



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# House of Representatives

## Hansard

**WEDNESDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2021**

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### SITTING DAYS—2021

Month	Date
February	2, 3, 4, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25
March	15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25
May	11, 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 27
June	1, 2, 3, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24
August	3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31
September	1, 2
October	18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28
November	22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30
December	1, 2

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**FORTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT  
FIRST SESSION—FIFTH PERIOD**

**Governor-General**

His Excellency General the Hon. David John Hurley, AC, DSC, FTSE (Retd)

**House of Representatives Office Holders**

*Speaker*—Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn Smith MP

*Deputy Speaker*—Mr Llewellyn Stephen O'Brien MP

*Second Deputy Speaker*—Mr Robert George Mitchell MP

*Members of the Speaker's Panel*—Hon. Kevin James Andrews MP, Hon. Sharon Leah Bird MP, Hon. Darren Jeffrey Chester MP, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP, Hon. Mark Maclean Coulton MP, Mr Dugald Milton Dick MP, Mr Jason George Falinski MP, Dr Michael Randolph Freeland MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Hon. Stephen James Irons MP, Ms Julie Ann Owens MP, Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mr Andrew Bruce Wallace MP, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Wicks MP, Mr Richard James Wilson MP, Mr Trent Moir Zimmerman MP

*Leader of the House*—Hon. Peter Dutton MP

*Deputy Leader of the House*—Hon. Darren Chester MP

*Manager of Opposition Business*—Hon. Anthony Stephen Burke MP

*Deputy Manager of Opposition Business*—Hon. Mark Butler MP

**Party Leaders and Whips**

Liberal Party of Australia

*Leader*—Hon. Scott John Morrison MP

*Deputy Leader*—Hon. Joshua Anthony Frydenberg MP

*Chief Government Whip*—Mr Albertus Johannes van Manen MP

*Government Whips*—Mr Rowan Eric Ramsey MP and Ms Nicolle Flint MP

The Nationals

*Leader*—Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard Joyce MP

*Deputy Leader*—Hon. David Littleproud MP

*Chief Whip*—Hon. Damian Kevin Drum MP

*Deputy Whip*—Mr Kenneth Desmond O'Dowd MP

Australian Labor Party

*Leader*—Hon. Anthony Albanese MP

*Deputy Leader*—Hon. Richard Marles MP

*Chief Opposition Whip*—Mr Christopher Patrick Hayes MP

*Opposition Whips*—Ms Joanne Catherine Ryan MP and Ms Anne Maree Stanley MP

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives

### Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Albanese, Hon. Anthony Norman	Grayndler, NSW	ALP
Alexander, Mr John Gilbert, OAM	Bennelong, NSW	LP
Allen, Dr Katrina Jane	Higgins, VIC	LP
Aly, Dr Anne	Cowan, WA	ALP
Andrews, Hon. Karen Lesley	McPherson, QLD	LP
Andrews, Hon. Kevin James	Menzies, VIC	LP
Archer, Mrs Bridget Kathleen	Bass, TAS	LP
Bandt, Mr Adam Paul	Melbourne, VIC	AG
Bell, Ms Angie Marion	Moncrieff, QLD	LNP
Bird, Hon. Sharon Leah	Cunningham, NSW	ALP
Bowen, Hon. Christopher Eyles	McMahon, NSW	ALP
Broadbent, Mr Russell Evan	Monash, VIC	LP
Buchholz, Hon. Scott Andrew	Wright, QLD	LP
Burke, Hon. Anthony Stephen	Watson, NSW	ALP
Burney, Hon. Linda Jean	Barton, NSW	ALP
Burns, Mr Joshua Solomon	Macnamara, VIC	ALP
Butler, Hon. Mark Christopher	Hindmarsh, SA	ALP
Butler, Ms Terri Megan	Griffith, QLD	ALP
Byrne, Hon. Anthony Michael	Holt, VIC	ALP
Chalmers, Dr James Edward	Rankin, QLD	ALP
Champion, Mr Nicholas David	Spence, SA	ALP
Chester, Hon. Darren Jeffrey	Gippsland, VIC	NATS
Chesters, Ms Lisa Marie	Bendigo, VIC	ALP
Christensen, Mr George Robert	Dawson, QLD	NATS
Clare, Hon. Jason Dean	Blaxland, NSW	ALP
Claydon, Ms Sharon Catherine	Newcastle, NSW	ALP
Coker, Ms Elizabeth Ann	Corangamite, VIC	ALP
Coleman, Hon. David Bernard	Banks, NSW	LP
Collins, Hon. Julie Maree	Franklin, TAS	ALP
Conaghan, Mr Patrick John	Cowper, NSW	NATS
Connelly, Mr Vincent Gerard	Stirling, WA	LP
Conroy, Mr Patrick Martin	Shortland, NSW	ALP
Coulton, Hon. Mark Maclean	Parkes, NSW	NATS
Dick, Mr Dugald Milton	Oxley, QLD	ALP
Dreyfus, Hon. Mark Alfred, QC	Isaacs, VIC	ALP
Drum, Hon. Damian Kevin	Nicholls, VIC	NATS
Dutton, Hon. Peter Craig	Dickson, QLD	LP
Elliot, Hon. Maria Justine	Richmond, NSW	ALP
Entsch, Hon. Warren George	Leichhardt, QLD	LP
Evans, Hon. Trevor Mark	Brisbane, QLD	LNP
Falinski, Mr Jason George	Mackellar, NSW	LP
Fitzgibbon, Hon. Joel Andrew	Hunter, NSW	ALP
Fletcher, Hon. Paul William	Bradfield, NSW	LP
Flint, Ms Nicolle Jane	Boothby, SA	LP
Freeland, Dr Michael Randolph	Macarthur, NSW	ALP
Frydenberg, Hon. Joshua Anthony	Kooyong, VIC	LP
Gee, Hon. Andrew Robert	Calare, NSW	NATS
Georganas, Mr Steven	Adelaide, SA	ALP
Giles, Mr Andrew James	Scullin, VIC	ALP
Gillespie, Hon. Dr David Arthur	Lyne, NSW	NATS

### Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Goodenough, Mr Ian Reginald	Moore, WA	LP
Gorman, Mr Patrick	Perth, WA	ALP
Gosling, Mr Luke John	Solomon, NT	ALP
Haines, Dr Helen Mary	Indi, VIC	IND
Hamilton, Mr Garth Russell	Groom, QLD	LNP
Hammond, Ms Celia Monica	Curtin, WA	LP
Hastie, Hon. Andrew William	Canning, WA	LP
Hawke, Hon. Alexander George	Mitchell, NSW	LP
Hayes, Mr Christopher Patrick	Fowler, NSW	ALP
Hill, Mr Julian Christopher	Bruce, VIC	ALP
Hogan, Hon. Kevin John	Page, NSW	NATS
Howarth, Hon. Luke Ronald	Petrie, QLD	LP
Hunt, Hon. Gregory Andrew	Flinders, VIC	LP
Husic, Hon. Edham Nurredin	Chifley, NSW	ALP
Irons, Hon. Stephen James	Swan, WA	LP
Jones, Mr Stephen Patrick	Whitlam, NSW	ALP
Joyce, Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard	New England, NSW	NATS
Katter, Hon. Robert Carl	Kennedy, QLD	KAP
Kearney, Ms Gerardine Mary	Cooper, VIC	ALP
Kelly, Mr Craig	Hughes, NSW	IND
Keogh, Mr Matthew James	Burt, WA	ALP
Khalil, Mr Peter	Wills, VIC	ALP
King, Hon. Catherine Fiona	Ballarat, VIC	ALP
King, Ms Madeleine Mary Harvie	Brand, WA	ALP
Laming, Mr Andrew Charles	Bowman, QLD	LP
Landry, Hon. Michelle Leanne	Capricornia, QLD	NATS
Leeser, Mr Julian Martin	Berowra, NSW	LP
Leigh, Hon. Dr Andrew Keith	Fenner, ACT	ALP
Ley, Hon. Sussan Penelope	Farrer, NSW	LP
Littleproud, Hon. David Kelly	Maranoa, QLD	LNP
Liu, Ms Gladys	Chisholm, VIC	LP
Marino, Hon. Nola Bethwyn	Forrest, WA	LP
Marles, Hon. Richard Donald	Corio, VIC	ALP
Martin, Mrs Fiona Barbouttis	Reid, NSW	LP
McBain, Ms Kristy Louise	Eden-Monaro, NSW	ALP
McBride, Ms Emma Margaret	Dobell, NSW	ALP
McCormack, Hon. Michael Francis	Riverina, NSW	NATS
McIntosh, Ms Melissa Iris	Lindsay, NSW	LP
Mitchell, Mr Brian Keith	Lyons, TAS	ALP
Mitchell, Mr Robert George	McEwen, VIC	ALP
Morrison, Hon. Scott John	Cook, NSW	LP
Morton, Hon. Ben	Tangney, WA	LP
Mulino, Dr Daniel	Fraser, VIC	ALP
Murphy, Ms Peta Jan	Dunkley, VIC	ALP
Neumann, Hon. Shayne Kenneth	Blair, QLD	ALP
O'Brien, Mr Llewellyn Stephen	Wide Bay, QLD	LNP
O'Brien, Mr Ted Lynam	Fairfax, QLD	LNP
O'Connor, Hon. Brendan Patrick John	Gorton, VIC	ALP
O'Dowd, Mr Kenneth Desmond	Flynn, QLD	NATS
O'Neil, Ms Clare Ellen	Hotham, VIC	ALP

### Members of the House of Representatives

Members	Division	Party
Owens, Ms Julie Ann	Parramatta, NSW	ALP
Pasin, Mr Antony	Barker, SA	LP
Payne, Ms Alicia Emma	Canberra, ACT	ALP
Pearce, Mr Gavin Bruce	Braddon, TAS	LP
Perrett, Mr Graham Douglas	Moreton, QLD	ALP
Phillips, Ms Fiona Evon	Gilmore, NSW	ALP
Pitt, Hon. Keith John	Hinkler, QLD	NATS
Plibersek, Hon. Tanya Joan	Sydney, NSW	ALP
Porter, Hon. Charles Christian	Pearce, WA	LP
Price, Hon. Melissa Lee	Durack, WA	LP
Ramsey, Mr Rowan Eric	Grey, SA	LP
Rishworth, Hon. Amanda Louise	Kingston, SA	ALP
Robert, Hon. Stuart Rowland	Fadden, QLD	LP
Rowland, Ms Michelle Anne	Greenway, NSW	ALP
Ryan, Ms Joanne Catherine	Lalor, VIC	ALP
Sharkie, Ms Rebekha Carina Che	Mayo, SA	CA
Sharma, Mr Devanand Noel	Wentworth, NSW	LP
Shorten, Hon. William Richard	Maribyrnong, VIC	ALP
Simmonds, Mr Julian Graham John	Ryan, QLD	LNP
Smith, Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn	Casey, VIC	LP
Smith, Mr David Philip Benedict	Bean, ACT	ALP
Snowdon, Hon. Warren Edward	Lingiari, NT	ALP
Stanley, Ms Anne Maree	Werriwa, NSW	ALP
Steggall, Ms Zali	Warringah, NSW	IND
Stevens, Mr James William	Sturt, SA	LP
Sukkar, Hon. Michael Sven	Deakin, VIC	LP
Swanson, Ms Meryl Jane	Paterson, NSW	ALP
Taylor, Hon. Angus James	Hume, NSW	LP
Tehan, Hon. Daniel Thomas	Wannon, VIC	LP
Templeman, Ms Susan Raye	Macquarie, NSW	ALP
Thistlethwaite, Hon. Matthew James	Kingsford Smith, NSW	ALP
Thompson, Mr Phillip OAM	Herbert, QLD	LNP
Thwaites, Ms Kate Lynne	Jagajaga, VIC	ALP
Tudge, Hon. Alan Edward	Aston, VIC	LP
Vamvakinou, Ms Maria	Calwell, VIC	ALP
van Manen, Mr Albertus Johannes	Forde, QLD	LP
Vasta, Mr Ross Xavier	Bonner, QLD	LP
Wallace, Mr Andrew Bruce	Fisher, QLD	LNP
Watts, Mr Timothy Graham	Gellibrand, VIC	ALP
Webster, Dr Anne Elizabeth	Mallee, VIC	NATS
Wells, Ms Anika Shay	Lilley, QLD	ALP
Wicks, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth	Robertson, NSW	LP
Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien	Clark, TAS	IND
Wilson, Mr Joshua Hamilton	Fremantle, WA	ALP
Wilson, Mr Richard James	O'Connor, WA	LP
Wilson, Mr Timothy Robert	Goldstein, VIC	LP
Wood, Hon. Jason Peter	La Trobe, VIC	LP
Wyatt, Hon. Kenneth George, AM	Hasluck, WA	LP
Young, Mr Terry James	Longman, QLD	LNP
Zappia, Mr Antonio	Makin, SA	ALP

### **Members of the House of Representatives**

Members	Division	Party
Zimmerman, Mr Trent Moir	North Sydney, NSW	LP

#### **PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party; CA—Centre Alliance;  
IND—Independent; KAP—Katter's Australia Party; LNP—Liberal National Party;  
LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals;

#### **Heads of Parliamentary Departments**

Clerk of the Senate—R Pye  
Clerk of the House of Representatives—C Surtees  
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanic  
Parliamentary Budget Officer—S Helgeby

## SECOND MORRISON MINISTRY

TITLE	MINISTER
<b>Prime Minister</b>	The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
<b>Minister for the Public Service</b>	The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
<b>Minister for Women</b>	Senator the Hon. Marise Payne
<b>Minister for Emergency Management and National Recovery and Resilience</b>	Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie
<b>Minister for Indigenous Australians</b>	The Hon. Ken Wyatt AM MP
<i>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet</i>	<i>The Hon. Ben Morton MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister to the Minister for the Public Service</i>	<i>The Hon. Ben Morton MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention</i>	<i>The Hon. David Coleman MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Women</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Amanda Stoker</i>
<b>Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development</b>	The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP
<b>Minister for Agriculture and Northern Australia</b>	The Hon. David Littleproud MP
<b>Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts</b>	The Hon. Paul Fletcher MP
<b>Minister for Regionalisation, Regional Communications and Regional Education</b>	Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie
<i>Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport</i>	<i>The Hon. Scott Buchholz MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</i>	<i>The Hon. Kevin Hogan MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Local Government</i>	<i>The Hon. Kevin Hogan MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories</i>	<i>The Hon. Nola Marino MP</i>
<b>Treasurer</b>	The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP
Assistant Treasurer	The Hon. Michael Sukkar MP
Minister for Housing	The Hon. Michael Sukkar MP
Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and the Digital Economy	Senator the Hon. Jane Hume
Minister for Women's Economic Security	Senator the Hon. Jane Hume
<b>Minister for Finance</b>	Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham
(Vice-President of the Executive Council)	
(Leader of the Government in the Senate)	
<i>Assistant Minister for Electoral Matters</i>	<i>The Hon. Ben Morton MP</i>
<b>Minister for Agriculture and Northern Australia</b>	The Hon. David Littleproud MP
<b>Minister for the Environment</b>	The Hon. Sussan Ley MP
Minister for Resources and Water	The Hon. Keith Pitt MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management</i>	<i>The Hon. Trevor Evans MP</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Jonathon Duniam</i>
<b>Minister for Foreign Affairs</b>	Senator the Hon. Marise Payne
<b>Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</b>	The Hon. Dan Tehan MP
Minister for International Development and the Pacific	Senator the Hon. Zed Seselja
Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment	The Hon. Dr David Gillespie MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Regional Tourism</i>	<i>The Hon. Michelle Landry MP</i>



<b>Minister for Defence</b> (Leader of the House)	The Hon. Peter Dutton MP
<b>Minister for Defence Industry</b>	The Hon. Melissa Price MP
<b>Minister for Veterans' Affairs</b>	The Hon. Andrew Gee MP
<b>Minister for Defence Personnel</b>	The Hon. Andrew Gee MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Defence</i>	<i>The Hon. Andrew Hastie MP</i>
<b>Attorney-General</b>	Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash
<b>Minister for Industrial Relations</b> (Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash
<i>Assistant Minister to the Attorney-General</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Amanda Stoker</i>
<i>Assistant Minister for Industrial Relations</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Amanda Stoker</i>
<b>Minister for Health and Aged Care</b>	The Hon. Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care Services	Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck
Minister for Sport	Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck
Minister for Regional Health (Deputy Leader of the House)	The Hon. Dr David Gillespie MP
<b>Minister for Families and Social Services</b>	Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston
<b>Minister for Women's Safety</b> (Manager of Government Business in the Senate)	Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston
<b>Minister for Government Services</b>	Senator the Hon. Linda Reynolds CSC
<b>Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</b>	Senator the Hon. Linda Reynolds CSC
Minister for Homelessness, Social and Community Housing	The Hon. Michael Sukkar MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Children and Families</i>	<i>The Hon. Michelle Landry MP</i>
<b>Minister for Home Affairs</b>	The Hon. Karen Andrews MP
<b>Minister for Emergency Management and National Recovery and Resilience</b>	Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie
Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. Alex Hawke MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs</i>	<i>The Hon. Jason Wood MP</i>
<b>Minister for Industry, Science and Technology</b>	The Hon. Christian Porter MP
<b>Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction</b>	The Hon. Angus Taylor MP
Minister for Resources and Water	The Hon. Keith Pitt MP
<i>Assistant Minister for Industry Development</i>	<i>Senator the Hon. Jonathon Duniam</i>
<b>Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business</b>	The Hon. Stuart Robert MP
<b>Minister for Education and Youth</b>	The Hon. Alan Tudge MP
<b>Minister for Regionalisation, Regional Communications and Regional Education</b>	Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie
<i>Assistant Minister for Youth and Employment Services</i>	<i>The Hon. Luke Howarth MP</i>

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 can be two departments in one portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a Minister in all cases. Ministers are sworn to administer the portfolio in which they are listed under the 'Minister' column and may also be sworn to administer other portfolios in which they are not listed. Assistant Ministers in italics are designated as Parliamentary Secretaries under the *Ministers of State Act 1952*.

## SHADOW MINISTRY

TITLE	SHADOW MINISTER
<b>Leader of the Opposition</b>	Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
<i>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</i>	<i>Senator Jenny McAllister</i>
<b>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</b>	Hon. Richard Marles MP
<b>Shadow Minister for National Reconstruction, Employment, Skills and Small Business</b>	Hon. Richard Marles MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Science</b>	Hon. Richard Marles MP
Shadow Minister Assisting for Small Business	Matt Keogh MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Employment and Skills</i>	<i>Senator Louise Pratt</i>
<b>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</b>	Senator the Hon. Penny Wong
<b>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs</b>	Senator the Hon. Penny Wong
Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific	Pat Conroy MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</i>	<i>Senator Jenny McAllister</i>
<b>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</b>	Senator the Hon. Kristina Keneally
<b>Shadow Minister for Home Affairs</b>	Senator the Hon. Kristina Keneally
<b>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</b>	Senator the Hon. Kristina Keneally
<b>Shadow Minister for Government Accountability</b>	Senator the Hon. Kristina Keneally
Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs	Andrew Giles MP
Shadow Minister Assisting for Immigration and Citizenship	Andrew Giles MP
Shadow Minister for Disaster and Emergency Management	Senator Murray Watt
Shadow Minister Assisting on Government Accountability	Pat Conroy MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations</b>	Hon. Tony Burke MP
<b>Shadow Minister for the Arts</b>	Hon. Tony Burke MP
Manager of Opposition Business in the House of Representatives	Hon. Tony Burke MP
<b>Shadow Special Minister of State</b>	Senator the Hon. Don Farrell
<b>Shadow Minister for Sport and Tourism</b>	Senator the Hon. Don Farrell
<b>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader of the Opposition</b>	Senator the Hon. Don Farrell
<b>Shadow Treasurer</b>	Dr Jim Chalmers MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer	Stephen Jones MP
Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation	Stephen Jones MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Treasury</i>	<i>Hon. Dr Andrew Leigh MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Charities</i>	<i>Hon. Dr Andrew Leigh MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation</i>	<i>Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>

TITLE	SHADOW MINISTER
<b>Shadow Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</b>	Hon. Bill Shorten MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Government Services</b>	Hon. Bill Shorten MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Carers</i>	<i>Emma McBride MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Government Services and the NDIS</i>	<i>Senator Kimberley Kitching</i>
<i>Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate</i>	<i>Senator Kimberley Kitching</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Education</b>	Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Women</b>	Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Education</i>	<i>Graham Perrett MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing</b>	Hon. Mark Butler MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House of Representatives	Hon. Mark Butler MP
Shadow Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care Services	Clare O'Neil MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Health and Ageing</i>	<i>Ged Kearney MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health</i>	<i>Emma McBride MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy</b>	Hon. Chris Bowen MP
Shadow Minister Assisting for Climate Change	Pat Conroy MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development</b>	Hon. Catherine King MP
Shadow Minister for Cities and Urban Infrastructure	Andrew Giles MP
Shadow Minister for Northern Australia	Senator Murray Watt
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Tourism</i>	<i>Senator Carol Brown</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Tasmania</i>	<i>Senator Carol Brown</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Northern Australia</i>	<i>Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Western Australia</i>	<i>Patrick Gorman MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Road Safety</i>	<i>Senator Glenn Sterle</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Defence</b>	Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel	Hon. Shayne Neumann MP
Shadow Minister Assisting for Defence	Pat Conroy MP
Shadow Minister for Defence Industry	Matt Keogh MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</i>	<i>Meryl Swanson MP</i>
<b>Shadow Attorney-General</b>	Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Constitutional Reform</b>	Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for the Republic</i>	<i>Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP</i>

TITLE	SHADOW MINISTER
<b>Shadow Minister for Communications</b>	Michelle Rowland MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Communications And Cyber Security</i>	<i>Tim Watts MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Finance</b>	Senator Katy Gallagher
<b>Shadow Minister for the Public Service</b>	Senator Katy Gallagher
Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate	Senator Katy Gallagher
<b>Shadow Minister for Families and Social Services</b>	Hon. Linda Burney MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians</b>	Hon. Linda Burney MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Reconciliation</i>	<i>Senator Patrick Dodson</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians</i>	<i>Senator Patrick Dodson</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Indigenous Australian</i>	<i>Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</i>
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Communities and the Prevention of Family Violence</i>	<i>Senator Jenny McAllister</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Agriculture</b>	Hon. Julie Collins MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government</b>	Hon. Jason Clare MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness</b>	Hon. Jason Clare MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for External Territories</i>	<i>Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education</b>	Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Youth</b>	Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP
<b>Shadow Minister for the Environment and Water</b>	Terri Butler MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for the Environment</i>	<i>Josh Wilson MP</i>
<b>Shadow Minister for Trade</b>	Madeleine King MP
<b>Shadow Minister for Resources</b>	Madeleine King MP
Shadow Minister for Queensland Resources	Senator Murray Watt
<b>Shadow Minister for Industry and Innovation</b>	Hon. Ed Husic MP
<i>Shadow Assistant Minister for Manufacturing</i>	<i>Senator Louise Pratt</i>

Shadow Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.

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*Wednesday, 1 September 2021*

**The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith)** took the chair at 09:30, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

## COMMITTEES

### Selection Committee

#### Report

**The SPEAKER (09:31):** I present report No. 38 of the selection committee, relating to the consideration of committee and delegation business and private members' business on Monday 18 October 2021. The report will be put in the *Hansard* for today and the committee's determinations will appear on tomorrow's *Notice Paper*. Copies have been placed on the table.

The report read as follows—

Committee and delegation business and private Members' business

1 September 2021

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Chair

Hon A. D. H. Smith MP, Speaker

Members

Mr B van Manen MP (Chief Government Whip)

Mr C Hayes MP (Chief Opposition Whip)

Hon D Drum MP (Chief Nationals Whip)

Mr R Broadbent MP

Ms N Flint MP

Ms P Murphy MP

Mr K O'Dowd

Mr R Ramsey MP

Ms J Ryan MP

Ms R Sharkie MP

Ms A Stanley MP

Mr L O'Brien MP, Deputy Speaker

Secretary

Mr J Sherd

Committee support

Mrs L Long

Mr D Pecar

Mrs H Waterhouse

Report relating to the consideration of committee and delegation business  
and of private Members' business

1. The Committee met in private session on Tuesday, 31 August 2021.
2. The Committee deliberated on items of committee and delegation business that had been notified, private Members' business items listed on the Notice Paper and notices lodged on Tuesday, 31 August 2021, and determined the order of precedence and times on Monday, 18 October 2021, as follows:

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Notices

1 **Mr Wilkie:** To present a Bill for an Act to amend the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, and for related purposes. (*Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Cleaning up Political Donations) Bill 2021*)

(Notice given 15 June 2021.)

*Presenter may speak to the second reading for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41. Debate must be adjourned pursuant to standing order 142.*

**2 Mr C. Kelly:** To present a Bill for an Act to amend the *Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992*, and for related purposes. (*Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Amendment Bill 2021*)

(Notice given 24 June 2021.)

*Presenter may speak to the second reading for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41. Debate must be adjourned pursuant to standing order 142.*

**3 Ms Steggall:** To present a Bill for an Act to amend the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006*, and for related purposes. (*PEP11 Bill 2021*)

(Notice given 31 August 2021.)

*Presenter may speak to the second reading for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41. Debate must be adjourned pursuant to standing order 142.*

**4 Ms Steggall:** To present a Bill for an Act to establish a national climate change adaptation and mitigation framework, and to establish the Climate Change Commission, and for related purposes. (*Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2021*)

(Notice given 31 August 2021.)

*Presenter may speak to the second reading for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41. Debate must be adjourned pursuant to standing order 142.*

**5 Ms Steggall:** To present a Bill for an Act to create duties to consider climate change impacts and to deal with consequential and transitional matters arising from the enactment of the *Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Act 2021*, and for related purposes. (*Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2021*)

(Notice given 31 August 2021.)

*Presenter may speak to the second reading for a period not exceeding 10 minutes—pursuant to standing order 41. Debate must be adjourned pursuant to standing order 142.*

**6 Mr Vasta:** To move—That this House:

(1) acknowledges that the month of August is Spinal Muscular Atrophy Awareness Month;

(2) notes that:

(a) spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) is the number one genetic killer of infants under the age of two in Australia and one in thirty-five people are carriers of SMA; and

(b) the Health Chief Executives Forum has encouraged all states and territories to include SMA in their Newborn Screening Program's following the success of the pilot program in NSW/ACT;

(3) recognises that the Commonwealth Government has invested significantly in the space of genetic testing and SMA treatment due to our strong economic management; and

(4) calls on the remaining state and territory governments to implement SMA testing into their Newborn Bloodspot Program, following the advice from the Health Chief Executives Forum.

(Notice given 11 August 2021.)

*Time allotted—30 minutes.*

*Speech time limits—*

*Mr Vasta—5 minutes.*

*Other Members—5 minutes each.*

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

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

**7 Ms Stanley:** To move—That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) 15 October 2021 is International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day;

(b) on that day, parents, families, friends and healthcare workers will memorialise babies they have lost through miscarriage, stillbirth and infant death;

(c) infant loss is a tragic and terrible event to go through for families, healthcare workers and friends, and International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day provides an opportunity to mark their shared loss; and

(d) direct support for persons affected by pregnancy and infant loss is difficult at the current time considering the local health environment;

(2) acknowledges that:

(a) each year approximately 150,000 women in Australia experience some form of pregnancy or infant loss;

(b) further issues are commonly faced by those close to these tragic events such as depression, anxiety, changes in relationships, development of unhealthy coping mechanisms and post-traumatic stress disorder;

(c) these effects, amongst others, are often underestimated and overlooked by healthcare professionals, friends, and even family members, especially concerning pregnancy loss related bereavement and subsequent grief;

(d) greater research and understanding is required to aide in the creation and establishment of programs, resources and services that support and provide assistance to survivors of baby loss and their families, and enable them to overcome their trauma and integrate their bereavement into their life in a healthy, helpful, healing manner;

(e) services for people affected by pregnancy or infant loss have been continuing, as best as possible, their necessary and significant work during this recent and difficult period; and

(f) further support is required including providing parents who aren't covered by leave entitlements with the same amount of paid leave they would be entitled to if their baby was born alive;

(3) expresses sympathy to all families who have suffered a miscarriage, a stillbirth or infant death; and

(4) commends every person who has supported parents and families through their journey from the loss of a baby.

*(Notice given 12 August 2021.)*

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

*Speech time limits—*

*Ms Stanley—5 minutes.*

*Other Members—5 minutes each.*

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

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

Items for Federation Chamber (11 am to 1.30 pm)

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

##### Orders of the day

1 Labour hire companies: Resumption of debate (*from 9 August 2021*) on the motion of Ms Swanson—That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) many Australian workers are being employed by labour hire companies on low wages and without access to entitlements such as annual leave, sick leave and parental leave;

(b) these workers are often working alongside other workers doing the same job, with the same roster who are employed on higher wages and with access to leave entitlements;

(c) the use of labour hire to avoid paying fair wages and conditions by Australian companies is growing, particularly in Australia's mining industry;

(d) the Federal Court of Australia in the *Workpac v Rossato* case determined that a worker who was defined as a casual employee by labour hire company Workpac was in fact a full time employee working a full time roster and therefore entitled to leave entitlements; and

(e) Workpac have appealed this decision in the High Court of Australia and the Government has intervened in the case to support the submission of Workpac that Mr Rossato is a casual employee and should not receive leave entitlements;

(2) recognises that the increasing use of labour hire companies by employers to avoid paying fair wages and conditions is reducing the incomes of workers and families, and is having a detrimental impact on their livelihoods, particularly in regional Australia; and

(3) calls on the Government to support Labor's policy and legislation in the Parliament that will ensure workers who do the same job receive the same pay.

