form, if you will, our Canberra family. I take this opportunity to acknowledge them and the work they have done for me in recent times: Ben Maxfield, who also worked as my campaign director in the recent Batman election; Dee Cakir; Jeffrey von Drennen; Heam Elasmar; Bella Mentor; Lloyd Toffolon; George Macris; Adam Reid; and Isabelle Kingshott. These folk have put in enormous amounts of effort for me, and several of them continue to do so. I am eternally grateful to them for their loyalty and for their effort. I also acknowledge the work of Laura Wood, who has recently joined me from the Department of Defence, having worked for me previously as a departmental liaison officer. I look forward to meeting my shadow ministerial challenges with her advice and counsel.

Lastly, I acknowledge my family. As I said in my first first speech, my family have always been a source of great strength and inspiration to me. I am blessed in the sense that I have always enjoyed the support and love of a loving family. Can I thank again my parents, Basil and Margaret Varghese and Ian and Lyn Feeney. I am blessed, Deputy Speaker, with four parents, all of whom love me and all of whom have provided me with great strength. Can I acknowledge my wife Liberty Sanger—an extraordinary woman, an inspiring woman. I said before and I say again, her marrying me is the greatest honour ever bestowed upon me and it will ever remain thus.

Mr BROUG (Fisher) (12:30): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have spoken here a few times before but I would be very grateful if everybody would behave themselves anyway—it would be a nice change. I congratulate you on your election to this office and the Speaker, Madam Speaker, and the Deputy Speaker who has just vacated the chair. You have a very important role in this place, and I wish you all the very best with fulfilling that responsibility. We saw yesterday some of those challenges, and I am sure there will be more to come in the days ahead. Part of that challenge falls to all of us, the 150 members of this the 44th Parliament. It is not good enough for us to blame the Speaker for lack of order in this place. We are all very honoured to be here and we need to honour that position by our actions and our deeds in this place. I do not think there would be one member of this parliament, new or returning, that has not been accosted in the street by a member of the community or a party member lamenting the standards in this House. It is up to all of us in what we do from this
moment on to determine whether or not we can raise that standard. I commit myself to playing my role in ensuring the standards are improved.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate all the members who are joining this parliament, the 44th, for the very first time. I have been listening to a number of those maiden speeches and what a diverse group of people are joining the 44th parliament. Winston Churchill once said that:

democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried.

If democracy can bring to us and our parliament the passion, the diversity, the experience of life that we have heard in the last day and a half democracy has served us well. I want to make one brief comment about one particular member, the member for Bass. His life story and mine started in a very similar way. We both joined the army at 17; both joined the Royal Australian Regiment. Six months before I went to Officer Cadet School Portsea, he did. He was my senior class man 32 years ago. The motto of the Officer Cadet School Portsea, which is now lamentably gone, was 'Loyalty and Service'. I think it is a wonderful motto for this place: loyalty to our country and service to its people. If we keep that uppermost in our minds, then Australia will be in good hands, regardless of what side of this chamber we sit on and regardless of our political persuasion.

I would also like to acknowledge a very select group of people that I join by coming back to this place on this occasion: the member for Leichhardt, the member for Brisbane, and the members for Paterson, Bonner, Canning, La Trobe and Macmillan all have that very special honour of not just coming to this place, but returning to this place. I am very honoured to join them as one of those few who having either, like the member for Leichhardt, through his own choice left or, in my case, being invited to leave by my constituents of having the opportunity to come back and work on behalf of the Australian population.

It was not an easy decision to come back, and again the member for Leichhardt was instrumental in that and I pay tribute to him. In fact, he almost stalked me at times, encouraging me to rejoin the LNP after the amalgamation of the Liberal and National Parties. I want to thank him for having the trust and the faith in believing that I had a role to fulfil in public life beyond 2007. I also thank the Prime Minister for his words of encouragement over that time and also for his will to see me become a part of this place. Someone who I will speak about a little more down the track, my wife, was certainly the biggest influence in me coming back. Some honourable members here will probably find it somewhat of a surprise that my wife would have wanted me to return, but I will explain a little more down the track.

My role in this place as the first new face in the seat of Fisher for 20 years is to earn the trust and the respect of the public. That is what I put forward when I put my hand up for preselection for the LNP; that was the core of my message to the people of Fisher and it will remain so long as I am in this place. That is an ongoing responsibility that we all have—the trust and responsibility of us in this place and in our electorates. I will be visible; I will be accessible. I am first and foremost a private member of parliament, which means my responsibility is to the people of Fisher—the people who put me here and who deserve to have me fight on their behalf. I am joined by the Minister for Small Business. He and I came into this place in 1996 and I am sure we would agree on one thing and that is that the former member for Gilmore was one of the most formidable backbenchers and private members that parliament has ever known. I aspire to put the wind up ministers in the way she put it up me...
and she put it up other ministers in fighting for her constituents. The minister reminds me that I have already done that with some success and thank you for passing me that compliment.

On a serious note, the people of Fisher have paid me this great honour and I feel blessed every day to live on the Sunshine Coast. It is a truly wonderful place—not just the environment, but it is also a caring community. This is a giving community and to be part of that is to be part of something very special. The volunteering ethos of the Sunshine Coast is embodied in the life-saving clubs that stretch from Alexandra Headland down to Caloundra. They are the embodiment because they are there in their very uniquely Australian outfits every weekend of the summer and the spring protecting our beaches and making our tourists safe.

But whether it is the young or the old, the veterans community or the environmental groups, our community strives for success on the back of volunteers and the strength of the people in the community. Being an ex-soldier, the veterans community is dear to my heart and I have always been very close to them. Today we are now seeing for the first time young veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan in particular. I was privileged to meet one the other day who is disabled because of frostbite of the toes. He is fighting to get his pension while trying to get his education back. I met him at the Mooloolaba Surf Club on a Thursday morning with a bunch of Vietnam veterans—it was wonderful but they were inviting another veteran from another era to share their stories, their troubles, their aspirations and their hopes. Just being there together, in an informal setting, said so much about mateship, which underpins our society and underpins our Defence Force.

We also have a lot of young caring people in our electorates. I am sure we all do. I went to the Chancellor State College the other day, having received two letters from two young year 7 students—Chloe and Hannah. I hope they read this. Today the Minister for the Environment introduced a bill into this House about protecting green turtles. That is what they wrote to me about. They wanted to see what they could do—not just what the government could do but what they could do as well. These young people deserve not only every bit of praise but also every bit of assistance so that they can benefit our community and our environment. This speaks volumes of the caring community that I am so privileged to be part of.

Unfortunately our community has been hit pretty hard in the last few years. We have so heavily relied on the construction industry—new housing—and tourism. They have both been hit. They have been hit because of economic conditions but they have also been hit by the decisions made by the previous Labor government. The Minister for Small Business, when he was shadow minister, came to Alexandra Headland and stated this incredible figure: 21,000 new and amended regulations impacting upon our society. You wonder why people complain. All business is asking is for us to get out of the way. That is not much for us to do. The challenge for the Minister for Small Business and the executive is to get the opposition to work with us to peel back some of this unnecessary regulation which puts barriers in the way of businesses and prevents them from making profits and employing other Australians. That is our role.

The first debate in this parliament was the carbon tax. We are going to hear about the highfaluting, high-level, macro-economic picture but let me bring you down to the grassroots. Let us talk about a bloke who makes his living going out to sea and catching prawns. These boats rattle and roll, and they have to have on them the highest quality refrigeration you can
get. When those units leak, instead of it costing a few hundred dollars or maybe $1,000 to replace the gas, it now costs $8,000—in one case $20,000. I ask members opposite where does that money come from? These people do not have overdrafts for that sort of money. It tears families apart. There is the IGA owner who, through no fault of their own, having increased their maintenance and done everything they possibly could, finds that their refrigeration gases have escaped and they have to find these extraordinary amounts of money which just are not there. Is it Maleny Dairies, or the butcher’s? They are all in the same boat. These are consequences of a policy that was not thought through and that has deep and lasting impacts not only on the people in those businesses but also on their ability to employ their fellow Australians. It has hurt our community. But it can stop. The decision was taken on 7 December to have it stopped. All we ask is for those opposite to respect the decision of the Australian population on that day and fast track those decisions.

There are many very innovative businesses on the coast that despite the hardships, despite the downturn, have succeeded. These are the champions of the coast; these are the people who not only give of themselves by putting their hard earned dollars into their businesses and innovate and employ but also give back to their community through various not-for-profit organisations. There are organisations that some of you know well, like Australia Zoo. I was privileged to know Steve Irwin as a friend, and his wife Terri today continues to send the animal welfare message and the message of Australian tourism to the world. She is now doing that through Bob and Bindi. There is the Big Kart Track, with Ferre. It continues to grow because he innovates. There is Aussie World, with David Thompson. These are tourism operators who have gone against the norm and are succeeding where others are failing. We have nationally award winning accommodation houses. We have Mark and Jo Skinner, from Narrows Escape. These are people who are reaching out to the world and bringing European visitors to the Sunshine Coast, not just taking the drive trade. That takes guts. They have got what it takes and they have a product that the world wants.

There is Bassett Barks. Would you be aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, that we export compost from the Sunshine Coast? We export compost to the world—some of the best that there is. There are these little secret gems that no-one knows about. Some people might think some of that compost is coming from me today! Sue Joseph has done that, and Sue and her family are another important part of the fabric of the coast. There is Hall Contracting, who have worked in Fiji and are now reaching out to Malaysia and Indonesia to extend our capacity in those parts of the world. When people tell me that manufacturing is dead, they are wrong. The Budden family invested several million dollars recently in off-road campers. They produce almost every single component of these world-class campers at Caloundra. They do not get the seats and the fabrication done in a sweat shop; it is done in Caloundra. They employ 70 tradespeople. It can be done. When you talk to Steve, he will tell you about the challenges that politicians have imposed. If we want businesses to grow and to succeed, we need to get out of their way.

Let me turn to a few broader issues that are also local. I have a great belief that part of this nation’s future is in primary production. It is not a ‘nice to have’; it is a ‘must have’. When dairy deregulation came to the coast it hurt us badly, but certain operators grasped the opportunity and changed direction, like Maleny Dairies. I believe that if you go into some places in Melbourne today, they will tell you that you can have your cappuccino with Maleny
milk—and they are right; it is special. The Hopper family have combined tourism and a quality product. They have kept eight dairies going and they have employed 40 direct jobs. Another offshoot is a Swiss family who came to Australia as premier cheese makers and established Maleny Cheese. Sara and Markus employ 30 people and keep another six dairies going. We probably would not have a dairy industry on the Sunshine Coast if it were not for these innovative people investing their own money.

Let me turn to another diverse industry. The last time I stood in this place was six years ago, but let me go back to 1996. If I had talked about the pineapple industry then it would have been that it was on its knees, that Golden Circle was on the way down, that the plant was closing. Today, Murray Pike and the Pike family will tell you that unlike most parts of the industry where the average age of the farmer is 60-plus in the pineapple industry on the Sunshine Coast the average age is now the mid-30s. He has never known better times because they grasped the opportunity to plant new pineapples, to embrace the fresh food market, to go away from practices of the past and they have made their own way. It can be done but, again, it needs our support. It needs our support at the borders so that we do not import infestations into this country that can decimate our industries and it needs our support with Austrade to make sure that we push our product overseas and we create new opportunities. They have done their bit; it is now up to us to do our bit.

To other national issues. To the credit of the Labor Party they introduced the NDIS. It is now going to be up to both sides of this House, without politics, to get this right. There are far too many of our fellow Australians who live with or have someone whom they live with who has a disability. They deserve better than this country has given them in the past. The NDIS is an opportunity and it is an idea that now needs to have substance put behind it. It is going to require an enormous amount of hard work and I pledge myself to being part of making sure that it delivers the promise that so many people have asked for.

To the challenges of broadband. It is a necessity. It is going to be crucial. The data era will offer opportunities and jobs for places like the coast. We can consider having some of our bureaucrats, state and federal, working from home, part time, full-time, in the regions, decentralising our workforce and taking away some of the congestion issues because we will have the data capacity. Labor said we would have broadband in 2013, yet not one house on the Sunshine Coast has got it. Today, I stand here and say that the minister has said we will have it by 2016 and I will hold him to account. I will hold our side to account as I wished the Labor Party had held their side to account. Too many businesses needed to make decisions and those decisions were built on a lie. We cannot do that. To get confidence back into the business community, we must deliver.

I mentioned veterans. It is going to be an ongoing challenge for us to meet the needs of our latest veterans. We have good people like Gary Phillips of the Sons of Anzacs. We have the centenary in 2015 of the landing at Gallipoli. But it is also the 50th anniversary of the deployment of the Australian task force to Vietnam and that is equally as important, and we must acknowledge that in an appropriate way. We have the lads from the Vietnam veterans at the Mooloolaba surf club and we have Tony Dell, who promotes the debilitating impacts of PTSD through his Stand Tall initiative.

Before my time elapses, a couple more issues and first off is Indigenous affairs. This is something that was dear to my heart when I was the minister and it remains so today. Some
very important steps have been taken and there are some very important steps to come. But we have still failed our First Australians. There are still far too many of them who do not have the basic rights that we enjoy. It is the responsibility of every Australian and the 150 people who sit in this place and those in the other place to ensure that we do not just close the gap in some time line and just set reports but that we change lives, we give opportunities and we do it now. I commit myself and I commend you all to doing just that.

Finally, some thank you's. Like all of you, you do not get here on your own and mine was a rough road to get here. I want to thank my party, my campaign team, my party membership and the 450 army of supporters who believed in what I believed in and a better way for the Sunshine Coast. All of them are important to me and to all of them I owe a debt of gratitude. To my family: when I first stood in here I had a family of three—Thomas, James and Sarah. They were all primary school children. Today, they are all adults. I have grown that family. I have a daughter-in-law, Tennille, and I welcome her to the family. And I now have young Trey, our first grandson. To my wife: thank you for your passion, your dedication and your commitment to public life, and for letting me come back to this place to play a role in Australia's future. I love you. I respect you. I will continue to do what I can with you on behalf of our community for Australia. I thank the deputy speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell): I thank the member for Fisher. Before I call the honourable member for Scullin, I remind the House that this is the honourable member's first speech and I ask that the usual courtesies be extended to him.

Mr GILES (Scullin) (12:50): I am so pleased that I am receiving the call from you, Deputy Speaker Mitchell, my neighbour and friend. I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and I pay my respects to elders past and present. My thoughts now are also with the traditional owners of the land I represent in this parliament. It is an honour and a very great privilege to be in this place. I thank the electors of Scullin for their belief that I can represent their concerns.

The Scullin electorate speaks to me of Melbourne's diversity. Over 37 languages are spoken at homes in Scullin. The multiculturalism of Melbourne's north is a tremendous strength and is characterised by a great interest across cultures and traditions as well as pride in particular heritage. I particularly thank the hundreds of ALP members and the many volunteers who did so much to keep Scullin proudly Labor at the last election, especially the hardworking members of the campaign committee chaired by the formidable Maureen Corrigan.

I am proud to be the fourth member for Scullin, and that I carry on a strong Labor tradition in Melbourne's north. I propose to do all that I can to keep it that way. The electorate remembers a great Australian, James Scullin—Prime Minister in difficult times, of course, but much more than that. He was a man who foresaw the Great Depression and who continued to make a selfless contribution to our country and the Labor cause long after he left high office.

My predecessor, Harry Jenkins, has left big shoes to fill, as I am all too often told! I do not propose to fill them; Harry remains a one-off. But I shall be very proud if I can bring to this role some of the qualities he always displayed: a great love and respect for community, for our party and for this parliament. It can be said that, in holding public office, Harry genuinely built public trust. I am, and always will be, grateful for his support and guidance. Harry succeeded his father, Dr Harry Jenkins, whose presence is everywhere across Melbourne's
north. It is a wonderful legacy of extraordinary service as a community activist, as a local GP and as a state and then a federal representative. How often constituents remind me of 'Dr Harry' speaks to his impact so many years after he retired. I feel an affinity with Ted Peters, as he and I bookended 44 years of representation by Harry Jenkins. Ted Peters became the member for Scullin at the time of 'the split'. He stayed the course with Labor when that must have been very hard for him to do.

That I come to be here is the result of the efforts of many, many people who have shaped my life's course—too many to properly acknowledge here. But it is important that I make some acknowledgement of some critical contributions. I am very fortunate to have been born to my parents and in the circumstances of my birth. To Richard and Vee I owe everything—so many opportunities and extraordinary love and support. I am so pleased that you are here today. I am even more pleased that my brother Ed can be here, away from work and family in London. In every measure but that of time he is my older brother, and he is certainly much the wiser. Jill Constable is my wife and my best friend. I do not have the words to do justice to her or our relationship, much less what she means to me. I can only say this: thank you for everything. Whatever I achieve in this role will be as nothing against family life with Jill and our beautiful young children, Daniel and Alice. The extended Constable and Garratt families, and most especially Joyce and Jo, have overwhelmed me with generosity and always made me feel as if I were one of them. I am terribly sad that Cec, my father-in-law, is no longer with us. This would have meant a lot to him, and that means the world to me.

Harry Truman famously advised that those of us looking for friendship in politics should get ourselves a dog. My experience over 23 years in the Labor Party has been very different—well, most of the time. There is no doubt that the friendship and support of so many in the Labor movement has enriched my life. I will not forget that I stand here for you. I am so pleased to be here with good friends and mentors, including the member for Jagajaga and the member for Bruce, and I am thinking of all the activists that I work with and have worked with—people with big hearts and clear eyes, typified by my friend Paul Erickson.

In my working life, I have also been fortunate. As a lawyer, I worked for two great firms, Holding Redlich and Slater & Gordon. Peter Redlich and David Shaw, in particular, taught me so much about the law, justice and life. It is wonderful to have former colleagues Andrea Tsalamandris, Cain Jackson and my great friend Toby Hemming here today. As a lawyer, I saw myself as first a listener and then a problem solver. I hope to build on that approach while I am here. Acting on behalf of the asylum seekers on board the MV Tampa set firm my resolve to be heard in public life, to stand here for those denied the chance to speak for themselves, to ensure that this parliament is the first and the best safeguard for the standards of a genuinely democratic and decent community.

The opportunities that I have had to work in politics have brought me much satisfaction as well as a deeper understanding of the possibilities of government. Working for Lily D'Ambrosio and Gavin Jennings was a privilege, and I learnt much from them—two politicians, two people I admire, two friends. Lily is also a local state member, along with Danielle Green, Bronwyn Halfpenny and Colin Brooks. I am so pleased to be able to work with all of them for our communities. I owe a debt of gratitude to Lindsay Tanner, the person who taught me so much about politics, practically and intellectually, and led me to imagine I might be able to make a contribution.
I am very proud to be a unionist, especially a member of the Australian Services Union. I am thankful for the support I have received from many unions throughout my involvement. It is of great importance to me that I thank and acknowledge my staff: Sally-Ann Delaney, Lori Faraone, Paul Frayne, Jim Tilkereidis, Justin Mammarella and Damian Apolloni. You all do wonderful work. Working alongside you means much to me and I hope to do justice to your support.