*Time allotted—30 minutes.*

*Speech time limits—*

*All Members—5 minutes each.*

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

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

##### Notices

1 **Mr van Manen:** To move—That this House:

(1) notes the vital nature of Black Spot Program (BSP) funding in reducing death and serious injury on Australian roads;

(2) recognises that BSP projects target those road locations where crashes are occurring, which are a major cost to Australians every year;

(3) commends the Government for its extensive commitment to road safety through infrastructure investment, by providing \$1.1 billion to the BSP from 2013-14 to 2023-24, with an ongoing commitment of \$110 million each year following; and

(4) acknowledges research from the Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics that the Government's BSP reduces death and serious injury from crashes by 30 per cent, on average at treated sites.

*(Notice given 23 June 2021.)*

*Time allotted—40 minutes.*

*Speech time limits—*

*Mr van Manen—5 minutes.*

*Other Members—5 minutes each.*

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

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

Orders of the day—continued

2 Youth mental health services: Resumption of debate (*from 2 June 2021*) on the motion of Ms Templeman—That this House:

- (1) notes with dismay that suicide is the leading cause of death among Australians aged 15 to 24 years;
- (2) recognises that for young people the decision to access mental health care is fragile, and if they do not have a positive experience they may not make another attempt to seek help;
- (3) further notes that youth-friendly mental health services are not available uniformly to young people; and
- (4) calls on the Government to:
  - (a) increase access to effective mental health services and supports for young people across all stages of mental ill-health; and
  - (b) build a youth mental health workforce to meet the current and future needs.

*Time allotted—40 minutes.*

*Speech time limits—*

*All Members—5 minutes each.*

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

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

Notices—continued

2 **Mr T. R. Wilson:** To move—That this House:

- (1) notes that:
  - (a) a number of Australian businesses have been impacted by cyber attacks including by ransomware in 2021; and
  - (b) ransomware is a common and dangerous type of malware employed by cyber criminals that can affect both individuals and organisations, and cause severe damage to reputation, and business bottom lines; and
- (2) records its concern at the impact and frequency of cyber attacks on Australian individuals and businesses;
- (3) notes the significant investment by the Government of \$15 billion in cyber and defence capabilities, including \$1.35 billion through the Australian Signals Directorate and the Australian Cyber Security Centre, to keep Australians safe online;
- (4) recognises the important work done by ACSC in providing advice and technical support to individuals and businesses affected by cyber incidents;
- (5) urges all Australians to implement good cyber hygiene measures across their home and business networks; and
- (6) encourages all Australians to visit [cyber.gov.au](https://www.cyber.gov.au) and take the steps to protect themselves, their businesses, their families and Australia's digital sovereignty.

*(Notice given 23 June 2021.)*

*Time allotted—remaining private Members' business time prior to 1.30 pm.*

*Speech time limits—*

*Mr T. R. Wilson—5 minutes.*

*Other Members—5 minutes each.*

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

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

Items for Federation Chamber (4.45 pm to 7.30 pm)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Notices—continued

3 **Mr Wilkie:** To move—That this House:

- (1) notes that the:
  - (a) Government has failed to establish a strong independent federal integrity commission, and on 8 September 2021 it will be 1,000 days since the Prime Minister promised to pass legislation to create one; and

(b) Government's proposed Commonwealth Integrity Commission is half-baked, creating the weakest watchdog in the country with hearings for all politicians and public servants held behind closed doors, no transparency on findings and penalties for whistle-blowers; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

(a) abandon its deeply unpopular Commonwealth Integrity Commission proposal which in its current form is beyond effective amendment and should be scrapped;

(b) establish a strong, well-funded, wide-ranging and independent integrity commission through the Australian Federal Integrity Commission Bill put forward by the Member for Indi that can launch its own inquiries into criminal, corrupt and unethical behaviour by politicians and their staff, hold public hearings and make public findings; and

(c) commit to passing such legislation as a matter of urgency.

*(Notice given 24 August 2021.)*

*Time allotted—45 minutes.*

*Speech time limits—*

*Mr Wilkie—5 minutes.*

*Other Members—5 minutes each.*

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 9 x 5 mins]

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

**4 Mr T. R. Wilson:** To move—That this House:

(1) recognises the critical work of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) in safeguarding Australia's security and national interests;

(2) notes that ASIO Director-General Mr Mike Burgess recently observed that 'Australia's threat environment is complex, challenging and changing';

(3) commends the Government for providing \$1.3 billion over ten years in the 2021-22 budget to help further improve ASIO's capabilities; and

(4) thanks the men and women who work in ASIO and our other national security agencies for their dedication to keeping Australians safe from a range of threats and to protecting our national sovereignty.

*(Notice given 23 June 2021.)*

*Time allotted—40 minutes.*

*Speech time limits—*

*Mr T. R. Wilson—5 minutes.*

*Other Members—5 minutes each.*

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

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

**5 Mr Perrett:** To move—That this House:

(1) recognises that:

(a) books can be an escape from the worries of everyday life;

(b) reading reduces stress by 68 per cent;

(c) reading makes your world bigger and makes more things possible;

(d) literacy and reading are tools that can help you achieve your goals and help others;

(e) reading helps your mind grow;

(f) by reading other people's stories you can walk in their shoes; and

(g) books build empathy, connection and help you feel less lonely;

(2) notes that:

(a) the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted many literary activities;

(b) major writers' festivals have been interrupted;

(c) schools have moved to online learning for weeks at a time; and

(d) libraries and adult education forums around the country closed their doors to in-person attendees; and

(3) acknowledges:

(a) Tuesday, 14 September 2021 is Australian Reading Hour and this year's theme is, Stories that Matter;

(b) Australian Reading Hour is in its tenth year and is a showcase for Australia Reads; and

(c) Australian Reading Hour highlights the importance of reading in transforming lives.

*(Notice given 23 August 2021.)*

*Time allotted—40 minutes.*

*Speech time limits—*

*Mr Perrett—5 minutes.*

*Other Members—5 minutes each.*

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

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

**6 Mr Simmonds:** To move—That this House notes that:

(1) membership of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) Cadets:

(a) gives young people the opportunity to be members of a team, develop their skills as leaders and develop an individual's capacity to contribute to society; and

(b) fosters an interest in Defence Force careers, and is important in developing ongoing support for Defence; and

(2) ADF Cadets contribute greatly to the community and Australian society.

*(Notice given 23 June 2021.)*

*Time allotted—remaining private Members' business time prior to 7.30 pm.*

*Speech time limits—*

*Mr Simmonds—5 minutes.*

*Other Members—5 minutes each.*

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

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

THE HON A. D. H. SMITH MP

Speaker of the House of Representatives

1 September 2021

## BUSINESS

### Rearrangement

**Mr DUTTON** (Dickson—Minister for Defence and Leader of the House) (09:31): I rise to move a motion to suspend standing orders and advise the House that, pursuant to standing order 47(c)(ii), the Manager of Opposition Business and I have agreed that an absolute majority is not required. I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent:

(1) the Prime Minister moving a motion in relation to the ANZUS Treaty and speaking for 10 minutes;

(2) the Leader of the Opposition speaking in reply for 10 minutes;

(3) the Deputy Prime Minister, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Minister for Defence and the Member for Gorton speaking to the motion for 5 minutes each;

(4) debate on the motion then being adjourned, and resumption of the debate being made an order of the day for a later hour; and

(5) any variation to this arrangement to be made only by a motion moved by a Minister.

Question agreed to.

## MOTIONS

### ANZUS Treaty: 70th Anniversary

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (09:32): In accordance with the resolution agreed to earlier, I move:

That the House:

(1) notes that today marks the 70th anniversary of the alliance between Australia and the United States of America under the ANZUS Treaty;

(2) reaffirms the commitment of Australia to that alliance, recognising its fundamental importance to our nation's security, sovereignty and prosperity, and to meeting the opportunities and challenges of our time;

(3) acknowledges that the alliance has underpinned peace, stability and freedom in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond, and that American leadership remains indispensable to the global rules-based order;

(4) acknowledges that next week marks the 20th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks, in response to which the ANZUS Treaty was invoked;

(5) places on record its profound gratitude to the servicemen and women of both our nations who have served together over more than a century; and

(6) acknowledges that the enduring friendship between our nations is underpinned by shared liberal democratic values and principles, and these have been embraced by our peoples across generations.

Today marks the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty, The ANZUS Treaty. ANZUS is the foundation stone of Australia's national security and a key pillar for peace and stability in our Indo-Pacific region and indeed across the world. For seven decades it has underpinned vital military, national security and intelligence cooperation between Australia and the United States, and much more besides. It has been, and I hope will always be, a shared national endeavour, one that has evolved to meet new challenges based on enduring values. The ANZUS Treaty was signed facing the ocean we share on 1 September 1951 in San Francisco. Among its architects, none stands taller than Australia's Minister for External Affairs in the years of the Menzies government, and later ambassador to the United States, Percy Spender. It was Percy Spender's unique foresight and hard-headed realism that helped secure the treaty—just 11 articles and little more than 800 words that have stood the test of time.

Sir Robert Menzies reflected on ANZUS, which I consider to be the greatest achievement of the Menzies government. Towards the end of his prime ministership, he said:

There is a contract between Australia and America. It is a contract based on the utmost goodwill, the utmost good faith and unqualified friendship. Each of us will stand by it.

And so we have—and for more than a century now, even preceding the treaty, from the cornfields of Le Hamel to the unforgiving steep terrain of Mount Tambu in Papua New Guinea, where stretcher-bearer Leslie 'Bull' Allen rescued 12 American soldiers from the battlefield and was recognised for his bravery with the award of the Silver Star. Mates helping mates. This continued in the snow of Korea, the rice paddies and jungles of Vietnam and, most recently, in the dust of Iraq and Afghanistan and the evacuation of Kabul.

Our alliance is based on trust and mutual respect, trust and respect so often forged in adversity—as it was in the Second World War when Prime Minister Curtin, almost a decade before ANZUS, turned our focus to the United States in our most desperate hour. It is an alliance based on a positive vision for our region, for a free, open and secure Indo-Pacific. Our alliance is based on a friendship that has never demanded the silence or, indeed, the censure of its critics; rather, we tend the tree of liberty across the Pacific. Ours is a partnership based on hope and on aspiration. We believe in free nations charting their own destinies, free economies trading fairly and openly, and free peoples embracing the future optimistically.

The ANZUS Treaty breathes and adapts with each passing generation. It has been stewarded by 14 presidents, and 14 prime ministers since Sir Robert Menzies. Our relationship now spans security and defence, diplomacy, trade, intelligence, shared facilities, space and cyber, future defence capability, and the shared and deep ties of people, culture and outlook. It embraces collaboration on new technologies, critical minerals and rare earths, strengthening of our supply chains—trusted supply chains—providing vaccines throughout the Pacific, and meeting the challenges of climate change and the new energy economy. Our two peoples see the world through the same lens.

The treaty we celebrate today has leaned into the world, dealing with it honestly as it is but in the hope of it becoming more as we would like it to be. At the launch of the Defence strategic update last year, I said we live in a region where peace, stability and prosperity cannot be taken for granted. Australia is confronting the most challenging strategic environment we have known in many, many decades. This strategic environment will challenge us, as it will challenge our great friends and partners in the United States and across our region, but our alliance will stand resilient in the face of these challenges as we nurture and refresh our commitment to one another. The ANZUS Treaty states that no potential aggressor could be under the illusion that we as allies stand alone in the Pacific.

Our nation's desire to strengthen the fabric of peace and meet the strategic challenges we face continues to be served by our alliance with the United States and the treaty we entered into 70 years ago today. Together we share hope, we share burden and we share vision, a positive vision. We may not be equal in size, but there is no doubting on either side of this partnership the equality of our commitment, of our resolve and of our dedication to the values that underpin our great partnership. Together we have always supported a world that favours freedom.

Our alliance and America's deep engagement in our region are essential as we look to rebuild from the pandemic and shape a free and open Indo-Pacific that is stable, secure and prosperous. In this mission, Australia and the United States work with friends old and new: our longstanding ASEAN partners, our Pacific family, our fellow travellers in the Quad, the Five Eyes and the g7+. We work together for an Indo-Pacific region where the sovereign rights of all nations are respected, that is free of coercion and where disputes are settled peacefully and in accordance with the rule of international law. For, as President Eisenhower declared:

... one truth must rule all we think and all we do. ... The unity of all who dwell in freedom is their only sure defense.

On this milestone, we recall another anniversary. Next week marks the 20th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks. Our then Prime Minister, John Howard, was in Washington DC—indeed, to acknowledge this very anniversary at 50 years. He saw the smoke plume in Washington as this tragedy struck that nation, but he also saw the great spirit and enduring faith of the American people, and their resilience and their determination. On returning home, John Howard addressed this very House as Prime Minister, saying:

... if our debt as a nation to the people of the United States in the darkest days of World War II means anything, if the comradeship, the friendship and the common bonds of democracy and a belief in liberty, fraternity and justice mean anything, it means that the ANZUS Treaty applies ...

And indeed it did. It was the first and remains the only time the ANZUS Treaty has been formally invoked. While ANZUS has only been invoked that one time, the intent of that treaty and the values that that treaty represents have underpinned our deep and enduring relationship with the United States for the past 70 years and will for decades to come.

Last week we spoke in this House about our response to the 2001 terrorist attacks, attacks that shaped much of the following years. Last week the horrific events at Kabul airport's Abbey Gate reminded us again of the enormous price our ally has paid for its role in the world. The United States has so often established the very peace and safety that so many nations shelter under—the remarkable achievement of shaping a postwar world that resulted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the postwar rules based order, with the Marshall Plan, described by General Marshall himself as a policy 'directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty and desperation'; the rebuilding of Japan, our great friend; and the security umbrella for the development of Asia; the Berlin airlift, which defied Soviet coercion and kept the flame of liberty alive, which eventually saw the wall that would enclose them torn down by the hands of those it sought to separate forever; and the ongoing stand against radical Islamist extremism that blasphemes and perverts that religion and dishonours those who seek to live out their faith in peace.

We must recognise that the peace afforded to so many by the United States, including those who have been quick to criticise them, has so often come at such great cost to our great ally, our friend and our partner. This is something Australia will never take for granted or presume upon. As I have said many times, including on the White House lawn, Australia looks to the United States, but we will never leave it to the United States. We stand by each other together and for the truths we both hold dear. 'In sunshine and in sorrow', as President Johnson said, and, in the words of Sir Robert Menzies, 'warmed by the same inner fires'. May that always be true. Finally, as President Reagan reminded us, let us press on, knowing, as he said:

... liberty is not an inevitable state, and there is no law which guarantees that once achieved it will survive.

Let us pledge ourselves again here, on this 70th anniversary of our great alliance, to renew and modernise our alliance, to continue to be vigilant and strong, to build economic strength for the peace and prosperity for all and for a world order that favours freedom. Whatever challenges lie ahead, I know, and Australians know, that Australia and the United States will go on to meet them with the same courage, the same daring and the same unbreakable bond that has carried us to this day and will continue to do so into the future, a bond sealed by the sacrifices of all who served under our flags of Australia and the United States, whom we honour especially this day and in whose name we rededicate ourselves to the values and freedoms they fought to secure for us to uphold and pursue. May our prayer be as a nation that God continue to bless our great alliance, those United States of America and the Commonwealth of Australia.

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (09:45): The 70th anniversary of the ANZUS Treaty is a significant opportunity to not just commemorate our shared history but look forward to how our relationship will impact our respective futures. It comes at a time when attention is focused on what conclusions are to be drawn from the 20-year war in Afghanistan, which came to an end this week. What is certain is we know the steadfastness of America's values as we know the steadfastness of our own. There can be no overstatement when it comes to the bond between the United States of America and Australia.

We joined the UN sanctioned mission that was largely led by the United States, and, through to the end, the Americans were our brothers and sisters in arms, unified in the purpose of preventing terrorism and improving the lives of burdened people, particularly the women and girls of Afghanistan. That was true through to the very end, in fact. If it weren't for our American allies, efforts to evacuate thousands of Australians and visa holders in these past weeks would have been no more than wishful thinking. The US presence made the crucial difference to ensuring we were able to take on this difficult task, and their presence came at a great cost, losing 13 of their own as they sought to help others. Their ultimate sacrifice reflects the heavy duty of leadership, and we honour them.

It is a weight that America has carried since World War II, where the origins of ANZUS are to be found in the war in the Pacific and Curtin's turn to America. ANZUS began as quite a specific response to the emergence of the Cold War. It began with a clear focus on the geopolitics of the time. The Korean War was raging. Of course,



geopolitical imperatives have not gone away, but the forms of cooperation that underpin our response to them have clearly changed.

The previous Labor government, of which I was a member, undertook some of the most significant reforms to strengthen the Australia-US alliance in decades. We reaffirmed the full knowledge and concurrence principles for our partnership with the United States. This was first entrenched with Prime Minister Bob Hawke's statement to the Australian parliament in 1984, and it has been reaffirmed by successive governments of both political persuasions since. The principles set the foundation for a program of reform directly aimed at new and emerging 21st century security challenges, from space, satellite and defence communications infrastructure to cyber. This included joint statements on cyberspace and on space security and the establishment of space situational awareness, defence satellite communications and a combined communications gateway. We upgraded and modernised existing facilities, including the deployment of a new jointly operated US C-band radar at the Harold E. Holt Naval Communications Station and the relocation of an advanced US space surveillance telescope to Australia. The Obama administration's global force posture review was paralleled by the Labor government initiating its own force posture review, Australia's first since the 1980s Beazley-Dibb review. This led to President Obama's 2011 announcement of the rotation of US marines through Darwin, greater utilisation of Australian airfields in our north and west and the promise of increased US Navy use of Australia's Indian Ocean naval base at HMAS *Stirling*.

Looking forward, Australia's alliance with the United States sits at the centre of the *2020 Defence strategic update*. The strategic update warned of the rapidly changing circumstances in our region and stressed that a 10-year strategic warning time for a major conventional attack against Australia is no longer an appropriate basis for defence planning. Reduced warning times mean defence plans can no longer assume Australia will have time to gradually adjust military capability and preparedness in response to emerging challenges.

With the US again engaged in a global force posture review, it is time for Australia, too, to have a closer look at its own posture to ensure that it fully meets the times. I therefore announce today that a federal Labor government will initiate a new force posture review upon coming to office. The Indo-Pacific would remain a key focus, and the review would ensure the government is considering both long-term strategic posture and, given fast-moving events in the region, short-term needs. The review would also respond to the continued emergence of cybersecurity as a central challenge to Australia's strategic positioning in the coming decade.

The relationship with the United States is far deeper than a security alliance alone. The United States has been a core economic partner of Australia, and its importance only continues to grow. The US remains our key capital investor, underpinning Australian innovation and driving both our countries to take advantage of emerging technologies. At the foundation of our shared economic prosperity is the global rules based order, the systems, norms and institutions that guide the world's interactions and govern disputes—the rules of the road—which are being tested in ways that weren't conceivable at their postwar conception: a global pandemic that continues to wreak havoc; terrorism and extremism that continue to find safe haven; the return of great power competition; the undermining of rules based trade; and the use of economic coercion for strategic ends.

The US and Australia have been close allies in building and strengthening these rules of the road, including in our region. But we need to do more, and we can only do more with friends and with partners. We welcome the return of American leadership and the rules based order under President Biden, and his dedicated effort in repairing alliances. But even when the United States stepped back from its longstanding leadership on trade and other forms of multilateralism during the Trump administration, Australia held the line and, importantly, held the door open for our friends in the United States.

Nowhere has this been clearer than in Australia's efforts, together with Japan, to resurrect the TPP in the form of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. Indeed, Australia's partnerships and leadership in the Indo-Pacific are our principal value-add to the alliance and we have an opportunity and responsibility to work closely with the administration as it develops its Indo-Pacific strategy, including building its economic footprint, particularly in South-East Asia. We must work with key partners, such as India, Japan, Indonesia, ASEAN, Korea, the EU and others both to strengthen economic engagement and to uphold the rules of the road.

Many of our neighbours want the balance that will come from greater US engagement and they are clear that there must be economic engagement as well as security partnerships. Australia should be doing all that it can to encourage the US to support Indo-Pacific regional pandemic recovery, reinforce ASEAN's centrality and strengthen regional architecture. As I've said previously, this includes rejuvenating the WTO and its appellate body. It includes boosting US economic integration in the region, strengthening regional architecture. We welcome the recent visits by Vice President Harris and defence secretary Austin to South-East Asia and see these

as important first steps in a US step-up in the region. We hope to see this grow rapidly in recognition of the vital strategic importance of this region, and Australia must be prepared to step up its own engagement to support it.

At a time when regional uncertainty is high, a deeper US commitment to ensuring all states have the capacity to protect their sovereignty is vitally important. President Biden's early embrace of the Quad was a welcome development, and there will be much opportunity for further US-Australia cooperation in that context as well. Labor remains strongly committed to this.

One final manifestation of how our alliance relationship needs to continue to evolve is climate change, one of the most significant security challenges of the 21st century. Climate change remains beyond this government's grasp. The *2020 Defence strategic update* only manages to acknowledge climate change once, stating that it plays a part in 'greater political instability and friction' which will 'reshape our security environment'. Former Chief of the Defence Force Admiral Chris Barrie and other former senior Australian security and military leaders such as Air Vice-Marshal Blackburn have been calling for the government to fully assess the security risks from climate change. This must happen.

Indeed, it is our Pacific partners who face current and existential threats of rising sea levels and who are urging Australia to step up in word and in deed. We know the risk climate bears on our security, and we have already vividly seen some of the impact it has had on the operations of the Australian Defence Force. This has included responding to the bushfire crisis over the summer of 2019-20 and the rising demands on our nation for the ADF to assist in climate driven natural disasters and humanitarian assistance missions such as Operation Fiji Assist.

In the US, senior leaders have been talking for years about the security implications of climate change. We know it is having geostrategic and regional impacts as well as direct impacts on defence systems, infrastructure and operations. Despite this government's abstinence, the importance of climate change and the impact it will have on defence and security has been embraced by our alliance partner the United States.

Secretary of Defense Austin has already identified climate change as a top priority for the US military. At his Fullerton address in Singapore in July this year, he described climate change as an existential threat and a challenge that we must meet together. The US military has acknowledged that climate change is not a future defence problem but an immediate challenge. It is time the Australia-US alliance reflected this reality.

We should immediately deepen US-Australian cooperation on climate change security issues. We must develop operational plans to address the natural disasters and humanitarian outcomes. We must study and plan for how other states may seek to exploit its impacts on regional security. We must develop capabilities and shared responsibilities to mitigate its worst impacts. We should cooperate on technological development to take advantage of the economic opportunity that comes from the shift to clean energy to develop cheaper energy prices and facilitate an expansion of high-value manufacturing capacity. This will assist to build economic resilience in the event of future shocks from pandemics, cybersecurity or regional instability.

A cooperative approach on climate change would allow us to work together and to strengthen our engagement with all countries of the Indo-Pacific, who equally share this challenge. On coming to office, I will make comprehensive cooperation on climate change a hallmark of alliance cooperation. The alliance will continue to be one of the three central components of Labor foreign policy along with regional cooperation and multilateralism well into the future.

The Biden administration's strategic engagement in our neighbourhood and leadership on climate is critical to realising a region that is prosperous and peaceful and where sovereignty is respected. While so much of the region's immediate focus is the response to COVID, it's more profound concern is climate change. Australia's own action on climate change will therefore shape our capacity to live in a region where our interests prosper in partnership with our neighbours and our American allies. Our alliance with the United States has served us well for 70 years. I look forward to it developing with even greater dynamism for many more to come.

**Mr JOYCE** (New England—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development) (10:00): It's my pleasure to rise today and add to the comments of the Prime Minister of Australia and also the Leader of the Opposition and to commend those comments to the House.

My father best reflects what it is like to have the United States as an ally—he as a New Zealander and I as an Australian. He remembers, as a serving member, being in Wellington Harbour in New Zealand. They had little fuel, few boats and not much of an air force, and they were watching Japanese spotter planes while my grandfather fought in the Pacific islands up to Guadalcanal. Then one day he turned around, and there was the American Navy. He said to his other serving members: 'We've just won.' That is what is required. Never doubt the family, which is New Zealand. Never underestimate, as he always said to me, the inspired power of the American people when put to the flame. It's not just strength in military but strength based on shared values. Liberty of the individual, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, rights to private property, no discrimination against

ethnicity—these are the cement that binds us together. These are the reason that we strive for what is right, what is just and what is good and that we have an obligation to be part of that process which is ANZUS. In a world moving step-by-step back to totalitarianism, where democracy slips to a form of quasi-democracy and quasi-democracy slips back to autocracy, where autocracy is not tempered by the collegiate aspects of cabinet forms of government or by referring to an executive but goes out and parrots the mouthpiece of the supreme leader.

Without being smart, because I'm not, there is a Latin phrase, 'si vis pacem para bellum', which means 'if you want peace, prepare for war'. We want peace. No-one, ever, encourages war. We want peace, but this is an essential component of what must happen if you want peace. It comes from *Epitoma rei militaris*, by a guy called Vegetius. It's Latin because it's been the same through history. There is nothing new about this. Preparation needs mass, and mass needs allies. Looking forward requires a learnt experience, a learnt experience over the long term, a learnt experience over a hundred years, of which 70 years is part of ANZUS, but it is a learnt experience over a hundred years, not a memory of the 1990s. The world has changed. Now the geopolitical circumstances show an uncomfortable resemblance to the power jousting in Europe in a previous century.

ANZUS comes with a cost, and it must have the capacity for a bipartisan understanding—and I see that today—of exactly what we need that contract for and exactly how we tie it to that contract. It comes with the requirement for this parliament to show to the Australian people continually why we were involved in Korea, why we were involved in Vietnam, why we were involved in Iraq and why we were involved for 20 years in Afghanistan. Friends have to understand that your heart is where your legs are as well, that you honestly believe in those shared values, that you are willing to say to your people from a parliament: 'This is essential. This is essential, as the contract that is essential for us.'

ANZUS is an insurance policy for the freedoms of our nation. ANZUS is the insurance policy that lets us sit in this chamber. ANZUS is the insurance policy that keeps us from being, if not defeated, a supplicant. ANZUS is the insurance policy that is essential for us in a new geopolitical world where the fuels of the bushfire are so apparent. I commend the motion to the House and thank the opposition, the Prime Minister and this government for their recommitment to this great and noble cause.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the honourable the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. We have no audio. I say to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, if he can hear, that we can see him but not hear him. What I'll do is call the Minister for Defence, and then we can come back.

**Mr DUTTON** (Dickson—Minister for Defence and Leader of the House) (10:06): I follow the fine words of the Prime Minister, the opposition leader and the Deputy Prime Minister, and join with all of them and people in both the United States and Australia today who recognise the giants that stand behind the success, the creation, the formation of the ANZUS alliance.

The Prime Minister spoke of Percy Spender and many other leaders on both sides—Democrat and Republican, Labor and Liberal. We have over the course of the last 70 years been incredibly well served as a nation because of their efforts—the efforts of Menzies and Curtin, of Holt and Johnson, of Hawke and Reagan, of Bush 41 and Bush 43, of Howard and of prime ministers since that period. We have each seen the importance and the necessity of the alliance to the mutual benefit of our two countries. We've done that because we share values, we share history and, most importantly, we share a future. We recognise those efforts, but we would do them a disservice if we didn't recommit to this alliance in a way that made a rallying call for people in our own region in the years and decades ahead.

Spender had incredible foresight, as did others over different periods of this 70 years, in recognising that there would be a future of uncertainty. We know now in the Indo-Pacific that we live in a more uncertain time, more so than any period since the Second World War. We can highlight the Battle of the Coral Sea and the efforts in PNG and elsewhere in the region that provided security to our nation over the course of the Second World War. There are countries in our region now that look to Australia, the United States and New Zealand because of the values we bring to the table. It is more important than ever in a time when the Chinese Communist Party are increasing their military assets at an unprecedented rate, when their acquisition of nuclear weapons and their deployment of their grey zone powers in our region are without precedent.

If we mean anything in our region, we represent it most ably through this alliance. The values we bring to the table for countries in our region mean they have the ability to trust in us. Millions of people across our region have been lifted from poverty or live a better life today because of peace in our region, and it must be maintained. The ANZUS alliance has been forged in war and in peacetime, and it now serves us in a particular way because there are countries who need our support now more than ever in the Indo-Pacific. Those countries will continue to look to the United States in the good times and bad. We need to make sure that, through our commitments—in a

military sense, in a trade sense, in other ways that reflect our values—we speak very loudly about that commitment.

We have seen the United States at its best when it is in an alliance—in an alliance and a coalition with others who share her values. And Australia ticks each of those boxes, and our friends in New Zealand tick each of those boxes. The work of New Zealand in the Indo-Pacific will be more important in the coming years and decades than ever before, and it will give even greater meaning to this ANZUS agreement. Our commitment to provide support to troops from the United States across the north of our country, in particular, is more important than ever and is only possible because of this alliance. The intelligence that we shared in Kabul in recent days, which ultimately saved the lives of Australian citizens, our troops, and those visa holders, was only possible because of this alliance. It is only the most recent manifestation of the significance of this collaboration, of this partnership.

I want to commend the Prime Minister for his work in the Quad and in other multilateral fora, but this is the pre-eminent body for us. The work between the Biden administration and the Morrison administration now, as I think people over the coming months will come to realise, will reinforce the value of this relationship. The ANZUS alliance under this government has never been stronger. I can say that with absolute commitment and dedication to the ANZUS alliance. I want to recognise all of those whom we deal with regularly, in particular the Secretary of Defense in the United States and our other counterparts. This alliance means more to Australia and the United States and to the Indo-Pacific than even Percy Spender could have imagined. As I said in my opening remarks, to do them justice we must give this commitment in a substantive way, because it represents the values of each of us; and together as an alliance, as a coalition, as a family, we are at our strongest.

**The SPEAKER:** I will just try again calling the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. No, I'm sorry, it's still not working. I think Broadcasting are going to try one more thing. I will call the member for Gorton.

**Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR** (Gorton) (10:12): [by video link] The 70th anniversary of the ANZUS treaty is a significant occasion to celebrate and gives us cause to emphasise the strong and enduring Australia-US alliance. The bond between the United States and Australia cannot be overstated. It is a bond that goes back to before World War II. It was in 1941 when the wartime Prime Minister John Curtin's relationship with the US reflected the genuine Australian desire to establish a close strategic partnership under which, formally under the Menzies government, the ANZUS treaty was founded.

Today in this place we affirm the commitment of Australia to that alliance and recognise its fundamental importance to our nation's security, sovereignty and prosperity. It is an alliance that has underpinned peace, stability and freedom in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. Our nations have served together over more than a century, and we extend our gratitude to the service men and women of both nations who work to uphold this peace and stability. The alliance between our two nations is one that is underpinned by shared democratic values and principles embraced across nations.

Today is also marked with a significance by Labor's announcement that we will commit to a Defence Force posture review if elected in the next term. In February this year US President Biden tasked Secretary of Defense, Lloyd J. Austin III, to conduct a global posture review to ensure the footprint of American service members worldwide is correctly sized and supports strategy, with a strong focus on the Indo-Pacific. Australia has only conducted two fully-fledged Defence posture reviews in recent times—former defence minister Kim Beazley's mid-1980s review and former defence minister Stephen Smith's review in 2012. As a minister in the previous Labor government I did witness the significant reforms undertaken to strengthen the Australia-US alliance. The United States force posture initiative in our north was a program that began under Prime Minister Gillard and President Obama in 2011 amid the Defence Force posture review that Labor commissioned. This led to our current Marine Rotational Force in Darwin.

An Albanese Labor government will conduct the first Defence Force posture review since 2012. With six defence ministers in eight long years, the government has been neglecting planning on posture despite deteriorating strategic circumstances. A Labor Defence Force posture review would ensure the Australian government is considering both long-term strategic posture and whether the Australian defence units, assets and facilities are prepared for the military to take action in a timely way. This independent review will investigate the future security and strategic environment, the importance of domestic and demographic issues and their impact on defence facilities, as well as the strategic location of ADF bases and assets. This will also assist us in preparing for humanitarian and disaster responses, including those related to climate change.

The 2020 strategic update warned of the rapidly changing circumstances in our region and stressed that a 10-year strategic warning time for a major conventional attack against Australia is no longer an appropriate basis for defence planning. Reduced warning times means defence plans can no longer assume Australia will have time to gradually adjust military capability and preparedness in response to emerging challenges. This is particularly

concerning when we know our major defence asset contracts are over budget and face years of delay and do not always represent value for money. We need to do better to deliver what our ADF and our country needs. We need to ensure our negotiations deliver assets on time, on budget and with appropriate local industry content. Labor's plan is to build on the foreign policy and defence traditions that have underpinned Australia's relations with our alliances, our region and the world to foster democracy and to maintain peace.

**Mr BURKE** (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (10:16): Before the debate is adjourned, I'd simply seek leave on the understanding that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would make his remarks at a later hour this day.

**The SPEAKER:** Yes, with the agreement of the House we can do that between items of business and between the introductions.

Ordered that the resumption of the debate be made an order of the day for a later hour.

Debate adjourned.

## BILLS

### **Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Response No. 2) Bill 2021**

#### **First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Hunt**.

Bill read a first time.

#### **Second Reading**

**Mr HUNT** (Flinders—Minister for Health and Aged Care) (10:18): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Today I introduce the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Response No. 2) Bill of 2021. This is the second stage of aged-care legislative reform to deliver the high quality and safe aged care that our senior Australians deserve.

This bill responds to a number of recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, ahead of further reforms that have been committed to by this government. The royal commission was one of the first actions of Prime Minister Morrison upon being appointed to office.

#### **Australian National Aged Care Classification (AN-ACC)**

This bill implements significant structural reform of funding for residential aged care. It replaces the outdated Aged Care Funding Instrument with a new model for calculating aged care subsidies. The Australian National Aged Care Classification (AN-ACC) model has been developed in consultation with the aged-care sector and consumer groups over several years and it will encourage innovation and investment in the sector.

The AN-ACC was developed following an extensive research project, and the government has taken a staged approach to implementation. From April 2021, residential-aged-care recipients have been progressively assessed and classified under the AN-ACC, and this classification will now be linked, through this bill, to the subsidy calculation for residential-aged-care providers. This bill will finalise implementation of the AN-ACC model from 1 October 2022.

#### **Aged-care and support worker regulation**

The royal commission recommended strengthening regulation of the personal care workforce and increasing protections for senior Australians from workers who pose an unacceptable risk of harm.

This bill responds in part to recommendation 77 of the royal commission by establishing authority for nationally consistent pre-employment screening for aged-care workers and governing persons of approved providers. It also establishes a code of conduct, which will ensure poor behaviour of approved providers, workers and governing persons is held to account.

A national database of cleared and excluded individuals will support employment decisions in aged care and, through mutual recognition arrangements with the National Disability Insurance Scheme, across the care and support sector more broadly.

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner will have powers to make and enforce a code of conduct. The commissioner will have a range of powers to deal with breaches, including civil penalties, and, significantly, new banning orders for individuals, in line with recommendation 103 of the royal commission.

These new regulatory arrangements are designed to work together, to effectively manage and prevent unsuitable workers from entering or remaining in aged care.

**Extending the Serious Incident Response Scheme to home care**

The bill extends the Serious Incident Response Scheme to home care and flexible care delivered in a home- or community-care setting from 1 July 2022. These amendments give effect to royal commission recommendation 100.

The new requirements seek to build provider capacity to identify risk, respond to incidents, and drive learning and improvements that will reduce the number of preventable incidents in the future. Under the scheme, providers of in-home aged-care services will be required to identify, record, manage and resolve all incidents that occur.

By extending the definition of 'reportable incident', this bill will ensure the most serious incidents occurring in home- and community-care settings are reported to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. Expanding the Serious Incident Response Scheme will reduce the risk of abuse and neglect, and protect vulnerable senior Australians receiving aged-care services in their home and the community.

**Strengthening provider governance**

This bill improves the governance of approved providers from 1 March 2022. The amendments align with recommendations 88 to 90 of the royal commission, which note that good provider governance arrangements result in high quality care.

A number of new governance responsibilities for approved providers and their governing bodies will be introduced, as well as new reporting requirements to assist senior Australians and their families to understand the operations of providers.

Approved providers will be required to notify changes to key personnel, and the bill will replace the current disqualified individual arrangements with a suitability test. The new governance arrangements will improve the transparency and accountability of providers, and will change the culture from the top down.

**Enhanced information sharing**

Along with improving regulatory protections in aged care, the Australian government is taking a first step towards aligning the regulation of providers across the broader care and support sector. This sector covers aged care, disability support and veterans' care. Regulatory alignment will improve the consistency of quality and safety protections across the care and support sector while reducing the overall regulatory burden on cross-sector providers.

The bill facilitates increased information-sharing by the commission, Department of Health and Department of Veterans' Affairs with specified Commonwealth bodies. It will facilitate information-sharing about providers and workers operating across the care and support sector who are not complying with their obligations, are failing to provide quality care or whose conduct might be putting senior Australians at risk. The amendments seek to address aspects of the existing legislation that make it difficult to share information in a way that responds effectively to such risks.

I note that reciprocal sharing of information about provider and worker conduct in the National Disability Insurance Scheme will be facilitated by proposed information sharing powers in the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Improving Supports for At Risk Participants) Bill 2021.

**Increased financial and prudential oversight**

The government is implementing a new financial and prudential monitoring, compliance and intervention framework for the aged-care sector. Its purpose is to build the sector's financial resilience and improve its accountability. It will enable the government to identify at-risk providers earlier, and help ensure providers meet their obligations to refund deposits to residents.

This bill introduces the second phase of a three-phase reform by:

- enabling the secretary or commissioner to request information or documents from a provider or borrower relating to the use of a loan made with a refundable deposit or accommodation bond
- making it an offence for a borrower to not provide the information or documents and
- extending the period of liability between misuse of refundable deposits and insolvency for both providers and key personnel from two years to five years.

These changes implement the government's commitment to enhancing the transparency of the aged-care sector and supporting continuity of care for senior Australians. They also respond to the royal commission's recommendations for more stringent financial reporting requirements and strengthened monitoring powers.

**Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority**

Finally, the bill expands the functions of a renamed Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority to also include the provision of advice on healthcare and aged-care pricing and costing, and to perform functions conferred on it by the Aged Care Act.

New governance and appointments arrangements will streamline administration and reflect the enhanced responsibilities and integrated functions of the pricing authority. Information used and disclosed to perform the new functions will be appropriately protected.

Establishing an independent aged-care pricing and costing advice function will support transparent and evidence based assessment of the costs involved in delivering care to senior Australians who use aged care. This builds on our existing work to improve transparency in the aged-care sector and fosters community confidence that the care they receive is cost effective and sustainable. Transferring functions performed by the Aged Care Pricing Commissioner to the pricing authority will further streamline administration and enhance industry confidence.

Collectively, these amendments form the second step in the government's five-year reform agenda through the five reform pillars: home care, residential aged-care services and sustainability, residential aged-care quality and safety, workforce and governance.

In particular, I want to thank all of those who have been involved in these monumental reforms, in particular beginning with the Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care Services, Minister Colbeck; and his staff, led by Mel Clode, who has done such work in such difficult times for her personally. I thank my own staff. Wendy Black has been an extraordinary pillar of strength in relation to this, as has Jane Kilmartin. I thank those within the department, led by Michael Lye and his team. They have done an extraordinary amount of work. And I thank all of those in the sector and all of the advocates for our senior Australians. This is landmark reform. This is reform which will save lives, protect lives and improve lives.

Ultimately, the health, safety and wellbeing of senior Australians is of the utmost importance to the government, and is driving our plan for generational change of the aged-care system. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

### **Social Security Legislation Amendment (Remote Engagement Program) Bill 2021**

#### **First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Wyatt**.

Bill read a first time.

#### **Second Reading**

**Mr WYATT** (Hasluck—Minister for Indigenous Australians) (10:28): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The government is reforming remote employment services, and the reforms will be co-designed and piloted in partnership with a number of remote communities ahead of implementing the new program.

The Social Security Legislation Amendment (Remote Engagement Program) Bill 2021 creates a new supplementary payment for jobseekers in remote engagement program pilot communities who volunteer to participate in a placement that is like having a job. The placements will build participants' skills in roles that will deliver goods or services to the benefit of local communities and provide a pathway for jobseekers to find a job. The new payment will be one aspect that communities can trial alongside other approaches to training, skills development and non-vocational support as part of the co-design of the new remote employment program.

Over many decades, governments have tried different approaches to delivering employment services in remote Australia. We have learned that what works in our cities and more densely populated regions may not work in remote areas. We have also learned that we have to continuously adapt and evolve to better meet new and existing challenges.

There is more to be done to continue to develop an approach that empowers the people, many of them Indigenous people, living in our remote communities to develop their skills and engage in economic opportunities in a way that is both tailored to their specific needs and beneficial to their communities.

This bill supports collaboration with communities to develop an appropriately flexible program that will build the skills and vocational capabilities of people in remote communities. Many of the more detailed aspects of the approach will be set out in legislative instruments and policy guidance, allowing the flexibility to adjust as lessons are learnt and communities' ideas change over the course of the pilots.

Achieving sustainable change in remote communities can only be done by working together, including by listening to Indigenous experience and expertise to develop a new approach. Working in partnership to pilot innovative approaches, learn and review, and develop the new program will be key to our future shared success.

Rewarding and sustainable employment opportunities are transformational for individuals, families and communities. Jobs contribute to financial and economic security and to self-determination and wellbeing.

Australians living in remote communities face complex employment challenges, different from those experienced in regional and urban areas. Remote areas cover 75 per cent of the Australian landmass. However, there are fewer jobs available in remote areas, with less than two per cent of actively trading businesses located there.

The measures in this bill recognise the lack of employment opportunities that people, including Indigenous Australians, face in some of the most remote parts of Australia. The opportunities and circumstances in remote Australia are unique and different from urban areas, and this will continue to be the case. We've heard what communities and stakeholders have said about current and previous remote employment services. We know that remote communities want changes so that future employment services better match place based economic circumstances and labour market opportunities.

This bill supports the reforms to the government's suite of employment services and programs to ensure they remain fit for purpose, make the most of technological advances and support Australia's economic recovery from COVID-19.

These reforms include the government's 2021-22 budget announcement to pilot a new remote engagement program to trial approaches in advance of replacing the Community Development Program (CDP) in 2023. Initially, we estimate that around 200 eligible jobseekers across the pilot sites will volunteer to participate in placements in work-like roles across their community and receive the payment.

We want to collaborate with stakeholders to develop a new remote engagement program that will better enable jobseekers to contribute to the goods and services that will strengthen the economic, social and cultural life of communities and build in-demand skills and, at the same time, create a pathway for these jobseekers to build skills to find local jobs.

When implemented, the new program will contribute to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which includes targets to close the gap on employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The new payment is one possible design element of the new program we would like to co-design with communities as part of the pilots. We will also work with communities during the pilot phase to explore:

- how to provide better support to jobseekers who have the skills and experience to work, but are having difficulty finding work;
- vocational training options for jobseekers that will lead to real jobs in their communities;
- how to provide the right support, at the right time, to jobseekers with acute or complex needs; and
- the best ways to engage with and support jobseekers to meet their mutual obligation requirements.

This bill makes changes to the Social Security Act 1991 and the Social Security (Administration) Act 1999 to create a new supplementary payment that will be paid at a fixed rate between \$100 and \$190 per fortnight. The new payment will be paid in addition to an eligible jobseeker's primary income-support payment and other supplements. The new payment will not be subject to the income test.

This bill proposes that an eligible jobseeker's income support plus the new supplementary payment will be approximately equivalent to the minimum wage for the hours participating in work-like activities. Eligible jobseekers will voluntarily participate in a role in government services or community organisations for between 15 and 18 hours per week building important skills and experience. The payment will be designed not to discourage people from taking up paid employment opportunities. The pilots provide an opportunity to test the level of incentives.

The bill defines an eligible jobseeker as someone receiving a qualifying income support payment, who receives employment services from a remote engagement program service provider and who has agreed to participate and is participating in an eligible placement, with a host organisation, for at least 15 hours per week.

Eligible jobseekers will be considered to be fully meeting all their mutual obligation requirements by participating in the scheme. Eligible jobseekers can voluntarily choose to leave the placement at any time.

To give effect to this commitment of working in partnership, this bill proposes further detail about qualification criteria and the rate of the payment be set out in legislative instruments. These legislative instruments will be informed by the outcomes of a co-design process with communities in the pilot sites. We will take the time to



work together and listen to communities in the pilot sites about what they think could work in relation to the amount of payment to be provided, the hours of engagement to be undertaken in return and what eligible jobseekers are required to do to continue to receive the payment. This approach will also enable adjustments during the pilots as lessons are learned.

This bill provides that the payment will not be payable after 30 June 2024.

While the bill will have no impact on arrangements for current CDP participants outside the pilot sites, learnings from the pilots will inform the design of the new program.

The bill also proposes amendments to repeal or omit provisions of the Social Security Act 1991 and the Social Security (Administration) Act 1999 relating to the former Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) Scheme. Removing these obsolete provisions will assist with modernising and streamlining the social security legislation.

It is important that we take this opportunity to work with Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in remote communities. Sustainable change can only be done by working together, including by listening to Indigenous experience and expertise to develop a new approach. An approach that empowers individuals to gain skills and find a job. And an approach that enhances employment pathways for jobseekers in remote Australia to realise aspirations. For themselves. For their families. And for their communities.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

## MOTIONS

### ANZUS Treaty: 70th Anniversary

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That the House:

- (1) notes that today marks the 70th anniversary of the alliance between Australia and the United States of America under the ANZUS Treaty;
- (2) reaffirms the commitment of Australia to that alliance, recognising its fundamental importance to our nation's security, sovereignty and prosperity, and to meeting the opportunities and challenges of our time;
- (3) acknowledges that the alliance has underpinned peace, stability and freedom in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond, and that American leadership remains indispensable to the global rules-based order;
- (4) acknowledges that next week marks the 20th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks, in response to which the ANZUS Treaty was invoked;
- (5) places on record its profound gratitude to the servicemen and women of both our nations who have served together over more than a century; and
- (6) acknowledges that the enduring friendship between our nations is underpinned by shared liberal democratic values and principles, and these have been embraced by our peoples across generations.

**Mr MARLES** (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10:38): [by video link] In truth, independent Australia, the modern nation that we are today, had from its very beginnings a deep connection with the history of the United States. Australia truly became independent in 1942, after the attack on Pearl Harbour in December of 1941 and the fall of Singapore in February of 1942. These events led the Curtin government to enact the Statute of Westminster Adoption Act 1942, which severed our ties with the United Kingdom. So much of our nation began then—our federal relations, the direction of our economy but also our foreign policy, the foundation of which was laid in Curtin's famous declaration on 26 December in 1941, when, without inhibition, he made clear that Australia looked to America. A decade later, under the Menzies government in Australia, the Holland government in New Zealand and the Truman administration in the United States, the ANZUS treaty was signed on 1 September in 1951 in San Francisco.

This treaty underpins the most important relationships that Australia has, with our sibling New Zealand and with our security partner the United States. Article IV of the treaty provides that if any of the treaty parties are attacked, then the others will come to their defence. It's been invoked once in the last 70 years after the September 11 attacks on the United States in 2001. And it was only last week, with melancholy, that we noted the tragic events in Afghanistan and the 20-year participation with the United States that Australia has had in that country.

From the point of view of Australia and New Zealand, one of the ideas behind the ANZUS Treaty was to focus American policy on East Asia, and in the last 70 years our part of the world has seen quite remarkable change—the growth of great economies, Korea, Japan and of course China. We have seen an amazing proliferation of technology. We've seen countries in the region be on the very front line of climate change—the coral atoll nations of the Pacific. And, with the rise of the economies, we've also seen a rise in militaries—a militarisation of the East

Asian time zone, which is on an enormous scale and which is very profound. It means that the strategic circumstances that we face today are more complex than at any point since the end of the Second World War, and, as confusing, as complex and as changing as this landscape is, one fact remains crystal clear: the centrality and the importance of our alliance with the United States has never been more significant.

With the United States we have partnered in the constructs of the economic architecture of the world in the region, through the establishment of the WTO, through APEC and through the beginnings of the negotiation of the TPP, but with the American withdrawal from the TPP the economic rules of the road in East Asia, through RCEP and through the evolution of the TPP, are now being written without an American participation. We really must, through the alliance, continue to advocate for the United States to develop an economic strategic agenda for East Asia.

We've had a deep scientific relationship with the United States, which is best characterised by our cooperation in space and, indeed, there is a formal agreement between the CSIRO and NASA, which is now in its 62nd year, which has seen Australia participate in rescues in space, in landings on the moon and in the tracking of the furthest human objects from the Earth, *Voyager 1* and *Voyager 2*, from the Tidbinbilla base of NASA's Deep Space Network. But it's critically important that we continue to evolve our scientific and technological engagement with the United States, particularly in respect of cyber and artificial intelligence.

It is so welcome to see the United States return to a position of global leadership in respect of climate change, and now it is essential that Australia stands side by side with America in dealing with this global challenge, both in terms of dealing with our own emissions but also in helping to tell the story of the Pacific Island countries which are on the front line of climate change. Of course, it's critically important that we continue to evolve our very special defence relationship with the United States. Last year's defence strategic review made the observation that the 10-year warning that we have always assumed of a major conventional attack on Australia is no longer a sound basis for defence planning. This is a seminal moment in our strategic policy history, but it demands action from the government in terms of responding to that. It obviously raises challenges about our procurements. It raises challenges in respect of our force posture, which is why the announcement today of the Leader of the Opposition of a defence force posture review under a future Labor government is so important, and, in that, we will continue to look to the United States to help us navigate our way through these challenges.

At the end of the day the ANZUS Treaty has been so enduring because we have shared values between our three countries—the rule of law at home, a belief in government of the people by the people for the people, and because of shared aspirations on the global stage. The very first paragraph of the ANZUS Treaty invokes the UN charter, which itself says:

WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED

... ..

to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and

to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained ...

This is the great call to establish a global rules based order, and we remain hand in hand under the banner of the ANZUS Treaty, this being a clear and abiding goal of all three nations.

Debate adjourned.

## BILLS

### Biosecurity Amendment (Enhanced Risk Management) Bill 2021

#### First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Robert**, for **Mr Joyce**.

Bill read a first time.

#### Second Reading

**Mr ROBERT** (Fadden—Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business) (10:46): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested Australia's human biosecurity systems in an unprecedented way. It has highlighted the rate at which a biosecurity threat can spread between countries and around the world. The spread of exotic pests and diseases is putting unprecedented pressure on our border, and our biosecurity system must continue to evolve to keep pace with these new threats.

Through this pandemic, international maritime vessels have emerged as a significant risk pathway for biosecurity threats to enter Australia. This bill will amend the Biosecurity Act to provide an improved framework to assess and manage incoming vessels and aircraft where infectious disease risks have been identified on board. These amendments are consistent with recommendations made by the Inspector-General of Biosecurity in his review of the *Ruby Princess* cruise ship incident, which the minister commissioned.

The bill will expand pre-arrival reporting requirements, ensuring that accurate and up-to-date information is available to assess the human health risk of arriving vessels and aircraft. It will also expand and strengthen penalties for operators and persons in charge of aircraft and vessels who do not comply with pratique requirements.

It will also provide a mechanism to manage groups of people, such as on board a cruise ship, where passengers or crew display signs or symptoms of a listed human disease, or have been exposed to such a disease. In these circumstances, human biosecurity officers will be able to effectively assess and manage the risks of that disease spreading or entering Australia.

We all look forward to the safe reopening of Australia's borders and this bill will play an important part in supporting this by reducing the potential for the entry, emergence, establishment and spread of listed human diseases while facilitating a critical step towards a national economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Currently, Australia is one of the few countries in the world that is free of serious pests and diseases. This means our current biosecurity system is serving our country well. It has been instrumental in successfully protecting our \$51 billion agricultural export industries, our unique environment, our native flora and fauna, and our way of life.

However, Australia's biosecurity system is facing growing regional and global threats such as African swine fever and hitchhiker pests like khapra beetle and the brown marmorated stink bug. Higher mail and cargo volumes and complex supply chains, together with the anticipated return to growing international passenger arrivals, increase the opportunities for pests and diseases to enter Australia. The constantly evolving biosecurity environment and risk profile have heightened the need for enhanced risk management to respond effectively to emerging biosecurity risks and future challenges.

This bill will enhance the ability of the Biosecurity Act to meet these challenges. It will increase the transparency and efficiency of administrative processes in the Biosecurity Act, such as those involved in conducting a risk assessment for the purposes of making certain determinations or granting an import permit. The bill will also introduce into the Biosecurity Act a framework to provide legislative authority to the agriculture and health ministers to make, vary and administer arrangements or grants for expenditure in relation to biosecurity related programs and activities such as the National Citrus Canker Eradication program, which successfully eradicated the citrus canker outbreak in the Northern Territory and saved Australia's \$800 million citrus industry.

The bill will also amend the Biosecurity Act to increase certain key civil and criminal pecuniary penalty provisions to promote deterrence and enable a proportionate response, reflecting the seriousness of the contravention of these provisions and the consequences that may result from non-compliance.

The increased civil penalties introduced by this bill will serve as a significant deterrent to anybody considering undermining our biosecurity laws and the criminal penalties will allow a proportionate and appropriate punishment for contraventions of the act.

This government is committed to continuous improvement across our world-leading biosecurity system. That is why this government announced funding of over \$400 million for biosecurity in the 2021-22 budget. The Biosecurity Act is the central pillar of our defence against current and emerging biosecurity threats, and this bill will enhance our biosecurity framework by improving the efficiency and administration of the act.

This bill ensures continued protection for agriculture, tourism and other industries; plant and animal health; the environment; and our market access while providing a stronger biosecurity risk management framework and contributing to a safe reopening of Australia's international borders.

I commend the bill to the House

Debate adjourned.

### **Customs Amendment (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement Implementation) Bill 2021**

#### **First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Robert**, for **Mr Tehan**.

Bill read a first time.

### Second Reading

**Mr ROBERT** (Fadden—Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business) (10:52): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Customs Amendment (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement Implementation) Bill 2021 amends the Customs Act 1901 to implement the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement—RCEP.

Once it comes into force for all 15 signatories, RCEP will be the world's largest free trade agreement, bringing together nine of Australia's top 15 trading partners—that together account for nearly 60 per cent of our trade and about two-thirds of our exports—into a single economic framework.

The signing of RCEP in November 2020 by Australia, the 10 ASEAN member states, China, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea signalled a commitment to opening up new trade and investment opportunities and support for rules-based trading arrangements. These signals are especially important in the face of the challenges of COVID-19 and emerging global trade tensions.

The negotiation of RCEP was driven by the 10 ASEAN nations, which collectively constitute Australia's second-largest two-way trading partner. Having considered a number of options for expanding opportunities for regional trade, ASEAN chose to pursue a more inclusive approach that would extend to all of ASEAN's then FTA partners, including Australia.

Australian participation in RCEP negotiations has allowed us to influence the rules incorporated in RCEP.

The government will continue to work with ASEAN and other RCEP signatory states to shape the implementation and future direction of RCEP so that it contributes to the development of open, transparent approaches to regional trade and investment; and bolsters ASEAN's role in the region.

Active Australian participation in RCEP will be needed to maximise our influence, requiring a substantial investment on the part of the government.

RCEP delivers a range of improvements over our existing FTAs with RCEP partners—especially in areas where our partners' economies have the greatest growth potential, such as services, investment and digital trade.

RCEP will help stimulate growth, strengthen economic integration, and build business confidence in our region. RCEP signatory states account for around 30 per cent of the world's population and GDP. No other free trade agreement brings together the collective economic weight of the ASEAN nations and the major economies in North Asia. RCEP also provides for additional economies to join RCEP in the future—building the significance of RCEP over time.

RCEP will lock in market access and address non-tariff barriers, creating significant new trade and investment opportunities for Australia across the Indo-Pacific. It will also establish rules that provide greater certainty and improve the business environment across the region.

RCEP's regional rules of origin will support access to regional value chains, thus increasing opportunities for Australian business. Regional cumulation rules will facilitate inputs from the most efficient and cost-effective regional source, while supporting access to preferential tariff treatment. Goods made in another RCEP party from Australian exports—for example, iron ore, wheat, barley, milk powder, copper, nickel and wool—would benefit from tariff preferences under RCEP when processed in a second RCEP party and exported to a third.

RCEP will reduce FTA rules of origin compliance burdens, meaning that Australian businesses trading with multiple RCEP parties will only need to comply with one set of rules and procedures. RCEP will also provide businesses with greater choice in how they meet origin documentation requirements.

This bill will insert into the Customs Act the rules of origin and document retention requirements called for by RCEP. The bill outlines when imported goods may be considered to have originating status and be eligible for preferential tariff treatment.

This bill is complemented by the Customs Tariff Amendment (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement Implementation) Bill 2021, which will amend the Customs Tariff Act 1995.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

## **Customs Tariff Amendment (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement Implementation) Bill 2021**

### **First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by **Mr Robert**.

Bill read a first time.

### **Second Reading**

**Mr ROBERT** (Fadden—Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business) (10:57): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Customs Tariff Amendment (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement Implementation) Bill 2021 will amend the Customs Tariff Act 1995 (the Customs Tariff Act) to implement Australia's import tariff commitments under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP).

The bill will insert a new schedule of duty rates into the Customs Tariff Act. Schedule 14 will contain the preferential rates of customs duty for imported goods that satisfy the rules of origin as agreed by Australia and other RCEP signatory countries. Australia has committed to eliminating the duty rate for most originating goods to 'free' over the years following the entry into force of RCEP. Certain goods, such as excise equivalent goods, will retain a rate of customs duty other than 'free'. Excise equivalent goods, which are certain fuel, alcohol, tobacco and petroleum products, that are considered originating under the agreement will continue to receive the same treatment as domestically produced equivalents.

The bill also amends certain tariff concessions to maintain their scope.

The bill complements the Customs Amendment (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement Implementation) Bill 2021, which will amend the Customs Act 1901.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

## **COMMITTEES**

### **Public Works Committee**

#### **Approval of Work**

**Mr ROBERT** (Fadden—Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business) (10:59): On behalf of the Assistant Minister to the Minister for the Public Service, I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: Christmas Island Stormwater, Landslide and Rockfall Mitigation Works Project.

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications is proposing to undertake infrastructure work to manage the risks of stormwater flooding, landslide and rockfall at key locations on Christmas Island. The proposed work includes upgrades to the stormwater overland flow and in-ground network arrangements at Drumsite as well as landslide and rockfall defence mitigation and protection measure at Flying Fish Cove. These proposed works are necessary to protect the community and visitors living or working on Christmas Island and to ensure the government meets its obligations to provide safe workplaces. The estimated costs of the works is \$28.9 million, excluding GST. The project was referred to the Public Works Committee on 12 May 2021. The committee has recommended the House of Representatives resolve, pursuant to section 18(7) of the Public Work Committee Act 1969, that it is expedient to carry out the project. Subject to parliamentary approval, construction activities are expected to commence in January 2022, with completion expected by mid-2023. On behalf of the government, I thank the committee for undertaking a timely inquiry and I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

#### **Approval of Work**

**Mr PITT** (Hinkler—Minister for Resources and Water) (11:01): On behalf of the Assistant Minister to the Minister for the Public Service, I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Construction of National Collections Building, Black Mountain Science and Innovation Park, ACT.