I have been elected to represent the people of Scullin. To me, this means being both a local advocate and a contributor to wider debate. Across Melbourne's north, Scullin encompasses Wollert to Thomastown to Hurstbridge, comprising a journey across many aspects of our culture, as well as geography. It combines long established suburbs like Watsonia North, green wedge communities such as Yarrambat, and dynamic centres of new growth in Epping North and South Morang—all different communities, united as outer suburban areas of Melbourne's north. They are great places to live and to work, but they are facing some significant challenges that must be addressed. Outer suburban communities both deserve and require the attention of our national government. We cannot allow Melbourne to become a city of two halves, with jobs and prosperity pulled to the centre. I am proud that Labor took a cities policy to the last election, continuing a tradition that goes back to Whitlam and Uren through, of course, Brian Howe, maintaining and advancing a principle of government that all Australians deserve fair access to services, no matter where they live. Grassroots activists across Scullin, such as the Aurora Community Association, are doing great work speaking up for liveability. I look forward to supporting their work of building community in growing communities.

The reasons that people have come to live in these communities are many and varied. We celebrate a rich and vibrant Indigenous heritage and welcome newly arriving communities, including many who have escaped oppression. There is, right across the Scullin electorate, a great sense of pride in place. But within the electorate there is also significant disadvantage and some emerging social problems. I am deeply concerned about the prevalence of family violence and the rates of mental health issues affecting young people. We must do more to address these epidemics whilst never losing sight of the need to tackle their root causes. A November 2012 VicHealth report highlighted the social as well as health problems associated with long commutes. The relationship between where we live and where we work is a vital one. Most people in Scullin travel some way outside the electorate for work. And right across Scullin, urgent investment is required to support our transport infrastructure—in particular, public transport.

This government's refusal to support urban rail projects will hurt families in Melbourne's north. And just as the provision of infrastructure impacts how we live, so too economic policies more generally carry with them social consequences. Gideon Haigh, in the Age yesterday, reminded me of this. He is in my view correct to write that we must also judge the policy decisions and choices we make by those consequences 'if we wish to live in a society rather than simply fit into an economy.' And let me be clear: I wish to live in a society.

It was heartbreaking to recently hear that 123 workers will lose their jobs at Golden Circle in Mill Park. Thousands of families in Scullin work in manufacturing, and they deserve a government that values and supports their jobs. Beyond manufacturing, more needs to be done to support employment in Melbourne's north. There are some great opportunities, such
as the Melbourne market relocation, an important work being done by local governments to promote the northern suburbs as a distinct regional economy. I look forward to supporting this work, to building partnerships and working to realise the possibilities of this dynamic region, a place with so many natural advantages but also extraordinary people.

I am proud of the work of the governments led by Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard. I will be heard in defence of their legacy and in support of Labor's reformist mission. Our recent reforms—education funding, carbon pricing, the NBN, DisabilityCare—are not just stand-alone policies; they will be enduring elements of the fabric of Australia's social democracy.

Like many others on this side of the chamber, I continue to be inspired by Ben Chifley's 'light on the hill' speech, not as a historical curiosity but as a call to arms for a movement of change—a call to dream large. It fills me with confidence that Labor's best days are ahead of us. It is also, to me, an enduring warning against the trap of mistaking means for ends. Labor is not just about putting more income in workers' pockets or electing politicians to this place; it is about creating for our citizens a sense of belonging, of security and of hope. I fear this trap has become easier to fall into over the last 60 years. When Chifley spoke in 1949 he was responding to the challenges of a rapidly changing world. It is incredible to think how much has changed since then. Australia has been reshaped. We are open to the world and are a genuinely multicultural nation. We have recognised that we cannot ignore the talents of half our population and have begun to properly acknowledge Indigenous Australians. We are more prosperous, better informed and living longer. In the last six years we made great advances. But Labor's work is far from done.

When I think of the light on the hill, I think of a more equal society. We are, most of us, quick to claim fairness, I think, as a national characteristic and a national virtue. And this is a good thing. I am all for fairness. But I am concerned to advance equality. The question is: should we ever subject a person to lesser treatment or deny anyone a right because of who they are? To me, the answer must always be a resounding no. If marriage is a right granted by the state, it must be granted to all—as it will be, I am sure, not because this is somehow inevitable but because of the power of people coming together in a just cause, as Australians have done so often to change the way we live, through trade unions, through social movements and through the work of the Australian Labor Party, and as we will do, to complete our Constitution, if I may borrow the Prime Minister's words, through recognising our Indigenous peoples and when we have an Australian head of state.

There is no more important consideration for anyone who seeks to engage in this process of change than what values they bring to bear in their participation in our national conversation. This is particularly important for those of us who find ourselves on the opposition benches, I believe. Why does being out of power matter? What are our objectives when we seek to gain power for working people and the vulnerable? What are the ideas and policies that we will seek to build public support for over the coming years? We should not be afraid of asking ourselves these questions. For me they speak to the essence of what it means to approach politics from a progressive perspective—to ask whether we are doing everything we can to deliver a fair and just society and, where we are not, to ask ourselves what is to be done.

Harry Jenkins's first and last speeches both invoked James Scullin's epitaph: 'Justice and humanity demand interference whenever the weak are being crushed by the strong.' This injunction is worth repeating. It speaks to a higher calling in politics and to the possibilities of
government. It lends a moral imperative to the role I have now. Those of us with the power to act must do so: to stand with constituents and support them in working through the problems they face every day, reaching out to make sure I am listening to all the voices within the electorate, not just the loudest; to stand up for compassion, justice and equality, knowing that this will not always be an immediately popular cause; to play my part in expanding trust in our great democracy and our political processes; and to make sure there is a real conversation in the community about political issues that genuinely informs representation—a dialogue that is respectful, mature and responsive. We must be prepared to listen and to have the arguments over solutions to the challenges we face.

For the many to have power against the few, they must have faith in collective institutions. However, it appears that faith is waning. Fewer young people are enrolling to vote, and more voters are, it seems, deliberately casting informal ballots. As I see it, this frustration with politics rests on a sense of alienation. One thing that is becoming increasingly clear is that the more insecure someone's working life is, the less likely they are to have faith in our political institutions and our traditions. To rebuild faith we must show leadership and instil confidence that this institution is a place where positive change is made, a place where hope is stronger than fear, as we heard last night.

And there are grounds for optimism; I am seeing it at a local level. I think of the Whittlesea Community Connections AGM last Sunday—a room filled with community activists sharing their stories, celebrating wins and planning the year ahead. I think of the young man I met door-knocking in North Epping, just devastated that his citizenship would be confirmed only after the election, meaning he would not be voting, but determined to make his contribution. And I think of the hundreds of Labor members in Scullin, from life members to those in Young Labor—of their selfless work in the cause of a more equal society. We must harness this optimism, and reject cynicism—including the all-too-pervasive sense that politics is just a form of combat sport or light entertainment. The buck stops here, of course.

It was extraordinary to be in this chamber last night and to hear the contributions from and about the member for Griffith. It was this parliament at its best, I believe. I am resolved to do whatever I can to present myself in the manner described last night, which is to tie together the optimism in the community to the representative politics that we are all part of. I want to persuade more people to vote Labor, of course, but I also want to do all I can to build our party as a movement of change. A larger, more open Labor Party of ideas will be, I am sure, a foundation stone for a stronger, more inclusive Australian democracy.

I am excited that in the UK, Labour’s Ed Miliband is speaking of a race to the top. To me, this means a drive towards a more equal society where everyone has every opportunity to achieve their potential. It is a powerful idea and a powerful reminder that ideas are at least as important as issues. As a society the right policy settings to secure jobs and growth are vital, but so is our storytelling or our sense of purpose about where we are going, how and why. If we can articulate our goals, build a shared sense of hope in this task, and if we can realise the great powers of government, this is a race that Australia can win.

Today, across Western democracies the very idea of government is under attack, directly through the work of the Tea Party and its supporters and more obliquely by the adherents of the misleadingly named Big Society. Both camps, it appears, are found in the present government. This government apparently believes that it should do for people what they
cannot do, or cannot do efficiently for themselves, but no more. What a narrow and defensive view of our collective capacity! I reject this formulation and will do my best to articulate a more positive vision of government for the future. I am in no doubt that we, the progressives, do have the better side of this argument about government. That the conservatives only discovered the courage of their convictions after the election speaks volumes to this.

We must be bolder in making the case for government. We can refresh and reframe social democracy through applying first principles to the issues of today and tomorrow. What can and should government do to help make a good society? And how can we, collectively, do more to help each other lead fulfilling lives?

In this speech I have touched on three issues—the fight for equality; rebuilding a sense of hope in formal politics; and defending an active role for government. These are the concerns of the moment. They relate closely to the questions before this parliament and to my sense of how Labor should respond and rebuild as we hold this government to account. I believe them to be enduring and propose to be consistent while I am here in making the case for a more equal society through building collective capacity in the actions of Labor governments to come. The issues of the day that dominate political conversation will no doubt change. Direct Action will, of course, soon be forgotten, but Labor's purpose and our story will continue. For my part I hope to be held accountable as an effective advocate for this sense of what politics can be and what we can achieve together.

I started this contribution by talking of the honour and the privilege it is to be here, which is what representing the people of Scullin in Australia's parliament means to me. But what really matters, of course, is what this might mean to others. It is a rare and extraordinary opportunity we here are collectively given in this place. We are enabled to speak up for others and to play a role in changing the circumstances under which they live their lives. Hopefully, we will expand opportunities and give more people a sense of hope, of agency, and of being full members of just, sustainable and equitable society.

I hope to be judged on whether I seize this opportunity and make a difference. I thank honourable members.

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley—Minister for Small Business) (13:11): I congratulate the previous speaker and, in fact, all the new members that have shared their ambitions and aspirations for the important role and responsibility they carry as a member of this House. Admittedly I might not agree with all of the sentiments but I respect the fact that within all of us there is a sparkle in our eye and a fire in our belly to do some good for our community, our country, and the more of that the better. So, congratulations and welcome to all the new members.

I did have cause to reflect on my first speech—this is not it—which was some 17½ years ago, some seven elections ago. I was reminded of the Australian cricket team where each newbie to the team gets given a number to reflect their selection. Apparently I am No. 892 in terms of my election to this House. It does remind all of us that it is a rare privilege and an extraordinary honour and opportunity to be a part of this legislature. I would imagine there is probably not more than 1,100 members that have been elected to this chamber since Federation, and it reminds us all of the hallowed place we are in and of our duty to do good and worthwhile things whilst we are afforded that opportunity.
I have been reafforded that opportunity by the good folks of Dunkley in choosing to have me again as their elected representative. I am not mistaking that as some adulation of the Liberal candidate. My community would not be characterised as a Liberal community. I see it is as a renewal of my contract, a belief that I am handy to have around, and to work effectively and collaboratively with the community. I have been given the opportunity by thankfully a few more votes than the last election, when it was a close-run thing, to be returned to this place. It did remind me, though, of what brought me here and the passion and the drive that led me to choose the calling of public life. I look back on what I said as some of my goals and reflected on my journey to this place 17½ years ago. There are not too many boys who went to school in the Pines that ended up in the nation's parliament.

Mr Frydenberg interjecting—

Mr BILLSON: Yes, thank you, my friend, the member for Kooyong, for making a useful contribution there. Thankfully he was not suggesting that I was too short to be a hood or a roughnut and had to do something else with my life, but here I am. What inspired my effort was to try to communicate to all in the community I represent that your postcode does not determine your potential. We all have the capacity to learn, to grow and to gain insight and wisdom to succeed in this country. What drove me to offer myself as a candidate was that that belief needed to be more broadly shared. There are large sections of the community I represent that would not count themselves as being on the good fortune side of the street. Life can be tough, resources are not abundant. Good gifted people, with the right support, the right encouragement and the opportunity to succeed, will make a good go of their life. What we need to do is encourage all of our citizens to reach for the ambition and the delicious possibilities that our country offers, and then support them to make those possibilities their own.

It was in that spirit that I was thrilled to be part of the team that offered the restoration of hope, reward and opportunity as our guiding light for this campaign. It was important because hope is precious. Hope is something that drives people to achieve worthwhile things—to get them out of bed in the morning; to believe that things will be better for the future and that they will play their part and benefit from those improved prospects; and to believe that reward is something that recognises effort and enterprise, and that it is a just and deserved response to application and effect. That is a good way to motivate people. The reward might not be financial; it may well be a meaningful, fulfilling life; it might be the chance to help others. I know that is the kind of fulfilment that I and I am sure you, Mr Deputy Speaker, derive from work in this place.

Opportunity is important as well. There has to be a genuine belief that there is a chance to get ahead in life, to make more and to improve the prospects of your existence for those you love, those around you and your community. That hope, reward and opportunity drove the coalition, the Abbott team. It had been diminishing, and you could sense that. You could see that in my community, where unemployment figures were trending up and not down, where businesses were closing and not being opened, where people were wondering about how to protect what they had and not how to apply what we could perhaps bring to the table to open up new possibilities.

In that spirit of optimism and that things can be better, I am pleased that the electorate chose to support, in a majority sense, my re-election; that we together could work to build a
stronger and more prosperous economy, not just nationally but in our own community. It is a wonderful electorate that I represent. It offers wonderful living standards—a place to live and raise a family, which was widely and consistently recognised as a strong point for the Dunkley electorate—matched by the prospects of a livelihood in our own community. We do not want to export our most productive citizens as they go elsewhere to earn a livelihood and to pursue their economic goals; we want to see more of that happening within our community.

We have the second great city in the metropolis that is Melbourne—the first being Melbourne—and we are the coastal city. We are Dunkley by the bay. It is a great place with great prospects for the future, and I am glad that the electorate responded so positively to that message and our plan to make those potentials ours, to turn them into reality.

It was interesting; the campaign was strange. I, as the somewhat weathered and long-term member, was the only candidate putting forward a local plan.

Mr Danby: Weathered?

Mr BILLSON: Yes, weathered—weathered by those dawn railway station visits at Seaford, where you get a natural exfoliation as the rain comes in sideways! Ironically, the Labor Party went around as if it were their turn—'Well, he's been there for a while. How about our turn?' It was quite ironic that the campaign slogan that Labor ran under was: 'Time for a fresh face.' The response from so many people was: 'What's wrong with this face?' It was not about my face; it was not about my appearance. This election was about our plans for the future; our vigorous advocacy; a belief in the community and in me—that when representation is required or when leadership would be of benefit, I will be there with them.

That is what the election was about. It was quite ironic that, in facing the seventh campaign that I have faced in Dunkley, there was no other local plan. There was no criticism of my advocacy, no suggestion that my representation had been poor, and no contest or challenge to the proposals that I was putting forward in an invitation to the electorate of 'Come join me in implementing this plan to pursue the destiny of opportunity that we see for our community.' There was none of that; just something about my face. I might not be the prettiest person in this place, but the passion, positivity and belief that you need to persevere in your work will drive me, not the extent to which Nivea might have been useful on my face many years ago.

Mr Frydenberg: Hey, I use Nivea!

Mr BILLSON: You use Nivea. So that was an interesting contest. As we look through that election contest, the plan that resonated so positively with the local electorate was about restoring hope, reward and opportunity. It was not only about the national strategy that is so important to the small businesses and family enterprises that represent the economy. They are the economy in the community that I represent—a point I reflected upon in my maiden speech some 17½ years ago, which I will come back to shortly.

In terms of local plans, there is the redevelopment of the Frankston foreshore—a $1.25 million commitment to finish the lifesaving club, the cafe, the meeting precinct and the function venue; the way in which the foreshore interacts with the water; the host venue for so many national and international sailing championships. Frankston is, according to the lifesaving association, the most visited beach in Victoria. We need to recognise that, just as I mentioned earlier, we are the city by the bay. Port Phillip Bay is our greatest attribute. We need to re-engage and connect more with that wonderful body of water that offers so much in
the way of economic, recreational and leisure opportunities. What drove my parents to move
from Albury around 1970 and choose where to live was the idea of living by the beach. We
need to celebrate that and invest in its success and in its contribution to our community and
our economy. That is what our plan is committed to doing—to creating a youth hub in
Mornington so that the northern area of the Mornington Peninsula shire has a focal point for
our young people, where community organisations, councils, community service providers,
church groups and those of goodwill wanting to help shape and contribute to the development
of our young people can come together; a place of collaboration, where the driving motive is
to support our young people be all they can be, to support them in grasping those delicious
possibilities and making them for themselves, and in some cases helping to map a pathway,
because too many choices can be overwhelming for some. We need this youth hub to bring
together our best game as a community to support our young people at a time of great change
and with the challenges that many face.

We will continue the Dunkley Community Safety Plan, at a cost of $759,000, that I have
developed, implemented, refined and expanded over a number of electoral cycles, to ensure
people can enjoy our community and peacefully go about their work—visiting, recreating,
promenading down the main street of Mornington, if that is their choice. We need more
CCTV and better lighting in Frankston, Seaford, Langwarrin, The Pines, Mount Eliza and
Mornington, tackling some of the areas of graffiti that cause people to be unsettled about what
is happening in their local amenity and local environment.

We will make an important investment in the Frankston Hospital, where incredibly
dedicated clinicians and administrators work, a hospital that has got growing demands on it
with a growing population. It is a hospital facility that is expected to respond to a greater
number of more complex medical conditions. We see the need for the oncology day-treatment
centre to be expanded and enhanced, and I am pleased that we made that commitment. We
will establish a new community in men’s shed in Langwarrin, supporting that community hub
function that is so important and which is a focal point for our volunteer organisations and
community service agencies. There are people just wanting to do things for the Langwarrin
community, working alongside the men's shed where mainly mature age men can share their
skills and wisdom—even in what I call the ‘greatest tonic in health care’ and that is silly talk.
When people get together and show an interest in each other and talk about the topics of the
day it can be very wellness giving. That is why the men's shed is so important as an antidote
for many who are feeling great isolation and loneliness, as well as a chance to apply skills and
share those with younger people.

We need to actually complete the Frankston Park Function Centre so that we can host the
kind of expos and the symposiums and those major functions and events that can make use of
the arts centre but which are looking for an exhibition space. We are keen to see that work
finished and also the resurfacing of the Ballam Park Little Athletics track. We also need
tourist directional signage. Many in this place would know of my many years of campaigning
for the Scoresby Freeway, which led former Prime Minister Howard to call me ‘Mr Scoresby.’
It was an important campaign of economic infrastructure which was vital for the east and
south-east of Melbourne and it needed to go further with the Frankston Bypass so that we
could integrate those freeway assets to provide a seamless movement of our people between
their livelihood choices—their education and leisure activities—and for people wanting to
live on the peninsula but needing to find economic opportunities elsewhere. We got there after Labor put up all resistance at every point along the way until finally agreeing that this issue was important.

The only thing that is missing now is some decent tourist and location and direction signage. The poor folk of Baxter, whom I am very proud to represent, are the Bermuda Triangle community of the peninsula. The freeway runs through their community, but you would not even know. They are not mentioned on any access or entry points. Those great tourist assets are important for our visitor industry, to guide the many hundreds of thousands of people who visit the peninsula over any sunny weekend. To get them to their destinations needs proper signage and the government have also committed to that work.