The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation is proposing to construct a new national collections building as well as minor alterations to the existing herbarium building at its Black Mountain Science and Innovation Park site in Canberra. The works will enable CSIRO to develop a collections precinct that will accommodate the 13 million specimens comprising Australia's national research collections. These collections represent significant research infrastructure and underpin research in a range of fields, including agriculture, biosecurity, biodiversity and climate change. The works will provide fit-for-purpose specimen storage vaults, research laboratories, curation facilities and office workspace. The estimated cost of the works is \$70 million, excluding GST. The project was referred to the Public Works Committee on 3 June 2021. The committee has recommended that the House of Representatives resolve, pursuant to section 18(7) of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, that it is expedient to carry out the project. Subject to parliamentary approval, construction activity is expected to commence in January 2022, with completion expected in August 2023. On behalf the government, I'd like to thank the committee for undertaking the timely inquiry. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

### Treaties Committee

#### Report

**Mr TIM WILSON** (Goldstein) (11:03): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, I present the committee's report entitled *Report 197: OCCAR managed programmes participation agreement; Minamata Convention on Mercury—report, August 2021*.

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

**Mr TIM WILSON:** I ask leave of the House for the chair of the committee to make a short statement in connection with the report.

Leave granted.

**Mr SHARMA** (Wentworth) (11:04): [by video link] by leave—I wish to make a statement on the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties report 197, which reviews two major treaty actions: the framework agreement between the government of Australia and the Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation for participation by Australia in OCCAR managed programs and the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

I'll address first the Minamata Convention on Mercury, which is quite an important environmental treaty. It's a global response to a chemical of global concern. By some accounts, as much as 9,000 tonnes of mercury are released around the world each year, and mercury, as many would know, is a toxic pollutant with the capacity for long-range atmospheric transport. It bioaccumulates in our ecosystems and it has significant effects on human health and the environment. There is no known safe exposure level for mercury in humans, and mercury, like other fundamental elements, can never be destroyed.

The Minamata Convention of Mercury is named after the Japanese city of Minamata, where the industrial release of methylmercury from a factory in the 1950s caused what was known as the Minamata disease epidemic—a debilitating and destructive disease which caused countless harms to newborn babies, infants and adults who consumed seafood which was rendered toxic by this mercury poisoning.

There are many good reasons for Australia to ratify this treaty. There is a need for global action to better control mercury and to control its interaction with us as human beings. But it's also important for Australia to be a responsible global citizen and demonstrate leadership in this region. Ratification of this treaty would provide certainty for and decrease the regulatory burden on Australian business and industry, which still make some limited use of mercury for industrial and other processes. Australia's ratification of this treaty would also allow us to participate in regulation-making and in shaping future decision-making under the convention. It is our understanding that Australia is already substantively in compliance with the convention, with ratification having negligible regulatory or financial impacts because Australia has existing policy and legislative frameworks in place which are robust and which manage protect the community from toxic chemicals such as mercury.

Australia has been slow to ratify this convention. It was signed initially in 2013 and entered into force in 2017. As of July this year it has already been ratified by 132 countries, or some two-thirds of the UN's membership. That's why the committee supports the convention and recommends that binding treaty action be taken. One particular recommendation the committee has made, though, is that the government does not seek an exemption to allow the continued importation of high-pressure mercury vapour lamps into Australia beyond the date of ratification. The committee heard from industry and others that such an exemption was no longer necessary and that industry—particularly the lighting industry and those which administer and install streetlighting, local councils and local government—have already made the transition away from HPMV lamps. They already have

plans in place to ensure that they transition more quickly to LED lighting and other elements which are now cheaper and which, of course, are much more environmentally friendly—and, incidentally, have lower emissions. For that reason, seeking an exemption is no longer necessary for Australia and it would also put us in odd company, alongside less-developed countries with much poorer environmental stewardship credentials such as China, Iran, Madagascar and Ghana. The committee noted that no other OECD or developed country has sought an exemption of the sort that Australia is proposing. So in this regard, the committee recommends ratification of this treaty and it also recommends that the government reassess this need to seek an exemption to allow for the continued importation of HPMV lamps into Australia.

The second item addressed by this report is the OCCAR managed programs participation agreement. The evidence on this one was quite clear from the defence department and others, that allowing Australia to join OCCAR would promote cooperation in defence procurement and sustainment in line with Australian interests and with little detriment—in fact no detriment—to our own national security needs. It would allow Australian defence industries in particular a better prospect of participating in global defence materiel supply chains, which is obviously critical if Australia is to develop and sustain a sovereign defence capability. So, in this regard, the committee does recommend that the government ratify this treaty and that it enter into force as soon as possible.

*Report 197* also touches upon three other minor committee actions—an amendment to the International Tropical Timber Agreement and two amendments to appendix III of CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. On behalf of the committee, I commend this report to the House.

**Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (11:10):** I move:

That the House take note of the report.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace):** The debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

#### **Reference to Federation Chamber**

**Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (11:10):** I move:

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

Question agreed to.

#### **Treaties Committee**

##### **Report**

**Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (11:10):** I understand this administrative matter was supposed to be dealt with the other day but was not. I seek leave to move a motion to take note of the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties presented on 31 August 2021, *Report 196: Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement*.

Leave granted.

**Mr TIM WILSON:** I move:

That the House take note of the report.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace):** The debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

#### **Reference to Federation Chamber**

**Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (11:12):** by leave—I move:

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

Question agreed to.

#### **BILLS**

##### **National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Bill 2021**

##### **Second Reading**

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (11:12):** I rise to speak on the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Bill 2021. It's been almost a decade since the Gillard Labor government announced the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Survivors waited a long time for that royal

commission, and they're waiting a long time for redress. It's been a painful and long journey for so many. These delays are only compounding the trauma. These delays re-traumatise the victims.

The royal commission estimated that 60,000 survivors would be eligible for redress. As of 26 March 2021 the scheme had received 10,005 applications and finalised 5,266 applications, including 5,218 payments. It's processing 3,627 applications, and 765 applications are on hold. Compare that to the 60,000 survivors estimated by the royal commission, and it does indicate that the slow rate of applications points to difficulties for survivors navigating the scheme. Their sense is that it is inadequate and that redress is hard to find.

Survivors have spoken of the difficulty of preparing an application. The Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme heard that for one survivor it took 17 months to finalise their application. A Senate estimates hearing last year revealed that the average processing time was 12 to 13 months. That's just not good enough for survivors of institutional child sex abuse. The second-anniversary review also identified a number of issues inhibiting the operation of the scheme and the delivery of redress to survivors, as well as the difficulties faced by First Nations people, people from culturally or linguistically diverse background and people with a disability. The quality, scope and geographic spread of support services, including financial counselling, leave much to be wanted. We've heard of major privacy breaches, in which the details of survivors' applications have been sent to the wrong individuals, and in some instances, those details have been sent to the institutions themselves. The second-anniversary review identified IT systems and lack of staff as aspects of the scheme that need vast improvement. Too many are waiting—many are ill, many are dying and many have missed out altogether.

It wasn't meant to be this way. The scheme that was ultimately rolled out by the government didn't fully realise the recommendations of the royal commission. It didn't live up to the hard work that that royal commission had done. It is vital that Australia gets right the promise of redress for survivors, and it's clear this scheme isn't delivering the way it was supposed to. In February, Labor moved a comprehensive suite of amendments to overhaul the scheme and get it back on track, to end the delays and ensure survivors don't miss out. The government refused these on the basis that the second-anniversary review was yet to report. Now that report has been completed—months ago.

It is over three years since the commencement of the scheme, and the government has finally presented some modest amendments to the parliament. We won't stand in the way of these amendments, but they fall well short of what survivors have asked and what Labor has proposed. I should say that, in not wanting to hold up the passage of this bill, Labor won't be moving detailed amendments to the bill, but one could easily imagine that a government that was better at living up to what the royal commission demanded would be moving these amendments itself. I call on the government to give a hard thought to that question. During the course of this debate they have an opportunity to look at what the royal commission has asked for and what survivors have demanded, come back at the end of the debate and move their own detailed amendments.

We saw that process play out last night with another bill, a bill relating to parental leave access for people who are the victims of family or domestic violence. Labor had flagged detailed amendments to that bill, but by the end of the debate, the government had done the right thing. They brought forward their own detailed amendments and we withdrew ours. In this case, we don't want to hold up these modest changes, but we do want the government to do better, survivors want the government to do better, the royal commission wants the government to do better and the Australian people want the government to do better.

This process should ensure that survivors don't miss out. We're still seeing institutions not joining, institutions shielding their assets and institutions becoming defunct, and while we welcome the government's power to revoke the charity status of such institutions and the government's pledge to name and shame, that measure doesn't go far enough. I say this as the shadow assistant minister for charities, well aware of the implications on charities of withholding their charitable status. It should only be done under very exceptional circumstances, but an institution failing to sign up to the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse for survivors is such an exceptional circumstance.

The government needs to be seeking financial contributions from institutions who don't sign up, through a levy or the tax system, so that redress can be paid to survivors. Where institutions are genuinely unable to pay or where institutions are defunct, the government needs to act as a funder of last resort. We know the government are considering this, but we need from them an ironclad guarantee that the government will act as the funder of last resort. We need that so as to provide certainty for survivors. Labor has called for the introduction of an early payment scheme to ensure the elderly or unwell don't miss out on redress. We're glad that the government has finally come to the table on this through the introduction of this bill. We been calling for this for years, and it should have happened by now. By definition, it would have helped those who have died while awaiting redress. It would have helped those who have become so ill and frail that they are limited in what they can do with any



payment. It's especially sad how long this has taken, because it just brings payment forward. It doesn't involve paying more; it just involves timely payment.

There is an issue of lifting the cap and ending deductions, where survivors have criticised the scheme for caps on payments, for the indexation of prior payments and for the deduction of unrelated prior payments, including stolen generation payments. Labor is concerned this is pushing survivors to give up on the scheme or leading them to seek justice outside the scheme. When they do that, that means civil claims, which tend to be more difficult, costlier and lengthier. These are the very things the scheme was designed to avoid.

Currently some survivors are receiving payments of \$5,000 or less. This bill will reduce the time frame over which prior payments are indexed before being deducted from a redress payment. It will do this by ceasing indexation when an application for redress is made and not at the time when the application is finalised. Labor believes that isn't good enough. Labor is again calling for the indexation of prior payments to cease completely. We are calling for the government to ensure that unrelated payments are not deducted, and this includes payments to stolen generation survivors for non-sexual abuse.

We're again calling on the government to lift the cap on payments from \$150,000 to \$200,000, following the royal commission's recommendation. The government should provide a guarantee that a review of an offer of redress won't lead to that offer being reduced. People shouldn't be scared to be asking for a review. They shouldn't be thinking that it's a roll of the dice. Survivors have been calling for such a change, Labor has been backing such a change, the royal commission recommended such a change, and that is what should be realised. I note that the second anniversary review also recommended the introduction of a minimum payment of \$10,000, even where a prior payment would have otherwise reduced a payment to a lesser amount. We call on the government to respond to this.

This bill also fails to address major shortcomings in the government's arbitrary assessment matrix, which survivors have been calling to be reformed for years. The government's assessment matrix sets low and arbitrary payments for the impact of abuse based on the kind of abuse and not the scale of its impact on a survivor's life. Again, this is another marked deviation by the government from the original recommendations of the royal commission. That's why Labor has called on the minister to remake the redress amendment framework to properly recognise the impact of abuse when calculating redress payments. The term 'penetrative' should be removed, in acknowledgement that trauma is not caused only by penetrative abuse. The government should make the assessment guidelines public so survivors know how decisions are made.

The second anniversary review also called for a change in the internal review process so there is more information for survivors or applicants—a simpler template, as well as the provision of an initial payment that cannot be reduced by the review. That second anniversary review also called for amendment of the standard of proof to 'reasonable likelihood'. As I said before, the whole purpose of this scheme was to end the hurdles, the high barriers, that access to justice can entail when complainants, abuse survivors, are forced to go to civil litigation.

The bill also fails to provide the ongoing psychological support that not only survivors have been calling for but the royal commission originally recommended. We're concerned that in many cases people are being provided with as little as \$1,250 to cover future counselling and psychological care. Survivors will likely need counselling and psychological care from time to time throughout their lives. As such, the system should provide it, and that's why Labor has called for the scheme to provide ongoing lifetime psychological support and counselling.

Often we hear a claim from this government that it cannot make a change to a scheme on its own, that it needs the support of the states and territories. Of course, agreement is needed for certain changes, but so is leadership, so is action from the Commonwealth. If states or territories are holding out on the Commonwealth in making the changes that Labor, the royal commission and survivors have called for, then there's a simple response the government can make: name those states and territories that are holding out, against the will of the royal commission and survivors of institutional child sexual abuse.

The Redress Scheme under this government falls short of the original recommendations of the royal commission. The improvements in this bill fall short of properly getting redress back on track and delivering redress for survivors—redress that is timely, redress that does not re-traumatise, redress that does not leave survivors missing out.

Finally, I would note that the member for Barton wished to be here delivering this speech in the second reading debate on behalf of the opposition but is prevented from doing so by technical issues today, so I'm speaking in her stead on this bill. I moved last night the second reading amendment that's been circulated in my name. Just for clarity, I'll move that again, and, naturally, that second reading amendment will need to be seconded. I move:

That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words: "whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House:

(1) notes that the Government has not committed to implementing all the recommendations of the second anniversary review of the National Redress Scheme; and

(2) calls on the Government to listen to survivors and:

- (a) increase the cap on payments to \$200,000, as recommended by the Royal Commission;
- (b) end the indexation of prior payments;
- (c) fix the assessment matrix and properly recognise the impact of abuse;
- (d) make sure funder of last resort arrangements are in place so survivors do not miss out;
- (e) guarantee that offers of redress will not be reduced on review; and
- (f) provide ongoing counselling and support".

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace):** Is the amendment seconded?

**Mr Stephen Jones:** I second the amendment and reserve my right to speak.

**Ms BELL (Moncrieff) (11:26):** It is with deep sadness and sympathy for all victims of child sexual abuse that I stand in this place and dare to speak of the unspeakable that has been forced upon the innocents of our nation. I put my name forward to speak on this National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Bill 2021 because I want to see child sexual abuse addressed, victims given justice and a safer upbringing for all Australian children. We know that it can take up to 50 years for some to bravely come forward, and many take as long as 30 years to tell their harrowing stories. For some, their very personal and painful truths remain untold and, often, their secrets go with them and their perpetrators to their graves.

I speak today for those victims who have passed, and for those who have found their voice and will find justice in their lifetime through the government's Redress Scheme. I stand also for those victims who have not yet found their voice; for those victims who have not yet seen justice or, indeed, have had justice denied; and for those who have been brave enough to stand before the law, to stand before their perpetrator, and yet have still been denied justice for the gross and callous theft of their childhood by evil, selfish and deranged sexual predators. Often this is because of the time it takes victims to muster the courage to face their perpetrator through the arduous court system.

I stand here for those women and men across our nation who struggle every day to come to terms with how and why their lives were destroyed by adults who were entrusted with protecting their personal safety in childhood. Many of those trusted individuals who failed in that, who abused them, were representing, through their employment, church organisations; they were in the state school system; and they were in charge of the pastoral care of children in many other institutional environments. Many remain in those positions of trust and remain abusers today. All of these institutions are listed on the national redress website, and, for the public's information, those institutions who have not signed up to this scheme are also listed on the website.

We know there are victims who have been and continue to be sexually abused in non-institutional settings—for example, in the home, by a relative or in extracurricular environments. This must stop. It must stop. The harm that is caused to children, and society more broadly, must stop. There is no greater cause of pain than to be abused by someone who is supposed to protect you. How, as a human being, could you ever fully trust again? This affects the ability to create what are considered normal, functioning relationships across lifetimes. I believe that many of the harms that we see in society today, such as domestic violence, mental health problems, violence, anger and rage, can often be attributed to childhood sexual abuse—the damage that it causes and the pain that it inflicts.

The National Redress Scheme was established in 2018 in response to the royal commission. It's a light at the end of a very dark tunnel for victims. It rightly turns the spotlight on to justice and financial support for victims. It can never fix or replace bad memories with good ones, but it can assist with counselling and often improve the poor health of many survivors. This government is focused on delivering outcomes for victims of child sexual abuse, and that is a great relief for so many across our nation who have just cause to seek redress.

The National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Bill 2021 introduces the first tranche of legislative amendments to the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018 as part of the initial response to the final report of the second year review of the National Redress Scheme, undertaken by Ms Robyn Kruk AO. The bill gives effect to several key recommendations from the second year review. This initial action reflects measures that are relatively straightforward to implement and have agreement from states and territories to ensure the scheme is rightly more survivor-focused. The review makes 38 recommendations to increase access to redress, to improve the scheme's operation and ultimately to make it easier for victims of these abhorrent crimes to obtain redress. In undertaking the review, Ms Kruk consulted with key

stakeholders, including survivors, advocacy groups, support services, institutions and the Commonwealth, state and territory governments. The government is prioritising initial action on 25 of the 38 review recommendations, in full or in part, and is investing over \$80 million over four years in the 2021-22 budget to support implementation of these recommendations. This bill will establish a \$10,000 advance payment for applicants who are elderly or terminally ill. Remember that I outlined earlier that many victims take up to 50 years to come forward, and therefore many are in their sunset years or sadly in ill health by the time they come to a redress process. This measure assists them to move forward with their lives.

Technically, the bill changes the date for which indexation of a prior payment is calculated to be when a survivor submits an application to the scheme, rather than when their application is determined. The bill enables flexibility to extend the period during which an applicant can accept their redress offer and allows the period for seeking a review to be extended in order to be consistent with the acceptance period. It removes the requirement for a statutory declaration in the application form. It introduces the ability for the scheme operator to make redress payments in installments, giving survivors choice and control over how they receive their payment. The government is committed to the continuous improvement of the scheme and recognises that people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse have waited too long. I congratulate the Prime Minister and the Minister for Families and Social Services, Senator Ruston, for their work to improve outcomes for survivors.

I conclude my remarks by again condemning those who perpetrated these crimes against defenceless children and abused their positions of trust in what can only be described as a national shame. I send love and light to you, the innocent children—now adults—who are struggling to come to terms with the heavy burden and toll of the sexual abuse you endured that has impacted you and your families and your relationships for the rest of your lives. I say to you that this is your way forward. I'm proud to stand as a member of this government, which continues to improve this scheme for Australian children. I encourage you to apply to the National Redress Scheme for your own benefit, your compensation and your healing journey. If you experienced sexual abuse when you were a child under 18, the abuse happened before 1 July 2018, an institution was responsible for bringing you into contact with the person who abused you, you were born before 30 June 2010, at the time you applied you were an Australian citizen or permanent resident and the institution you attended has joined the National Redress Scheme, then you may be eligible for redress. You can call 1800737377 or you can go to [nationalredress.gov.au](http://nationalredress.gov.au) to apply.

**Ms THWAITES (Jagajaga) (11:35):** [by video link] Child sex abuse survivors deserve better from the Morrison government. This bill goes some way to improving the National Redress Scheme, but it is in no way enough. It is almost a decade since the announcement of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Survivors are getting older, many are still waiting for redress and some are tragically dying and missing out altogether.

The royal commission estimated 60,000 survivors would be eligible for redress. As at 26 March this year the scheme had received just over 10,000 applications and finalised 5,266, including 5,218 payments. It's processing 3,622 applications, and 755 applications are on hold. These statistics show that there is a massive gap between those estimated to be eligible and those who have so far received a payment. The slow rates of both payments and applications indicate that the scheme is difficult to navigate, inadequate in its current form and hard for survivors to find. Survivors have spoken of the difficulty of preparing an application, and in a Senate estimates hearing last year we heard that the average processing time for claims is between 12 and 13 months. These difficulties are of course even harder for First Nations people, for people from CALD backgrounds and for people with disability.

While it's positive that this bill is coming forward and making some improvements to the scheme, and so this bill shouldn't be held up, we can't pretend that it will make the changes that the National Redress Scheme needs. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse uncovered some of the worst abuses and the worst failings of government and institutions in our nation's history. For too long we looked the other way. We allowed the cover-ups. For too long we allowed power imbalances to mean that children were abused and then silenced. The consequences for those children, some of whom did not get to grow into being adults, have been horrific. Consequences for their families and for their communities have been horrific. So, in the wake of the landmark royal commission, it would seem urgent that we do all we can to make what reparations we can. Of course we can never fully undo the hurt and the damage that came from this massive abuse of trust. But we can make it so much easier for victims to get the redress that they deserve. That means that the Morrison government should stop dragging its feet and urgently and comprehensively address the major challenges that still exist within the National Redress Scheme.

The scheme that was ultimately rolled out by the government did not fully realise the recommendations of the royal commission. Labor proposed amendments to the scheme in February to align with the royal commission's recommendations, but the government voted them down. Survivors have been clear from the outset. Since the royal commission they have highlighted the following: they are missing out on redress; there's an ongoing lack of

survivor trauma focus and ongoing counselling and support; and survivors are seeing their payments chipped away by a low cap, indexation of prior payments as well as an arbitrary assessment framework. The government's amendments to the scheme fall short of what survivors have asked for and what Labor has proposed. The whole point of the royal commission was to listen to survivors, and yet the Morrison government is still not hearing them.

The National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Bill 2021 seeks to establish an advance payment scheme for older, ill or vulnerable applicants. The advance payment scheme will provide \$10,000 to older, terminally ill or vulnerable people. The advance payment will be deducted from a person's final redress payment. Labor have been calling for an advance payment scheme for some time now, and we do support the change. People have waited too long for the support that they should have. This bill will also seek to reduce the time frame in which prior payments are indexed before being deducted from a redress payment. Indexation will now cease when an application for redress is made, not at the time a decision on a redress application is finalised. Again, this change is not good enough. There has been an ongoing criticism from survivors, and Labor is calling for the indexation of prior payments to cease completely—as well as ensuring that unrelated payments are not deducted. There's no need for this government to be so mean spirited about this.

This bill will also introduce changes to allow the Department of Social Services to extend the time a person has to accept an offer of redress beyond the current six-month limit. This is significant, as a person can only apply for redress once, and, if an offer is not accepted within the allowed time, it's taken as having been refused. The bill will remove the requirement for applications to include a statutory declaration, as this can be a traumatic experience for survivors. The bill will also allow redress payments to be made in instalments if requested by the applicant. As I said, these are welcome changes, but there is still too much that is unaddressed and that has been unaddressed for far too long.

We know that survivors have asked for so much more and that the second-anniversary review of the scheme recommended more. So we have both the voices of survivors and a comprehensive review saying that what the government is putting forward today is not enough. Further changes must be made, and they must include things such as a face-to-face application process for First Nations, CALD and disability communities; lifelong access to counselling for all survivors; improving the quality, scope and geographic spread of support services, including financial counselling; developing a survivor improvement charter to set expectations around privacy service standards; and reviewing the limit of one application so that changes in circumstances and additional information can be taken into account. This is naming just a few of the things that that review found and that survivors have asked for.

It is too important for us to wait to get this right. As I said earlier, unfortunately some survivors are dying before they get to be part of the redress scheme—before the acknowledgement of the hurt and the neglect that they suffered. I urge the government to do better, urgently, to support survivors.

In talking today, I want to pay tribute to all of the survivors, to their families and to their communities. You should never have experienced what happened to you. I acknowledge all of those who told their stories to the royal commission, and I acknowledge all of those who were not able to. I thank the tireless and fearless advocates, people such as Leonie Sheedy of CLAN, who have worked so hard to push successive governments to do so much better. Those are the people that we here in this place must listen to. Those are the people that the Morrison government must listen to. We all owe these survivors a debt. They were failed by institutions. They were failed by this place. It is on all of us to make sure that the redress, the reparations that they get now, live up to their expectations and live up to what's been recommended in the review of this scheme.

I also want to acknowledge in this speech the work of my colleague the member for Newcastle, who, in her community and in this parliament, has been critical to ensuring survivors are heard and has pushed for them to get the redress scheme that they deserve. It's a pleasure to be a Labor member with her and to know that there are such fierce advocates on the Labor side for victims of child sexual abuse.

It seems like I give speeches in this place, time after time, about missed opportunities by the Morrison government—about things that come half done, too late, without enough support for people who desperately need it. This is another one of those occasions. The Morrison government have missed the opportunity to address major structural issues in the National Redress Scheme. They should implement all of the recommendations of the second-year review of the National Redress Scheme and, most importantly, lift the maximum redress payment to \$200,000. Survivors have been through so much. They need to be able to count on this redress scheme. We must get it right. We must not add to the trauma. We must help the healing.

**Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (11:45):** I rise in support of the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Bill 2021. It forms part of the initial response our government is taking to the *Final report*:

*second year review of the National Redress Scheme*, undertaken by Ms Robyn Kruk AO. At the outset, I want to put on record my sincere thanks to the minister in the other place, Senator Anne Ruston, for bringing this bill before the House and introducing it as the first tranche of amendments to the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018. The measures we are discussing in this bill will ensure the scheme is survivor focused and trauma informed, and, ultimately, it will enable fairer outcomes for survivors and enhance the access of a survivor to redress. The changes in this bill align with findings of the independent review led by Ms Kruk, which heard directly from survivors, advocates and other stakeholders. I thank them all for their engagement in the review process.

Recently, I attended a dedication and memorial commemoration at De La Salle College in Malvern, in my seat of Higgins. It was an incredibly moving service, dedicated to the lives of those who've experienced historical child sexual abuse and recognising forever the harm inflicted upon them. I'd like to thank De La Salle College for acknowledging and leading the way to ensuring victims of institutional child sexual abuse have been heard and respected. At that ceremony, we honoured and remembered those students who were victims of historical sexual abuse during their time at the college. It was incredibly difficult for the victims to be there, and they're incredibly brave souls to be there, but we also need to equally understand that De La Salle College has shown bravery in stepping forward to do the right thing by paying reparations for harms of the past.

As a parent and as a paediatrician, it's appalling to think of children put into a situation where those that they are supposed to trust and respect have that stripped from them. They're essentially having their childhood stripped from them. And to listen to the events at the service was an incredibly touching and moving experience. Recognising the past practices that put these students in harm's way is the first step in the process towards healing, and I commend principal Peter Houlihan and the wider De La Salle College community for their efforts in this regard. The victims have been traumatised, and the National Redress Scheme is one small way to help redress what has been a wrong of the past.

As a federal government, we are responding to these past injustices and want to ensure that the National Redress Scheme meets its goals to provide redress to these survivors of institutional child sexual abuse in a timely and effective way. Approximately \$490 million has been provided to survivors, with more offers being made each day. A total of 10,665 applications have been received as of June, with 5,700 being finalised. The average payment amount is \$84,743 per survivor. Importantly, 500 institutions have so far joined the scheme. As a member of the Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme, I've heard firsthand the harrowing stories from survivors of institutional abuse. I'd like to thank the chair of this committee, Dean Smith, for so sensitively holding the inquiry and providing a space for victims and advocates to safely express their experiences and what they would like to see change with regard to the redress scheme.

As a government, we understand the enduring pain and trauma that survivors have had to experience and know how much more work needs to be done to ensure the success of this scheme. I would like to say that for so many it can be incredibly retraumatising to have to re-experience and talk about these past experiences. We're committed to continual improvement of the scheme to ensure it is survivor focused. This includes naming those organisations which have failed in their obligations to those survivors by not joining the scheme. Our federal minister responsible for this scheme, Minister Anne Ruston, has named these organisations publicly in order to get them onboard. This is the right course of action and highlights her determination to put survivors of abuse first. We've already committed to stripping recalcitrant institutions of their charitable status and denying them eligibility for Commonwealth grant funding until they join the scheme. This is right and proper.

The redress scheme was established in 2018 in response to the royal commission and has fulfilled a promise to survivors seeking redress for the wrongs committed against them historically—a shameful blight on the history of our country. We're committed to redress for survivors and improving the scheme over the 10-year life span of it, as evidenced in this bill and the measures we're introducing to improve it. The bill gives effect to several key recommendations that are straightforward to implement from the second-year review and that have universal agreement from the state and territory governments, so these are changes that will happen very swiftly. I'd also like to thank those governments of all political persuasions for working so well together to see this scheme implemented and continually improved for survivors. The review made 38 recommendations to increase access to redress and to improve the scheme's operation, and the government is prioritising initial action on 25 of these recommendations either in full or in part, and it is, importantly, investing over \$80 million over four years in this most recent budget to support implementation of these recommendations. The government plans to produce a final response to the review in early 2022, following further consultation with stakeholders, institutions, survivors and governments of state and territory denominations before final decisions are made.

There are a number of amendments contained in this bill, and I'd like to point out a couple that I think are incredibly important. The first is the \$10,000 advance payment for applicants who are elderly or terminally ill.

Certainly, in our redress committee, we did hear of those who were finding it difficult at the end of their life to access the redress scheme, so I'm very pleased that through engagement with survivors and stakeholders it's become apparent that this is an important thing to redress. We know that the nature of institutional child sex abuse means that survivors may not come forward to seek redress for some time. I know this, as someone very close to me who grew up in the UK took many, many years to understand that what he had experienced had actually been criminal. He'd been keeping it secret for so many years and it was only at a school reunion, upon returning to the UK, that he found that his teacher had been jailed for 25 years. The shock for that person was enormous. To know that he was carrying an experience that had not been redressed and had not been acknowledged was extraordinary. So it is important that we recognise that these childhood traumas can take decades to come to the surface, and it only seems fair to introduce amendments that make providing advance payment of \$10,000 possible, which will provide applicants with a form of recognition of their abuse early in their application process while they wait for the redress scheme outcome.