We need a Frankston memorial to ensure those who have served are properly respected. We have a highly visible memorial at present, which is great for day-to-day awareness of people who are going past the civic chambers. But on commemoration day those whom we seek to commemorate can barely be accommodated at that venue. We need somewhere that is appropriate to not only support the Centenary of the Anzac landing but, as my friend and colleague the member for Fisher, Mal Brough, said, commemorate the 50th anniversary of us first deploying our military capability into Vietnam. We have committed funding for that.

The Green Army project is very important but time will not allow me to get too far into all of that. The dedicated Aged and Carer counter at Frankston Centrelink is very important in terms of service, dignity and capacity to respond to the needs of that very important group within our community.

I was curious to read that one Labor councillor was having a bit of a go at some grants that Labor had announced prior to the federal election. The previous government was not able to actually follow through with putting contractual arrangements in place. The Labor councillor was saying, 'Not only should you honour your own election commitments; you should honour Labor's as well.' There is a novel campaign strategy! Labor not only wanted me to honour my commitments, which I will in full; they wanted me to honour theirs as well. That is an odd strategy.

Did Labor apply that strategy itself, in 2007, when the Howard government left office, regarding the funded election commitment that I made as part of the coalition's campaign for re-election for an Australian technical college? I did not hear any of the Labor councillors then saying, 'The Howard government hasn't been re-elected, but let's make sure the incoming government gives what the region needs and that is an Australian technical college.' I did not hear any of that. I did not hear any of the Labor councillors then saying, 'Gee, we really should honour that seawall commitment that the Howard government made to the Dunkley electorate, to build the public infrastructure needed for a safe boat harbour on that magnificent bay, which is the strongest asset of our community.' I did not hear any of that but, apparently, when Labor loses office federally the incoming coalition government has to honour Labor election commitments. That is not how it operates.

If the projects have merit, I am happy to consider them. But a Facebook entry of the member for Isaacs, standing with a Labor councillor, with a cheesy grin, the only documented evidence of the project, does not amount to sound public administration in my eyes. So it is a bit rich for the Labor councillors to be—
Mr Frydenberg interjecting—

Mr BILLSON: I do not know what it is. Members of the Labor Party think there is a bit of pub talk, they come up with a project and it ends up on Facebook and they think that that somehow represents due process and good value for taxpayers' money. That is not the way it operates. Labor were interested in projects but were too indifferent to actually follow through with them. Let us have a look at the projects. It is sad that community groups have been caught up in this cynical Labor electioneering campaign.

In the few minutes that are available to me, I do want to touch on the small business portfolio that I have the extraordinary honour to carry as a cabinet minister. Small business men and women are the horsepower of our economy. We know their businesses are the engine room, but the people behind them are the ones who make those tough calls about mortgaging their houses to pursue an opportunity, to pay themselves last while ensuring the staff are paid and to be worried about the cash flow of their business. Even though revenue might be up and down, they are the ones who still pay the bills. I have been there; I know what that is like—the pillow talk of cash flow. Most people would like to be discussing something else with their sweetheart, but that is what the life of small business can be like. It is a vital contributor to our economy. Small business lost 412,000 jobs under Labor. Its share of the private sector workforce contracted from 53 per cent to 43 per cent.

Since the election of Labor and the end of the Howard government, through to the election of the Abbott coalition government, there are 3,000 fewer small businesses employing people. The contraction in the small business economy has to stop. We have to arrest that decline, because, for communities like mine, small businesses and family enterprises are the economy. We do not have a mine; we do not have a tower of bank workers. We have got courageous small business men and women who deserve the support of a government that respects them and understands the challenges and difficult decisions that they have to face day in, day out. We have to remove some of the headwinds and the red-tape barriers that are there that just mean even more time on the weekends is spent doing things the government requires them to do, without actually putting that time into the growth of their businesses.

In the minute that is left, I have to say some thank yous. I want to say thank you to Tony Abbott. What an outstanding statesman! There is nothing more character building in public life than being Leader of the Opposition, against the mass, the resources and the advantages of incumbency, and to lead a cohesive, coordinated and incredibly disciplined team with the shared purpose of giving the nation the government that is needed to restore that hope, reward and opportunity I spoke of.

Thank you to our campaign team: to Robert and Linda Hicks; to Arthur Ranken, my father-in-law and director of visual signage; to Colin and Dawn Fisher; to Bob Garnett; to the more than 350 volunteers; to the fed sec 104; to my dedicated office team; to the ministry team that are now helping me with my role; and particularly to my family. Thank you to Alex, Zoe, Maddie and Bella. You suffer much because of the vocation of your father. Thank you to my sweetheart, Kate. I could not ask for a better ally and a better and more devoted partner. I love her dearly and I thank her. (Time expired)

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (13:31): First I want to say a very heartfelt thank you to the people of Wills and to my campaign team, who gave me wonderful support throughout the election campaign and indeed in the months and years leading up to it. It is a great honour
to have such a strong level of support, and I am determined to work hard in this parliament to be a vigorous and forceful advocate for and representative of the people of Wills.

During the election campaign, the claim was made that Labor had neglected the Wills electorate. This was without foundation. So that the House can get a better appreciation of the various programs and projects funded by the federal government, I list now some of the local press releases which I put out over the last six months: 'Applications for Volunteer Grants 2013 open', 'Wills unemployment falls again', '$309,000 to enhance local settlement services', 'Funding to help local communities help the environment', 'Supporting people with mental illness and their carers in Wills', 'Local sporting champions program: $4,000 for 8 local athletes', 'Glenroy NGO in line for National Homelessness Awards', 'More than 57,900 local homes and businesses to be connected to Labor's NBN', '$99,000 to fix black spot in Wills', 'Hidden Creek neighbourhood house supported by the Australian government', 'Discover Wills's clean energy transformation', 'Applications open for next round of Digital Enterprise Program', 'St Bernard's Primary School excels in special education', 'Funding to enhance social cohesion in Wills', 'Melbourne's north to provide food industry precinct base', '$465,228 available for Moreland Council community infrastructure', 'NBN switched on for more homes and businesses in Brunswick', 'Merri Community Health Services to benefit from National Crime Prevention Fund', 'Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Co-operative Ltd receives funding boost', '$215,000 clean technology grants for two Wills food manufacturers', '$77,000 clean technology grants for Broadmeadows and Coburg manufacturers', 'Funding for Renew Australia to continue creating opportunities from empty spaces' and '$4,000 in grants and certificates for Wills Sporting Champions'. The claim that Labor in government neglected the Wills electorate does not withstand real scrutiny.

The address-in-reply is no doubt the right time to pay my respects to the Governor-General, Her Excellency Quentin Bryce—I think she has done an outstanding job and I sense that all Australians are proud of her—and, through her, to Her Majesty the Queen. Recently, I read a thorough and detailed book written by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. It is called Harmony. My copy was given to me by Dick Smith. Dick is an outstanding Australian who cares deeply for this country. Dick's work on issues like population and Australian ownership is inspirational for me and, I know, many others.

I absolutely commend Prince Charles's book Harmony to everyone who is interested in the future of our planet. The breadth of his knowledge is exceptional, and both the intellectual rigour and creative insight lying behind this book are deeply impressive. There is way too much about environment, population, food and architecture in it for me to do justice to it here. You will have to read it for yourselves. But I will give two examples. Let me cite first page 220, where he discusses academic studies which have found that contact with nature can make people more resilient to illness. One piece of research investigates the recovery rates of patients who had access to a view of trees in a Texas hospital courtyard, compared with those whose windows gave sight of only a concrete wall. All the patients had undergone the same gall bladder surgery, so were considered to be a broadly comparable group. Those patients who enjoyed a view of trees out the window spent fewer days in hospital, used fewer narcotic drugs, had fewer complications and registered fewer complaints with nurses responsible for their care. By contrast, the people who could not see images of nature suffered increased depression, were in need of more pain relief and spent more time in recovery. So being
exposed to the patterns produced by nature is directly necessary for our health. Prince Charles says the findings underline how harmony and connection with nature is not some vague or fringe concern but has real benefits for people.

The second example I will draw to attention of the House is on page 232, where he bemoans ‘the modern trend towards more and more central planning’. He says:

Communities get what others decide for them—there are no alternatives on offer. …

A top-down approach to planning has been something of a partner of the industrial-scale copybook urban scheme. It is driven by the brutal economics of ‘growth’ and competitiveness and the pursuit of efficiency targets that care little as to whether a place ends up with ‘soul’.

But Prince Charles believes that if people are empowered to work together there are huge benefits. He says:

… the ability of people to self organise can be a very powerful force, but sadly it is an opportunity that is too often untapped. Centralised spatial planning devised by specialist planners trained in a 20th century mechanistic ideology sometimes misses fundamental choices and can lead communities in directions that are not in their best interests. I have enough experience now to know for sure that if people had been put more at the heart of the planning process, some of the disastrous urban environments created in many cities during the twentieth century might easily have been avoided.

I personally think it incredibly important that local residents get to determine what kind of street, neighbourhood and community they live in. And I will provide some free political advice to any of the new MPs in this place who decided parliament is all right and that they would prefer a lengthy parliamentary career to a brief one: back local residents, not property developers. I repeat: support local residents, not property developers.

I was not a candidate for the opposition front bench. I was a shadow minister for 10 years prior to 2007. I have been there and done that. It is my experience that being a shadow minister brings with it obligations not to speak outside your portfolio, and to have everything you do say cleared and approved by the Leader of the Opposition's office. For me, these limitations are simply too great in a world and an Australia that I believe is facing massive challenges.

The world is being damaged, perhaps irreparably, by rapid population growth, climate change, unchecked rainforest and other habitat destruction, poverty, war and terrorism. Australia is not immune from these challenges. Many of our unique and beautiful birds, plants and animals are on the brink of extinction. Our young people cannot afford to buy a home of their own, and their jobs are insecure, while pensioners and retirees battle rapidly rising electricity, gas and water bills and council rates.

I need to be able to speak out about these things, and I intend to. Anyone who thinks my decision to return to the back bench means that I am looking to lead a quiet life and slip out the back door is very mistaken. On the contrary, it is a necessary pre-condition for being active in the debate about the issues that are of greatest importance to the world and to this country.

I, and every other post-war baby boomer, can count myself incredibly lucky to be born when I was, because our children do not have the opportunities my generation had—job and career opportunities, housing opportunities and free education. For all the hype about growth and progress and development building a better world, it is not. It is tougher for our kids than it ever was for us.
This is not just true for Australia. It is true in many other countries as well. It is heartbreaking to hear the stories of all the African migrants who drowned off the coast of the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa. Terrible, terrible, terrible. There is a response that says we should tackle this problem by dismantling our borders and allowing people to live wherever they want to live. But anyone who has seen the Gumballs video, by Roy Beck of NumbersUSA—and if you have not, I cannot recommend it too highly—will know that there are two billion people in the world living on $2 per day or less, and that their numbers are increasing by 80 million every year. No nation in the world—not the United States, not Europe, not Australia—can cope with such numbers.

There are two causes of mass migration. One is people fleeing political violence and repression. The other driver is poverty and people wanting a better life. In those countries that are beset by political violence, the most common cause is religious fundamentalism. There is religious violence, oppression of minorities, not enough respect for the rights of women, and not enough separation between religion and politics and between church and state. This needs to be called out. It is a task for all of us, from whatever religious or ethnic background we come, to condemn, to denounce, to shun and to treat as outcasts religious leaders who preach hate and violence. It has to be called for what it is. Until political and religious violence stops, there will be people fleeing it.

Of the other motive for getting on board a boat—the search for a better life—again, we all have a role to play. We should lift our foreign aid budget to 0.7 per cent of GDP. We should not cut our aid by $4.5 billion over the forward estimates as the Liberal government is doing. It is claimed there is a budget emergency and we cannot afford this aid. Why then is the defence budget to be increased? The government target of 2 per cent of GDP spending on defence is quite arbitrary, and absolute nonsense. Spending money on aid builds goodwill with our neighbours and makes us more secure. I have seen it with my own eyes—the people in Indonesian villages like Australians. In stark contrast, spending money on more powerful weapons just makes our neighbours suspicious and sets in place a vicious circle of arms race, fear and mistrust.

So why isn't there more debate about how Australia's rapid population growth is making it harder for our young people than it was for us? After considerable reflection, I have come to the conclusion that population is not unique in this regard. It is one of a number of issues—not the only one—that are considered threatening to the economic interests of the wealthiest and most powerful Australians, and in some cases non-Australians, who exercise great influence on our political debate through their direct and indirect media influence.

There are political issues that contain no germ of threat to corporate wealth—same sex marriage, asylum seekers, the republic and politicians' entitlements. These things occupy endless column-inches and airtime. If they distract and divide us, so much the better. But issues that have the potential to impact on the wealth of the wealthy—executive salaries, trade practices and market concentration, foreign ownership, threats to the environment from industry and agriculture, and, yes, population growth and migration—are constantly overlooked and repressed.

In this we do not get any help from quite a few people who think of themselves as progressives, and who would look you in the eye and swear black and blue that they want to save the environment, they want to protect workers and that they care about the future. But
whether it is from fear of being called racist or xenophobic, or a form of moral conceit or vanity, they will not touch the issue of population. That is, of course, their right. But let me make this point to such people, as bluntly as I can: for as long as Australia's rapid population growth, high migration path endures, it will destroy the things you claim to hold dear. It creates a surplus pool of labour, which is used as a battering ram against job security and against workers' pay and conditions. It prevents us attaining full employment, and the quest for jobs, jobs, jobs for our increasing workforce leads us to sacrifice our environmental standards, destroy wildlife habitat and compromise our quality and way of life.

Debate interrupted.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Goods and Services Tax

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (13:45): I rise today to call on the Prime Minister and the Liberal and National parties to rule out a plan to impose the goods and services tax on the rents of mobile home residents. I ask this on behalf of the thousands of residents in my electorate who live in mobile home parks and who are very fearful of the recent draft Australian Taxation Office decision to overturn the exemption from imposing GST on mobile home rents. Should this ruling be enacted, the effect on residents who live in the numerous mobile home parks would be devastating. The fact is, they simply cannot afford a 10 per cent increase in their rents. Indeed, many pensioners and older Australians reside in these mobile home parks on the North Coast of New South Wales, and this draft ruling is causing massive distress and uncertainty for them.

When the GST was introduced, mobile home parks were deemed residential premises and were therefore exempt from GST. However, on 30 October 2013 the ATO released a plan saying that these mobile home estates would no longer be considered residential premises and therefore not exempt from GST. As you can imagine, there are massive amounts of distress and uncertainty in relation to this draft taxation ruling. Today, on behalf of these very concerned residents in my electorate of Richmond on the North Coast of New South Wales, I call on the Prime Minister to please act urgently and immediately rule out this unfair plan that imposes the GST on mobile home rents. The residents in my electorate simply cannot afford this 10 per cent increase. It is causing distress among thousands of residents in my electorate.

Perry, Ms Lauren

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (13:46): I rise to congratulate our magnificent and emerging cycling talent in Northern Tasmania, epitomised by young champions like Lauren Perry in my electorate of Bass. In recent years I have been privileged to observe Lauren's development as a cyclist. Her second placing in the 2011 Stan Sjeka Cycling Classic, in the driving rain and in elite company, was a magnificent effort by a 16-year-old. A year later she took a step up onto the top level of the podium, winning the Classic at 17 years of age, in the process beating home a world championship silver medallist.

And last October there was Lauren's magnificent gold medal in the Women's 3000m Individual Pursuit at the Junior World Titles in Glasgow. Lauren's middle kilometre was spectacular. She broke the will of her Russian opponent and won the world title by two seconds—an eternity in an event like the individual pursuit. The photo of Lauren circling the velodrome with the Australian flag flying speaks of dedication, composure, and a ferocious
will to win. And in the crowd as Lauren rides past is a clear image of a woman consumed by unrestrained joy—Lauren's mother.

It was an absolute thrill a few weeks ago to attend the civic reception for Lauren in our home city of Launceston and to see the rainbow jersey—the mark of a world champion. Congratulations to Lauren, her coach and her family. She is adding the next chapter in Tasmania's proud record of cycling achievement.

**Australian Public Service**

**Ms BRODTMANN** (Canberra) (13:48): One of the very first acts of this government was the 18 September announcement of the merger of DFAT and the agency formerly known as AusAID. Since the announcement, I have had a constant stream of AusAID staff members contacting me to express their concerns over the lack of clarity in the integration process. Many had hoped that the 24 October combined staff meeting held at DFAT might have provided staff with the detail they lacked. Alas, this meeting provided more questions than answers, and today—57 days after the integration was announced—staff from both departments are still asking questions. They want to know (1) if any external professional change-management advice is being provided to support the integration; (2) why there are no women on the steering committee appointed to oversee the integration; (3) how many jobs are going to be lost in the integration, when and from what areas; (4) if a position or function is deemed to be duplicated, what the process will be for determining which staff member will maintain that position or responsibility for that function; (5) whether AusAID or DFAT staff will be moved to a different location and, if so, to where and when; and (6) when and why the decision was taken to cancel the AusAID graduate program and terminate their contracts. I accept, as do most Canberrans, that machinery of government changes are a part of living in Canberra. But public servants have lost their security. The least this government could do is provide them with clarity. *(Time expired)*

**BRAS NT**

**Mrs GRIGGS** (Solomon) (13:49): I rise today to raise awareness about an organisation close to my heart. Last Tuesday, BRAS NT was launched. BRAS NT brings together a number of organisations that look after cancer sufferers, including the Cancer Council, NT Breast Cancer Voice, Dragons Abreast NT, Encore, Belladonnas and Flamingo Belles. The establishment of this overarching body to support the Territory's multiple cancer-focused organisations is another example of the Top End's strong community spirit coming to the fore.

BRAS NT wants to strengthen services, assist communications and improve outcomes for people impacted by breast cancer in the Territory. Under the alliance, organisations will work together to promote the development and delivery of quality services and treatment opportunities for Territory women. It will also identify possible changes to the delivery of breast cancer services as well as the development of breast cancer treatments.

BRAS NT is supported by many fantastic women such as my good friend Penny LaSette, who ran the launch and lunch last Tuesday. Penny is a fantastic advocator for women with breast cancer and will be a fine asset to BRAS NT, as will the other tireless volunteers, without whom this organisation would not exist. Congratulations to them. I look forward to all Territorians supporting this wonderful organisation.
Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (13:51): I rise to speak on the importance of mail delivery services to the people of Corangamite. It is with considerable concern that I note Australia Post's plans to move letter sorting from the Geelong Mail Centre to the Melbourne suburb of Dandenong. The Australian Postal Corporation Act requires Australia Post to meet a number of performance standards under its community service obligations. Regulation 6 of the standards requires that mail lodged in any regional city or town for local delivery within that city or town must be delivered the next day. If this plan goes ahead in its current form, local mail posted in many country towns in my electorate—including Bannockburn, Lorne and Colac—will take at least two days to deliver and will be in breach of this standard. Marking some street posting boxes as local will not cut the mustard. That is because Australia Post does not have the power to exempt any street posting box, or mail lodgement point, as they are known, from its next-day delivery obligation. Country mail services are vital for families, small business owners and farmers. This plan is not in the interests of the people of Corangamite and should be shelved.

Digital Television Switch-over Household Assistance Scheme

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (13:52): On 3 December analog television in Sydney will finally be switched off. We will be fully in a digital world. In preparation for the switch-over, some time ago the Labor government introduced a Household Assistance Scheme that provided assistance to people in need who were not able to make the transition to digital themselves. It covered people on the age pension, disability support pension, carer payment, Department of Veterans’ Affairs service pension and income support supplement. It was much derided by the opposition of the day as a waste of money. But, as we go fully digital on 3 December, I know there are many people in my area and in the electorates of those opposite who will need assistance to ensure that at this time they do not find themselves without any free-to-air television at all. I urge all the members of this House, and anyone out there who knows someone who may find themselves unable to deal with the technology and unable to afford the technology to make the switch, to call the Household Assistance Scheme. They can get the number through their local member of parliament. I am sure everyone opposite, in spite of their opinions at the time that it was a waste of money, will find that number and help out their constituents now. This is an incredibly important program that ensures that some of the most disadvantaged people in the community do not get left completely in the dark when we switch to digital.

Australia Post

Mr BROUGH (Fisher) (13:54): Mr Deputy Speaker, congratulations on your election to that position. I rise to bring to the House's attention the demise of Australia Post at Montville. With only two weeks notice, Australia Post closed this vital service in this small country town, which services a burgeoning tourism trade. It has left small business and the elderly in the lurch. It is unacceptable what Australia Post has done. It has not met its service obligation to the community. I call upon it to make some facility available there, and also where it has closed operations at Caloundra in this lead-up to the Christmas period.

On a broader note, we need to be aware that important parts of our society, such as local post offices and local pharmacies, are models which are under strain. But they are a very
important in providing not only a service but a linkage within society that, if lost, will make ours a weaker society. I encourage all members to seek answers to how we can grow the business for licensees in Australia Post so that we can keep these vital services. Unlike the Labor Party, which decided in the dying days of its government to strip funding from pharmacies, we see pharmacies as an integral part of a functioning society, which fulfil more than a clinical need.

**Bushfires**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (13:55): On Thursday, 17 October, Shortland electorate was ravaged by bushfires. People from the Central Coast were evacuated to Doyalson RSL and Swansea RSL. I thank the Rural Fire Service for the fantastic job that they did in protecting the homes of people in that area. There are many people in the Central Coast part of my electorate who live in relocatable home parks. Those people are elderly and they live amongst the bush. They would have been in great difficulties without the service of the Rural Fire Service, without the generous donations from Coles and Woolworths and without the staff at Doyalson RSL and Swansea RSL who worked through the night to provide accommodation for the people who were involved in the fires. I thank the RSPCA for the fine work that they did with the animals who were injured and I thank everybody who added support. I would like to put in a special word in for the Medicare Local, which helped those people who had left their medications behind to be able to obtain vital, life-saving medication.

I encourage everyone to have in place a fire evacuation plan if they live in an area that is likely to be hit by fires.

**Child Care**

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (13:57): Mr Deputy Speaker, congratulations on your appointment. Recently I met with the wonderful Wilston Kids Care team and Wilston State School Principal Guy Hendriks. Wilston Kids Care is an exceptional example of a parent-run out-of-hours school care facility in my electorate of Brisbane. The Wilston Kids Care team, including Chris Noonan, Vic Ernst, Shannon Lea and Kaylene Pointing, provide an invaluable service to the parents of Wilston State School. As a parent-run facility, their focus is on accessibility, quality and affordability. They accommodate up to 100 children before school and 200 children after school.

However, organisations like this are under threat because of the huge burden left by the previous government's incompetent implementation of the National Quality Framework. That is why the Abbott government has committed, as a priority, to undertake a Productivity Commission inquiry into all forms of child care, including out-of-hours school care. The new Assistant Minister for Education, Sussan Ley, has already coordinated meetings with state and territory ministers, including the Queensland Minister for Education, Training and Employment, to discuss the National Quality Framework and its impact on all forms of child care.

We are a government that has hit the ground running from day one. We are working to keep our commitments and we have made a strong start. As a working mother of now-adult children, I understand only too well how important it is for families to have access to affordable and flexible child care. That is why I welcome the Productivity Commission inquiry into child care.
Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:58): Further to my last statement, I would like to highlight the human cost of the decision to integrate AusAID and DFAT. I know from my own experience, after losing my job in 1996 after the Howard Public Service cuts, what the human cost is actually like. Many of the graduates have moved to Canberra with their partners, husbands, wives and families, at great cost. Many of the graduates have knocked back graduate positions in other government agencies. Many of the graduates and their partners have resigned from their jobs to move to Canberra, and many of the graduates have no jobs as they turn the corner of 2013 into 2014.

I accept, as do most Canberrans, that machinery-of-government changes are part of living in Canberra, that they are the prerogative of a new government. What I do not accept is that these changes are being carried out under a cloak of secrecy. Public servants have lost their job security. The least this government could do is provide them with clarity and detail.

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

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:00): Madam Speaker, I inform the House that the Minister for Foreign Affairs will again be absent from question time today, as she is in Sri Lanka at the Commonwealth conference. The Minister for Trade and Investment will answer questions on her behalf. The Deputy Prime Minister will answer questions on behalf of the Attorney-General and the Minister for Defence.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Economy

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:00): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to his misleading statements on the debt cap on Tuesday, and again in the
parliament yesterday, when he said: '… we never, when I was the leader, voted against it in the parliament.' Prime Minister, given that the coalition did in fact vote against the debt cap being increased, on 25 June last year, did the Prime Minister mislead the parliament or is he simply loose with the truth?

The SPEAKER: I might add, to the Leader of the Opposition, that it is getting a little perilously close to the wind. I think he should consider his words a little more carefully. I call the Prime Minister.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:02): I am not imagining the debt disaster that Australia has been saddled with by the former Labor government. The debt disaster is real, and this government is taking action to deal with Labor's legacy of debt and deficit.

Opposition members: Answer the question!

Mr ABBOTT: Getting to the question: I said in this parliament that we have never voted, under my leadership, against an increase in the debt cap—and that is absolutely correct.

Mr Bowen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I draw your attention to page 752 of the Practice, which would indicate that misleading the House can be regarded as a serious matter of contempt. And I seek leave to table the Senate Hansard of 25 June 2012, when I believe the member for Warringah was Leader of the Opposition, which indicates 30 members of the coalition voting on an amendment to remove the debt cap increase.

Leave not granted.

Carbon Pricing

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (14:04): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister inform the House of the impact of the carbon tax on the Australian economy? What are the economic benefits of scrapping the carbon tax, particularly on my home state of Queensland?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:04): I thank the member for McPherson for her question and I thank her for her concern to do the right thing by the people of Queensland and the people of Australia. There is no doubt the carbon tax was, is and always will be an act of economic self-harm. If you look at the former government's own figures, by 2050 Australia's cumulative gross domestic product would have been $1 trillion less with the carbon tax than it would have been without the carbon tax. We would have been $1 trillion poorer with the carbon tax than without the carbon tax under the former government's own figures. It is as if our economy were to close down for a whole year as a result of the impact of the carbon tax.

But that is not all. Under the former government's own figures, by 2050 national income per person would have been almost $5,000 less with the carbon tax than without the carbon tax. Real wages would have been six per cent less with the carbon tax than without the carbon tax. These are the dire consequences, for ordinary working Australians, of the carbon tax that members opposite still support—only they never had the guts to be honest about it with the Australian people before the election.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The honourable member for Isaacs will desist!
Mr ABBOTT: Under the former government's own figures: by mid-century, output in the aluminium industry would be 61 per cent less with the carbon tax than without it and output in the iron and steel industry would be 20 per cent less with the carbon tax than without it. And something that should haunt every member opposite: on the Labor Party's own figures, households are $550 a year worse off with the carbon tax than without it. That is why this government is utterly determined to get rid of this toxic tax.

When it comes to the great state of Queensland, under the former government's own figures gross state product in Queensland would be four per cent lower by 2050 with the carbon tax than it would be without it. The carbon tax is an anti-Queensland tax, just as the mining tax is an anti-Western Australian tax. We support the great state of Queensland. That is why we are determined to scrap the carbon tax.

Economy

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:07): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to his Treasurer's pre-election statement—and it is a cracker:

Well, if debt is the problem, more debt is not the answer.

Prime Minister, what has changed? If something has, why not give Australia a full and frank budget update?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:07): Everyone knows which party in this House is the party of debt and deficit, and it is members opposite. We all know that members opposite were completely incapable of managing debt and deficit when they were in government. Now they think they can manage debt and deficit from opposition. What frauds they are. We will deal with Labor's debt and deficit problem. We will deal with it. Members opposite were like bad tenants who trashed the house before they were evicted. We are here to repair the place that they have so badly damaged. Members opposite should stop interfering with the fiscal repair job that this country so desperately needs.

Carbon Pricing

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (14:09): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. I remind the minister that regional areas have been hit hard by the carbon tax. In my electorate of Dawson, the carbon tax costs the Mackay Regional Council alone $1 million a year for its Hogan's Pocket Landfill site. How will scrapping the carbon tax impact upon ratepayers in Mackay and North Queensland?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:09): My thanks to the member for Dawson for his question. I acknowledge his passionate advocacy for the people of North Queensland. The reality is that the carbon tax is hurting all Australians, but particularly those who live in regional communities, who pay more for everything as a result of this carbon tax. It is a tax that has been costing jobs. It has made our industry less competitive and, therefore, made our country less able to achieve its potential. It adds insidiously to the cost of everything that we do.

Even a visit to the dump costs more. As the member referred to, the Mackay Regional Council is paying about $1 million a year in carbon tax just on its Hogan's Pocket Landfill site—$1 million a year. That is no small amount, particularly for a regional city to pay. Sadly,
there are 34 other communities across Australia that are also paying massive amounts of carbon tax on their landfill sites. If it generates more than 25,000 tonnes, they have to pay the carbon tax. Ironically, if it generates only 24,999 tonnes, they pay nothing, but for one extra tonne you are immediately up for a half a million dollars, and the amounts keep just going up and up.

Of course, there is only one thing councils can do in response to this million-dollar tax and that is to pass it on to their ratepayers. The Mayor of Mackay was right when she said that the council was merely collecting on behalf of the federal government due to the tax. She was collecting a tax for the federal government and so she had no option but to raise the rates for residents of Mackay and district.

This government has a mandate to get rid of that tax, to save the ratepayers this tax and to make sure that the cost of living falls right across the nation. But, unfortunately, Labor fail to recognise that mandate. They want the rates to remain high. They will not give the councils the opportunity to pass on these benefits to the ratepayers. Labor should listen, junk the garbage tax and consign the carbon tax itself to the dump. Let us get on with delivering the mandate we have from the Australian people.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, could the Leader of the Nationals please table the script he was reading from?

The SPEAKER: Are his notes confidential or non-confidential?

Mr TRUSS: Confidential.

The SPEAKER: Then they are not tabled.

Carbon Pricing

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (14:12): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. If he is concerned about the financial position of Mackay Regional Council, why has he made the decision to withdraw the grant for community infrastructure of $411,484 that was included in the budget, announced at the Australian Local Government Association in June and welcomed by him at the time but ripped out after the election?

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: If the people on my left would be quiet we will hear an answer.

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:13): During the election campaign and in the lead-up to the election campaign, the Labor Party made almost 1,000 promises to fund projects across Australia. Of 1,157 projects that Labor announced under its regional development program, 1,012 were not contracted—they were empty election promises.

Mr Albanese: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order, on relevance. It was a very specific question that requires a very specific answer from the Deputy Prime Minister.

The SPEAKER: I accept that the change we made to the standing orders requiring direct relevance has meaning. Therefore, I would ask the Deputy Prime Minister in his answer to be directly relevant to grants.
Mr TRUSS: Nine hundred and ten of the projects that were announced and uncontracted were to councils, the local councils under this program, the regional development program. Round 5 was all to councils.

The SPEAKER: I will call the member for Grayndler, but you may only have one point on relevance.

Mr Albanese: Madam Speaker, now the Deputy Prime Minister is defying your ruling, when you indicated to him—

The SPEAKER: No, there is no point of order.

Mr Albanese: very clearly that he needed to be directly relevant to the very specific question.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr TRUSS: That 910 included the project for the Mackay Regional Council that the honourable member refers to. So Labor had announced these projects, but none of them were contracted. None of them had even been reviewed by the department and assessed for their merit.

The reality is we have our own election commitments and we will honour our election commitments. But I have never known a government to be expected to honour the election commitments made by the opposition side. They were not elected. Haven't they figured it out yet? They were not elected. The voters voted for our commitments and we will honour the commitments we have made.

Asylum Seekers

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (14:16): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Could the minister inform the House on action being taken to introduce temporary protection visas for illegal boat arrivals?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:16): Thank you to the member for Bowman for his question. I am pleased to advise the House that after an absence of more than five years this government has restored temporary protection visas. Temporary protection visas were abolished by those on that side of the House—along with the Greens—when they came to government over five years ago. What followed in the wake of that everyone in this place will remember: over 50,000 people turned up on over 800 illegal boats to Australia. There was a budget blow-out of over $11 billion, and over 1,100 people perished at sea. That is what followed from the decision of the previous government to abolish temporary protection visas and the many other measures that had been introduced by the Howard government that had stopped the boats. The previous government had found a solution. They turned it into a problem of catastrophic levels, and they should hang their heads in shame.

What they are doing in the Senate right now is joining up with the Greens, yet again, to defer the consideration of the Greens motion, which is to disallow the introduction of temporary protection visas. They are teaming up with the Greens to defer the decision for some weeks yet. This portrays the problem that those on the Labor side have always had on this issue. They are double minded, they are divided on this issue, and they always defer to the Greens. That is what they are doing here.
So I am pleased to say that temporary protection visas are back, and they are back because those on that side of the House left behind a legacy caseload of 33,000 people that they had not processed. This government has a big job to stop the boats and we are making a good start, with a reduction of 75 per cent in illegal arrivals by boat since Operation Sovereign Borders commenced. But we have another big task, and that task is to clear the backlog of Labor's lethargy when it comes to how they dealt with people who they allowed to come into this country. Had they been re-elected, those people would all be getting permanent visas—but not under this government, because this government believes what it says. We have conviction on this issue. Those on that side were double minded. They flipped and they flopped and they went with every wind that passed through that debate. As a result, they could not be believed. But, now, under this government, every measure is backed by resolve, because the people-smugglers know that this government means business. That government, when it was in power, could not hold a position from one day to the next.

**Asylum Seekers**

Mr MARLES (Corio) (14:19): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. I refer to reported statements by the Indonesian search and rescue agency Basarnas concerning the Australian interception of an asylum seeker vessel and subsequent actions and events on or around 7 November. Are these reports accurate?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:19): Last night I issued a statement about that matter. I made it very clear in that statement that the place of rescue, where the passengers were rescued, was closer to Indonesia than it was to Australia. We therefore sought to take those rescued passengers, in accordance with international search and rescue protocols, to the nearest place of safety, which was Indonesia, not Australia. That is the practice we have been following and that is the practice that has proved effective on many occasions.

But these are matters which we continue to work through with the Indonesian government, who are a strong partner. I want to stress how strong a partner they are. The cooperation that we receive from Indonesia and the strong leadership they show, particularly on on-land disruptions in Indonesia, has been extraordinary, because it has been that leadership from Indonesia, working together through our government and through the Bali process, that has meant that we now know that more people are being stopped from coming to Australia under sovereign borders than are arriving. That is why we are having success.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr MORRISON: I know those on the other side are sensitive on this issue, and they should be. They should be very sensitive on this issue, because under that side of the House they ran a taxi service. They ran a water taxi service and they were open for business for that water taxi service. Under that side of the House we measured illegal arrivals by boat in the thousands per month. Under this government, they are measured in the hundreds.

Where these people will be processed is on Nauru and Manus Island, because they are being processed offshore. That was one of the many policies that were put in place by the previous Howard government that were abolished by those on that side of the House along with temporary protection visas. They had to be dragged, kicking and screaming, to restore offshore processing, and they restored it under protest. When they restored it, it was
underfunded, it was incompetently put together, it did not send the signal and it did not provide the effective implementation that makes the policy work. Any and every measure to deter boat arrivals, regardless of who the author is, will always be more effective in the hands of a coalition government that believes in a border protection policy and a border protection initiative than in the hands of Labor, who are double minded, divided and always deferring to the Greens.

**Live Animal Exports**

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (14:22): My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, your government has committed to maintaining the live animal Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System. But ESCAS is only an aid to improved animal welfare standards if those companies found to be breaking the supply chain, or acting improperly within it, are brought to heel. Prime Minister, will the government support the strongest possible sanction being imposed on any company found to be repeatedly breaching ESCAS?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:23): I thank the member for Denison for his question, and I respect the passion and the commitment that the member for Denison brings to the particular issue about which he has asked me. If I may say so, though, respectfully to the member, the government does support the live animal export trade and we want to encourage the trade rather than discourage the trade. Yes, it does have to take place under the right conditions. But it is an important trade. The live animal export trade is worth up to $1 billion a year, and I would like to think that in the years to come it might be worth more. The live animal export trade employs about 10,000 people, and I would like to think that in the years to come it might employ more, particularly in northern Australia, where it is quite an important industry.

I know there are many in this House who would prefer to see exports of, for instance, boxed beef rather than of live animals, but in many countries such as Indonesia, where reliable power is not always available in some of the more remote places, the only way to get beef to those people, to improve their diets, is through live cattle going to wet markets. So this trade is important for Australia. It is important for countries such as Indonesia, and it should be encouraged, although I accept the member's point that it should be encouraged under the right conditions.

To get to the specifics of your question: the government will always investigate breaches. I believe we are investigating a number of breaches at the moment, and if those investigations turn out to reveal breaches we will take the relevant action. But, in what may disappoint the member, I have to say that we are satisfied with the rules as they stand and we do not intend to toughen them further.

**Taxation**

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (14:25): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline how resources businesses, including small resources companies in Western Australia that employ thousands of my constituents, will be better off because of the new government's plans, particularly its taxation plans?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:25): Thank you very much. That is a great question, because it focuses on the fact that it is the coalition that is getting rid of the mining tax and getting rid of the carbon tax. We want to reduce the burden on business so that
business can get on with investing and creating jobs. But the Labor Party is opposing all this, of course. The Labor Party is opposing our attempt to get rid of the carbon tax, to reduce the electricity bills for people in the member for Forrest's electorate—every electorate in Australia, in fact. And the Labor Party is opposing our abolition of the mining tax. The mining tax is a signature example of failed policy. When it was originally announced—and I want to pay credit to the member for Lilley for the policy, because he was the architect of the original policy—the member for Lilley described it as a historic reform. He wasn't wrong, was he! It was a historic reform.

A government member: He's pretending not to listen!

Mr HOCKEY: Well, he didn't bother staying around for the member for Griffith last night, which was quite rude, so he wouldn't listen to me if he doesn't listen to the member for Griffith!

I just make the point that the RSPT, when it was announced originally, was meant to raise $49.5 billion. When the second version of the mining tax was announced, they reduced it and they said it was going to raise $26.5 billion. The tax has been such a success to date that it has raised $400 million, and it has cost the Australian Taxation Office $50 million to collect $400 million! But the problem for the Labor Party is this: they locked in all this expenditure against a tax that does not raise any money. Therefore, if we get rid of the tax and all of the expenditure, it improves the budget bottom line by over $13 billion.