Another key change to the bill that was identified is to the way indexation is applied to a survivor's payment. Currently, indexation on a relevant prior payment is calculated from when the prior payment was made until the date a determination on the application is made. This will be changed so that the indexation is calculated up to the point a person submits their application, ensuring applicants are not unfairly impacted by the time it takes for their application to be processed. This processing time is obviously varied for each applicant, so this change will apply to both future and past applicants, acknowledging the need to ensure no survivor is disadvantaged. Importantly, this measure is being covered by the Commonwealth government, meaning no change to institutions' liability. Flexibility will be introduced to the scheme to ensure a survivor can extend the period they have to consider whether or not to accept an offer or seek a review.

Removing the requirement for applications to include a statutory declaration will also make it easier for survivors to apply for redress. This is another key feature of this bill and will ensure survivors will no longer be required to submit a statutory declaration, which can be difficult to obtain for some elderly or vulnerable people. We are in rolling lockdowns in my home state of Victoria at the moment. Moving about and getting this extra documentation is particularly onerous, which many survivors question when they are undertaking this task. This measure is consistent with other social security payments which do not require applicants to complete a stat dec, and brings uniformity. Consequences will still be in place for people who provide false or misleading information. I think this approach is a sensible one.

The other key change is the flexibility of payments, providing survivors the choice of receiving the payment in instalments rather than as a lump sum. We heard in our redress committee hearings that survivors would like to have this change made. This will give survivors control over their management of their finances. Financial autonomy is incredibly important to those who may have had controlling and difficult relationships in their younger and formative years.

I would like to express my gratitude to Ms Kruk and the Ministers Redress Scheme Governance Board, which comprises ministers from states and territories who have carriage of the Redress Scheme, for their support of the scheme. The board have agreed to the changes contained in the bill, and I thank them for their ongoing advocacy to improve the scheme for survivors of institutional child sex abuse.

Lastly, I would like to pay tribute to the survivors. Yours is a hurt that cannot ever fully be redressed. Your childhood has been robbed. I'm deeply sorry. I know everyone in this House is very sorry for those who have suffered at the hands of institutions and perpetrators. I'm very proud of the fact that this government and those in this House have supported the changes to make sure we can go some way towards redressing the wrongs of the past.

I commend this bill to the House.

**Ms CLAYDON** (Newcastle) (11:57): It is always an honour to stand in this parliament and try to give voice to the survivors of child sexual abuse in institutions. I'm therefore very pleased to be able to contribute to this debate today, and I do so in strong support of the amendments moved by the member for Fenner on behalf of the member for Barton. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was a necessary and essential response to one of the darkest and ugliest chapters in our national history. We remain forever grateful to the then Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and a former colleague and friend, the former member for Jagajaga, for their outstanding work in establishing the royal commission and enabling the National Redress Scheme to become a reality.

The royal commission uncovered some of the most horrific abuse of innocent children, often perpetrated by the very people they were entrusted to. That was a gross violation of trust. It was felt deeply in my community of Newcastle; we are not dissimilar to the town of Ballarat, the dreadful epicentre of the institutional abuse that took

place over many decades. Until the Redress Scheme, many survivors had not been able to access any form of justice for what had happened to them. While no amount of financial compensation will ever take away that trauma and abuse, the National Redress Scheme continues to serve as an important step in the healing process and a way for many to secure justice for the harm and utter betrayal that occurred.

Labor welcome the legislation before the House today. We believe that the reforms to the National Redress Scheme are absolutely necessary to start bringing that focus back onto the survivor and their experience of the Redress Scheme. The Redress Scheme must be unswervingly focused on ensuring that every decision is made in the best interests of victims and survivors. It must be trauma informed in its approach and practice. Victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in institutions have consistently told us about their concerns with the National Redress Scheme and its many inadequacies. These are issues that Robyn Kruk AO canvassed in her independent second-year review of the National Redress Scheme. But we need to put on record that that review is a reiteration of the many, many issues that are well known and have been put before this parliament since at least 2019.

There have been three reports handed down to this parliament since the royal commission. Many, as I said, have highlighted that the scheme is not working as it was intended to. I was in this House on 2 April 2019 when the final report, entitled *Getting the National Redress Scheme right: an overdue step towards justice*, was tabled in this parliament. I was here in May 2020 when the *First interim report of the Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme April 2020* was tabled in this parliament. And, again, I was here on 23 June this year when the *Final report of the second year review of the National Redress Scheme* was tabled in this parliament.

Of course, the joint select committee, which I have been deputy chair of in both the former parliament and this current parliament, is right now deliberating additional reforms that are required. We're looking very closely at the issue of the funder of last resort, a matter which I'll come back to, and indeed issues around barriers to participation for First Nations people and CALD communities—people who we know are not currently accessing the scheme in numbers that we would expect or want to see. Labor supports the government's decision to finally take some action here. As I said, three reports down; glad to see some legislation now on the table.

We welcome all the parts of the bill, but I think it's also incumbent on us to acknowledge that many of the changes in this particular bill are what I would regard as the low-hanging fruit. They are relatively non-controversial, easy changes to be made. I'm glad that the governance council has agreed to it, but truly these should have been done some time ago.

The one that Labor is especially pleased to see in this legislation is the adoption of Labor's policy on advance payments. This is something that the Scottish parliament, in fact, led the way on. I give a shout-out to our colleagues in the Scottish parliament for advancing this proposition, which we have warmly embraced and now wish to take up in Australia. This is an issue that my Labor colleagues have been pressing for since April of last year. We put this to the Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme, and bipartisan support was received to ask the independent reviewer, Robyn Kruk, to do some more detailed investigation. I'm very pleased to see that this has finally been given the tick and we are now seeing an early release scheme in legislation.

Advance payments are really all about ensuring that those people who are old, sick or have multiple comorbidities get some compensation before they pass away, because, sadly, I am aware of at least 20 people who have passed away before receiving their redress. I am really very mindful of cases in my own electorate, and I'm thinking now of Frances, who was aged 96 and waited an eternity for redress in her lifetime. She finally was given a redress payment just months before she died, having, as I said, waited her entire life for redress. It just seems now, upon reflection, very cruel that she hadn't received that earlier payment and recognition so that she might have put her mind at rest and got rid of much of that anxiety she lived with. She might have got to enjoy that period of life—a bit longer period of life—before her death. For that and for every survivor that has passed without having that proper acknowledgement, I am deeply, deeply saddened.

We've got many survivors who are worried about COVID-19 and the impact that's going to have on their life, their quality of life and the length of their life. They would like to see this advance payment put in place, as it should be. We have really waited far too long for this to come, but it's a terrifically welcome part of the legislation today.

Another issue that's caused great distress and anxiety for survivors relates to the issue of indexation. This is an issue that CLAN and its advocates in particular have really pressed, both with the committee and I know with government members. Prior to the changes in this bill, survivors were forced to adhere to a very mean and unnecessary provision that left many with little redress. There have been some shocking examples where the indexation has actually reduced people's payments—potentially reduced them to zero—which was, of course,

completely unjustifiable and outside of the spirit of the Redress Scheme. So we would like to see indexation as a practice ceased altogether. I need to make that very clear: that remains Labor's position, but at least the government has agreed to ensuring that indexation will not be deducted from the Redress Scheme payment—the clock can't start ticking—until the redress application is finalised.

I'd also like to say it's really hard to overstate how difficult the decision to accept redress is and the emotional trauma that it can really give rise to for a lot of people, so the bill allowing the department of social security to extend the time a person has to accept the offer of redress beyond the current six-month limit is welcome. I'd have to say that it was recommended by the royal commission that this should have been a 12-month period in the first place. So, again, this is another example where a deviation from the royal commission recommendations has not been to the benefit of survivors. I'm glad to see some remedy in this bill on that front.

On the requirement for the statutory declaration: we've had a lot of evidence from the Commonwealth funded knowmore Legal Service, which provides free legal services to survivors, to get rid of this ridiculous and unnecessary component. It's just another additional barrier. I know members have made reference to the fact that during COVID this has been especially difficult, but, regardless of COVID, this was an unnecessary hurdle. There are ample provisions to ensure that any instances of people being misleading—or, indeed, of fraudulent behaviour—can be dealt with through other avenues. It was not necessary to have a statutory declaration to accompany the application, so I'm glad to see that this is now going. And knowmore has been calling for this change since 2017, I think. Here we are in 2021, finally listening and acting.

This bill also finally allows redress payments to be made in instalments at the applicant's discretion. Again, this has been a really important matter for a lot of First Nations communities who have raised these matters with us about needing to have the choice to be able to take the payments in instalments. I know the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency raised this with the committee. It was raised with the committee in the last parliament as part of the evidence we took for our 2019 report, was repeatedly raised again in this parliament and was part of the interim report that was tabled here. So I am pleased that, many years later, the government has accepted this advice.

Every time this government has chosen to move away from the royal commission recommendations, it has been to the detriment of survivors. We need to keep calling that out. That is the value of having the Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme, because it is now the only platform for survivors to voice their experiences directly with members of the parliament. I want to trust the government's word that this bill truly represents the first real step in a long line of necessary and overdue changes to the Redress Scheme.

My colleagues who have spoken before me have outlined the many shortcomings that remain with the National Redress Scheme. The most egregious harm is actually the lack of reform around the assessment matrix, which sets such low arbitrary payments for the impact of abuse. The matrix is focused on the kind of abuse that takes place, not the impact of that abuse on a survivor's life. Again, this is in direct contrast to what the royal commission had recommended. In my view the term 'penetrative' needs to be removed altogether, as an acknowledgement that trauma is not only caused by penetrative abuse. The Morrison government must reconfigure the redress assessment framework to properly recognise the impact of abuse when calculating redress payments, as recommended by the royal commission. There are many aspects that still need to be addressed on this front. My Labor colleagues and I will be pursuing this throughout the joint committee hearings and holding this government to account at every opportunity. *(Time expired)*

**Dr MARTIN** (Reid) (12:12): I rise to support the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Bill 2021. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse handed down its final report in December 2017. This was after decades of denial of responsibility, of hiding the truth, of institutions and individuals silencing survivors and avoiding reality. We were provided with the stark reality of the crimes, trauma and acts of evil that had been perpetrated against children over many years, often by those tasked with caring for them.

The royal commission shone a light on the experiences of survivors of child sexual abuse. They told their stories and we listened. We believed them. More than 4,000 individual institutions were reported as places where abuse had occurred, with the youngest victim the royal commission interviewed being just seven years of age. More than half of the survivors were aged between 10 and 14 years when they were sexually abused. We know the journey for survivors of child sexual abuse is traumatic and extremely challenging. For many survivors the abuse they suffered can have profound and broad-ranging impacts, with individuals experiencing a diverse range of ongoing health problems, including mental and physical health problems.

The Morrison government remains absolutely committed to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse. The government has introduced this amendment bill in response to the *Final report: second year review of the*



*National Redress Scheme*, undertaken by Ms Robyn Kruk AO. That review made clear that changes were needed in order to ensure that the scheme meets its intention of being survivor centred, humane and a less onerous option than civil action.

The government remains committed to continuing to improve the Redress Scheme over its 10-year life. As it stands, the Redress Scheme covers approximately 66,400 sites across Australia. In addition, over 6,100 payments, totalling approximately \$519 million have been paid to survivors to date. This amendment bill will establish a \$10,000 advance payment for applicants who are elderly or who are terminally ill. This will ensure that survivors have a form of recognition of their abuse early in their application process while they wait for their redress outcome. To assist survivors, they will not need to apply for the advance payment—rather, this scheme will identify eligible applications after receiving a valid redress application or at any time during the application process. It will then offer the advance payment to the survivor.

The bill also changes the date for which indexation of a prior payment is calculated to when a survivor submits an application to the scheme, rather than the date their application is determined. It will also enable flexibility to extend the period in which an applicant can accept their redress offer, and will allow the period for the survivor to seek a review to be extended to be consistent with the acceptance period. It will also introduce the ability for the scheme operator to make redress payments in instalments, to give survivors choice and control over how they receive their payment. The bill also removes the requirement for a statutory declaration application form.

On this last point: while it may seem small, I believe it will have a profoundly important impact. We note that one of the key things we heard and learned from the royal commission was that simply an acknowledgement of belief in a survivor's story can be very significant. Let's remember that some survivors have spent their lives just fighting to be believed. As the second-year review noted, many survivors consider the requirement for a statutory declaration questions the integrity of their application.

The review also made clear that some survivors have difficulty in complying with this step due to being homeless, living in a community where they do not have a birth certificate or if they have concerns about confidentiality, especially in regional communities or for people who have literacy difficulties. Survivors are also required to provide proof-of-identity documentation despite, in many instances, being in receipt of other national government health or social care payments.

The measures in this bill have been agreed to by all states and territories, and the government has committed \$80 million over four years in the 2021-2022 budget to support implementation of the recommendations of the second-year review. I recognise that this bill does not address all of the review's 38 recommendations. The government has made clear that it will continue to progress the other recommendations, many of which constitute major changes to the scheme. It will continue to work with stakeholders, and plans to release a final response to the review in early 2022.

From the outset, the government has always been committed to ensuring survivors have access to redress, and the measures in this bill, along with the other work of the government, will ensure the scheme is more survivor focused and trauma informed, enabling fairer outcomes for survivors. It will enhance a survivor's access to redress.

**Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (12:18):** In my comments on the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Bill 2021, I'm going to focus on just a few matters.

This legislation makes several improvements to the Redress Scheme in response to the two-year review of the scheme itself—a review that I believe was very necessary, given that it was a new scheme and that there would have been, understandably, changes required as the administration of the scheme was rolled out. The improvements in this legislation are indeed welcome, but they simply don't go far enough. As the member for Newcastle quite rightly pointed out, there have been some three previous reports with respect to this matter, all of which have raised deficiencies in the current scheme and the administration of it. Indeed, even with respect to this review, where there were some 38 recommendations, not all of them were adopted in this legislation, and nor were many other good suggestions that have been made by both this side of the House and other stakeholders.

The Redress Scheme was initiated by Labor under the Gillard government, in terms of the original royal commission which ultimately led to it. I have no doubt that it was something that not only was well overdue but would have brought a great deal of hope to all of those people who were in institutional care and who had, in some way or another, been violated. To now, after a royal commission, delay improvements that are needed, that have been exposed and that have been identified by the review itself simply draws out the suffering, the anxiety and the trauma of all of those people.

The redress recipients, in my view—and I suspect in the view of all people in this place, based on the comments that I have heard to date with respect to the scheme—have in many cases been living with their trauma

for decades. This whole process was initiated in recognition of that and in recognition of the hurt and pain that had been caused to them. And it was about finally bringing to them not only some recognition but some restitution for what they had endured. So, that being the objective, let us, the parliament, now not further delay but instead move quickly to bring some comfort to those very people. In recognition of that delay, I say not only does it cause further hurt but I suspect that in some cases it may even cause an attitude of, 'I'm just hitting my head against a brick wall and I will simply not pursue this matter any further, because to do so just continues to agitate and relive the trauma that I have lived through.' That would be the last thing that we would want to do to the very people that I think we all would agree have suffered enough.

The key change in this legislation is the provision of an advance payment of \$10,000 to vulnerable applicants, those being the elderly and perhaps people with a severe health issue, and to provide that \$10,000 payment whilst their applications are being assessed. I think that is a good start, but what I hope it doesn't do is simply give people \$10,000 as a way of saying, 'Now you can go away and leave us alone.' I suspect that, in some cases, if it gets too difficult for them, that's exactly what they might do. I would hope that this is not going to be the case and that, in fact, the \$10,000 will be given in good faith and that their applications are then properly pursued, with all of the support that they might need to do that. So there is that \$10,000 payment, along with some other adjustments in the legislation, which I have read through but will not go through in detail, because I think the payment is the most significant of them all. That leaves out some 20 other sensible suggestions that have been made with respect to the administration of the Redress Scheme; those suggestions are simply not picked up.

In his second reading speech, the minister stated that the government's final response to all of the review's recommendations would be provided in early 2022. Early 2022 is the period when we are very likely going to be having an election. So the reality of that statement is that this issue is going to be pushed down the track, and I don't think anyone in this House would know when it is likely to be dealt with. In other words, it is very unlikely that any of those other recommendations will see the light of day in the foreseeable future. I believe that is wrong, given that those recommendations were made in good faith, they are before the government, they are before the parliament, and we should be dealing with them now.

For victims of this abuse, even dealing with the application process would be incredibly traumatic and difficult. I know that because I've actually spoken with several victims. For victims with a disability or a language problem or for a First Nations person, the process would be even more difficult, and we need to do something to make that process much easier for them. I accept that some support measures might be available out there, but they are simply not enough. We should make sure that they are given every bit of support they need to follow through with applications that they need to make. Likewise, with respect to counselling—and that is one of the other matters that have been raised—lifelong counselling should be made available to victims. Having identified that they are victims, having accepted that they are victims, there's no doubt in my mind that those people will require that support for the rest of their lives.

The reality is that reviewing the criteria and the process should be an ongoing thing because different matters arise at all stages of that process. I will give one example of that, concerning one case where I spoke to the victim. The person was already in receipt of some compensation from the institution or the organisation where the abuse occurred. That organisation was one of the first to join the Redress Scheme, but, after it joined the Redress Scheme, the criteria under which that person's payments were assessed changed. The assessment process undertaken originally by the organisation was much more generous and much fairer than the assessment process under the scheme. So the person has actually gone backwards, in terms of missing out on support that might have otherwise been available, because the organisation, quite rightly, joined the scheme but the government's assessment criteria are inferior to those of the organisation. Things like that should never be allowed to happen, because, had the scheme never come in, that person would be in a better position today. I've raised that matter with government, but it seems that we are locked into the assessment process that we currently have. In that case, as I say, the person involved was actually denied the support that they would otherwise have received.

In another matter, earlier this year I put a question on notice to the minister in respect of those organisations that had not joined the Redress Scheme. I thank the minister for his reply to that, which I received recently. The reply said that organisations that had not joined the scheme had until the end of the third quarter to do so. The particular organisation that had not joined at the time and about which I had spoken to victims about their experiences was the Jehovah's Witnesses. I asked the minister again: has that organisation now joined the scheme? In the answer, the minister said that the organisation was in the process of doing so. But I'm still not clear whether they have, and I would like to think that the government would like to know, given that the Prime Minister standing at that dispatch box made it clear that any organisation that didn't join the scheme would lose their DGR status. I would certainly appreciate an update with respect to that matter because I know that there are people within that organisation who are victims and who are finding it extremely difficult to seek redress for a whole

range of reasons, which I outlined in another contribution on this matter that I made earlier this year or late last year.

Finally, the people that are directly affected by the Redress Scheme, the victims, are people that not only I but other members in this place have met with, and there are many stories that we can tell. They have all suffered in silence and their lives have been profoundly changed as a result of their experiences. In many cases, that experience was whilst they were in the care of people who were entrusted with actually protecting and looking after them but didn't. They now carry that trauma and that injustice each and every day of their lives.

The royal commission also exposed all of that. We hear very compassionate and understanding words from members opposite and from the government itself. Those words need to be matched by real action. Regrettably, that is not always the case. It reminds me very much of the words about defence veterans we often hear in this place, which, equally, are not always matched by the actions of the government. They become empty words and, quite rightly, leave people feeling even angrier and more hurt than they previously were.

So I say to the government: you have done the right thing. You have reviewed the scheme, and you have the recommendations before you. You should be listening to the words of the people and the organisations that are involved with the scheme. You should be taking on board the concerns that have been raised and the proposals that are being made in order to make the scheme even better. The people who were the victims deserve that, and it's up to the government to deliver on it.

**Mrs ARCHER** (Bass) (12:31): I believe that the government is absolutely committed to survivors of institutional child sex abuse, and the Redress Scheme has been an important step in addressing the shameful history of institutional abuse in Australia, but there is no doubt that for survivors the pace of change has been frustrating. The Redress Scheme is complex and relies on collaboration with the states, and I don't think that we have always got it right. The government recognises this and is committed to continuing to improve the scheme, and the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Bill 2021 adds to that improvement.

There is not enough money in the world that can take away the pain and suffering that so many survivors have carried with them their entire life. While some survivors have gone on to build a life that has brought them joy, many have been unable to sustain meaningful relationships or employment, and many have struggled with addiction and ongoing trauma. Redress can help both in a tangible way and by recognising the intrinsic pain of survivors. People who have experienced institutional child sex abuse have waited too long for redress, and we must continue to listen to their voices and improve this scheme. While the purpose of this bill is to implement recommendations that are reasonably straightforward and aim to improve the survivor experience while seeking redress, it's important to note that this bill is not the extent of action that the government will seek to undertake, with a number of recommendations made in the recent review still under consideration and consultation.

The review found that the redress process was traumatising, bureaucratic and too slow, and these amendments are a step in the right direction to addressing these issues. It's common to hear of survivors who have been brave enough to come forward and tell their painful stories to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, or through the media, being put through further heartache when seeking redress. I recall some time ago listening to an older gentleman, who had called in to ABC talkback radio, telling his story of the horrific abuse he suffered as a child in institutional care and the terrible, enduring effect it had on his whole life, a life of pain and loneliness and trauma. Redress would make his final years a little easier, but he said that the wait was so long he feared he would die waiting. It's not good enough.

It's to people like that man that we owe these amendments so that the Redress Scheme, first established in 2018, will introduce a range of new measures that will make the process, which is already so painful, a bit less so to navigate and far easier to access. The amendments include establishing a \$10,000 advance payment for applicants who are elderly—in this case, classified as those over the age of 70 or, for Indigenous Australians, over the age of 55—or who are terminally ill; changing the date from which indexation of a prior payment is calculated so that it is when a survivor submits an application to the scheme rather than the date that their application is determined; and introducing the ability to make redress payments in instalments, giving survivors choice and control over how they receive a payment.

Every individual has their own, unique story, and for some the wounds exist to this day, with some elderly survivors only coming forward with their stories for the first time. We mustn't forget that, while a necessary part of seeking redress, the process involves retelling their life history and telling what brings them to seek redress, which may re-traumatise people. I recognise the scheme has been complex to navigate and can be confronting to survivors. We must seek every means necessary to ensure that this process is as simple as it can be.

I've spoken many times in this place of the need to ensure that there is a trauma informed response within government policy, and I'm pleased that, at least in this situation, these amendments begin to address this issue. One of the proposed amendments before us today is the introduction of flexibility to ensure a survivor can extend the period they have to consider and accept an offer of redress or to seek review of their redress offer. This amendment addresses technical issues in the operation of the legislation but creates a more trauma informed approach, ensuring applicants do not lose the ability to access redress or procedural fairness due to the restricted and disconnected drafting of current provisions.

Of course, the scheme can only seek to appropriately compensate survivors if those institutions which were responsible for the horrific acts of child abuse, many of which came to light during the royal commission, actually join the scheme. I thank Minister Ruston for her dedication to getting the scheme right and for working with the institutions—sadly, far too many of them—to ensure they sign up to the scheme. While many of these institutions have taken responsibility for the abuse that occurred in their school, club, organisation or church, it both saddens and, frankly, enrages me to hear of some who are still refusing to be held to account for the pain and hurt they have caused. Just recently I learned that the Devonport Community Church, in Tasmania, are refusing to join the scheme, as they believe, 'The scheme could be misused by those seeking easy money.' I cannot even begin to properly describe just how offensive this reasoning is. It is completely devoid of any compassion or care. As Minister Ruston has said, it is completely unacceptable that they have failed to meet their moral obligations.

Sadly, the church is one of three institutions that have failed to sign up to the scheme. The minister also said:

These are institutions which know they have been named in applications and yet they have chosen to shirk their responsibility to finally do the right thing by these survivors.

Let there be no doubt that I wholeheartedly support the minister's words.

Unfortunately, seven institutions which did take steps to join have not been found to meet the legislative requirements of the scheme and are therefore unable to join. As such, I commend the government for its commitment to supporting the expansion of funder-of-last-resort provisions to cover institutions that do not meet the legislative requirements of the scheme to join, providing \$22.8 million over four years in the 2021-22 budget for the Commonwealth share of expanded funder-of-last-resort costs.

Lastly, this is an opportunity for me to say thank you to every single survivor who has told their story to the royal commission, which has led to the Redress Scheme, and to those who gave input to the scheme and contributed to the more than 450 submissions, surveys and consultations that informed the outcomes of the review. To you, and to all the survivors that have come forward in the years following the royal commission: we must, and we will, do right by you. To all silent survivors of abuse: I hope you can one day find your voice and speak your truth.

In closing, I repeat what I've said before in this place: as important as the National Redress Scheme is, we must also acknowledge that child sexual abuse is not only historic in nature; it happens now, every day, in Australia. Our responses to the issue of child sexual abuse must go further. We must make greater efforts to prevent abuse happening in the first place, and we must have a more holistic approach to recognising and addressing trauma to mitigate the lifelong damage caused to victim-survivors.

**Mr DICK (Oxley) (12:39):** I rise to address the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Bill 2021 and to commend the member for Bass for her strong support for victims. I know, like all members of the House, that the work of the Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme, which I was a member of in the last parliament and have been a member of in this parliament, is, I think it would be fair to say, a constructive and well-resourced use of this parliament's time. Members from both sides of the chamber and from both houses of parliament have given voice and allowed the voices of many survivors to be heard regarding their experience of the Redress Scheme, which has not been as it was designed to be nor what survivors had anticipated. Today we will be dealing with some legislation to improve the scheme. This also enables me to speak to the chamber about the serious issue of redress that Australia has been grappling with for some time. I wouldn't say Australia now is delivering. I would say that that is underway, but more work needs to be done. We know how important this scheme is to the survivors of institutional child sex abuse. The scheme was a long time coming when it was first introduced, and these steps are a step towards ensuring that it does right by those who access it.

I want to start my remarks today by expressing my disappointment that, while the bill goes some way towards fixing the issues with our existing redress program, it fails to address many of the recommendations of the second anniversary review of the Redress Scheme by Robyn Kruk AO, an eminent Australian who I think has done a remarkable job. I'll touch on some of the recommendations that I think should be supported and that I think survivors also want supported. That's why I'm a strong supporter of the bill today and want to speak on it, in

particular the second reading amendment that the member for Fenner, in lieu of the member for Barton, has moved today.

Survivors of child sexual abuse have been waiting their whole lives for redress for the horrific crimes that were perpetrated against them as children. For decades they have suffered in silence, tormented by the truly awful acts committed against them over many years. Being on the redress committee for a number of year has enabled me to learn and to understand but also to hear the tragic stories of so many people. Growing up on the south side of Brisbane in a loving family with an older brother and sister and with two parents who did everything they could to make sure that their children would be protected and loved but also given every opportunity in the world, I had, I would say, a very idyllic and happy childhood. It really has shown me what a privilege I've had in my life. When I was just a child, I had no understanding of the horrific abuse that was happening in my home city, my state and my country. It puts everything into perspective. Now serving in the parliament, representing my own community—meeting with survivors, talking to them, hearing their stories—and, of course, having the absolute honour of serving on the joint committee has made me a better member of parliament and also, I would go so far as to say, a better person. I have been able to look into the eyes of people who have gone through things that, as a child, I could never have understood would have happened in my life. I have heard witness statements through hours and hours and days and days of evidence and read some of the worst stories that you could ever imagine. The Parliament of Australia needs to hear this as well.

We need only look at the numbers from the previous Labor government's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to see the scope of the impact that child sexual abuse has had. Over the five years of the commission, 16,953 people who were within the terms of reference contacted the royal commission. The commission heard from 7,981 survivors of child sexual abuse in 8,013 private sessions. It received 1,344 written accounts and referred 2½ thousand plus matters to police.

These striking numbers only begin to scratch the surface of just how big the issues were for thousands of Australians, and this speaks to how important it is that we get the redress right. The bill today makes five key changes to the scheme. It establishes an advance payment scheme, reduces the time frame over which prior payments are indexed, allows the time a person has to accept an offer of redress to be extended, removes the requirement for applications to include a statutory declaration and allows redress payments to be made in instalments.

I want to focus on the first one today, and that's the establishment of the advance payment mechanism. This is something that we have been calling for, and in this part of my remarks I want to acknowledge the outstanding work of the member for Newcastle and the work that she has done as the deputy chair. And I also want to acknowledge the current chair, Senator Dean Smith, who has acted in a very collaborative and collegiate way. But the member for Newcastle, Ms Claydon, has really been at the forefront of this, from the experience of her own community and also in being a powerful advocate. I like to say that she is the voice for the voiceless. The bill will establish an advance payment, providing \$10,000 to people aged over 70, to First Nations people over 50 or to terminally ill or vulnerable people. Although this is a minor amount, it is a significant amount and we can imagine the recognition that comes with it in helping the mental wellbeing of survivors by being acknowledged, their voice being heard and also a public acknowledgement.

Secondly, the passage of the bill will reduce the time frame for which prior payments are indexed before being deducted from a redress payment. Indexation will now cease when an application for redress is made, not at the time of a decision when a redress application is finalised. We've been calling for the indexation of prior payments to cease completely, and we will have more to say about that. The bill will also allow the Department of Social Services to extend the time a person has to accept an offer of redress. Currently, that period is six months. This is an important change, as a person can only apply for redress once and if an offer is not accepted within the allowed time it's taken to be refused.

The bill also seeks to reduce the trauma of applying for redress by removing the requirement for applications to include a statutory declaration, and the member for Newcastle, in her remarks, made crystal clear why that's such an important provision which needs to be introduced. And, of course, if payment by instalments are requested by an applicant that's not only common sense but I think it's best practice. These changes are important and they will help to ensure that the redress scheme functions in the interests of survivors.

I want to touch on the recommendations in the second anniversary review which the government has so far refused to act on. As I mentioned in my earlier remarks, Ms Kruk delivered her report to the minister at the end of March this year. In conducting her review, Ms Kruk met with 81 survivors and with support services and government agencies, and she received around 226 submissions on top of the commissioned feedback study, in which 503 survivor support groups and institutions participated. Now, not all groups were happy with the way that process was undertaken. I particularly want to place on record the concerns that CLAN raised when we had public

hearings. I pay tribute to all those advocates, but particularly to CLAN. It has been leading the fight for justice for survivors for so long.