The Labor Party are so appalled, outraged, about the debt that they are opposing everything we are trying to do to get it down. It is like poisoning the well and then, afterwards, when they go into opposition, they start to drink from the well and they do not understand why it does not taste like Coca-Cola. It actually has poison in it. The Labor Party do not understand that they poisoned the economy and they poisoned the budget. Like bad tenants, they trashed the joint, and now they are doing everything they can to stop us from fixing it. But the bottom line is: this is Labor's debt, this is Labor's mismanagement, this is Labor's mining tax and we are going to get rid of it.

Asylum Seekers

Mr MARLES (Corio) (14:28): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Can the minister advise the House exactly how many boats have been turned back to Indonesia successfully since the election?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:29): As I reminded the House yesterday, the coalition announced a policy before the last election that we would be implementing Operation Sovereign Borders. This is a very different way of doing things—a very, very different way. And I have to say, one of the key differences is that we now measure arrivals in the hundreds, not the thousands—as we did under the previous government. But there are many differences that are taking place, and one of those differences is the way that we handle information. We do it on the guidance of the Joint Agency Task Force of Operation Sovereign Borders, and it is done for this purpose: so as to not use information to advantage people smugglers to sell their product.

Those opposite might not understand this, because under their government they were not running such an operation; they were running a water taxi service. They were happy to let people smugglers know where their vessels were and how successful their operations were
and to provide them proofs of voyage that could be used to provide proof of payment and to accept payment and get the cashflow of the business running. They were very happy to do that. But we are not running that sort of an operation. That is why the communications protocols about what happens within Operation Sovereign Borders, which are tactical on-water operations and things of that nature, are not things that are canvassed publicly. To do so would be to assist people smugglers to get people on boats that sink. If that is what the opposition is encouraging the government to do—to go back on our election promises—

Ms Plibersek: Madam Speaker, a point of order: the changes to the standing orders require that the minister be directly relevant to the question. There is no way that he is directly relevant. He just needs to tell us a number. If the number is zero, then say it!

The SPEAKER: I would ask the honourable member to withdraw that last term.

Ms Plibersek: To assist you, Madam Speaker, I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. It is not my sort of language. There is no point of order.

Mr MORRISON: To provide the information that the opposition has requested would be to violate the communications protocols which have been established by the Joint Agency Task Force for Operation Sovereign Borders. To do so, as I said, would aid people smugglers. I know that those opposite got everything they wanted when they were last in government, together with the cheers of the Greens. They were able to abolish all the measures that worked, and they invited the 50,000 arrivals, which they duly advised to the people-smuggling audience all around the world and encouraged them to keep coming. This government is not going to engage in the practices of the former government, and that is why we are seeing a 75 per cent reduction in arrivals. What remains available to the government is to implement the full suite of measures that we took to the Australian people and, most importantly, the resolve to back it up, which the previous government dismally lacked.

Employment

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (14:33): My question is to the Minister for Education, representing the Minister for Employment. Is the minister aware of the published statement by Grocon employees, ‘We have been unfairly singled out for abuse, threats and intimidation by the very organisation we pay union fees to in an argument which is not of our doing’? What will the government do to ensure that workers in the building and construction sector, including those in my electorate of Casey, are protected from abuse, threats and intimidation?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Minister for Education and Leader of the House) (14:33): I thank my friend the member for Casey for his question. In 2001 the Cole royal commission, a commission founded by the now Prime Minister, the member for Warringah, found that construction sites were hotbeds of intimidation, thuggery, lawlessness and violence. In 2005 the Howard government established the Australian Building and Construction Commission. This comes as no surprise to the members of the Labor Party, of course. In 2012 the Leader of the Opposition abolished the Australian Building and Construction Commission. While the Australian Building and Construction Commission existed, construction industry productivity grew by nine per cent, consumers were better off by $7.5 billion annually and there were fewer working days lost through industrial action. But presumably the Leader of the Opposition did not support those positive economic outcomes, because he moved to abolish the Australian Building and Construction Commission.
The Grocon dispute in Melbourne last year plumbed new depths for Labor thuggery—I mean union thuggery; a Freudian slip!—intimidation of workers. The workers at Grocon themselves published this advertisement, which my friend the member for Casey referred to, which, amongst other things, said:

Grocon employees are fed up and disappointed with the Union representing their own needs and agendas against, over and beyond Grocon employees wishes.

… All we want is to be able to go to work and be allowed to provide for our families and loved ones.

… We only ask that we be allowed the same basic rights our Union leadership enjoy, to be free to access our places of work without the lies, threats and abuse, and without fear of reprisals.’

Today we move to reintroduce the Australian Building and Construction Commission, because this side of the House represents workers in Australia, and the other side of the House represents union leaders. The Leader of the Opposition will oppose this move, because when the union leaders come to see the Leader of the Opposition about policy it is like pushing against an open door. The problem with the Leader of the Opposition is he does not believe in anything at all. The only thing he believes in is gaining power, so the union leaders support him; he will support their wishes. It is hard to disagree with someone when you do not believe in anything. And the problem with the Leader of the Opposition, because he believes in nothing at all, is that when the union leaders say ‘Jump’, he asks, 'How high?'

I table the Grocon advertisement from the employees and the Independent Economics analysis of the economic benefits of the Australian Building and Construction Commission from 2013.

**Asylum Seekers**

**Mr MARLES** (Corio) (14:36): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. In light of the minister’s previous response, how does reporting the successful turning back of boats help people smugglers?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:37): I can understand why those opposite are unfamiliar with the way these sorts of issues are handled, because they have never engaged in them. When the opposition was in government they just picked people up and invited more to come, which was not just by their operations but by the way they conducted themselves in this place and other places as they constantly defaulted to softer and softer policies. Only as time wore on and the political winds blew hard against them were they dragged kicking and screaming to restore some of the measures of the previous government. But, when you do not believe in those measures, it is not surprising that you do not do them with any conviction or with any success.

**The SPEAKER:** I ask the minister to resume his seat. I recognise the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms Plibersek:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Clearly, once again, the standing order refers to direct relevance. There is no way in which this answer is directly relevant to the question asked.

**The SPEAKER:** I would ask the minister to be directly relevant to the question as it has been asked.

**Mr MORRISON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Commenting on on-water operational matters at sea would be to telegraph tactics employed by the government as to how these
measures were handled. That is why the Joint Agency Task Force, which runs our military led border security operation, has so far led to a 75 per cent reduction in illegal arrivals of boats and people to Australia.

_The SPEAKER:_ The minister will resume his seat. I call the Manager of Opposition Business.

_Mr Burke:_ I rise on a point of order. There were some significant points of order in the previous parliament when you, as the member for Mackellar, suggested—

_The SPEAKER:_ What is your point of order?

_Mr Burke:_ That, if the minister does not know the answer, he should be sat down.

_The SPEAKER:_ That is not a point of order. I call the minister.

_Mr MORRISON:_ Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is for those reasons that the government does not comment on on-water operational matters. It is to protect the measures that we know do stop the boats and have stopped the boats, and under this government the boats are stopping again.

_DISTINGUISHED VISITORS_

_The SPEAKER_ (14:39): I have to inform the House that we have present in the gallery this afternoon members of the 30th delegation of Young Political Leaders from the United States of America, who are visiting under the auspices of the Australian Political Exchange Council. On behalf of the House, I extend a very warm welcome to the members.

I also wish to advise the House that we have present with us the Hon. David Tollner MLA, former member for Solomon and now Deputy Chief Minister in the Northern Territory government. We make you welcome.

_Honourable members:_ Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

**National Broadband Network**

_Ms SCOTT_ (Lindsay) (14:40): My question is to the Minister for Communications. Can the minister update my community in Lindsay, and especially those with inadequate broadband, on the progress of the NBN? Why is it important to roll it out sooner and more affordably in Western Sydney? How would the government ensure NBN accountability to the parliament and the people?

_Mr TURNBULL_ (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (14:40): I thank the honourable member for her question and congratulate her on her election and on her first speech yesterday. As the honourable member will know, the people of Western Sydney have been receiving Labor promises, unfulfilled, of better infrastructure for years. There are at least half a dozen rail projects from the state government, and from the Labor federal government they were told before the election that there were 85,000 homes in Western Sydney where construction had commenced. But, in fact, building contracts had only been signed for half of them. Another fact that was denied the people of Western Sydney at the election was that there were, in fact, only 303 homes in brownfield areas actually connected to the NBN. Only 303 connected in all of Western Sydney, a region of 1.9 million people, and that is after six years in government and more than $5 billion in taxpayers’ funding.
Of course, the honourable members knows, and we all know, that there are many areas in Australia that have absolutely inadequate broadband, often no broadband at all. That is why my department is conducting a comprehensive survey to ascertain for the first time where the broadband needs are greatest. I was in the honourable member for Chifley's electorate last week in Derwent Parade in Blacktown to see some broadband being rolled out by the NBN—fibre to the premises. Was that an area of inadequate broadband? No, Madam Speaker, it was not. The people of Derwent Parade could buy not one but two competing 100-megabit-per-second broadband services from each of Telstra and Optus. So, while there were homes in Western Sydney that had no broadband, the NBN was being rolled out in the honourable member for Chifley's electorate in streets where they had some of the best broadband in Australia.

The honourable member asked me about accountability. Unlike the Labor Party, whose statistics were not in English when talking about the NBN but were in Conrovian, a bizarre Orwellian language that was impossible to understand and was calculated to mislead, we are publishing every week the up-to-date rollout figures in plain English. But it gets worse for the Labor Party. The honourable member for Blaxland, the shadow minister, and I agreed that there would be a joint committee on the NBN as there was in the last parliament. We agreed that that should be the committee that dealt with it. But Senator Lundy, the disappointed Senator Lundy, rolled him and there is now a Senate committee looking into the NBN, on which neither of the Leader of the Opposition's broadband spokesmen are able to sit. What a failure of leadership on behalf of— (Time expired)

Asylum Seekers

Mr MARLES (Corio) (14:44): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. I ask the minister about an on-land operation of boat buying. How many Indonesian fishing boats has the government bought since the election?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:44): Again, it is an operational matter. But I can tell you this, and that is that the measures which comprise $20 million to effectively engage communities across Indonesia, where we have had great success in getting their cooperation to spread the message about the evils of people-smuggling—which those measures and many others that were contained in that package were designed to achieve—are progressing well.

Registered Organisations Commission

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (14:45): My question is to the Minister for Education, representing the Minister for Employment. I refer the minister to the Fair Work Australia investigation into the Health Services Union that found 181 contraventions of the registered organisations act and HSU rules. Minister, what action is the government taking to ensure that union members can have peace of mind that their organisations are being run properly and their membership fees are administered with some integrity?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Minister for Education and Leader of the House) (14:45): I thank my friend the member for Mitchell for his question. Today the government moved to introduce the Registered Organisations Commission. We did so for two primary reasons. The first of course is to protect the reputation of union leaders that do the right thing. There are many union leaders out there whose reputations have been seriously damaged by the illegal actions
of a few, and we moved today to restore the reputations of those union leaders who do the right thing. But, secondly, we want to make sure that we can reassure union members that this side of the House recognises their desire that their union membership dues are used with integrity. This side of the House once again is demonstrating that we genuinely represent workers' interests.

Members of unions who pay their fees, especially low-paid workers at the Health Services Union, should be able to know that their hard earned dollars are being spent with integrity. We are not the only people who think this. Paul Howes, the head of the Australian Workers Union, said on 26 November 2012:

I actually believe there is a higher responsibility for us as guardians of workers' money to protect that money and to act diligently and honestly. The reality is I do not have any issue with increasing the level of requirements and penalties on trade unions for breaching basic ethics like misappropriation of funds.

If only the Leader of the Opposition shared Mr Howes's view about registered organisations. The Leader of the Opposition has forgotten the 181 contraventions of the registered organisations act and HSU rules found by Fair Work Australia. He has obviously forgotten that the member for Dobell, the former member, has been charged with 150 criminal related fraud charges against misappropriation of HSU funds. He has forgotten that the former ALP president, Mike Williamson, has pleaded guilty to misusing almost $1 million of HSU members' funds.

While this government is standing up for the unions, the Leader of the Opposition is once again following the lead of his union minders. But do not take my word for it. Bruce Hawker, writing in the *The Rudd rebellion*, said:

… any firm position on party reform which reduces union influence could easily see Shorten retreat from any support he is now showing for a Rudd revival.

We know that at the end of the day the Leader of the Opposition is simply a union stooge for his union minders.

**Asylum Seekers**

**Mr SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:48): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Is there information currently in the possession of the minister which he will provide to his weekly media briefing tomorrow and which he is unwilling to provide to parliament today?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:48): I have no information within my folder here which goes to the matters that would deal with the briefing I would give tomorrow. But I will tell you this: once again, the communications protocols established for Operation Sovereign Borders provide for a once-weekly report to be provided by the commander of the JDF at that briefing which updates details of arrivals and transfers to offshore processing centres. That is the practice we will follow because that is the practice that ensures the integrity of the operation that we are running that has led to a 75 per cent reduction in illegal arrivals by boat to Australia since Operation Sovereign Borders was put in place. I know those opposite do not want to hear that figure. I know they do not want to hear the figure that arrivals by boat illegally under Operation Sovereign Borders have fallen
by 75 per cent. That is a figure that they should reflect on because when they were in government we measured them in the thousands.

I am not going to violate a protocol that has been put in place by the JDF to ensure the integrity of that operation for the entertainment of those members opposite or others. We will ensure the integrity of that operation just as we will ensure the integrity of our borders, because that is what the Australian people elected us to do. We are doing what we said we would do and we will get on and do it.

Child Care

Mrs MARKUS (Macquarie) (14:50): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Education. Can the minister explain to my constituent Sylvia Mollison, a family day-carer of Springwood in my electorate of Macquarie, how the government plans to address the impact of red tape and changes in the childcare sector that have led to increased fees for parents?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Assistant Minister for Education) (14:51): I thank the member for Macquarie for her question and also thank her for a visit to her electorate in July this year where we went to the Bunya Child Care Centre and witnessed an Indigenous Welcome to Country and dance, which was very special. One of the critical issues that was raised by the member for Macquarie's childcare centres and services was the amount of red tape under which all services are operating. As shadow minister visiting hundreds of centres across the country, it was a theme that I heard many, many times.

The coalition government wants a thriving childcare and early-learning sector that delivers flexible, accessible and affordable quality education and care. But, as we know, Labor's agenda is to tax, spend and interfere. And nowhere is that interference written larger than in the amount of red tape and regulation that childcare services face.

The point I want to make is that much of this does not relate to the critical relationship inside the childcare centre, which is between the educator and the child. We have absolute commitment to quality, education and care, but we recognise that the volume of red tape under which services have been operating is just too much. It is pushing up the cost of child care and parents are rapidly finding that child care is becoming unaffordable which, in turn, influences their participation in the workforce and influences the productivity of the nation as a whole.

So I look forward to reassuring the member for Macquarie's constituents and taking the real-world examples that she, as well as members from other electorates, may bring to this place about how we can actively pursue an agenda that reduces costs around red tape.

I also want to mention that we are, as promised prior to the election, announcing the first public examination of Australia's childcare and early-learning system in almost 20 years, with a Productivity Commission inquiry which will look at the policy settings from a generation ago and reflect new ones for the future.

MOTIONS

Prime Minister

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:53): I seek leave to move the following motion:
That the House:

(1) notes the:

(a) Prime Minister's failure to lead an 'open and transparent' government, despite promising the Australian people he would;

(b) repeated failure of the Minister for Immigration to answer questions inside and outside the Parliament; and

(c) Government's setting aside of ministerial responsibility to pursue media spin; and

(2) calls on the Minister for Immigration to immediately explain:

(a) details about the boat carrying Somali asylum seekers that arrived in Darwin on 11 November 2013;

(b) reported statements by BASARNAS concerning the Australian interception of an asylum seeker vessel and subsequent actions and events on or around November 7; and

(c) how the Government intends to pursue its election commitment to turn back boats to Indonesia and buy back boats in fishing villages.

Leave not granted.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:55): I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the Honourable Member for Maribyrnong from moving the motion forthwith.

Why is it that Australians can find out more about Australian government policies in the Jakarta Post than from the hapless Minister for Immigration and Border Protection? The government opposite promised to be an open-door and transparent government. They made it incredibly clear and made a lot of noise that they would in fact be an open government. Many Australians, I suspect, have not signed up to a subscription to the Jakarta Post. Instead, they hope that our own media will be able to tell them what the government are doing on an important issue like boats. But can they find in our own media all of the details? No, they cannot. They need to rely on Indonesian newspapers to tell them what the Australian government are unwilling to tell us.

Before the 7 September election, these people opposite said they were going to be the big champions of accountability. Instead, the Australian government is treating Australians very poorly—

The SPEAKER: I would remind the Leader of the Opposition that he is speaking to a motion to suspend standing orders and that he is providing reasons for the suspension.

Mr SHORTEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is very important to suspend the orders in order to have the debate because Australians deserve better in terms of finding out what is going on with important policy issues. But we know that this is a government which loves to hide and which makes the Australian people seek out what they are doing. For instance, if it is not addicted to hiding from the Australian people, then where is the budget update to justify by increasing our debt to half a trillion dollars?

They have refused to provide timely and detailed information about boat arrivals and interceptions. We saw that remarkable display from the minister for immigration where, whenever he is asked a question about matters, he says, 'It's an operational matter,' or 'It's not Friday' or 'The matter is on the water.' Members of the House: what boat issue is not going to
There is an arrogance creeping into this government, which has even been identified by members of the media.

Respected political commentator Laurie Oakes has written that it is disgusting and that the government is thumbing its nose at voters. In 2010 the Prime Minister said to the same respected journalist that his position did indeed change his mind in response to changing circumstances. But the only changing circumstances about the requirement for openness is that the then opposition leader was elected to be the Prime Minister. He said, 'The last thing we want to do is hide anything from the Australian people.' Before the election he said he would issue an alert whenever there was a boat coming through. Now he has gone back on that promise. We believe he said, in full disclosure: 'There is no full disclosure underway in this government.' What he and his spokesperson actually say about turning back the boats is: 'We won't tell you.'

We heard question after question today asking: how many boats are being turned back? We got the ridiculous explanation: 'If we told you how our policy is working, somehow the people smugglers would be encouraged.' Any simple exercise of logic says that, if you are beating the people smugglers, why not tell them indeed? The issue is that they are not the government that they promised to be when they were elected.

We are then told that when a boat comes into Darwin Harbour we cannot talk about that because it is not a Friday. Australians deserve better. We know that this is a government who are addicted to saying one thing in opposition and another in government. They said that Labor was scaring people about massive cuts. What do they do when they get in? They cut the superannuation benefits of 3½ million Australians.

Only a coalition addicted to secrecy could say that it is better to give a tax break to 16,000 people with $2 million in their superannuation, but for 3½ million Australians—

The SPEAKER: I ask the Leader of the Opposition to return to the subject of the standing orders suspension which is relevant to this debate.

Mr SHORTEN: I appreciate what Madam Speaker is saying. It is our intention to suspend standing orders so we can address the issue of secrecy, so we can address the inability of the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection to explain and his hiding behind 'Everything is operational, everything is to do with the military, everything is on a boat, everything is at water.' He is at sea!

We are talking about this matter of the Prime Minister promising to lead an open and transparent government. He came up with another cracker of a slogan. He said there would be no surprises and no excuses. But when something is an operational matter, that is an excuse. When something is at sea, that is an excuse.

Why is it that after all the good work that the previous government did building positive relations with Indonesia, these foreign relations vandals have got into power and started dictating what should be the case to other countries? Diplomacy requires respect. Not providing any debate or respect and telling people what to do and simply treating everything in terms of the next domestic slogan is not the way to conduct a government.

Most importantly in terms of this proposition, Labor on this side knows that the Australian people deserve the respect of a full explanation. Day after day, we have seen the minister for immigration deny, obfuscate and avoid the real issues. Today we saw a brazen attempt. When
he was asked, 'What is it that you can't tell parliament today that you'll tell tomorrow?' we got an explanation unprecedented since Federation: 'It's not in the folder! What will we get next week? The dog ate my homework?' 'I left my running gear at home and my explanation was there?'

It is not good enough for a minister of the Commonwealth to say, 'It's in the folder and, if it's not in the folder, then I know nothing.' Sergeant Schultz on Hogan's Heroes said, 'I know nothing.' What he should have said is, 'It is not in the folder, therefore I know nothing! It is not appropriate to say, 'If it is not in the folder, I can't help you.' All we get from the minister for immigration is a folder carrier, a postbox, someone who says, 'I can't help you today, but I might come back tomorrow.'

The business of government is not just a Friday matter and then you take the other six days off. The business of government is not hiding behind the military and saying five times in a row at a press conference that you will handball it to the military. The military should not be used to do the job of ministers. Ministers should be used to do the jobs of ministers. It is not enough and it is not satisfactory to say, 'We can't tell you how many boats we've turned back, because that might tell the people smugglers what's going on.' I actually think that the minister for immigration inadvertently tripped over the truth.

The SPEAKER: I ask the Leader of the Opposition to come back to the suspension question.

Mr SHORTEN: Of course, Madam Speaker. I appreciate your guidance. The minister for immigration stumbled across a correct morsel of an answer in amongst the nuggets of nonsense.

The SPEAKER: Suspension starts with an S.

Mr SHORTEN: What he said was, 'The answer, if I give it, will encourage the people smugglers.' I go: 'Ah ha! A light bulb moment for the minister for immigration!' Of course the answer will encourage the people smugglers, because it is not working. I understand why he does not want to answer. I love these people opposite! No, I don't. I appreciate the inadvertent humour of those opposite. They say the numbers are down. Well, of course they are—because of Labor's PNG solution. Be gracious enough to give us a little bit of credit.

In conclusion: it is not satisfactory to say, 'If I did not bring my folder today, I'm not playing and I'm not answering questions.' It is not satisfactory to say that a matter relating to boats is on the water. Thank you for that, Descartes! 'It is on the water, therefore I can't answer.' That is not good enough. The Australian people deserve better and our communications from the coalition should not be via The Jakarta Post. Do better, Minister.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr Burke: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (15:05): The Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about secrecy. I want to talk about the success that the Australian people deserve—the success of putting in place measures that deal with a very significant issue of failure that this government is having to address on a daily basis.

If we are talking about results here—because that is what the Australian people are interested in—every week the Australian people are being updated on the results that are
occurring because of the government's initiatives. Under the previous government, the results were 50,000 people illegally arriving on more than 800 boats. In addition to that, there was a budget blow-out of more than $11 billion. Over 14½ thousand people who were seeking protection in Australia by applying offshore through the proper process were denied a protection visa in Australia because their visa and their protection went to someone who came illegally on a boat.

But, above and beyond all that, the results that were achieved under the previous government after they abolished those measures were: over 1,100 people dying at sea.

They are the results that so appalled the Australian people that at the last election they elected this government to restore the measures that worked. At that election we went to the Australian people and said what we were going to do. We said we were going to restore the measures that worked under the Howard government. We said we were going to put in place a regional deterrence framework, working with our partners throughout the region to ensure that we could put in place the deterrents—not the accommodations that were put in place by the previous government—that would stop people getting on these boats and stop the cost, the chaos and the tragedy, which was the story of the previous government that the Australian people wanted to see closed and ended.

All of the measures that we took to the last election are part of the arsenal of measures we are employing on this task. Those measures include the implementation of Operation Sovereign Borders. Operation Sovereign Borders is a military-led border security operation where the commander of the Joint Agency Task Force was appointed by the Chief of the Defence Force. It was his appointment. We tasked the JADF to put in place the arrangements for successfully implementing this policy. Part of the arrangements that the JADF put in place was a set of communication protocols designed to manage information so as not to advantage people smugglers.

They are the protocols this government is following, and they are the protocols the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite are inviting me to break, to violate and to undermine. They are asking me to undermine the judgment and the protocols put in place by the commander of the Joint Agency Task Force, who was in fact appointed by the Chief of the Defence Force. I am disappointed that the opposition would seek to reflect on that appointment and on the decisions of the Joint Agency Task Force.

As minister, I am ensuring that those protocols and those operations are being put in place, as they were designed to do. The results they are achieving, which are being provided to the Australian people, live up to the promise we made before the last election, which was to make a difference from day one. The difference is this: a 75 per cent reduction in illegal arrivals by boat to Australia since Operation Sovereign Borders was put in place. All of the measures we took to the last election are being implemented through Operation Sovereign Borders.

The members opposite have reflected on the measures that were introduced by the previous government. I would add this advice to the members opposite. The biggest measure that this government has in addressing the disastrous record of the government that preceded us, which opened our borders and left people dead in the water, is this: the resolve of this government. It is the resolve of this government that puts the steel in the measures that makes them work. The members opposite, over the years they served in government, as arrivals went from tens to hundreds to thousands, thought the answer to all of this was a press conference and a
signing ceremony. They thought the answer was to flip and flop with the wind, ridden by division and double-mindedness. That sent the message loud and clear to the people smugglers that the former government was not serious and its heart was not in it. The Australian people knew it and they threw them out of office because they knew the former government was not serious about this issue and they would never have the resolve to carry it off.

That is why I said before that any measure dealing with deterrence of people-smuggling to Australia will always be safer and more effective in the hands of the coalition than it will ever be in the hands of the members opposite, because the people smugglers know that they just do not believe it. That is why we have seen that when the coalition got its hands back on offshore processing and the belated measures that the previous government was dragged kicking and screaming to introduce, they really began to work, and they will really continue to work, because we have applied ourselves not to the speaking but to the operation and implementation. This government does not talk about doing things; it does things. That is what we were elected to do—we were elected to do things.

The members opposite always thought the answer to every political crisis was a political response and a press conference. With the Malaysian people swap they put in place from August to May 2011, which was negotiated in secret, I stress that as they flipped and flopped and demonstrated their inconsistency over so many points, they made one critical error at the time they released the announcement. The error they made on that occasion was not that they kept those negotiations secret for so long. The error they made was that they announced the Malaysian people swap on the eve of the budget as a political stunt to avoid another weekend embarrassment for their government. In doing so they effectively blew any potential operational effectiveness of that measure, because they announced an agreement that was not done.

This government is not going to make the same mistakes the previous government did when it comes to border protection. When we talk to other governments we will do it discreetly and privately. When we put arrangements in place we will put them in place so that they are effective. We will not be providing running commentaries. We will not be running a shipping news service for people smugglers. We will be managing the information in a way that continues to achieve results.

The opposition is missing the point. The opposition think that this is an issue for sport. The Australian people have had enough of the sport, enough of the histrionics, enough of the talking. What they want are results. What I can report to the Australian people, as we have each week, is that the boats are stopping. That is what we committed to the Australian people to do and that is what we will use every fibre in the being of this government to continue to deliver. We are stopping the boats. We said that we would stop the boats. It was those opposite who set the boats running, and it is those opposite who sit so ashamed of their performance that they are engaged in these childish games to undermine the operational effectiveness of an operation that is working. This government has the resolve and the unity of purpose to get this job done. The opposition is looking for sport. I suggest that they look for it somewhere else.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:15): I second the resolution. I cannot remember the last time that a minister ran out of material at the beginning of their
speech. People talk about how difficult it might be to make the transition from government to opposition. Who has ever made a worse transition from opposition to government? We have a situation in which the person who was their star in opposition has become an absolute embarrassment in government. The reason that we should suspend standing orders today is that, if question time is to mean anything at all, ministers have to be willing to answer questions here.

What we have had from the minister for immigration is an acknowledgment that he will put information out as part of a media strategy, as though the media strategy is the only part of his job that matters. And there is a reason he does not have to worry about any other part of his job. Other than the media strategy, he has not implemented any of the new policies that he promised at the election. How many boats have they bought in Indonesian fishing villages? There is no doubt in anyone's mind that not one boat has been bought in Indonesian fishing villages—not one. Every Australian knows it; everyone in Indonesia knows that it is ridiculous. But this minister wants us to believe that it is a secret operational matter and that he will decide whether or not I will tell you on a Friday afternoon—that great time to get a message out to the Australian people.

The journalists have been complaining for some time about the fact that basic pieces of information are not being made available to them. But we did not think that that culture of secrecy would extend all the way to the floor of this parliament. If you are a minister in a country that does not have the Westminster system of government, you do not have to come to the floor of a parliament. But I thought that the Westminster system was important to some of the people in this room. I thought that we opened the parliament with reference to the idea of there only being a couple of traditions in Australia, and one of the two is British. If the Westminster tradition matters, how come we have a minister who refuses to pass on information when the only defence he has is, 'Oh, it's not in my folder'? Lots of people have come up with excuses over the years. But no child would get away with 'the dog ate my homework' as readily as the minister thinks he can get away with 'Oh, it's not in my folder.'

If they have turned back boats, what is the possible argument that it would help people smugglers for that to be public? We have had four years of the Prime Minister, while he was the Leader of the Opposition, telling us that that would be a deterrent and that that would send a message. Now from the minister for immigration we find that it is a secret message! 'We have to make sure that the people smugglers do not know. Damn: sometimes, the Jakarta Post might find out, but hopefully we can keep the deterrents under wraps.'

Notice also that whenever the minister for immigration or the Prime Minister talk about the reduction in the number of the boats they include dates prior to when the regional resettlement arrangements were put in place. When they choose a two-week period they will never choose the final two weeks before the election, when it was down to one boat each week. You will not find them referring to that. I remember your complaint in the Daily Telegraph, Minister, when you said, 'It's not the policy; it's the weather.' We remember that one, too.

If you want to be a minister in this parliament who is accountable to the Australian people, you need to recognise that they have a right to know. They have a right to know through the press gallery and through the media and they certainly have a right to know under the Westminster system within this parliament and on the floor of this House. We have gone from turn the boats to telephone the boats to buy the boats to hide the boats. We have a minister
who, the moment he was elected, went from being the most public voice to donning the invisibility cloak and wanting to hide. He is the greatest embarrassment that this government has. We should suspend standing orders to compel him to provide the information to the parliament and to answer the questions that have been asked that he so callously refuses to answer. (Time expired)

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that the motion to suspend standing orders be agreed to.

The House divided. [15:24]

(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes ...................... 53
Noes ...................... 85
Majority .................. 32

**AYES**

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodmann, G
Burke, AS
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Elliot, MJ
Feehey, D
Fitzgibbon, JA
Gray, G
Hall, JG (teller)
Husic, EN
Katter, RC
Leigh, AK
Marles, RD
Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Parke, M
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Thomson, KJ
Watts, TG
Zappia, A

Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burke, AE
Butler, MC
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Ferguson, LDT
Giles, AJ
Griffin, AP
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
King, CF
Macklin, JL
Mitchell, RG
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Perrett, GD
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JCT (teller)
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakinou, M
Wilkie, AD

**NOES**

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S (teller)
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
 Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG

Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Briggs, JE
Brough, MT
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coleman, DB
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PC
Question negatived.

**Mr Abbott:** Madam Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

**DOCUMENTS**

**Australian Parliamentary Service Commissioner**

**Department of Parliamentary Services**

**Presentation**

The **SPEAKER** (15:30): Pursuant to the Parliamentary Service Act 1999 I present the annual reports for 2012-13 of the Parliamentary Service Commissioner and the Department of Parliamentary Services.
COMMITTEES
Appointment

The SPEAKER (15:31): I have received a message from the Senate informing the House that Senator Parry has been appointed a member of the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings; that Senators Boyce and Smith have been appointed members of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights; that Senators Eggleston, Fawcett and Parry have been appointed members of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security; that Senators Bernardi, Ruston and Smith have been appointed members of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit; and that Senator Ruston has been appointed a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works.

PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE HOLDERS
Speaker's Panel

The SPEAKER (15:31): Pursuant to standing order 17(a), I lay on the table my warrant nominating the honourable members for Solomon, Hughes, Bonner and Braddon to be members of the Speaker's panel to assist the chair when requested to do so by the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker.

DOCUMENTS
Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Minister for Education and Leader of the House) (15:32): Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Full details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Economy

The SPEAKER (15:32): I have received a letter from the honourable member for McMahon proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The urgent need for the Government to cease the culture of secrecy on its proposal to lift the debt limit to half a trillion dollars.

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

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

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Minister for Education and Leader of the House) (15:33): I move:

That the business of the day be called on.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the business of the day be called on.
The House divided. [15:38]

(The Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Scott)

Ayes ......................84
Noes ......................47
Majority ...............37

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Question agreed to.

**BILLS**

**Commonwealth Inscribed Stock Amendment Bill 2013**

**Consideration of Senate Message**

Bill returned from the Senate with an amendment.

Ordered that the amendment be considered immediately.

*Senate's amendment*—

(1) Schedule 1, item 1, page 3 (line 6), omit "$500", substitute "$400".

*Mr HOCKEY* (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (15:46): I move:

That the amendment be disagreed to.

The opposition and the Greens have said there is no compelling evidence to have a debt limit of $500 billion and that, rather, there should be a debt limit of $400 billion. I table today the economic statement from the member for McMahon that says debt is going to peak at $370 billion. I table today the executive minute from the Australian Office of Financial Management that says that it would be 'prudent from an operational perspective to set it'—the debt cap—'at a level $40 billion to $60 billion higher—'*

*Ms Owens interjecting—*

*Mr HOCKEY*: than the peak projected within year CGS'.

*The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott)*: The member for Parramatta is grossly disorderly.

*Mr HOCKEY*: Three hundred and seventy plus 60 equals 430—$430 billion.
Ms Owens interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Parramatta, you are interjecting outside of your place in this chamber.

Mr HOCKEY: I further add the point that the Labor Party has now declared it is voting against our mining tax repeal package, which reduces the debt by $13½ billion. The opposition have said that they are going to oppose our abolition of the CEFC, the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, which also reduces the debt. The total of the mining tax and CEFC abolition is going to reduce the debt by $20 billion, so that adds $20 billion. The Labor Party failed to deal with the challenges at the Reserve Bank and we had to borrow $8.8 billion to go into that. When you add it all up—and it is on the public record—that well exceeds $400 billion. That is a legacy of Labor.

But wait—there's more. As the Reserve Bank identified only last week, growth figures for next year are being downgraded, which will have a negative impact on revenues, which will have a negative impact on the budget. But wait—there's more. As you open each cupboard door in relation to the budget—whether it be the ACCC or one of any number of other areas which will soon be identified and revealed—you will find that $500 billion, including a cap, is the appropriate level to deal with the legacy of Labor debt.

The thing is that, whenever the Labor Party released an economic statement, they got the numbers wrong—absolutely wrong. We will not do that. We will not release the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook until the September national accounts have come in, at the beginning of December. What a revelation that is! The Labor Party always tended to release those figures before they had released the September national accounts, and that is one of the reasons why they always got the numbers wrong. So we are taking the prudent approach. We are fixing up the mess. We are identifying right across the budget where the problems are. We are dealing with the legacy of Labor's debt. It is all on the public record. This chamber is the public record. Now the challenge is for the Labor Party to deal with it.

The Labor Party are running around saying that under the Abbott opposition we opposed increasing the debt limit. They are just dead wrong. I know the member for McMahon was never actually in the Senate, but what he does not understand is that we did move a procedural motion in the Senate to separate out the debate on the debt limit but it was rejected by the Senate. It was a procedural motion. We never voted against the debt limit. If Labor did not understand the challenges in relation to the debt limit when they were in government, how can we expect them to understand the challenges from opposition?

I am saying this to the Labor Party: on 12 December Australia reaches the $300 billion debt limit that Labor left. The Senate is going to have a bill before it to have the debt limit increased to $500 billion. That is Labor's legacy. The $500 billion is not a target; it is a limit. We do not want to get there, but I tell you what: we are not going to put the stability of the markets and the stability of the CGS program at risk as a result of Labor's incompetence in opposition.

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (15:51): We were promised a government of no excuses. We were promised a government of no surprises. We were promised a government with the adults in charge. And we get this childish performance from this trainee Treasurer. The Treasurer could have a debt limit increase right now. We could vote on this and we could have a debt
limit increase right now. We voted on this last night and we supported a debt limit increase. But the Liberal Party will insist on transparency and we will insist on a lot more transparency than we are getting from this Treasurer—this Treasurer who is refusing to release the mid-year economic forecast as well as the incoming government brief, this Treasurer who stood at that dispatch box yesterday and said, 'I'd love to release the Reserve Bank documents,' this Treasurer who stood at that dispatch box yesterday and said, 'I'd love to release the request from the Reserve Bank for $8.8 billion.' It was FOIed and rejected. And today at two o'clock the government was obliged to table before the Senate the correspondence from the Reserve Bank, and the government has failed. The government is in breach of a Senate order.

What have you got to hide? Why are you going to such lengths to be so duplicitous with the Australian people and not release the request from the Reserve Bank for $8.8 billion? You say the Reserve Bank asked for $8.8 billion this year. Well, show us the request. It is nice and simple. Did they request it? Show us the request. Do not hide behind a breach of a Senate order. We just saw in question time—the second question time of the parliament—an amazing contempt of the parliament. When you are in contempt of the parliament, you are in contempt of the people. This Treasurer is in contempt of the parliament and the people. What have you got to hide?

The Reserve Bank transfer of $8.8 billion, of course, increases this year's deficit by that amount. But it goes much further than that. It increases the level of interest required by more than $1 billion over the next four years. Not only has the Treasurer declined to outlined the reasons for that; he has outright refused to release the documentation in breach of an order of one of the houses of the Australian parliament. What levels will you go to to hide the facts from the Australian people?

Let us be very clear: there is only one person talking about a crisis here; there is only one person talking about a shutdown of the government; there is only one person talking about a breach in the debt limit—that man there. The only person who is trying to confect a political crisis here is the Treasurer, because he could have a debt limit increase right now, today, of $100 billion. It is not a small amount, not a trifling amount. Does the Treasurer think for one second that he can argue that $400 billion would not be enough to get through to next year? Senator Sinodinos was asked in the other place: 'When will $400 million be breached?' He said, 'Oh, sometime over the forward estimates.' As I outlined to the House yesterday, the Australian Office of Financial Management has made clear that it issues bonds only for the budget year in question.