Labor has also made repeated calls for significant changes to be made to the scheme, and that's what we're doing with the second reading amendment today: increasing the minimum payment to \$200,000, which was a key recommendation of the royal commission; ensuring that payments are not indexed when calculating a redress payment; ensuring that prior payments which do not relate to institutional child sex abuse are not deducted from redress; introducing an advance payment scheme for elderly and the ill; ensuring that governments act as funders of last resort for all institutions; guaranteeing that the review of an offer of redress will not result in the offer being reduced; and providing necessary ongoing psychological counselling and support for recipients of redress.

That's a big issue I want to place on record today that the government needs to do more on. They need to be working more constructively with organisations, support groups and the survivors themselves. We know that there is a huge list of recommendations that are not included in this bill. I want to support and trust what the government is saying on this but, so far, their record in delivering a redress scheme that meets expectations has not lived up to that. As someone who's been following this for a number of years, I really want to make sure that the government hears this message today. They have to do better with the implementation and management of the Redress Scheme in this country.

We have a duty and obligation to those survivors. We have a duty of care to ensure not only that those people's voices are heard but that the scheme is simple and easy to navigate. All the evidence that we've heard is that that is not the case. To be fair to the government, they have tried; but they need to do better. That is not from the member for Oxley or the Labor opposition; it is the voice of so many in Australia saying this scheme needs to work—the families of survivors, the people who have been caught up in this system, the people that haven't come forward yet because of their fears or concerns around accessing the scheme and the difficulties they're having to navigate with the Commonwealth government, their fear of government and their misunderstanding of what's happened. Ms Kruk's report is a really vital and important one. I'm hopeful that the government will look at all those recommendations, and I will take them at their word they will be working through them. While the bill today deals with some of the modifications to the scheme, there is still a huge amount of work to be done in terms of giving justice to survivors.

I will finish my remarks today by paying tribute to the survivors. Understanding their pain and trauma is one thing, but delivering justice for them is another. I commit myself today to making sure that I keep learning from, listening to and hearing their experiences, bringing their voices to the parliament to ensure that justice for the pain and trauma they have gone through their entire lives is not only seen to be done but is delivered.

**Mr FLETCHER** (Bradfield—Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts) (12:53): I thank all members who have contributed to this debate. The National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Amendment Bill 2021 will amend the primary legislation for the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse in response to recommendations from the final report of the second-year review of the National Redress Scheme undertaken by Ms Robyn Kruk AO. The review makes 38 recommendations to increase access to redress and improve the scheme's operations, making it more trauma informed, more efficient and, ultimately, more survivor focused. The Australian government is prioritising initial action on 25 of the 38 review recommendations in full or in part and is investing over \$80 million over four years in the 2021-22 budget to support implementation of these recommendations.

This bill makes legislative changes giving effect to a number of these recommendations. Importantly, the measures in the bill make genuine changes that will have a real and direct impact on survivors' experience in accessing redress through the scheme in the short term while further improvements continue to be made. In line with the scheme's governance arrangements, all states and territories have agreed to the amendments in the bill. Work is underway to ensure administrative arrangements are put in place to enable measures to commence as soon as possible, especially for advance payments to be made.

More substantial changes to the scheme arising from the review require further detailed development work in consultation with state and territory governments, survivors, institutions and other stakeholders. The government is continuing to consider and consult on these issues and I commend the bill to the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough):** The original question was that this bill be read a second time. To this, the honourable member for Fenner has moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The immediate question is that the amendment be disagreed to.

Question agreed to.

Original question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

### Third Reading

**Mr FLETCHER** (Bradfield—Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts) (12:56): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

## Defence Legislation Amendment (Discipline Reform) Bill 2021

### Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Mr McCORMACK** (Riverina) (12:56): Discipline in the military is critical to the success of the Australian Defence Force—it almost goes without saying, but it is so very, very true. The men and women who don an ADF uniform are made of special stuff, the right stuff. They are disciplined beyond any measure in civilian life and they need to be. Rigid training hones the discipline in them. The Defence Legislation Amendment (Discipline Reform) Bill 2021 updates the Defence Force Discipline Act to enhance the management of disciplinary matters within the ADF. These are good amendments; these are timely.

Our ADF is always under pressure; that's the very nature of the critical role it plays and this is certainly so today. Our military personnel, from the Chief of Defence right through to the newest recruit, are also the very best in the world at what they do. I have been lucky enough to visit Al Minhad Air Base, Camp Baird, in the United Arab Emirates twice. The first time was in August 2014 and then again in October 2019. On both occasions, and I had the opportunity to speak to military personnel from other allied nations, I was told that our ADF men and women are the ones they want to serve alongside. Australian men and women are regarded highly for their courage in combat, ingenuity, service, respect, integrity, excellence and discipline.

Of course, ADF personnel are only human. Whether they are old hands in the Special Air Service Regiment or are on their first posting after marching out of recruit training, they still have human frailties. They make mistakes; they err. No-one is perfect, and whether it's an undisciplined act or something of a more serious nature that requires their superiors to intervene then commanders need the tools and the guidelines to enable them to make the right call every time. These amendments do just that.

I have a little historical context—and it's not that ill discipline began at this point; I'm not saying that at all and I'm not suggesting that in any way, shape or form—an interesting anecdote, nonetheless, as part of this debate. But before going into that narrative, I would point out that air forces, armies and navies have been instilling discipline and meting out military punishments for breaches since the start—since that long line of khaki which happened well before Gallipoli. It annoys me that we have some modern military 'historians' who wish to put 21st century slants and revisits, and rewrite such things as Anzac legends, simply to sell a book. Then, there are some journalists and media organisations who are quick to besmirch the good names and reputations of our SAS and others when they are only in possession of half the facts or none at all. The old saying 'I wouldn't want to be in the trenches with that person' certainly applies in these cases. The SAS does so much to protect this nation and to assist other nations. They are the best of the best.

Some of the media coverage attempting to tarnish the names of some soldiers because of a song played at a funeral is, quite frankly, beyond the pale. It's so typical of a society prone to catastrophise the very, very smallest of issues. And those of us who are fortunate enough to have never experienced the physical and mental pressure of a soldier involved in active combat and the subsequent lifelong bonds held between brothers and sisters in arms should not be so quick to assume the worst in people or throw wild accusations which effect the whole, instead of perhaps a few.

As I stated, there is a fascinating piece in relation to the military and disciplinary procedures from way back—although it seems like only yesterday—in my local newspaper, the *Daily Advertiser*, and I was working there at the time. In the edition of Thursday 14 February 1985, there was an article highlighting the fact that women had just entered recruit training with the 1st Recruit Training Battalion, Kapooka, Blamey Barracks, the home of the soldier. The article said:

The first Australian women to train alongside men in the army arrived at Kapooka last night.

Two buses, one from Sydney and one from Melbourne, delivered 48 new recruits who will go through an intensive training period for the next 11 weeks.

The women, whose average age is 18, will undergo virtually the same training as the men. The only difference is that hand grenade throwing has been completely ruled out—because that is combat related—and there are slight variations on physical requirements.

That, I am thankful to say, has changed. The article continues:

Next week the new recruits will rise at 5.45am to start training drills, field and bush exercises and weapon handling.

The Kapooka recruits form Delta Company and yesterday's arrivals will be known as 31 Platoon. Recruits have come from all over Australia and have signed for three or six-year terms.

The first busload from Melbourne arrived at 5.50pm and the girls shuffled out to prepare for their first taste of army life—standing at attention during a roll call. The second busload arrived from Sydney at 7.20pm. After the roll-call the women dragged heavy suitcases to the barracks, their new home for the next 11 weeks. That period will not be easy one, according to Royal Australian Army ordinance corps Major Bob Antonis.

He said training and night study will mean a 17-hour day for the new recruits and there wouldn't be "time for them to fraternise".

Although the women will be billeted in a barracks less than 50 metres from male soldiers, a "hands off" warning has been issued. An officer spoken to last night would not specify what punishments would be carried out for those disobeying the warning but agreed guilty male soldiers could be in a great deal of trouble.

Senior army officers did not allow us to speak to the recruits when they arrived last night. However, one recruit spoken to in Melbourne yesterday was enthusiastic about her new career.

Helen Jones, 20, from the Victorian town of Portsea, signed on for six years. Recruit Jones has had 18 months experience in the Army Reserve. "I realised I wanted more after being in the Army Reserve," she said.

... ..

Delta Company will be under the command of Lieutenant Jill Curry and 31 Platoon leader is Sergeant Gail Legge.

After the 11-week training period the recruits will decide which army trade they will undertake.

The next batch of recruits, 32 Platoon, will arrive in four weeks.

One wonders what happened to those recruits, but it was a proud day when those women arrived at Kapooka. And, indeed, the little anecdote about the fact that there was going to be very strict rules enforced as far as 'fraternising', as the journalist Steve Connolly called it, no doubt that was carried out, because Kapooka has always been the home of the soldier but the home of discipline as well. I'm proud to say it's in my electorate, of Wagga Wagga, and it does a great job. Successive commanders have ensured that the discipline has been what it needs to be at Kapooka. Indeed, this amendment improves the management of disciplinary issues in the entire Australian Defence Force. The act enables commanders in the ADF to ensure and enforce military discipline, and ensure the safety and wellbeing of servicemen and women.

I'm pleased that the amendment will result in a military discipline system that is going to be more efficient and easier to understand and, perhaps most importantly, to use. It will reduce needless delays, while also being fair to those involved. This was a point made by the member for Stirling in his contribution to this debate on Monday. He talked about the fact that it will result in a system that will be far easier to use, and it will reduce unnecessary delays. He should know. Having served in the Australian Army, he would know this. He said:

This is important, because if somebody has a pending infringement hanging over them for months or, potentially, longer then it can impact, certainly, their morale and that of the rest of the unit, and their ability to attend promotional courses and other training activities as well. So it's really important that we get in and deal with infringements quickly when they occur.

Morale is something that is so critical in the ADF. I do acknowledge not only the member for Stirling, but other members in this place who have served. Parliamentarians who have come here having given service in the military, I commend them. We say always thank you to them and to all of those who have served, who are serving and those who will potentially pull on a uniform in the future.

The majority of breaches covered by the DFDA are of a uniquely military nature. They range from offences that are operational matters, right through to being late for work—and sometimes being late for work can be a serious breach. Unlike other occupations where you could be five or 10 minutes late, in the Defence Force this can be a critical error. Serious criminal offences or other illegal conduct can be referred to civilian authorities, such as the civilian police. It is critical that breaches of discipline are resolved expeditiously—and fairly!—to maintain morale, as the member for Stirling pointed out, and to ensure good order and fighting capability.

We need, at all times, to maintain an operationally capable Defence Force with the absolute highest levels of professional competence, and we do; commitment, and we have; and discipline, both on and off duty. As I say, we can be very proud—and we are—of those people who pull on a uniform, because the service and sometimes the sacrifice they make is the ultimate. What they do for and on behalf of our nation in difficult times is beyond



measure, and we should be very thankful—not just on Remembrance Day, Armistice Day, or on Anzac Day, but on every single day.

This bill will provide commanders within the ADF with the necessary tools to better carry out their mission. It will reform the ADF's military discipline system, and in particular—and this is important—the lower level summary system and disciplinary infringement scheme so that we do have that ability to get these matters resolved quickly, because resolving these matters quickly is what it is all about. It will make it easier to use the act when dealing with minor disciplinary matters, particularly when deployed on operations. When members are out in the field and things are alleged they can be resolved quickly and amicably, and everybody can get on with what they need to do. It will build on what is working well, and that's important. The disciplinary infringement scheme works by enabling a broader range of minor breaches in military discipline to be managed faster and simply as disciplinary infringements, rather than as the service offences, which are intricate, adversarial, court-like procedures, that currently apply.

This will also provide a more formalised and better structured discipline hierarchy based on the seriousness of the offending, available punishments, rank of the individual—that's critical too—and the seniority of the discipline authority.

As well, the changes introduce several new service offences relevant to the modern ADF. The new service offences to be introduced include, I'm pleased to say: cyberbullying and the related offence of failure to comply with a removal order concerning cyberbullying material; failing to perform a duty or an activity; and failing to notify a change in circumstances when in receipt of a benefit or entitlement. The cyberbullying aspect of this amendment is so critical. We are in a new era where mobile phones can be used, dare I say in the context of this debate, as weapons. People do not need to have some things filmed and then shared amongst colleagues. It makes it so much more critical when you are in either close quarters or close confines with work colleagues, as the unique nature of military service provides. I'm very pleased, and I know that the parliament will also be keen, to see this measure adopted as part of this amendment.

The changes build on the very successful and highly regarded disciplinary infringement scheme. They will provide more opportunity for our people to choose to have a wider range of minor breaches of discipline dealt with in a less-confronting manner than before with the more formal, court-like and adversarial summary authority tribunals. This reduces stress on all involved. What we want and what we are going to get through these amendments is a better discipline system managed well and done properly. I commend the amendment to the House.

**Mr STEVENS (Sturt) (13:11):** I think it would be remiss at the commencement of remarks on a bill related to the Australian Defence Force to not first make mention of the milestone yesterday of the exit from Afghanistan of the United States, and of course the experience over the last month, particularly, of our own heroic ADF personnel and other personnel from other agencies—DFAT and home affairs—and the effort that they've gone to to help many people, particularly Australian citizens, safely leave Afghanistan. Of course, I pay tribute to all of those who served there over the last 20 years, particularly the 41 fallen Australians. I pay tribute to them, their sacrifice and, of course, the sacrifice of Australians throughout the history of the Commonwealth in conflict, particularly major conflict overseas and particularly those who lost their lives.

It's a poignant reminder of how significant the Defence Legislation Amendment (Discipline Reform) Bill 2021 is, because our Defence Force is so vital to the national security of our nation. They have our utmost respect, and we need to ensure that our legislative frameworks when it comes to dealing with them are modern and efficient. Those are the two things I would like to reflect on in my contribution in support of this second reading.

I also pay tribute to those who have already made a contribution to this bill, particularly ex-service personnel. I apologise if I'm missing any, but I think I heard the contributions of the member for Stirling and the member for Solomon. There may be other former serving personnel who have contributed to this second reading debate. I was quite interested to hear both of their contributions, because they are uniquely qualified to speak on this. I also pay tribute to my colleague Senator Andrew McLachlan, who I know was quite involved in the process leading to this bill coming to the chamber. He has particular experience when it comes to military justice. I know that other contributors in this second reading debate talked about the contribution that he made to what is now before this parliament. I pay tribute to him.

I'm very proud that we have some excellent ADF capability in my home state of South Australia, particularly RAAF Base Edinburgh, which, frankly, is a RAAF and Army base. It's a vital national security asset to the Commonwealth. Many people who serve on that base and serve in uniform live in my electorate of Sturt, adjacent to that base. We're also very proud to have such a significant defence industry capability in South Australia. We

are building the Royal Australian Navy's future frigates and submarines in South Australia. We have other great military assets, like Cultana and Woomera, which are so vital in testing and proofing ranges and so on.

This bill does two important things: it improves the efficiency of our military justice system and it modernises our military justice system. Regarding the second of those, I endorse the comments Mr McCormack, the member for Riverina, made about modernisation, in particular in relation to introducing cyberbullying as a category that needs to be reflected in our military justice system. It is vitally important that we recognise the potential for cyberbullying, not just in the services but throughout our society. We've changed, updated and modernised other elements of our justice system to make sure we recognise the significance of this type of activity as bullying and its potential to lead to very, very significant long-term impacts on victims. In many cases it can lead to suicide. It is a very serious thing, and we need to acknowledge it. We need to indicate that we won't tolerate it and that we believe that anyone who engages in it should be appropriately dealt with.

The amendments in this legislation, which ensure that that's very clear in the military justice system, will send the message to those who serve in uniform that, in the ADF, just like in any other part of our society, we don't tolerate what is emerging as a new form of potential harassment. Mobile phones, smartphones et cetera, and all the various devices that can capture material now, didn't exist in decades gone by, so I understand why it isn't until now that we haven't had a proper mechanism in place to deal with this category of offence. But I am very pleased that it is being picked up in this legislation. I also endorse some of the other modernisation in the legislation, which other speakers have talked about. It is vitally important that, as regularly as possible, we ensure that the military justice system is capable and competent to deal with the most modern, developing offences. They may not have existed in decades gone by but they do exist now and need to be appropriately dealt with through the mechanisms of the military justice system.

Regarding the efficiency of our military justice system, we talked about the lower level summary offences in the Defence infringement system. I particularly note the member for Stirling's comments about this, as someone who has experienced the military justice system. I don't cast the aspersion that he's necessarily been within it, but he's served in uniform and therefore is aware of examples of how, in the past, the system hasn't necessarily been as efficient as it could have been. There's a saying that the punishment should fit the crime, and I think the process should also fit the crime. Though I have not served, I understand from the contributions of those who have that at times some of the disciplinary processes can, frankly, take far too long. For some of the lower level offences, the fact that you've got a question mark over you and you're awaiting the outcome of a particular disciplinary procedure can cause significant impacts on your career. It can hold you back from consideration for certain promotions or impede progression in your career. A comment was made by one of the contributors that, in some ways, having a low-level conviction for something is better than having an outstanding matter for the same allegation. That's because, until that allegation is resolved, you can be put on pause for any progression through the ranks within the ADF. I think we can all agree that it is fair and right that people get access to swift justice, which is fair justice. When certain allegations are hanging over the head of service personnel, they should not have to wait for an undue period of time to get an outcome as a result of potentially avoidable bureaucracy or delays. Equally, and as something else that contributes to the efficiency of this, we believe in the importance of the right to the presumption of innocence.

We also believe in the right of appeal and that when a decision is made against someone, whatever the disciplinary decision might be—whether or not it's a conviction or whatever action it might be—it's important that there's an opportunity for review. Again, that has to be in the context of the scale of the offence and the scale of the consequences that the person is subject to, if they are found to have committed that offence. Equally, when you've got summary justice being distributed, it's important that there is an appropriate scale of review in place for those determinations that might be made against someone. That's another thing that this bill does. It creates efficiency where allegations are made, but it also ensures that there's fairness, there's a presumption of innocence and there's some natural justice in the processes so that, as the scale of an alleged offence is more significant, so too is the substance of the process, the right to appeal and other representation. The military justice system has the same capability as courts martial in undertaking proper trials where the offence meets that threshold. Equally, as has been mentioned by other contributors, the civilian justice system is very commonly referred to when there's an allegation of a crime that's been committed that would be a crime of the same substance outside of the military system in civilian life in this country. I think that's very important. It's important that we make sure that we have a very high standard when it comes to discipline in the forces. Also, if you serve in the forces, you should have the same rights and privileges as any other citizen of this country.

Clearly, the Defence Force needs its own system of enforcing its rules, as the consequence of not doing something—say, not following an order—in the Defence Force is quite different to the consequence in any other workplace. Having the categorisation of offences in the military system that wouldn't be considered offences in

other workplaces—you wouldn't use the term 'offence' in other workplaces or our parts of our society—is vitally important within the ADF because, as I mentioned at the commencement of my remarks, we rely on our service men and women so much to secure our national security and the interests of our country. We're proud of them and the service that they provide to our country and have provided throughout our history. This is a good opportunity for us to make sure that the military justice system, which is very important, is modern and efficient so that they are capable of receiving justice and also have no ambiguity whatsoever about the standards and what is expected of them.

With those comments, I thank all those that have contributed to the debate. Thank you for the bipartisan support for this important reform from all those on both sides of the chamber. I think this is an excellent outcome, particularly for the men and women in uniform that serve our nation with such great distinction. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr RAMSEY** (Grey—Government Whip) (13:23): I rise to address the Defence Legislation Amendment (Discipline Reform) Bill 2021. There's no doubt that we live in a changing society with changing workplaces, and the acceptance of many actions and behaviours yesteryear is perhaps no longer permissible, not just in Defence but right across society. There has been a lot of reform within the workplace concerning our treatment of individuals—bullying, for instance. Respect, I think, is the bottom line as well as the value of reaching speedy resolution on problems that exist within the workplace. We all know that a problem in a workplace that is unresolved can cause tension between workmates, and Defence is no different. As the conditions change and society changes, so too do the rules need to change. Defence was once largely a male domain, and it now has a very mixed workforce. Once again, in many cases, activities that may have been tolerated in the past would no longer be tolerated in Defence and, when infringements occur in this area, they need to be dealt with quickly. They're not something you want hanging around for a long time.

I'm sure we've all seen the kind of induction that people get in the defence forces—I haven't served in the forces, but it has been depicted quite well—with the sergeant or the corporal about 50 millimetres away from the inductee, yelling their tonsils out in a very confrontational way. For instance, I had a friend some years ago who joined the reserves. He gave up after a few weeks, when, in the middle of a rain event, he was asked to dig a hole under a tree and, once he completed the task, he was asked to shift it. Basically, he had to fill it in and start again somewhere else. I don't know whether that kind of treatment goes on in Defence today. I suspect it's not the same as it was, because the expectations of society and workers—and, at the end of the day, that's what Defence Force employees are; they're workers—are quite different.

Looking for a bit of inspiration, I googled famous AFL sprays, and I saw Ron Barassi giving someone a dreadful dressing down, Rodney Eade's complete rant and Malcolm Blight—there's a whole list of them. If you watch them, you see that that's not the way they treat their workforce today. They treat them with much more respect because society's expectations have changed, and dispute resolution, as a rule, is dealt with very quickly. Basically, it doesn't fit the bill anymore, and neither does it in the modern Defence Force.

The essence of this amendment is discipline resolution. It's the link between cause and effect: if I sin today, do I get dealt with tomorrow, next week or next year? The purposes that sit within Defence at the moment can often lead to it being next year, because it ends up in an adversarial court situation, which, of course, at the end of the day, only makes people more reluctant to report poor behaviour. This moves in that area. It takes account of the modern world, which the member for Sturt just spoke. The fact is that the electronic world and our mobile phones have such a big part to play in society. There's an instant camera in our pocket or in our hand at any given event, and there is the ability to spread information, misinformation, rumours and all those other kinds of things around on the electronic services. We need to be up to date in the Defence Force as well. I'm pleased that this legislation takes those issues into account.

Our military has an excellent reputation worldwide as a well-trained, highly disciplined unit that can get done jobs that need to be done. We owe a great debt of gratitude to them. Every year, when it comes to those important dates on the calendar—Anzac Day, Remembrance Day, the anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan or Vietnam Veterans' Day—we pause to reflect on those who have served in our country's service. But we shouldn't forget them on any given day. Certainly, individuals get changed in the defence forces and generally, I would say, for the better—not always, because sometimes they come away with poor experiences and things that cause mental issues. But, in general and across the board, if one of my children were wanting to go into the military, I would be encouraging them, not discouraging them. That's what I think of the organisation and the values that it holds and the important role that it delivers for Australia's place in the world. That's why we need to keep it relevant. That's why we need to keep it up to date. I'm pleased that this legislation is receiving bipartisan support. I commend the proposed legislation to the House.

**Mr PASIN** (Barker) (13:29): I think the member for Grey was expecting it to be 1.30, but he's given me an opportunity to begin my contribution, which will continue at an appropriate opportunity. In speaking to the Defence Legislation Amendment (Discipline Reform) Bill 2021, can I first acknowledge that I am speaking today on the 70th anniversary of the ANZUS treaty, an incredibly significant agreement between our nation, New Zealand and the United States. That treaty is in particular focus at this time, given the events at Hamid Karzai International Airport in recent days.

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

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

#### Eden-Monaro Electorate: COVID-19

**Ms McBAIN** (Eden-Monaro) (13:30): [by video link] Across my electorate, the first day of spring usually represents the turning point for communities. In the Snowies, it usually means there are only a few weeks left of the snow season, with the last skiers and snowboarders filling the slopes for their last chance of a good run down the mountains. On the coast, it's when whale season is getting into full swing, and visitors from Canberra, Victoria and across New South Wales come to the area to experience a few degrees of extra warmth.

But this year the change of season isn't bringing with it the same feeling of fulfilment, anticipation or excitement. The school holidays can no longer be relied upon as a time of good tourism traffic, because Eden-Monaro has lost most of the last seven school holidays, first to bushfires and then to the first outbreak of COVID followed by border closures, further outbreaks and now this lockdown. The snow is almost gone, and the money that usually comes with it was gone a long time ago. We can't replicate winter, and now our businesses must wait till next season to get another chance at that snow traffic. For an area of the country that has had next to no COVID cases and, luckily, has avoided outbreaks, what is happening in other regions across New South Wales is continuing to have a devastating effect on our communities. Last year, local businesses had JobKeeper. They had a way to keep the connection between themselves and their employees. People kept their jobs. This year the support that's available breaks that link. This is almost two years of missed tourism income, and our businesses can't hold on much longer. *(Time expired)*

#### Stop Child Abuse—Trace An Object Campaign

**Mr SIMMONDS** (Ryan) (13:31): [by video link] Today I had the pleasure of representing the Minister for Home Affairs, Karen Andrews, as Commander Sirec from the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation and I launched a new partnership for the Trace an Object campaign with Suncorp Stadium here in Brisbane. As part of the upcoming football matches in September, we will be putting Trace an Object images up on the big screen at Suncorp Stadium so that more people than ever before can engage with the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation and look at some Trace an Object images that have been pulled as part of cold cases where children were being exploited. People can be part of identifying various objects that may lead to a break in a case.

The work that the AFP officers are doing in this regard is very, very important. They are searching the darkest reaches of the dark web and engaging with some of the worst predators imaginable. Trace an Object is helping to involve the Australian community in protecting our children, which is so very important. So if you're an amateur sleuth or a keyboard detective, have a look at the images on the ACCCE website and see if you can help to crack a case and save a child from exploitation and abuse as we assist the AFP. This government is so passionate about keeping our children and our families safe, supporting the ACCCE and the work of the AFP officers.

#### Brighton Council

**Mr BRIAN MITCHELL** (Lyons) (13:33): [by video link] Last week the people of Brighton elected a new mayor and a new councillor. I'd like to congratulate Leigh Gray, who won the race convincingly. Leigh is an experienced local councillor who has spent 16 years in service to the community he now leads. He is as local as they come. Raised in Bridgewater, Leigh has lived in nearby Brighton for more than two decades. In Leigh Gray, Brighton has a mayor who is passionate, dedicated and ready to lead the city as it embarks on a journey of extraordinary growth. I also want to congratulate Aaron De La Torre on his election as councillor. Aaron is a good man, and I have known him for years. He has lived in Brighton his entire adult life with his young family, and he is a driving force for good. Aaron is a proud union man, leading the Australian Services Union in Tasmania. With his towering height and his lumberjack beard he cuts an imposing figure, but he is one of the most genuine and thoroughly decent people you will ever meet. I am confident Aaron will make a fantastic contribution to the Brighton community in his new role as an elected councillor.

Finally, to outgoing mayor Tony Foster, the Don Bradman of Tasmanian local government—Tony has diligently served the people of Brighton as councillor and mayor for an incredible 34 years. He has earned his retirement. I wish him all the best. Brighton couldn't have done it without you, Tony. Have a fantastic time.

### **South Australia: Energy**

**Mr STEVENS** (Sturt) (13:35): I am thrilled to report to the House that electricity prices are falling in my home state of South Australia. On the weekend I welcomed the announcement from the Essential Services Commission of South Australia confirming a further drop in average household and retail electricity bills since the awful depths of the dying days of the previous Labor government, when we had the highest electricity prices in the country. On some metrics, I think at one point we had the second-highest electricity prices in the world. We're turning that around. Of course, we've now met the election commitment that the now state government—the former Liberal opposition—made to reduce the average household bill by over \$300 a year. ESCOSA confirms that, since the election, the average household electricity bill is already \$303 a year lower than in the dying days of Labor. The job is not done. We want to keep reducing electricity prices, of course, but it's great to see them going in the right direction.

We know how vital it is for families and businesses that electricity be reliable and affordable. It underpins so many decisions, particularly investment decisions in those sectors that are energy intensive. For too long, South Australia was on the wrong side of that equation, but we are regaining the great legacy of Sir Thomas Playford in being a low-cost electricity jurisdiction once more.

### **Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence**

**Ms RISHWORTH** (Kingston) (13:36): [by video link] Too many women and children in Australia are victims of domestic and family violence, with, on average, one woman every nine days tragically killed, and one in four women having experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a current or previous intimate partner since the age of 15. These numbers are far too high, and they demand action.

The southern suburbs of Adelaide, where I live, are not immune, and too many of our women and children, sadly, experience domestic violence. We know that early intervention and prevention are key when it comes to stopping this from happening. Unfortunately, there is no current preventative domestic violence service hub in the southern suburbs. Access to education, therapy, counselling and referrals to support can help women and their children before it reaches crisis point. But, without a dedicated prevention hub, this won't occur. This has been the demand of women in the southern suburbs, through the Southern Women Matter group, along with shadow state minister, Katrine Hildyard. They're calling on both the state and federal governments to fund a support hub in the southern suburbs. I join their call, asking the government to take action and make funding available for a preventative domestic violence service hub in the southern suburbs of Adelaide. *(Time expired)*

### **Townsville City Deal**

**Mr THOMPSON** (Herbert) (13:38): [by video link] I'd like to update the House on our investments through the Townsville City Deal. For some time now, the deal partners have been working to identify how to reallocate the \$195 million which had been set aside for stage 2 of the Haughton pipeline but which was then rejected by the state Labor government. Recently, we made two announcements which will deliver on the aims of the city deal. The first is \$15 million to the Royal Flying Doctor Service for a brand-new base and maintenance hub at Townsville Airport. The second is \$40 million going towards transforming Reef HQ into Australia's national centre of excellence for tropical coral reef education, making it a premium tourism destination. Both these projects will have significant positive economic, educational, health and social benefits for our community. They are great examples of listening to the community and working to secure the commitments, and now we'll work hard on delivering.