We are more than happy to work cooperatively with the government if they are up-front with the Australian people, if they reveal the impact of their decisions—of this man's decisions—since the election and if there is much more transparency to go with it. Before the election we heard all about the need for transparency when it came to increases in the debt cap. We heard the now Prime Minister—who went on 2GB, for a change, to do an interview—say:

... the Government has to justify this. Our money, our future, is too important to be mortgaged like this without the Government giving us the strongest possible arguments for it, because every dollar that they borrow has got to be repaid.

I have got news for the Treasurer. This is actually a hung parliament. The government has a big majority in this House but no majority in that house. A hung parliament requires a bit of
cooperation, a bit of negotiation and a bit of transparency. It does not mean being arrogant. It
does not mean saying, 'My debt limit or no debt limit.' It does not mean chest beating. It does
not mean political stunts. It does not mean saying, 'You'll wear this like a crown of thorns.' It
means being responsible, open, transparent and constructive—something this Treasurer is just
not capable of.

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (15:56): Let me deal with a couple of
issues here. The shadow Treasurer talks about being open and honest and responsible. Why
did the Labor Party have a $300 billion debt limit when they forecast in the budget the debt
would go to $370 billion? Why would you go out and buy a house and finance it on the basis
that you will be able to raise $200,000 of debt but the bank will only give you $100,000? Why
would you do that? Why would the Labor Party do that? Because they do not understand the
implications of what they are doing.

I want to give you this promise. I will not bring
down a budget that has projected debt that
is greater than the debt limit. I will not do that. As you know, the AOFM has advised that you
need to have a buffer of $40 billion to $60 billion for refinancing purposes. You do not even
understand that. You just said they only ever issue for the year they have got to fund, but
actually they have also got a whole lot of other challenges in funding as well, including off-
budget funding. I really wonder about this.

In relation to the Reserve Bank, yes, I accept responsibility for the decision on behalf of the
government. We do not need to hide behind advice. The Governor of the Reserve Bank will
appear before the House Standing Committee on Economics, and you can ask the Governor of
the Reserve Bank about that. Then you can ask the Secretary of the Treasury before estimates
next week about the debt limit, and you can ask him about the advice that might have been
provided to the government in relation to the Reserve Bank Reserve Fund.

But we are not going to be like your government in a whole lot of areas. One of the areas
we are not going to be the same as you were is that we are not going to hide behind the
advice. We are going to say, 'We accept responsibility for this decision, and this decision is in
the interests of the nation.' That is how we are going to behave.

So, if you want to argue about the Reserve Bank Reserve Fund funding, let us argue about
it. You tell me why they should not have that money, why the Reserve Bank Reserve Fund
should be at 3.8 per cent. You explain that. You explain why the Reserve Bank should be in a
position where it cannot deliver dividends for as far as the eye can see and why it has to work
damned hard to replenish the Reserve Bank Reserve Fund in the face of potential headwinds
coming out of Europe and the United States. You explain that to the Australian people. If that
is your policy position, you explain it. But, when it comes to process, Labor are hiding behind
a fig leaf, because they always treated the debt limit as a debt target. Last night I could not
sleep too well and I wondered who the hell introduced that $75 billion debt limit in the first
place. It was old buggerlugs. How about that!

And do you know what he said to the parliament when he introduced the $75 billion debt
limit? He said, 'This government doesn't need to raise debt to finance its spending.'

Mr Bowen interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: I haven't finished with you! You were the one who introduced the $75
billion debt limit. And then, just weeks before the election, he announces that the debt is
going to $370 billion. But he wants us to be in a position where the can is kicked down the road.

We will not go down the path of the United States. We will not have the parliament kick the can down the road for another moment of attention, if it needs to come to that, to deal with the debt limit. We will not allow that to happen, because we are offering the Australian people stability and certainty, and the Labor Party is offering the Australian people, as they did in government—they are now in opposition—more debt and more deficit. And the Labor Party is going to stand in the way of every attempt to fix up the budget. They trashed the joint, and now they are stopping everyone from going in and trying to fix the house. That is unacceptable. That will be unacceptable to the Australian people. It will be unacceptable, at the end of the day, to the markets. I say this to the member for McMahon and I say this to the Greens: I am keeping to my word that we will not under any circumstances deliver a budget that has forecast peak debt that is higher than the debt limit. And if the Labor Party wants to play games on this, then they can also accept responsibility for the cuts that will need to be made to Labor's expenditure, which is associated with the challenge of trying to live under Labor's poor debt cap.

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (16:01): I think Australians are increasingly realising that the government they elected is not the government they were promised. We saw in question time today the minister for immigration refusing to answer basic questions, attempting to hide the boats. We have seen for months now the opposition hiding the ministers—ministers who were everywhere before the election are suddenly nowhere to be seen, because they cannot get permission from the Prime Minister's office. And now we are seeing the hiding of the budget update, a budget update that yesterday the Prime Minister told the parliament 'sometimes under Labor came out in December'. I'm afraid not. The Prime Minister was dead wrong on that. The budget update should be out now—and it should particularly be out now if you are asking for an increase in the debt limit.

The Treasurer is the only person in Australia who thinks he can ask for a doubling of his credit card limit from the bank and not give them a single piece of paper to justify it. And it is always someone else's fault: maybe it is someone else's debt, maybe the Greens did it, maybe 'the dog ate my homework'. But the very fact is that this Treasurer is making decisions that are going to worsen the 2013-14 budget. He is giving a huge tax break to mining billionaires, who I noticed were very well represented in the parliament today. He is giving $700 million back to multinationals because he cannot take cracking down on profit shifting seriously. And he is giving $9 billion to the Reserve Bank of Australia. Now, he says he is giving $9 billion to the Reserve Bank because they so desperately need it. He says it is because Labor 'raided' the Reserve Bank dividends. It is just a pity we can actually go back and look at the facts. When you go back and look at the facts you see that the amount Labor took out per year by dividends was half as much in real terms as what the Howard government took out. So if we, according to the Treasurer's statement, 'raided' the Reserve Bank, then the Howard government doubly raided the Reserve Bank.

The fact is that the Treasurer has given the Reserve Bank $9 billion not because they have asked for it—he has not shown us a shred of evidence of that—but because he wants to take out a bigger dividend in future years. He is like the coach who takes over a quarter of the way into the season and wants to blame his predecessor for the finals result. And he is still out here
trying to trash-talk the economy, with this ridiculous suggestion that $400 billion would not be enough for the debt cap. The fact is, $400 billion is below projected debt. And if the Treasurer thinks projected debt is going to go higher then he can release an economic statement and explain why. He can explain how the decisions he has made have weakened the budget—why that tax break to mining billionaires, why that tax break to multinational companies, why that parental leave scheme that gives $75,000 to millionaires to have a child have worsened the budget outcome.

Of course, there is a clear pattern here. Before the election, in May of last year, we were told by the Prime Minister that the debt limit should only be increased where there are the 'strongest possible arguments' for doing so. Now we are told that you can do it with the wave of a hand and a few mistruths in parliament. Before, we were told by the Treasurer that were they to win election on 7 September, 'We will own the economy from day one'. After, we are told, 'Actually, sorry—what I meant is, I'll own it from day 300, and for the first 300 days in office I'm going to say it was the other guys' fault.' We were told beforehand that we would see a government that would be transparent, in which the adults would be in charge. But after, we saw the misleading of parliament, not once but twice on this very issue. The Prime Minister came in here and said that he had not voted against the debt cap. In fact, he had voted twice against the debt cap. He said that Labor had released the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook in December, but we had not done that.

The fact is that if the Treasurer wants an update on the debt cap he ought to listen to serious commentators like Laura Tingle, who said that 'Joe Hockey's failure to prosecute in the parliament a persuasive argument as to why an increase in the debt cap ... was needed made it look more like a political stunt than a serious, needed piece of economic infrastructure'. And as Ms Tingle said, 'Why not $400 billion?' (Time expired)

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Minister for Education and Leader of the House) (16:06): I move:
That the question be put.
Question agreed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (16:07): The question now is that the amendment be disagreed to.

The House divided. [16:11]

(The Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Scott)

Ayes .................82
Noes ..................48
Majority..............34

AYES
Andrews, KJ
Baldwin, RC
Briggs, JE
Brough, MT
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coleman, DB
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Gillespie, DA

Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S (teller)
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)
Entsch, WG
Gambaro, T
Goodenough, IR

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CHAMBER
Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (16:19): I present the reasons for the House disagreeing to Senate amendment (1) and I move:

That the reasons be adopted.

Question agreed to.

**GOVERNOR-GENERAL’S SPEECH**

**Address-in-Reply**

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the following Address in Reply to the speech of Her Excellency the Governor-General be agreed to:

May it please Your Excellency:

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

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (16:20): In my view, honourable defeat is overrated. In my view there is little honour in avoidable failure. In my view those who want to save the environment, those who want to help workers and those who care about the future have a responsibility to succeed. Honour comes from success, from solving problems, from being able to proudly hand the baton over to the next generation.

In political debate people are very frightened about being called racist or xenophobic. This is true of prime ministers and it is true of ordinary people. Yes, there are racists out there. It is a pity; it is true. But the use of the term ‘racism’ has become a new kind of McCarthyism, used to stifle debate. Let me point out in response to the allegation of racism or xenophobia against people who want to contest our rapid population growth that, first, Australia is already a multiracial society—one-quarter born overseas, one-half with one or both parents born overseas. The bird has flown. No-one is trying to maintain Australia as a white Anglo Saxon outpost of the British empire. It cannot be done and I have not come across anyone who is trying.

Secondly, stopping rapid population growth will assist Australians of all backgrounds. For example, Broadmeadows has high unemployment. Many unemployed people in Broadmeadows are of Turkish background. They are entitled to our consideration, rather than running migrant worker programs that wreck their ability to find work.

Thirdly, if talking about population makes you a racist, you are in pretty good company. People do not usually think of Dr Martin Luther King as a white supremacist. What did he have to say about population?
Family planning, to relate population to world resources, is possible, practical and necessary. Unlike plagues of the dark ages or contemporary diseases we do not yet understand, the modern plague of overpopulation is soluble by means we have discovered and with resources we possess. What is lacking is not sufficient knowledge of the solution but universal consciousness of the gravity of the problem and education of the billions who are its victims.

People would not ordinarily think of David Suzuki as a puppet or fellow traveller of Pauline Hanson. What did he have to say about population? Dr Suzuki said:

Of course human numbers are at the very core of our crisis. The explosive rate of growth simply can’t continue.

And, while we are at it, I will point out a couple more. In 1993, former US President Bill Clinton told the United Nations:

And to ensure a healthier and more abundant world, we simply must slow the world’s explosive growth in population.

His vice-president, Al Gore, said:

I consider the dramatic growth in the world's population to be the greatest challenge currently facing the environment … The effects of this rapid increase are felt around the globe.

It is ironic in the extreme that we have a couple of agents provocateur out there accusing people who talk about population of trying to hijack the environmental movement when, in fact, they are the most fair dinkum environmentalists you will find. I defy anyone to challenge the environmental credentials of Jacques Cousteau, who has devoted his entire life to marine conservation, and who said:

Population growth is the primary source of environmental damage.

I defy anyone to challenge the environmental credentials of Captain Paul Watson, the founder of Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, who has spent his life risking injury and imprisonment to harass Japanese whalers. He said:

The accusation that a stand to reduce immigration is racist is music to the ears to those who profit from the cheap labor of immigrants. They are the same people who love to see environmentalists make fools of themselves. And there is no environmentalist more foolish than one who refuses to confront the fact that uncontrolled human population growth is the no. 1 cause of the world’s increasing environmental problems.

And does anyone think Sir David Attenborough, with a lifetime behind him of educating and advocating for the protection of our rainforests and other wilderness areas, to be a bogus environmentalist? David Attenborough has described global population increase as frightening, and has said:

I’ve seen wildlife under mounting human pressure all over the world and it's not just from human economy or technology—behind every threat is the frightening explosion in human numbers.

And further:

I’ve never seen a problem that wouldn't be easier to solve with fewer people, or harder, and ultimately impossible, with more.

So what am I going to do about it? I am going to set up an NGO, an incorporated association, to pursue the cause. It will have a token membership fee and will not be a competitor organisation for Sustainable Population Australia or the environment NGOs. It will not be a political party; I am in one of those already! It will not try to have a policy on everything. It
will try to avoid the divide and distract traps that I talked about earlier. It will try to set out a coherent and superior alternative to the path that we are on. I am going to launch it soon. It will be limited to Victoria, which may disappoint some in a national audience, but you have got to start somewhere. I may be able to work up associate membership for interstaters. The great 19th century philosopher John Stuart Mill said:

Solitude, in the sense of being often alone, is essential to any depth of meditation or of character; and solitude in the presence of natural beauty and grandeur, is the cradle of thought and aspirations which are not only good for the individual, but which society could ill do without. Nor is there much satisfaction in contemplating the world with nothing left to the spontaneous activity of nature … every hedgerow or superfluous tree rooted out, and scarcely a place left where a wild shrub or flower could grow without being eradicated as a weed in the name of improved agriculture.

I hope people will join my NGO and will help me build it into a large movement of citizens dedicated to passing on to our children and our grandchildren a world in as good a condition as the one our parents and grandparents gave to us. Because population is not about race; it is about stewardship.

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (16:27): I begin my address-in-reply speech today in this 44th Parliament by expressing my great appreciation to the voters in Cowan for returning me to the House of Representatives, again, for a third term. I have contested four elections as the Liberal Party candidate for Cowan and won the last three. On every occasion the margin has improved. Before the 2004 election the Labor Party held the seat by 5.5 per cent. Now the margin is 7.46 per cent to me. So I do thank the electors of Cowan for entrusting me with the responsibility of representing them in parliament. It is a great honour. I know that, whatever happens as a member of parliament, my job is to always focus on making the lives of those in my electorate and the whole country better. It is not about us. We are the servants of our constituents and of the nation. We are not their masters.

Collectively in the last two parliaments I made 413 speeches in order to represent the people of Cowan and to say the things that needed to be said. My predecessor in Cowan made 174 speeches in three parliaments, but I want to assure my constituents that I will continue to speak and speak often on the things that matter. I have always spoken against the carbon tax, the ETS and the boats, and I have always spoken for human rights and freedoms in places such as Vietnam and Burma. These will continue to be themes I will pursue in this 44th Parliament. I will also pursue the things that matter more locally for the people of Cowan: federal roads and infrastructure such as the Swan Valley Bypass; national crime prevention initiatives such as the CCTV promise we made in Ballajura, to further secure the Kingfisher Oval precinct; and also the state government's promises of the Reid Highway interchange at Malaga Drive, the new Ballajura police station and the dualling of Gnangara Road. These are reminders to us that, whilst the primary responsibility and authority for these matters are state or local authorities, we in this place must also add our voices in support of these issues.

With regard to federal matters, the national issues are very clear. Essentially they are: getting rid of the carbon tax and the mining tax, stopping the boats and getting the economy back to where the elected government of this nation lives within its means and no longer spends against the future generations. This is why we were elected and this is what we always must do as members of this parliament.

Debate interrupted.
ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott) (16:30): Order! It being 4.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Abbott Government
North Queensland Youth

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (16:30): I would like to begin by reaffirming the following. Our promises for the roads of the 21st century will be kept. We will axe the carbon and mining taxes. We will reduce red tape and increase our nation's competitiveness. We will deliver a white paper on the sustainable development of the north of Australia. We will finally deliver fair indexation to DFRDB and DFRB superannuants. We will address the pain of huge increases in home and body corporate insurance in North Queensland. We will bring competent government to all Australians. I will have more to say on these things in the very near future.

This afternoon in this House, I would like to speak about the youth of North Queensland and, in particular, Townsville. Over the last month, I have attended speech nights for a number of schools. Additionally, I have been able to speak to a great many year 12 students as they approach their end of school days and the beginning of the next stage of their lives.

I was also a guest participant in the Townsville Greek festival's Dancing with the Stars. This was organised and run by young members of the Greek community. That I came last had nothing to do with my brilliant Zorba and everything to do with professional jealousy from the judges! But I digress. Last weekend, I was also lucky enough to help out at the drive-through at McDonald's North Shore for McHappy Day, to raise funds for Ronald McDonald House charities.

In North Queensland, we have real challenges with youth unemployment. We face, around Townsville, youth unemployment rates of over 25 per cent. That is one in four young people around Townsville who do not have meaningful employment, training or engagement in higher education. There is always a lot of discussion surrounding youth crime, and it is very right that we discuss it openly. I do not intend to excuse the crimes, nor the criminals involved here. But, where there are young people who have lost their way in the education system, there will always be a sense of hopelessness which may befall them. Where there are families in which there has been generational unemployment, there will be escapes from that harsh reality pursued. Crime is a natural consequence and partner here.

But, when you are talking to the year 12 students at Thuringowa, Kirwan or Northern Beaches state high schools, when you see the joy in the performances of the year 12 students at Town high, when you see the young men and women at Abergowrie, St Margaret Mary's, Ignatius Park and Townsville grammar, you know that the vast majority of young people deserve a go and will pay you back in spades. When you have been in the drive-through with these young people in McDonald's, providing excellent customer service, no matter how busy it is and when you see the professionalism of the young members of the Greek community in running their festival, you know there are young people out there doing the right thing who will secure our country's future and will be ready to provide the leaders we will need to take Australia forward.
As the father of three brilliant and charming children, I want a future in Australia where education is valued and opportunity is sought. I want a future where young adults can have meaningful jobs in all fields. I want to see young people with jobs in construction as well as technology. I want to see a future for Australia’s youth where risk-taking is valued and respected. I want to see a future for young people where they own their own small businesses, with banks and financial institutions backing them. I want to see a future for young Australians where resilience is a core ingredient in their make-up.

We are an ageing population. We need to look at what is going to happen next and we need to trust the people who will be charged with our future prosperity. I have, after my three years as the member for Herbert and four years of end-of-school celebrations, confirmed repeatedly my faith in the future generations of Australians. These young men and women are not asking for much. What they require is the same as we received in my younger days.

Let us prosecute the people who do wrong and let us be strong in our condemnation of those who are abusing civil society. But let us not cast a pall over the good work and great attitude of so many of our young Australians. Let us see what they can provide and the strengths that they bring to new enterprises. Let us celebrate what is good in all of us and let us ensure that our country continues to give all of us—no matter our age, our skin colour, our religion or our ethnic background—a deadset fair go.

**Workplace Relations**

**Mr STEPHEN JONES** (Throsby) (16:34): Earlier today, we saw the Leader of the House use an industrial dispute of some vintage in Victoria to justify the reintroduction of harsh industrial relations laws into this parliament. We have become accustomed to listening to members of the Liberal Party, in particular, talking about unions—union members, union officers and union officials—in pejorative terms, in a negative fashion, demonising the work that they do. I do not believe I have ever heard government members talking about the hard work of the decent men and women who are unionists and who dedicate their lives to securing jobs, businesses and rights at work for Australian men and women.

I would like to use the opportunity of this adjournment debate to level and equalise the noise in this place. I would like to tell a story that the member for Cunningham and I are very familiar with. It is about the work of certain CFMEU officials on the south coast of New South Wales who have been directly responsible for dealing with a very difficult set of circumstances confronting two mines in the Illawarra. I can say, with absolute certainty, had it not been for the hard work of one district vice-president, a man by the name of Bob Timbs, and the officials of the lodges representing the Russell Vale mine in the member for Cunningham’s electorate and the Wongawilli mine in my electorate, the men and women who work at those mines would not have jobs today and, quite literally, the hundreds of creditors who are owed money by the former operators of that mine would not see their money.

What has gone on is this. On 25 September, the 500 workers of a company by the name of Gujarat NRE were told that they were not going to be getting their weekly wages. If you roll the clock forward another six weeks, they had still been attending work—each and every day, working for the company that employed them—without being paid. At the conclusion of around about six weeks, the average worker was owed about $13,500. We understand that several hundred creditors also were owed significant amounts by this business.
The work of Mr Timbs and the lodge officials occurred in the face of quite a bit of hostility and uncertainty within the workforce, who were understandably at pains to see how they could be turning up for work day in and day out while not being paid at the same time as their families were struggling to meet their bills, put food on the table, keep their kids at school and put petrol in the tank. But due to the work of the union in running a welfare fund and putting some minimum payments into the bank accounts of workers, they managed to keep the workers turning up to work each and every day to try to keep the business ticking over and both of the mines operating at a time when the workers were not being paid. It was in effect a reverse strike. It was the employer who was not paying these people and yet they were turning up for work every day.

Thankfully, a new investor has come in—a business by the name of Jindal Steel and Power, which is a foreign investor. We are often encouraged to demonise foreign investors, but I can say that if it were not for this foreign investor the mine would not be operating. They have injected around about $150 million into the business and there is probably more money to come. With my assistance and that of the member for Cunningham, they are currently talking to all levels of government, who are also creditors, and our state Labor members of parliament are talking to the government of New South Wales to work out arrangements to ensure that the mine can work through all the money that is owed to the creditors but continue to cut and export coal.

I go to some lengths to tell this story, because in this place we are often encouraged to demonise one union in particular, the CFMEU. In fact, a whole inquiry was set up to demonise that union in particular. Never do we hear the good stories of the work they do. Never do we hear of the work they do in ensuring the welfare of workers and securing the payments to them—and not just for their members. But I think they deserve some credit in this place on this day for the fact that this business will continue to operate.

**New South Wales Bushfires**

**Mrs MARKUS** (Macquarie) (16:39): I rise today to speak about the recent bushfires that have ravaged the electorate of Macquarie and in particular the community of the Blue Mountains. The impact is significant, visibly and tangibly, but the impact is also in the unseen. There is psychological and social trauma for the individuals, families and business owners touched by bushfires.

On 17 October the Linksview Road fire burnt hot and fast through the communities of Springwood, Winmalee and Yellow Rock, destroying 193 homes. On the same day the Mount York Road fire burnt out more than 8,000 hectares of bushland and destroyed 10 homes in Mount Victoria. The State Mine fire started on 16 October and burnt through more than 50,000 hectares, impacting the communities of Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine, resulting in one home lost and another damaged. This fire also had significant impacts on the Hawkesbury, with evacuations and road closures. Overall, 191 homes in addition were damaged.

From that terrifying day on 17 October there have emerged stories of survival and unimaginable terror as residents rushed to escape the fires. One family in Yellow Rock had over 50 people shelter in their home as the fires ripped through. Employees at Oasis Nursery sheltered in the lunch room, fearing for their very lives.
I spent most of Thursday evening in the Springwood evacuation centre with families and individuals, many unsure if their homes were still standing. Early Friday was very emotional. Escorting police I stood with members of the community in front of their homes, which they had just lost. The president of the local RSL was just one person I shared this pain with.

Many have lost businesses, their means of survival and income, and are doing it tough. Mr Joe Mercieca is the owner of Blue Eco Homes, whose business was destroyed. Yet Joe has demonstrated the spirit of many of those affected by putting his hand up to become part of the recovery committee.

The economic impact of the bushfires on a community that relies so heavily on daily visitors and tourism is enormous. In the days following the disaster it became clear, however, that the community would not be beaten by this. The response from the community as well as the emergency services has been outstanding.

A special mention must go to the Springwood Sports Club and to Richmond Club. Both of these clubs opened their doors to families and became evacuation centres, at a huge cost to their own business. The work of emergency services must be acknowledged, in particular the NSW Rural Fire Service, National Parks, RAAF bases Richmond and Glenbrook, NSW Fire and Rescue, the SES and the NSW Police. I will be forever grateful for the work of these courageous men and women, many of them volunteers, who worked day and night to protect their communities in the face of extreme danger.

I also wish to acknowledge the work of all involved in the recovery centre, which has provided a one-stop-shop for those affected. I owe thanks also to my colleagues, to the Prime Minister, who came to visit the worst affected areas the day after disaster struck, and to Minister Payne and Minister Keenan, who were with me on the ground within days following the disaster. Their work to quickly activate much needed disaster relief funds and assess what else was needed on the ground was much appreciated.

Since this disaster struck I have not stopped making representations on behalf of the people of Macquarie to the Prime Minister, the Assistant Treasurer, the Minister for Human Services, the Minister for Justice, the Minister for Small Business, the Minister for Defence and the Minister for Trade and Investment. I also thank and acknowledge the state member of the Blue Mountains, Roza Sage. She and I have worked tirelessly together.

Minister Payne organised a mobile Department of Human Services office, which was set up on the ground to help people access payments quickly. The defence force has been on the ground to help with the clean-up and the clearing of properties. Last week I initiated a meeting with Phil Koperberg and Habitat for Humanity to see what other assistance could be offered, particularly during the rebuilding phase.

Our priority has been to bring immediate relief to those most in need, and within 24 hours. We activated the Disaster Recovery Payment to assist families whose homes were destroyed or damaged, and those who were severely injured or lost loved ones. Fortunately, not one life was lost in the Blue Mountains. Under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, we also contributed to the cost of meeting the immediate needs of those affected by the bushfires, including emergency food, clothing and accommodation.

It has been disappointing to observe the behaviour of Senator Doug Cameron. Under the guise of caring for his community Senator Cameron has taken every opportunity to throw
political darts and stand back and criticise. One worker from the Winmalee neighbourhood centre approached me in the street to complain about the senator's behaviour at the recovery centre. In a genuine spirit of bipartisanship, the Minister for Human Services offered assistance to any residents who contacted Senator Cameron's office. He has failed to respond to this offer. In closing, I acknowledge that the people of Macquarie have suffered a huge blow. There is a long journey ahead, but I believe that through joint effort that is being undertaken locally and nationally we will see this through.

**Goods and Services Tax**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:44): Shortland electorate is an electorate that has a number of relocatable or moveable home parks. I was very disturbed to learn that the ATO released a draft ruling on 30 October this year that has the potential to increase the rental costs of over 100,000 low-income earners by imposing a 10 per cent GST on them immediately—and not only will it be imposed on them immediately; it will also be retrospective.

In the Shortland electorate, there are over 5,000 people living in relocatable home parks—people living in Valhalla, Teraglin, Sunset Strip, Sanctuary, Macquarie Shores and Lakeside Leisure Living, just to name a few of the parks. These are all older people. They are all people who are 55 years or older. The homes they live in cost up to $300,000 to purchase and place on the land in the parks. They choose to do that because they feel safe. It is a communal lifestyle. This is the life choice that they have made.

This ruling has the potential to impact on them very negatively financially. It has the potential to have an enormous commercial impact on the park owners. In 2000, when the GST was introduced, moveable home estates were considered commercial residential premises. Nothing has changed since that time. What park owners offer, how parks are structured and how residents pay their rent are still exactly the same as in 2000. There is absolutely nothing that has happened. I do not see how imposing a GST on the vulnerable people who live in residential parks can be condoned.

There has been no consultation on this important issue. I have been in contact with many residents within my electorate. ARPRA, the Affiliated Residential Park Residents Association, is running a campaign to see that justice is done for the people who live in parks. I understand that they will be visiting Canberra to take their case to the Treasurer. Ninety-five per cent of the people who live in these parks are pensioners. They rely on their pensions. They are all eligible for rental assistance. Yet they are going to be hit with this GST on their rent.

I do not think that somebody sitting in the ATO would understand what this lifestyle is about. They would think that moveable home parks are the same as caravan parks. This is an issue that we had to deal with when the GST was introduced. We had to make these people understand what the lifestyle is in one of these relocatable home parks. I see the member for Robertson sitting on the other side of the House, and I know that there are a number of residents in Robertson who live in relocatable home parks. I hope that she joins me in this fight to see justice for all those people who we represent here in this place.

I am going to fight and fight really hard to see that these low-income people who are living in residential parks—older, vulnerable people—do not have to pay this GST. This new tax
will really impact on them. I am sure that the government does not want to hurt these vulnerable people. People living in these villages, as I have already said, are generally pensioners receiving low incomes. They have no extra cash to throw around. It cannot happen. This GST cannot be imposed on the vulnerable people who are living in these residential parks. They have chosen this lifestyle. They have planned their retirement. Part of that plan did not include paying the GST on the rent for their site. Those people who have to rent their relocatable homes within the park will not pay the GST. Yet if you own your home you have to pay GST. That is not good enough.

Electricity Prices

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (16:49): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to start by saying what a great pleasure it is to be standing before you today as a member of the Abbott government representing the wonderful people of Darwin and Palmerston. I will again try and represent everybody in the fantastical cities of Darwin and Palmerston. I look forward to delivering on the election commitments that the Country Liberals, as part of the coalition, made during the election campaign. I would also like to welcome all the newcomers to this place and particularly the new member for Dobell, who sits next to me. She is a very good member. I wish them all the very best and I urge them to make good use of their time here, because we never know how long it will be. Being a politician is the ultimate community service. Whether it is helping a constituent with an immigration issue, providing pension advice, liaising between a local business and a government department or burning a sausage at a community barbecue, there is no other job like being a member of parliament.

The Abbott government was elected with a bold vision for change. The first change was to introduce to the parliament yesterday legislation that will see the repeal of the carbon tax. The coalition government will legislate to ensure that power prices in the Northern Territory come down to levels equivalent to what they were when the tax began in 2012. In Solomon, the carbon tax has increased electricity costs by around 10 per cent over the past two years, an unacceptable impost on hardworking families and business operators in the Northern Territory. Obviously, electricity is an essential service used by all Territorians. But in the build-up to and in the hot humid wet season months there is another essential to life, and that is air-conditioning. Recently, my office spoke to the operator of a Darwin air-conditioning company, who said that the cost of replacing the refrigerant gas in a domestic air-conditioner had increased from around $25 a kilo to around $100 a kilo since the carbon tax kicked in.

Another essential to living life in the Territory is ice. We use it in our eskies and at our barbecues. It is something that people use all the time in trying to keep drinks and other things cool. One of the largest ice suppliers in the Territory is NT Ice, in Berrimah. Its operator, Michael Goonan, tried to absorb the price increase that resulted from the hike in electricity prices caused by the carbon tax. He even installed a 24-kilowatt solar system for $50,000. His applications for assisted government funding were knocked back by the same Labor government that introduced the carbon tax to encourage alternative energy use. After all that, he still had to put up his price for a bag of ice. So it is a double hit that affected his business and ordinary Territorians who wanted ice for their weekend barbecues.

Michael makes a very good point: the carbon tax is a sneaky tax because its exact cost is not outlined on the quarterly or monthly power bills. This makes it hard for consumers to see its actual impact on their cost of living. The GST, on the other hand, is all there for us see. He
also points out that the impact of the carbon tax on the competitiveness of Australian businesses is of concern. He has this message for Territory Labor politicians who want to keep the tax, including the member for Lingiari, Mr Snowdon, and the new senator Senator Peris. He says they need to consider the capacity of Australian businesses to compete in a global market in this day and age. He says charges like the carbon tax prevent Australian businesses from moving forward and producing quality products at a market price that will be competitive overseas. He says countries are importing goods into Australia because imposts like the carbon tax make us less competitive and this has a snowball effect: less manufacturing, fewer jobs and less wealth to share around.

Business operators like Michael Goonan can see the inherent dangers of applying an unnecessary handbrake to the Australian economy. It is a pity that those over on that side of the House, the Labor Party, cannot also see them. I say: scrap the carbon tax immediately. That is what those on the other side need to do. They need to side with us and agree to scrap the carbon tax.

Asian Women at Work

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (16:54): I rise to congratulate Asian Women at Work, a wonderful organisation that has been operating in my electorate and throughout Sydney over the last 20 years. It is a great community service. Asian Women at Work represents a network of migrant women of Asian backgrounds, many of whom reside in my electorate of Fowler, where over 30 per cent of people come from Asian backgrounds.

Last Sunday, I attended the event celebrating the organisation's 20th anniversary. The event provided an opportunity to look back on the formation of this organisation, to review its two successful decades and to enjoy many cultural performances and stories from current members.

Asian Women at Work was established in 1993 by a very courageous woman, Debbie Carstens, upon her return from a placement at the Urban Rural Mission of the Uniting Church in South Korea. She was inspired by the struggles of the independent trade union movement in South Korea and recognised the need for further representation for women of migrant backgrounds, particularly in the textile, clothing and footwear industries in Australia. Debbie was assisted in the noble cause of forming Asian Women at Work by the Uniting Church, the Baptist Inner City Ministries, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, the Textile Clothing and Footwear Union and the SEARCH Foundation.

Today, Asian Women at Work provides a strong voice to over 2,000 members, who are often isolated from information and certainly from close support. The organisation has worked hard to educate women who, due to their limited knowledge and skills, including language skills, are often not aware of their legal rights and are vulnerable to exploitation.

In addition to providing a strong voice for migrant women workers, Asian Women at Work provides a place where women can share their common interests, fears and hopes. Members are able to enjoy educational classes, including English and computer classes, and participate in various recreational events, including dancing and sports. This gives women who often work very hard and have worked hard all their lives an opportunity to come together to relax, form friendships and learn new skills. The Fairfield-Cabramatta branch of this organisation, located at the epicentre of my electorate, in Cabramatta, organises a number of successful education and entertainment activities for these women. These activities include swimming.
classes for Vietnamese and Chinese migrant workers and computer classes, which are regularly attended by women in my electorate. The computer classes are vital because they provide an opportunity for people to stay in touch as well as be able to apply for jobs online in the fast-moving labour market of south-west Sydney.

Other projects currently undertaken include a drama group and a life-skills-sharing group who work in vegetable gardens, sharing information on food and nutrition—and one of the big things is working to preserve traditional Asian cultures. That is also something which this group should be applauded for. Regrettably, many studies support the need for such organisations as Asian Women at Work, because, unfortunately, there is a large body of evidence that says that people who come from migrant backgrounds are often susceptible to exploitation in low-paid jobs. That is one of the areas in which this organisation works hard to protect its members and it is because of that susceptibility that I consider the Fair Work Amendment (Textile, Clothing and Footwear Industry) Act 2012, which ensures protection and rights for contract outworkers, one of the most significant achievements of the previous Labor government in protecting workers' rights.

In recent conversations with representatives of Asian Women at Work, I was told they fear the new developments of the Abbott government that might mean a step back in time, particularly when it comes to workers' rights. I congratulate Asian Women at Work—its leadership, including Coordinator Lina Cabaero, Bich Thuy Pham, Ronnie Wang and Angela Zhang; its many staff; its volunteers; and its 2,000 members. I congratulate them on their 20 years of great work and service to a community in looking after people in need.

House adjourned at 17:00

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Pyne to move:

That, in respect of the proceedings on the Clean Energy Legislation (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013, the Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Import Levy) Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013, the Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Import Levy) (Transitional Provisions) Bill 2013, the Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Manufacture Levy) Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013, the True-up Shortfall Levy (General) (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013, the True-up Shortfall Levy (Excise) (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013, the Climate Change Authority (Abolition) Bill 2013, the Customs Tariff Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013, the Excise Tariff Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013, the Clean Energy (Income Tax Rates and Other Amendments) Bill 2013, and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (Abolition) Bill 2013, so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the following from occurring:

(1) the resumption of debate on the second readings of the bills being called on together;
(2) at the conclusion of the second reading debate or at 12 noon, Thursday, 21 November 2013, whichever is the earlier, a Minister being called to sum up the second reading debate, then without delay, (a) one question being put on any amendments moved to motions for the second readings by non-Government Members, and (b) one question being put on the second readings of the bills together;
(3) if the second readings of the bills have been agreed to, messages from the Governor-General recommending appropriations for any of the bills being announced together;
(4) the consideration in detail stages, if required, on all the bills being taken together for a period not exceeding 60 minutes at which time any Government amendments that have been circulated in respect
of any of the bills shall be treated as if they have been moved together with (a) one question being put on all the Government amendments, (b) one question being put on any amendments which have been moved by non-Government Members, and (c) any further questions necessary to complete the detail stage being put;

(5) at the conclusion of the detail stage, one question being put on the remaining stages of all the bills together; and

(6) any variation to this arrangement to be made only by a motion moved by a Minister.

Mr Bandt to move:

That this House recognises:

(1) the tragic loss of life resulting from the sinking of ships carrying migrants off the coast of Lampedusa in October 2013;

(2) the challenging circumstances vulnerable people face in seeking asylum from persecution in their countries of origin; and

(3) Australia's role in responding compassionately to this global challenge.

Mr Bandt to move:

That this House directs the Prime Minister to establish immediately an inquiry:

(1) into the actions of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and the Australian Federal Police ('the agencies') in response to allegations of corruption and of breaches of Commonwealth laws:

   (a) concerning the Reserve Bank of Australia, Securency and Note Printing Australia; and

   (b) in the Leighton group of companies;

(2) with terms of reference that require it to investigate and report on at least the following matters:

   (a) whether actions taken by the agencies to investigate allegations of serious fraud and commence any prosecutions were appropriate;

   (b) whether the agencies properly communicated with each other and worked together in a manner that ensured the highest probability of laws regarding serious fraud being enforced;

   (c) whether the relationship between the agencies is such that the Australian community can have the highest confidence that any claims of serious fraud are being properly investigated and any breaches properly prosecuted;

   (d) whether Australia would be better served by having a 'stand-alone' Commonwealth agency to prosecute breaches of laws regarding serious fraud;

   (e) recommendations regarding future actions that should be taken by government and agencies; and

   (f) any related matters; and

(3) to report to the Prime Minister by 30 September 2014, with a copy of the report to be tabled in the House of Representatives at the earliest possible opportunity thereafter.

Mrs Prentice to move:

That this House:

(1) notes that Australia Post is responsible for and has sole discretion over introducing, retiring or changing postcodes;

(2) recognises that:

   (a) residents in more than 50 localities from Amberley, Benarkin to Karana Downs and Vernor share the postcode 4306, suburbs which in some instances are more than 130 kilometres apart;

   (b) these localities fall within the four divisions of Ryan, Maranoa, Wright and Blair;
(c) the shared postcode is having a detrimental impact on mail delivery services, postal delivery costs and insurance premiums for people living in these areas; and

(d) communities within the 4306 postcode have previously petitioned the Government on this issue and to date have had their request rejected; and

(3) calls on the Government to request that Australia Post allocate unique postcodes to localities which currently share a postcode with a geographically separate locality.