We've outlined our remaining priorities for the funding, and it's a matter for the deal partners, the Queensland state government and the Townsville City Council to discuss them. Unfortunately, there has been disagreement on some projects, and I'm urging everyone involved to put the community ahead of personal or political preferences. In the meantime, I'd once again urge the state Labor government to get on with the job of building stage 2 of the Haughton pipeline. More than a year on from the rejection of the funding— *(Time expired)*

### **COVID-19: Children**

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (13:39): When it comes to this government and COVID vaccinations, Australia's children are neither seen nor heard. Amid all the talk from this Prime Minister—and it is largely just talk—it's as if our 12- to 15-year-olds don't exist. The United States and Canada started vaccinating that age group in May. Many European nations started in June, as did Israel. They knew it was a race. Canada has now fully vaccinated 60 per cent of its 12- to 15-year-olds. Australia has managed zero. Even parents

with children deemed eligible because of underlying health issues are struggling to get appointments for their kids. Either national plan targets should include 12- to 15-year-olds or the government needs to specify vaccine targets for that age group.

Children should be vaccinated quickly, and their parents deserve to know when. Parents across Australia are struggling in lockdown, dealing with the added stresses of home-schooling. At the very least they're owed the basic courtesy of clarity. We desperately need to see our children back at school, but not at any cost, and certainly not at the cost of risking them coming home with COVID. The Prime Minister needs to stop trying to force exhausted parents to look through his rose-tinted glasses. The Prime Minister needs to be straight with people and look after these young Australians.

### **Bonner Electorate: Infrastructure**

**Mr VASTA** (Bonner) (13:41): I'm happy to share that the Lindum crossing safety upgrades are getting underway. I have been fighting for these upgrades since 2017, when over 7,000 locals in Bonner signed my petition to fix Lindum crossing. We were successful, and in 2019 the federal government committed \$85 million to this worthy project. Brisbane City Council have also come to the table with \$40 million to fix Lindum crossing. We are moving forward with the first stage of the level crossing safety upgrades thanks to \$1 million from our federal funds.

The immediate safety upgrade to the Lindum crossing will include the installation of new and extended median islands as well as new on-road line markings and resurfacing, with works beginning at the end of November. The second stage will utilise \$10 million of our government's \$85 million commitment to this project, with plans currently being finalised and the upgrade due next year. These upgrades have been a long time coming, but the good news is they are now underway. We are motoring ahead with these project upgrades and making sure that we fix Lindum once and for all.

### **Afghanistan**

**Mr BANDT** (Melbourne—Leader of the Australian Greens) (13:42): [by video link] We have seen terror and horror in Afghanistan. Australia has committed to taking 3,000 refugees, but this is not enough. We must take at least 20,000 Afghans in addition to our annual humanitarian intake, and those currently here on temporary visas must also be allowed to make Australia their home. The government cannot seriously suggest that these people can be returned to the Taliban.

We have to take more people not just because it is the right thing to do and is something that Australia did after the Tiananmen Square massacre and the war in Vietnam but also because Australia helped to create this terrible situation. The decision to invade Afghanistan 20 years ago was made by Prime Minister Howard exercising his unchecked power to blindly follow George Bush into an imperialist war and keep us there. It's what happens when you have no independent foreign policy. Even today the government slavishly celebrates the ANZUS treaty without any reflection on the cost of this prolonged war.

This very quickly became a war without clear strategic objectives, which allowed murder and terror to flourish. Even though we were constantly told we had to put troops in harm's way to defeat the Taliban, two decades of continued military aggression has destabilised the country and left the Taliban in control. The government should apologise to the people of Afghanistan, and the government should apologise to Australian service personnel for putting and keeping them in harm's way without any clearly defined mission goals. Future parliaments, not the Prime Minister, should decide if we go to war. (*Time expired*)

### **ANZUS Treaty**

**Mr TED O'BRIEN** (Fairfax) (13:44): I believe our nation's greatest challenge is not COVID-19 but resolving the China question and pursuing peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific. We know that the international political economy is amidst a period of heightened uncertainty, and the strategic challenges we face as a nation are as great as we've seen for generations. But our end goal is clear: it is peace; it is stability; it is an Indo-Pacific free from coercion; it is a region in which nations, economies and people can be free, where sovereignty is respected, where individuals can trade and speak freely, where international laws prevail. No matter what future scenarios people paint or strategies they put forward, a constant has to be the primacy of our relationship with the United States and the relationships they have throughout the Indo-Pacific. Indeed, today we celebrate that relationship with the United States as we mark 70 years since the signing of the ANZUS Treaty—a treaty that not only underpins our relationship but is an outward expression of that which binds us, which is our values and the value of freedom. God bless Australia, God bless the United States of America, and God bless the relationship between our two great nations.

### Coombs, Mr John

**Mr BURKE** (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (13:46): John Coombs, the former national secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia, passed away this morning. Most Australians remember John as a champion of the MUA during the notorious Patrick waterfront dispute. The scenes of workers turning up for work to be confronted by dogs and men in balaclavas sent shockwaves throughout Australia. The entire workforce was sacked. Against all odds, resisting the might and power of government and business, John was tenacious in defence of his members and he won. His fight for justice resonated with workers around the country. I remember the ACTU congress that followed, where John was treated as a hero for every worker. People understood his fight was for his members but his victory empowered all workers.

For a time, John and I lived around the corner from each other. He was forever proud of his members—not only when they fought for their own rights, but when they fought for others around the country and for those as far away as South Africa. He thought the world of Greg Combet, and I was in touch with Greg this morning. Greg said to me, 'As someone who spent many years working with John, sharing the experience of one of the most bitterly fought industrial disputes in our history, but more importantly having enjoyed the warmest and most deeply felt friendship and many wonderful occasions together, I feel John's passing very keenly.' I offer my condolences to Gwen and all of John's family and to all who loved him.

### COVID-19

**Dr WEBSTER** (Mallee) (13:47): [by video link] COVID has challenged us as a nation in ways we have not experienced in our lifetimes. The losses have been profound—lost jobs, businesses, careers and opportunities. Children have missed out on social and educational growth, locked away from families and friends. We have missed first hellos and last goodbyes. We have had tastes of freedom, only to have them ripped away from us time and time again. We are mentally and emotionally fatigued by trying to do the right thing or left feeling guilty if we don't, even in regions with zero cases of COVID month after month.

There are over 15,000 small businesses in Mallee, and many have failed due to ongoing lockdowns. Over half the shops in Mildura are now for lease, as business owners have given up. Educational outcomes for our young people are also suffering. There are 131 schools in Mallee, with over 24,000 students. Only time will tell how deeply the past 18 months of scattered learning has affected them. Patrick McGorry has spoken of the deepening mental health crisis, the shadow pandemic. I see it as being like an iceberg: the real threat is below the surface. I think we currently only see a glimpse of the potential risks ahead of us. To reduce the risks of the shadow pandemic, we need a reconsideration of the restrictions— (*Time expired*)

### Australian Reading Hour

**Mr PERRETT** (Moreton) (13:49): [by video link] Australian Reading Hour is in its 10th year and this year, more than ever, we've needed our books to transport us from the daily reality of viruses, vaccines, homeschooling, travel restrictions and lockdowns. The magic of books has kept us sane and transported us to places we can't physically travel to. Books are an escape from the worries of everyday life and reduce stress by 68 per cent. Reading makes your world bigger, even if you're confined to a hotel room in quarantine, because books can make the impossible possible. This year especially, when we're more disconnected from each other than we've ever been, reading other people's stories allows you to walk in their shoes for a mile. Books build empathy and connection and help you feel less lonely.

On Tuesday 14 September we celebrate the joy of reading with Australian Reading Hour, where we ask everyone to read for one hour. You can read anything you like, but the theme for this year is 'stories that matter', which has made me think about Australian stories that matter most to me. My top 10 in order are: *Cloudstreet*, by Tim Winton; *My Brilliant Career*, by Miles Franklin; *A Kindness Cup*, by Thea Astley; *Boy Swallows Universe*, by Trent Dalton; *Such is Life*, by Joseph Furphy; *Charades*, by Janette Turner Hospital; *Bring Larks and Heroes*, by Thomas Keneally; *Praise*, by Andrew McGahan; *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, by Richard Flanagan; and *My Brother Jack*, by George Johnston. Happy reading, everybody.

### COVID-19: Vaccination

**Mrs WICKS** (Robertson) (13:50): [by video link] The COVID-19 vaccine rollout continues on the Central Coast, with over 110 locations on the Central Coast where you can go and get vaccinated. This includes over 70 GP-led clinics offering Vaxzevria, formerly known as AstraZeneca, with 15 of these offering Pfizer; and 44 community pharmacies administering Vaxzevria. As of this month, they will also be able to administer Moderna. There is ample supply of Vaxzevria available, and I've heard many reports of locals securing bookings within days of ringing up. The Erina respiratory clinic also offers Vaxzevria and Pfizer, and there are two state-run clinics operating at the Gosford and Wyong hospitals.

The COVID-19 vaccines in Australia are safe, effective and free. For every Vaxzevria vaccine administered, a Pfizer dose is freed up for somebody who really needs it, including those who are under 18, and pregnant or breastfeeding women. I'm pleased to be advised that the Pfizer supply continues to increase across Australia. We've just announced that there'll be an additional 40 GP-led clinics administering Pfizer vaccines across the Central Coast this month, taking the total number of GP-led clinics to 55 across the coast.

The federal government believes that all Australians should have access to a vaccine when and where they are available. I encourage all Central Coast residents to make a choice for your country, your community, your family, yourself or any or all of these reasons and go and get vaccinated to help stop the spread of the delta variant. *(Time expired)*

### **Le, His Excellency Hon. Hieu Van AC**

**Mr ZAPPIA** (Makin) (13:52): In what has been described as a fairytale journey, after seven years in office South Australian Governor Hieu Van Le ended his term yesterday. Born in Vietnam in 1954, Hieu Van Le arrived in Darwin in December 1977 as a 23-year-old boat refugee with little more than the clothes he was wearing, having fled at the end of the 10-year Vietnam War. His arrival was very similar to that of so many Afghan people who have fled their homeland in recent days. Three decades later, Hieu Van Le was appointed Lieutenant Governor of South Australia and, on 1 September 2014, Governor of South Australia, a role in which he has been so warmly received by the South Australian people and in which he has served with dignity, professionalism and humility.

As patron of more than 200 organisations, Hieu Van Le, most often accompanied by Mrs Lan Le, became the people's governor. Hieu will be replaced by career diplomat Frances Adamson, who becomes the third woman to serve as South Australian Governor. I congratulate Frances Adamson and wish her well in the role. I also thank Hieu Van Le and Mrs Lan Le for their service to South Australia, and wish them every happiness in the next phase of their lives, in which I have little doubt they will both continue to serve South Australia in some capacity.

### **COVID-19: Testing and Detection**

#### **COVID-19: Vaccination**

**Mr TIM WILSON** (Goldstein) (13:53): Thank you to those residents getting tested to shield us against COVID-19 and, more critically, those who are making sure they're vaccinated. Locally, the testing centre run by 'Sandy' Hospital and its ambulatory care centre and Brighton Golf Course have conducted an incredible 120,000 COVID-19 tests over the past year. Led by Amanda Murphy, David Osman and Dr Vanessa Thompson, SACC's walk-through sites and pop-up clinics have made testing more responsive to the outbreaks where they've occurred and accessible to residents locally. Now their operations team, led by Helen Kenny, Britt Crowley, Emily Kate Daly and Daniel Chechina, are delivering vaccines, having put 38,000 jabs into people's arms since June.

Thank you to the team for your efforts and to the whole team at the 'Sandy' Hospital for being at the front-line dispensary of vaccines with local GP clinics and pharmacies. As reality has set in, everyone plays a critical role in ensuring jabs get into arms. Residents carry the burden and responsibility to make sure that they get a COVID vaccine, so they have the armoury to confront a post-COVID-zero future. We give thanks to those who have, to those who will and to those who are helping them do so.

#### **COVID-19: Quarantine**

**Mr DICK** (Oxley) (13:55): I rise to thank the people of my electorate and the whole state of Queensland for their incredible work in containing COVID-19 and for their commitment to keeping themselves and their neighbours safe from the virus. Since June there have been 16 potential outbreaks in Queensland. Sixteen times, the people of Queensland have been faced with COVID-19, faced with the delta strain, and we did what it took to come out on top. But the people of Queensland are incredibly fortunate to have a premier and a state Labor government that they can trust to make the right decisions at the right time, even when the Prime Minister and the federal government try to stand in their way.

Last week, Premier Palaszczuk stepped into the enormous leadership vacuum created by the Prime Minister and announced that her government would build a regional quarantine facility at Wellcamp airport. Labor has repeatedly called on the federal government to build this facility. Back in July, Labor leader Anthony Albanese showed the leadership that should be coming from our Prime Minister and toured the site and listened to the people of Queensland. He then called on the Prime Minister to step up, do his job and build the facility that Queenslanders support. Quarantine is a federal responsibility, and we have a government that is determined to shift responsibility, like everything else, onto the state governments.



The Prime Minister had two jobs this year: to roll out the vaccine and establish a safe, alternative hotel quarantine. Both have been abject failures. It's clear that Queenslanders deserve a federal Labor government that's on their side.

### **Tokyo Paralympic Games**

**Thomas Kane, Ms Tiffany**

**Levy, Mr Matthew**

**Mr ZIMMERMAN** (North Sydney) (13:56): [by video link] Over the last week, Australians have been tuning in to watch our incredible Paralympic athletes compete on the world stage in Tokyo. Just like their Olympic counterparts, our Paralympians have been well represented on the podium, reaping over 50 medals in the games so far. I had the pleasure of hearing the stories of two North Sydney based Paralympian swimmers, Matt Levy and Tiffany Thomas Kane, when I caught up with them via Zoom from Tokyo.

Matt, a veteran of the Paralympic swimming team, was born with cerebral palsy and a vision impairment. He told me with a shrug how he has endured over 50 operations in his lifetime. Matt made his Paralympic debut in Athens, in 2004, making this his fifth consecutive Paralympic Games, becoming only the second athlete to achieve this. In Tokyo he has added a bronze medal and a gold medal to his already impressive collection.

Tiffany became the youngest Australian Paralympic swimmer to compete at the world championships when she participated at the 2015 competition in Glasgow at just 13 years of age. She went on to win a gold and a bronze in Rio in 2016. Already at these games this inspiring young woman has won bronze in the 200-metre individual medley and is on track to defend her 200-metre breaststroke crown, winning her heat in the event just this morning.

Matt, Tiffany and the entire Paralympic team have made their communities and their nation so proud. We are inspired by your efforts and wish you all the best of luck for the rest of the games.

### **Scullin Electorate: Infrastructure**

**Mr GILES** (Scullin) (13:58): I rise to recognise the completion of the Hume Freeway interchange at O'Herns Road, which opened yesterday. This is something that I have been campaigning for since before I was elected to this place, and in December 2013 I tabled a petition of residents from Epping North and Wollert to fund connecting O'Herns Road with the freeway. This is a win for them.

For years now, there's been a grassroots-led campaign fighting for funding for this vital interchange to better connect people in this fast-growing part of Melbourne to opportunity and amenity. I pay tribute to the hard work and the dedication of community members like the Aurora Community Association. I thank the City of Whittlesea and my state colleagues Lily D'Ambrosio and Bronwyn Halfpenny, because this was a project based on real need, not something dreamt up in a minister's office and plonked on a spreadsheet before an election. It will make a real difference to people's lives.

This is not a project that should have taken so long to build and it shouldn't have taken the immense pressure led by community and the consistent support of the member for Grayndler, now the Leader of the Labor Party. Melbourne's outer suburbs simply can't rely on a Prime Minister who announces projects before an election, like commuter car parks, but ones that will not start in that term of office. Melbourne's north deserves better. Melbourne's north deserves the infrastructure that people in growing communities deserve, and that will only come from an Albanese Labor government.

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

## **QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

### **COVID-19: Biosecurity**

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:00): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to threats by the Attorney-General that state governments may again face High Court challenges to force their borders open. Can the Prime Minister confirm that he spent \$1 million of taxpayers' money supporting Clive Palmer's attempt to tear down the Western Australian border last year and that some of it went directly to Clive Palmer?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:00): We did not pursue that matter and we are not pursuing those matters.

### COVID-19: Economy

**Mr WALLACE** (Fisher) (14:00): My question is to the Prime Minister. Given that we know widespread lockdowns present a significant negative effect on our economy, will the Prime Minister outline to the House how sticking to the national plan ensures a way forward for our country to live safely with the virus, restore Australia's economic future, get businesses going again and get Australians into jobs?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:01): I thank the member for Fisher for his question. I especially thank him for his untiring advocacy on the issue of mental health in this parliament and particularly for our young people. He has been an extraordinary advocate and has informed the government's policies significantly, including the more than \$2 billion that we announced in last year's budget. I commend the member for Fisher for his extraordinary work and passion.

He also knows that the national plan will enable Australians to live safely with the virus in the future. That's what it achieves and that's why it's important: to move away from the heavy burden of these terrible lockdowns that are being lived with in two states and one territory even now as we speak, and also not to have to live with the threat of such heavy lockdowns hanging over the rest of the country. The national plan is essential, critical, to Australia's economic recovery. Today, the national accounts which have been released affirm that, despite the tremendous challenges of COVID over the course of 2020-2021, our economic response as a government, investing in the resilience of the Australian economy, its businesses and households, has proven to be highly effective. That has ensured that Australians have been able to continue to make their way through.

Now, it's certainly difficult; there's no doubt about that. But what the national accounts reveal is an economy that is resilient and an economy that has been supported by the targeted and well-thought-through economic interventions that are seeing Australia through: supporting incomes, keeping our economy ticking over, enabling Australians to build their first home and supporting new investment by businesses all around the country to drive our economy through at a very difficult time. All measures are working closely together to achieve what has been over the course of 2020-2021 an extraordinary economic comeback. It's an economic comeback which some doubted would occur, but one which now puts Australia, in the course of the last financial year, as one of the most successful developed economies in the world in countering the impact of COVID-19.

But the challenges are still there and we're now going to face the same challenge again as the delta strain has wreaked its havoc on countries all around the world, including here in Australia. We will mount that comeback again! The same economic policies, determination and commitment which have seen Australia once through this pandemic, economically—putting a million people back into work—we will do them again. Australians can have confidence that we will produce through our policies the confidence that they can go ahead to support an economy that guarantees the essentials that Australians rely on. (*Time expired*)

### Economy

**Mr STEPHEN JONES** (Whitlam) (14:04): My question is to the Treasurer. The Treasurer said our economy was 'ahead of the pack', but new numbers show that it's growing more slowly than the US, the UK and the OECD average, and the current quarter has been extremely tough for Australians. Was your claim of 'ahead of the pack' about as accurate as your claim to be 'back in black'?

**Mr FRYDENBERG** (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:04): The Australian people watching today's question time could be mistaken in thinking that the honourable member actually wanted the economy to contract in the June quarter. They were actually begging and hoping and wishing that our economy would contract. The reality is that it didn't. The reality is that, at 0.7 per cent in the June quarter, we saw economic growth that was better than what the market was expecting. We now see our economy is 1.6 per cent bigger than it was at its pre-pandemic levels. The honourable member references other countries. Let me tell him that in France, their economy has contracted by 3.2 per cent, whereas ours is up by 1.6 per cent. In Germany, their economy has contracted by 3.3 per cent, whereas our economy is up by 1.6 per cent. In the United Kingdom, their economy has contracted by 4.4 per cent, and our economy is up by 1.6 per cent.

These are the June quarter numbers, and of course we're going to have a tough September quarter with our two major states in lockdown. But I'd say to the honourable member that what these numbers show today is that our economic plan has helped drive economic growth. I point to the dwelling investment numbers, which are up by more than 15 per cent through the year. A pipeline of 151,000 house approvals over the course of the last year was driven by programs like HomeBuilder, which those opposite did not support. Our immediate expensing provisions have seen machinery and equipment up by more than 22 per cent since last October's budget. Normally, in a recession you get businesses putting their wallets back in their pockets and not investing in economic growth. But businesses across Australia are buying a new harvester for the farm, buying a new cafe machine for the coffee shop, buying new tools and equipment for the tradie and investing in their future because they have hope and they

have confidence in Australia's future. Today's economic numbers show that we have seen solid growth over the June quarter, that our economy is strong, that our economy is resilient and that our economy will bounce back strongly once restrictions start to ease.

### Agriculture Industry

**Mr CHRISTENSEN** (Dawson) (14:07): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister. Will the Deputy Prime Minister outline to the House how regional Australia has been front and centre by delivering 0.7 per cent growth in today's national account figures, confirming the success of the Morrison-Joyce government navigating Australia safely through the pandemic?

**Mr JOYCE** (New England—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development) (14:07): I would like to thank the unassuming, quiet and retiring member for Dawson for that question. The member for Dawson was instrumental in the Mackay Ring Road stage 2, and the one thing we're not looking forward to is another one of his postings on TikTok or Facebook. He has been absolutely incredible for Urannah dam, and I look forward to working as hard as I can and as quickly as I can to get that dam built.

In the national accounts, agriculture has seen its highest ever gross value at \$48.3 billion, up from \$48.1 billion. Agriculture contributed more than a third of last year's GDP growth. Prime Minister, hasn't there been a difference in the short time I've been back in the agriculture portfolio? It has been incredible to go to saleyards. I remember that once, if you got \$1.20, you were doing well. I was speaking to Scotty on his property near Tamworth. I said, 'Scotty, what's the price today?' He told me it's \$5 a kilogram live. I said, 'Hey, Scotty, how about we buy some fat lambs? What's that going to set me back?' He said, 'Mate, well over 200 bucks.'

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** Members on my left!

**Mr JOYCE:** I can remember a time when, if you got \$40 for a fat lamb, you were doing well. Agriculture under this government has been a roaring success because it shows we have a plan that makes sure that we work hard. I'd like to commend the Prime Minister and the Treasurer for the instant asset write-off. It is brilliant, whether for McDonald Bros Transport buying a prime mover, or you're buying a cattle crush from Guyra. Buy it for your yards and use the instant asset write-off. If you're buying panels, instant asset write-off—

*Ms Butler interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Griffith is warned!

**Mr JOYCE:** If you are doing things that make your productivity greater, you can get support from a coalition government, and the coalition government has taken this section of the economy roaring ahead.

We believe in irrigation. We're building dams. A dry acre at St George probably produces about \$60 worth of wool; a green acre, an irrigated acre, \$9,000 worth of cotton. We know the numbers. We know how to make this economy bigger. We know how to create the economy that can pay for the great stimulus work that this government has done to keep Australians going forward, to keep our net growth going forward, to keep our nation safe and to give the Australians the hope and the safety of a plan that will take them to a better future.

### Regional Development

**Mr DICK** (Oxley) (14:10): My question as to the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development. I refer to the announcement made by the minister for regional development of \$8 million for the Fitzroy Community Hospice. Why did the minister allow Senator Pauline Hanson to gazump him and the member for Capricornia and announce the grant the day before?

**Mr JOYCE** (New England—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development) (14:11): I would like to note that, of course, we have Labor Party members who lobby us for grants, especially in regional areas, because we love regional areas.

*Honourable members interjecting—*

**Mr JOYCE:** Yes, we do. I can give you the letters.

*Honourable members interjecting—*

**Mr JOYCE:** It goes very well. And of course we have senators who lobby us. And I can tell you, Mr Speaker, the member for Capricornia—who, because of COVID, can't be here today—and the member for Flynn, sitting up there are why we have Rookwood Weir, in the member for Flynn's seat. It's the member for Capricornia who got the Keppel Bay Sailing Club \$20 million. She was instrumental in that. And I can tell you the Rocky sports stadium—

**The SPEAKER:** Just resume your seat for a second.

**Mr JOYCE:** I look forward to continuing on about the Rocky sports stadium.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order?

**Mr Albanese:** Yes, it goes to relevance. The question goes to why Senator Hanson is making government announcements prior to the minister.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I listened carefully to the Deputy Prime Minister at the beginning of his answer and I appreciate that he mightn't have answered in the way the Leader of the Opposition wishes. But I do think he was relevant to the question, and he's now giving some context. So I'll keep listening.

**Mr JOYCE:** And context I am happy to give. So, although I note that Senator Hanson has lobbied, I can tell you right now that the member for Capricornia has for the Rockhampton Hospital car park, \$7 million; the Rocky sports stadium, \$23 million; Rookwood Weir, \$183 million; the Rocky Ring Road; Beef Australia—

**The SPEAKER:** I do think the Deputy Prime Minister's now straying from the one example that was given in the question to a whole lot he wasn't asked about.

**Mr JOYCE:** I apologise, Mr Speaker. I would say that, quite obviously, it is the case that, if we have an announcement then a whole range of people—you know what they say about success and failure and parentage. But success is driven by government. Announcements are driven by government. The government has the Expenditure Review Committee that approves the money. The government has the cabinet that approves the policy. And this government, this side, has the member for Capricornia, Michelle Landry, who has been an absolutely tireless worker for her electorate, just as the member for Flynn has, just as the member for Hinkler has, just as the member for Calare has, just as the member for Riverina has. It has been a great team that has brought so much to regional Australia.

I look forward to working with the member for Capricornia on many other further announcements—because the people of Central Queensland realise that, when the other side were in government, they were forgotten about; they were taken for granted. They were taken for granted—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** Members on my left!

**Mr JOYCE:** And you know what the final insult was for the people of Central Queensland, where this piece of infrastructure is? The Leader of the Opposition went up there, but he didn't want to take the media to Moranbah. We all remember that!

**The SPEAKER:** You're well and truly straying now, Deputy Prime Minister.

**Mr JOYCE:** There we go. He was like a gnome in the grass. The only way to find him was if the lawn mower accidentally hit him! The member for Capricornia, I know, is making sure that she will continue to frequent my office lobbying for things, as no doubt other senators will, as no doubt members— *(Time expired)*

*Ms Butler interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Griffith, I have been very tolerant and it's now ended. I realise there aren't a lot of people here, but I'll still use 94(a).

### COVID-19: Vaccination

**Mr BANDT** (Melbourne—Leader of the Australian Greens) (14:15): [by video link] My question is to the Prime Minister. Your job is to keep all people safe, not just some. But even though you set an 80 per cent vaccination target for adults, there's no target for children, nor for at-risk communities like First Nations peoples or peoples with disabilities. Everywhere from Wilcannia to the United States, we're seeing the virus rip through at-risk communities. Prime Minister, at national cabinet this Friday, will you ensure the national plan has separate vaccination targets for children, First Nations people, people with disabilities and other at-risk groups so that they're vaccinated to at least the same levels as the broader population when restrictions are eased?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:16): I thank the member for his question and highlighting those very important groups within our community, all of which are encompassed within the national plan. The member may not be familiar with the details of the national plan and, in particular, how it recognises that even within the overall vaccination targets of 70 and 80 per cent that there is a strong recognition in all the work that has been done going into that plan that there will need to be careful management around vulnerable communities. Those vulnerable communities are CALD communities, they're Indigenous communities, they're a range of many other communities—those who are homeless, those who have issues with substance abuse. There are a range of varying groups across the community which will require continued careful management for their public health.

The Chief Minister here in the ACT has been making this point extremely well. And he and I have discussed it on numerous occasions as we've been preparing plans to deal with a pandemic that post 70 and 80 per cent vaccinations will require an ongoing and very careful public health plan that deals with disadvantaged communities. Socioeconomically disadvantaged communities—we've seen this in how the pandemic has played out, not just here in Australia but all around the world. And there will be a very clear and cooperative national strategy that deals with the ongoing public health needs of disadvantaged communities. But that plan will ensure that the broader community will also be able to go forward, and this it's why it is a safe plan.

It's a safe plan that enables the broad spectrum of Australia to move ahead and to avoid these terrible lockdowns that are causing so much pain and for Australians to move on from that and not live in fear of them either but, at the same time, ensure that we have very targeted and focused public health responses at a state and at a federal level that understand the very serious needs of those communities, be they in remote places—this is a matter the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory has consistently raised, and we have worked together on from the outset—

*Dr Freeland interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Macarthur!

**Mr MORRISON:** working closely with him, as we indeed are now, because there is such a disparate—a disparate—performance on vaccinations, particularly in the Northern Territory.

*Dr Freeland interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Macarthur will cease interjecting.

**Mr MORRISON:** So that is exactly what the national plan provides for. I'm sure the member will be pleased to hear that. And, if he'd like to learn more about it, then we'd be very happy to ensure he can be provided with further details if he were so interested.

### COVID-19: Economy

**Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (14:19):** [by video link] My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer remind the House yet again of the Morrison government's very strong record of ensuring our economy remains resilient in the face of the many challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:19):** I thank the member for Robertson for her question and acknowledge that there are more than 10,000 businesses in the honourable member's electorate who are going to benefit from the immediate expensing provisions that are now available to them as a result of policies that we've supported on this side of the House. I had the welcome opportunity to join the member for Robertson in her electorate before these lockdowns, and I had the opportunity to meet with a young female apprentice electrician and hear how the government's wage subsidy is supporting her opportunities to get into training and to get a job.

Today we have the national account numbers. They show that the Australian economy is strong. They show that the Australian economy continues to grow. They show that the fundamentals of the Australian economy remain sound and that the Australian economy remains resilient in the face of the biggest economic shock since the Great Depression. In the June quarter, 29 days saw lockdowns in one part of the country or another, including across our four largest states, yet our economy still grew by 0.7 per cent, ahead of market expectations, and we have seen through-the-year growth of 9.6 per cent, strong through-the-year growth across our economy.

This growth was driven by an improvement in household consumption—up 1.1 per cent and more than 15 per cent through the year. And the tax relief we've provided to Australian households saw nearly \$4 million go into households' pockets in the June quarter. We also saw dwelling investment, off the back of programs like HomeBuilder, up again, by more than 15 per cent through the year, with a strong pipeline of construction. We saw business investment, particularly in machinery and equipment, being very strong. Machinery and equipment investment was up by more than 22 per cent since last year's October budget. That's the fastest growth in machinery and equipment expenditure in nearly 20 years—off the back of our immediate expensing provisions. As the Deputy Prime Minister has said, farm GDP has been extremely strong—up by more than 40 per cent through the year as a result of a bumper winter harvest. So whether it is household consumption, dwelling investment, business investment, farm GDP or even public-sector final demand, which is government infrastructure across the states and territories, it is helping to create more and more jobs. So we can be hopeful, we can be confident, we can be optimistic about our future because the Australian economy and its fundamentals remain strong.

### JobKeeper Payment

**Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (14:22):** My question is to the Prime Minister. Why didn't the government put rules in place to require that JobKeeper payments to profitable companies with rising revenue be returned to the taxpayer?

The government makes welfare recipients and parents who receive the childcare subsidy return excess payments. Why weren't the same rules put in place for profitable companies with rising revenue?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:23): When we announced JobKeeper, at one of the most difficult times this country has seen for decades, the country was looking into the economic abyss like so many countries around the world. People didn't know whether they would be able to go to work the next day or, indeed, whether they would ever see work again. The very day we announced it, the number of people who it was intended would be given notice that they would not be coming back to work—I've heard the stories from all around the country. When we announced it, it had many purposes. Of course, it was to provide income support that was necessary on a scale that Australia has never had to engage in before and to effectively marshal the private sector payrolls of this country to deliver a level of social security income support we had never seen before. It was a great partnership between the government, private sector employees and, indeed, Australia's financial institutions and the banks to enable that level of economic support, to provide an injection of confidence that was so desperately needed. And we made a deal with the employers of this country. We said, 'We are going to provide this support for companies going into this situation and it will be there for six months.' That's what we put in this place. We made that promise and Labor voted for it. We said we were going to stand by this economy and those businesses, and we made that legal. We did that together.

What I hear from those opposite now is they want to change the rules afterwards. They want to change the goalposts. They want to shift the mark. They want to have it each way. They want to support JobKeeper and they want to oppose JobKeeper. This is a constant theme of the Leader of the Labor Party. We made that commitment—

**The SPEAKER:** The Prime Minister will resume his seat. The Manager of Opposition Business, on a point of order?

**Mr Burke:** On direct relevance. The question does not go to the whole of the JobKeeper program. The question goes simply to those employers, those companies, that ended up with rising revenue and turned a profit.

**The SPEAKER:** I understand that. I'm going to hear from the Leader of the House; I'm ready to rule, but I don't want to keep cutting the Leader of the House off!

**Mr Dutton:** At some stage I probably should put a question to you about this continual conduct which you have commented on—you have, I think, chastised both the Leader of the Opposition and the Manager of Opposition Business on a number of occasions—because it is an abuse of the standing orders. They repeat getting up and making a statement which goes beyond—

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the House will resume his seat. I will rule on whether points of order are frivolous or not. I've heard from the Manager of Opposition Business. The question was very specific, but the way it was framed was, 'Why didn't the government take certain action?' I think the Prime Minister's been very relevant up until now. I have to say that the answer has nothing to do with his observations about the Leader of the Opposition, because he didn't ask the question. But explaining how the program evolved and how it passed through the parliament is being relevant to the question, even if he's not answering in the way you'd prefer.

**Mr MORRISON:** The question put by the Labor member betrays what we have seen from the Labor Party in this place. What was essential at that time was that what was committed to was followed through. That is what gave the Australian business community the confidence to keep people on the payroll, to then put a million people back into work and to ensure that, under the national accounts, as we have just seen, Australia's economy was bigger at the end of June than it was before we went into the pandemic. What we have seen, in the questions put by the Labor Party, is they will happily change the rules on business; they will happily flip them. They cannot be trusted on anything they say when it comes to the economy. (*Time expired*)

#### **ANZUS Treaty: 70th Anniversary**

**Mr SHARMA** (Wentworth) (14:28): [by video link] My question is to the Minister for Defence. Will the minister please inform the House of the significance of today's 70th anniversary of Australia's most important strategic and military partnership, the US alliance?

**Mr DUTTON** (Dickson—Minister for Defence and Leader of the House) (14:28): I thank the honourable member for his question. He is a man who has served his country as an ambassador and continues to do great work as a local member of parliament, and who is one of the strongest supporters of our relationship with the United States.

As we know, 70 years ago today in San Francisco the compact was signed between Australia, the United States and New Zealand. Of course it came off the back of the Second World War, and it came off the back of an effort of our allied troops to save the world from a particular course and a direction that would have been harmful and

devastating to the entire world for many decades. The world would never have recovered from the Second World War had the United States and the Allies not approached Germany and the forces against us during that period, without the resolute capacity that only the United States can bring to a wartime effort.

Since that time, over seven decades we have stood with the United States and the United States has stood with us. We've seen in its most recent iteration in the Middle East we brought out 4,100 Australian citizens, visa holders and permanent residents. Not one of those people would have made it to our plane if it wasn't for the effort of the United States. And it wasn't just us. New Zealand, France, Spain—rattle off the countries; they were not able to have a presence at Kabul without those 4,000 soldiers and without the 1,000 British soldiers. We have an incredible partnership with the United Kingdom as well. Our countries would not have achieved the success without the United States.

We turn our attention now to the Indo-Pacific region. We know that there is greater uncertainty in this region than at any time since the Second World War. It is more important than ever for countries in our region to see the rock that is the relationship between the United States, our country and New Zealand. Our shared values, our perspective on the world, our belief in freedom of speech, our belief in a sovereign right and our belief in making sure democratic processes prevail have been at the core of the peacetime success that has resulted in millions of people being lifted from poverty and put on a much more certain trajectory than they would otherwise have faced. With uncertainty in our region the Australian public knows that our ANZUS alliance is more important now than it was 70 years ago. All those leaders on both sides of the equation, who have given their commitment to this compact for 70 years, should know that this government will continue to reinforce the ANZUS treaty for many, many decades to come.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition, on indulgence?

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:31): I join with the defence minister and others who spoke earlier today in commemorating and celebrating the 70 years of the ANZUS Treaty. It is our most important relationship. It will be even more important going forward given the uncertain times that we're in. I certainly commend my further comments and the comments of both sides of the House in the earlier debate on what is a bipartisan commitment between Australia and the United States based upon friendship.

#### **Newcastle Electorate: COVID-19**

**Ms CLAYDON** (Newcastle) (14:32): My question is to the Prime Minister. Rachel, in my electorate, is 24-weeks pregnant. She cannot get an appointment for the vaccine recommended for her until 2 November. She's on the waitlist at five GP clinics and was turned away when she tried to get a vaccination at a walk-in clinic. In Newcastle another pregnant woman, just like Rachel, is in intensive care with COVID. How could the Prime Minister leave pregnant women so vulnerable?

**Mr HUNT** (Flinders—Minister for Health and Aged Care) (14:32): Whilst I don't have Rachel's details, I'd be very happy to receive them and to see if we could assist in some way, shape or form. We are aware of the other case to which the member refers, and we are seeking details from New South Wales Health at this stage. I've not received them, but I have requested them.

In terms of vaccination for women who are pregnant, on 9 June 2021 the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation—ATAGI, as it's well known—in conjunction with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, RANZCOG, issued a joint statement recommending that pregnant women are routinely offered Pfizer mRNA vaccine at any stage of pregnancy. From a Commonwealth perspective they have been prioritised through that period, and we have been encouraging general practices, Commonwealth vaccination clinics and state clinics in order to provide that support.

I know there are over 8½ thousand primary care vaccination sites across the country, and approximately 200 are in the Hunter region, as the member would be aware. This includes 110 general practices, two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health services and over 70 community pharmacies. In particular, 50 of those general practices have had early access to Pfizer in the Hunter region, and we would be happy to assist in either of those cases. We continue to encourage all practices to provide priority to pregnant women, in line with the advice of ATAGI as issued on 9 June.

#### **Economy**

**Mrs McINTOSH** (Lindsay) (14:34): [by video link] My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer inform the House how the Morrison government's unprecedented financial support and its decisive economic management are keeping our economy resilient as we move towards a national plan to return to life after the COVID-19 pandemic? Is the Treasurer aware of any alternative policies?

**Mr FRYDENBERG** (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:35): I thank the member for Lindsay for her question and acknowledge her strong support for the policies of the Morrison government, which are designed to help create jobs and to help Australia get through the biggest economic shock since the Great Depression.

Last year, at the height of the pandemic, we were staring into the economic abyss. Treasury thought that the unemployment rate could reach as high as 15 per cent—that's more than two million Australians potentially unemployed—and that economic growth could contract in the June quarter by more than 20 per cent. That's nearly the size of the Victorian economy. That's what Australia faced at the height of this pandemic.

And we responded with overwhelming and unprecedented amounts of economic support—direct economic and health support now totalling more than \$300 billion. That economic support has seen a strong rebound across the economy. In the back half of last year we saw the strongest growth numbers in more than 50 years. We have seen our unemployment rate come down to 4.6 per cent, the lowest in 12 years. I point out to the House that when we came to government the unemployment rate was 5.7 per cent, and I point out that today—as of the end of the June quarter—our employment levels are 1½ per cent higher than they were going into the pandemic. In Canada, they're 1½ per cent below. In the United States they're 4½ per cent below.

So we have put in place policies that have helped support the economy. One of those policies was JobKeeper. JobKeeper supported 3.8 million Australians and around one million Australian businesses. It's a program that was described by the Governor of the Reserve Bank as a 'remarkable' program. And the Australian National Audit Office said that the ATO, in administering the program, was highly effective in its management of risks. We also know from a Treasury review, in their words—the federal Treasury—that the program was 'well targeted'.

Now, am I aware of alternative approaches? I am, from those opposite—those opposite who seek to diminish from what has been the most remarkable economic support program this country has ever seen. It's a program that has helped support millions of our fellow Australians. And now the Labor Party is seeking to destroy a fundamental tenet, a fundamental position, in our tax system to force the tax commissioner to dump data before the Senate. That is a dangerous precedent, and that is one that has been called out by business groups.

Our programs throughout this crisis, including right now with the COVID disaster payment and the business support payments, are designed to keep Australians in jobs.

### **COVID-19: Vaccination**

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:38): My question is to the Prime Minister. Yesterday, the Prime Minister said, 'Ultimately, everything is a state matter.' Was it the states or was it the Prime Minister who failed to deliver enough vaccine supply?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:38): I was being asked about state borders when that matter was raised yesterday.

**Mr Albanese:** It's a social measure—

**Mr MORRISON:** That is a public health social measure. A border closure is done on the basis of a public health order. It's done on the basis of public health orders—that's exactly what it is. The Leader of the Opposition might want to freshen up on some of the facts. He might want to get across some of these issues if he wants to engage in these snide interjections which are the result of his own lack of knowledge and understanding of the challenges this country faces!

What I do know is this: today, I read this—a very wise statement made by a member of the Senate, 'I think we are getting to the end of the lockdown era, partly because we are doing so well on vaccinations.' Senator Kitching, a Labor senator from New South Wales, had an outbreak of truth in the Labor Party. There has been an outbreak of truth!

But I think the Leader of the Opposition remains vaccinated against the truth, completely vaccinated. There's no shortage of that when it comes to the Leader of the Opposition.

What we do know today is that, again, more than 330,000 vaccine doses have been administered right around the country. Today we will go close to—indeed I expect we will breach—20 million doses having been administered around the country. This week we announced the half a million additional doses of hope, of Pfizer, coming through the arrangement we were able to put together with the government of Singapore. There are also the million doses and more that we were able to secure in our arrangement with the Polish government. We are working these issues, ensuring we leave no stone unturned to ensure that we can continue to accelerate the vaccination program, which is now achieving rates of weekly vaccination that exceed even those of the United States and the United Kingdom at their peak.

Those opposite may want to talk this down. I'm pleased Senator Kitching has decided to take a different approach. They may want to seek to undermine and be negative and hope for the worst, but the government will



continue working to deliver the best for this country. We're not only seeing that with the vaccination program; we're seeing it with the economic supports that have enabled us to bring Australians through one of the biggest crises this country has ever seen. So we will continue to do that, while the opposition will continue to be negative.

**The SPEAKER:** The Prime Minister has concluded his answer. The Leader of the Opposition can't be seeking the call for a question. Are you seeking it—

**Mr Albanese:** I am asking the Prime Minister to withdraw the comment that he just made. He's made it repeatedly. I've now lost seven of my constituents. They have died. No-one in Australia is hoping for the worst from this disease—because that's the worst, a loss of life. I'd ask the Prime Minister to withdraw.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition has made his point. The remark was not unparliamentary. There's no doubt about that. The Leader of the Opposition can make the request, which he has done, but it's a matter for the Prime Minister given it wasn't an unparliamentary remark.

### COVID-19: National Plan

**Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (14:42):** My question is to the Minister for Health and Aged Care. Will the minister please update the House on how Australia's vaccine rollout and national plan will assist small businesses and employees to return to work?

**Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Aged Care) (14:42):** I thank the member for Higgins for her question and her work as a national leading paediatrician prior to coming to this place. We know that in the last 24 hours over 560,000 cases have been diagnosed as part of the global pandemic, and 8½ thousand people have lost their lives. These numbers continue every day at agonising global levels. Australia has been spared so much of it, but we have not been spared absolutely, as we see so clearly in New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT at the moment. But one of the things which are fundamental is what's occurring at the moment with vaccinations. We've seen, as the Prime Minister has said, over 334,000 vaccinations in the last 24 hours alone, the highest rate for a Tuesday, which always leads to a very good outcome for the rest of the week. We're now at 19.7 million and, as the PM says, we are today expected to pass 20 million doses that have been delivered. Very significantly, that's 1.95 million—almost two million—Australians, or almost 10 per cent of the eligible population, in one week who have come forward for either a first or a second dose, a rate which is higher than anything achieved by either the United States or the UK at the peak of their rollouts. To do that, we're drawing upon the entire national network—our GPs, our pharmacies, our Commonwealth vaccination clinics. In particular, I want to thank and acknowledge our Aboriginal medical services and our state vaccine clinics.

Very importantly, as we do this we see that we are on the cusp of achieving 60 per cent first-dose coverage for the entire nation. That should occur probably during question time today—a 60 per cent first-dose rate for the entire nation—and in the coming 48 hours we are likely to pass 80 per cent for everybody over the age of 50. For the country as a whole, what matters about the 60 per cent first-dose rate is that it means we are now approximately 2.2 million Australians from the 70 per cent level and approximately 4.2 million Australians from the 80 per cent level.

These numbers are not that far away, and at the pace of almost two million vaccinations a week, you can see how close we are, you can see that it's there, you can see that we're on the cusp of achieving the levels which will allow the national plan to be delivered to help create and save jobs. I welcome the comments of both the New South Wales and Victorian premiers recommitting to that plan to save jobs and save lives. (*Time expired*)

### COVID-19: Vaccination

**Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:45):** My question is to the Prime Minister. Yesterday the Prime Minister said, 'Ultimately, everything is a state matter.' Was it the states or the PM who failed to vaccinate aged-care workers? Is it any wonder the New South Wales Premier is aghast at this performance, saying today:

... there was a process where aged care workers would get vaccinated first. We had tens of thousands of them in NSW who hadn't been offered the vaccine. We're playing catch-up now.

Isn't Premier Berejiklian right?

**Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:46):** The Minister for Health and Aged Care may wish to add to this answer. The vaccination rate for aged-care workers now is 78.8 per cent on first dose and 56.7 per cent on second dose. Importantly, for aged-care residents the first-dose vaccination rate is 89 per cent and the second-dose vaccination rate is 84.4 per cent. We know that that is the principal reason why we have seen during the course of the outbreak in New South Wales such a significant fall in fatality rates compared to what we saw with similar cases in Victoria during the outbreak last year. That has been an extraordinary effort by many, including the vaccination program led by Lieutenant General Frewen and by

Professor Murphy prior to that, and, in addition to that, the great work being done by the New South Wales government in partnership with the federal government. I thank them for that.

We've been continuing to work on what is a very difficult program in that sector, but we do know the decision taken by our government to ensure that we focused first and absolutely on getting to every single residential aged-care facility in this country and being able to offer two doses of vaccination has saved hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of lives. That is ultimately the outcome that this is all about—saving lives, saving livelihoods. That is what our program has been doing. More than 30,000 lives have been saved in this country because of the responses that the government, together with our partners around the country, have been putting in place now for these many months, more than 18 months, and not only just the 30,000 more lives that have been saved but the million jobs, the million Australians who are back in jobs and can look forward to a future with confidence because they've been living in a country whose COVID response has done both of those things—saving lives and saving livelihoods.

Mr Speaker, I need to add to an earlier answer. I referred to Senator Kitching as being a senator for New South Wales.

**The SPEAKER:** You did.

**Mr MORRISON:** She is, as we all know, a senator from Victoria, and that's the truth, just like she said.

**The SPEAKER:** No, no, the Prime Minister will—

**Mr MORRISON:** I was just adding.

**Mr HUNT** (Flinders—Minister for Health and Aged Care) (14:48): To add to the Prime Minister's answer, 225,000 aged-care workers have now had vaccinations. What we've seen is that the pledge to put in place mandatory orders has had a major impact. We know that access has been available, but what we've seen over the last seven weeks is 13,000; 11,000; 14,000; 13,000; 18,000; 21,000; and 16,000 workers now having taken up a vaccination. I welcome that fact that, last week, New South Wales added a public health order to this. All of those elements have helped to lift those rates. Unfortunately, it has been necessary to mandate. The access has been there, but the uptake is now there. We welcome it. It's saving lives and protecting lives. *(Time expired)*

### COVID-19: Regional Australia

**Dr WEBSTER** (Mallee) (14:49): My question is to the Minister for Regional Health. Will the minister please update the House on actions the Morrison-Joyce government is taking to protect regional, rural and remote Australians during the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Dr GILLESPIE** (Lyne—Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment and Minister for Regional Health) (14:49): I'd first like to compliment the member for Mallee for her fierce campaigning and advocacy for her cross-border communities to make sure they don't get caught in the COVID crossfire and get access to the medical services they deserve across the river or across the border. Please be reassured that we are vaccinating at record levels around rural, regional and remote Australia. That is why in last week's figures 493,000—almost half a million—of those 1.9 million doses were delivered in the out-of-metro regions in Australia. It's constantly being calibrated, recalibrated and adjusted so that we get more points of care, more points of vaccination and more point-of-care testing around regional Australia.

In the member for Mallee's electorate—she'll be reassured; she's there on the ground and she probably knows this, but this is just to illustrate the point—there are 10 general practices in her home town, there are five community pharmacies, there's one Aboriginal medical service and there's one Commonwealth vaccination centre. The Royal Flying Doctor Service has brought forward their latest visit this week not only into the Mallee but up near the Queensland border down the coast. Just yesterday and today they were at Wreck Bay. I would like to compliment the Flying Doctor. They have turned up again. I want to give a big shout-out to one of their nurses, Kellyann Johnson, who's Indigenous and is from the Jervis Bay area. They were running a huge clinic in Wreck Bay. The oldest recipient was an 88-year-old Indigenous lady, and the youngest was a 12-year-old boy. One of the local leaders said, 'Kellyann is an inspiration, and now all the little kids say they want to be a Flying Doctor nurse too.' So thank you Kellyann.

Seriously; that latticework of community based primary care vaccination sites is why this ramp-up is working in regional Australia. If you look at the national figures, you see that, in the metro districts and outer metro, the vaccination last week at the finalisation of figures was 58 per cent. Just across the border in rural and regional Australia it was 57 per cent, so we're matching the metro rollout. There are some waves where we're a bit behind, but we're catching up rapidly. In the remote part of Australia we have got extra support through the ADF and through the Australian Medical Assistance Teams.

Rural Australia not only generates the wealth of the country; it's also the playground of the city folk, and we are working to make sure regional, rural and remote Australia reaches the 70 per cent and reaches the 80 per cent at the same time so we can all get going and get our lives back. We have a plan that's being delivered— (*Time expired*)

### COVID-19: Quarantine

**Ms STANLEY** (Werriwa—Opposition Whip) (14:52): My question is to the Prime Minister. Yesterday the Prime Minister said:

Ultimately, everything is a state matter ...

Was it the states or was it the Prime Minister who failed to establish a system of safe national quarantine?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:53): Again the question from Labor is misrepresenting the statements of yesterday. I've made it very clear that the border measures that are put in place by the states relate to public health orders, and they are clearly responsibilities of the states when it comes to people moving from one state to another. So I ask that the Labor Party cease misrepresenting that.

But I'm asked about quarantine. The most important challenge for quarantine right now is to ensure that home quarantine trials are successful so home quarantine becomes the norm that enables Australians who are overseas to return, that enables Australians who are here now and who have been vaccinated to go overseas as they used to and to return and quarantine at home. This is the very matter I was discussing only last night with the New South Wales Premier because it's so important to enable international travel to start again. Home quarantine is the answer to that. That is what is set out in the national plan. That is what is agreed in the national plan. That is what has been led by the Commonwealth in moving us into a home quarantine phase that will enable Australians to travel again. It will enable more people to come into the country, be they students or be they skilled workers that are so necessary for Australia's economic performance. They can take advantage of a range of different quarantine arrangements, both commercially provided and otherwise provided, that will enable the national plan to gear up and strengthen our economy into the future. So home quarantine is what is needed. Home quarantine is what is going to release Australians out of the lockouts, out of the lockdowns, to ensure that Australia can live safely with this virus. I would urge all members of this chamber to support the move to go now to home quarantine. That will see Australians who are vaccinated able to return home and vaccinated Australians able travel again to be reunited with family overseas.

That is the challenge that's now before us. That's what was set out in the national plan that I took to the national cabinet and was agreed to, and I look forward to working closely—whether it is in South Australia, where the trial is already underway, or in New South Wales, where further trials will be done. And I encourage all other states, be it Queensland, Western Australia or Tasmania, to get on board with those initiatives. I know they're watching those trials very closely, and they'll be very enthusiastic about taking them up, because the national plan enables Australians to live with the virus, and home quarantine enables Australians to live with the virus and connect again with each other and those all around the world.

### Defence Industry

**Mr STEVENS** (Sturt) (14:55): My question is to the Minister for Defence Industry. Will the minister please outline to the House how the Australia-US defence alliance is creating a stronger partnership between our defence industries so that our ADF has the capability it needs to keep Australia safe and secure?

**Ms PRICE** (Durack—Minister for Defence Industry) (14:56): I thank the member for Sturt and acknowledge and thank him for his passion and interest in South Australia's defence industry, especially that world-leading shipbuilding industry. I thank him so much.

Today we celebrate our longstanding and deep friendship with the United States—70 years of the ANZUS treaty. It is an unbreakable bond that has reached new heights, especially between our two defence industries. We have joined Lockheed Martin in the US to deliver the most advanced war-fighting aircraft in the world, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Fifty Australian companies share in some \$2.7 billion worth of work in this program, with Australian-made parts on every F-35 globally. Marand in Melbourne manufactures the vertical tails, Ferra engineering in Brisbane manufactures the weapons adapters and Cablex in Melbourne manufactures the cabling.

I had the great pleasure of witnessing this partnership in action firsthand when I visited the F-35 production line in Dallas, Texas, some two years ago. It really was a very proud moment to see those very shiny, upright Marand vertical tails on every F-35 on the assembly line. Australian workers and defence personnel train and work in the US with their American colleagues in the F-35 program, creating new skills to operate and to maintain these aircraft at home and also abroad.

When I went to the US I went with one goal in mind, and that was to win more F-35 work for the Australian defence industry, and I'm proud that we succeeded, with Western Sydney based Quickstep winning more manufacturing work because of that visit. Only last year, the Prime Minister and I announced that the first military aircraft to be designed and built in Australia in more than 50 years had been rolled out in partnership with Boeing. I'm talking about the Loyal Wingman. The development of this aircraft in Australia is Boeing's largest investment in unmanned aircraft outside of the United States, and we should be incredibly proud of that. This will ensure our two countries have a leading edge in the field of autonomous war-fighting capabilities. A bit closer to home, here in Canberra, CEA has developed the world's most advanced radar systems for defence capabilities, with exports to the US of that particular capability.

ANZUS has taken our alliance to new levels. This is creating a much stronger bond between our two countries. As the Minister for Defence Industry, I'm very focused on bringing us even closer together. No-one can say with any certainty what the future threats are to the security of this country, but what is clear is that a defence industry partnership with the US ensures that our men and women in uniform have what they need to keep us safe and secure.

**The SPEAKER:** The minister's time has concluded. I call the member for Makin.

### COVID-19: Vaccination

**Mr ZAPPIA** (Makin) (14:59): My question is to the Prime Minister. Yesterday the Prime Minister said, 'Ultimately, everything is a state matter.' Was it the states or was it the Prime Minister who said the vaccination program was not a race?

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the House?

**Mr Dutton:** The Prime Minister has made very clear that the statement made as a preamble to that question is not accurate. It related to a response the Prime Minister gave when asked about the closure of state borders. It has been repeated since the Prime Minister has raised this, and it is very clear that this misleading statement, regardless of how often it's repeated, is factually not correct, and it shouldn't be allowed.

**The SPEAKER:** I can't agree with the Leader of the House. The *Practice* has made it very clear since 1901. It's not for the Speaker to vouch for the accuracy of questions or, indeed, answers. If someone claims to have been misrepresented, we've got the standing orders so organised that there's an official capacity for them to do that at the end of question time or at the end of when a comment has been made. The question is in order.

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (15:01): I would encourage the member to go and have a chat with Senator Kitching. I would encourage him, next time they're in their caucus room, to go and have a chat with the ALP senator for Victoria about the progress of the vaccination rollout, which she has made very clear is the reason Australia is moving away from lockdowns in this country, and I welcome her acknowledgment of that. Those here who sit opposite us may want to come in here every day and seek to undermine that program. They may wish to engage in their usual politicisation of the COVID-19 pandemic. They may wish to choose that, but they reinforce only one thing to the Australian people: that they are only engaged in negativity. They are only engaged in running down the country. Even here yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition—

**The SPEAKER:** I will just say to the Prime Minister: the question was asked by the member for Makin, and the Prime Minister needs to be relevant to the question that was asked by the member. It's not an opportunity to begin a political debate on yesterday or today or any other matter.

**Mr MORRISON:** What I can confirm, as the Minister for Health and Aged Care has done, is that today we are likely to go past the milestone of some 20 million doses of vaccines being administered around the country—20 million doses. That means that almost 60 per cent of the eligible population aged over 16, around 60 per cent of them, would have had their first dose in this country. That's around 35.7 per cent who've had a second dose. For those over 50, it is almost now 80 per cent who have had their first dose and 52.9 per cent who have had their second dose. Very importantly, 87.8 per cent of those aged over 70, the most vulnerable in our community, have had their first dose, and 63.8 per cent have had their second dose.

I can update the House on my earlier response, as further information has been brought to me after my morning briefing. For aged-care workers, first dose is now 82.9 per cent and second dose is 61.3 per cent. The vaccination program is a central part of the government's national plan to get Australia beyond these lockdowns which are doing such terrible damage to people in this country. We need to get past these lockdowns, and the vaccination program is liberating Australians from those lockdowns, which is the objective of the national plan, not to keep Australians shut in, not to keep Australians locked out of states around this country. The national plan is about opening up Australia. The national plan is about connecting Australians to other Australians and connecting

Australia's economy to the world so Australian businesses can continue to go forward and have confidence to invest and to employ. (*Time expired*)

### ANZUS Alliance

**Mr TIM WILSON** (Goldstein) (15:04): My question is to the Minister for Home Affairs. Will the minister please update the House on how the Morrison government is working closely in the ANZUS alliance to tackle the threats of serious organised crime and terrorism in order to create a stronger Australia and keep all Australians safe?

**Mrs ANDREWS** (McPherson—Minister for Home Affairs) (15:05): I thank the member for his question. I recognise his ongoing interest in national security matters and the great work he is doing as a member of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security. On the 70th anniversary of the ANZUS treaty it's worth reflecting on the strength of our alliance and the great strides that we have made together in addressing a range of challenges. It's a fact that COVID is not the only challenge to our safety and security, and it's a fact that serious and organised crime and terrorism are threats that don't recognise borders. That's why our government continues to build ties and work extremely closely with allied nations, particularly our ANZUS partners, who are also part of our Five Eyes intelligence network.

I've had a number of meetings recently with US Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas on a range of national security issues. Of course, our two nations will continue to work very closely and very effectively on a range of operational issues. We've seen that just recently, with the success of the AFP's Operation Ironside. That operation was borne out of the very close relationship between the FBI and the AFP. It's been a very longstanding relationship that has served Australia and the United States very well. Our international network was mobilised and we worked very collaboratively on the technology that enabled us to listen in on criminal networks and, ultimately, to be able to take them down. This has made Australia a safer place by taking drugs and crime bosses off our streets. So far, 293 offenders have been charged and close to 5,000 kilograms of drugs have been seized. Australia is also a big beneficiary under an historic new data-sharing agreement with the US, which will give our local law enforcement agencies more tools for the fight on crime. Having passed enabling legislation in June of this year, we are now looking to settle and finalise the terms of that agreement and to do that before the end of this year.

When it comes to national security and when it comes to the safety of our community, Australians know that this government, the coalition government, is a government that they can rely on to keep them safe and secure. We're absolutely getting on with the job of making sure that we are looking after the best interests of Australians, and we are taking every action that we possibly can to ensure they are safe and secure at home and in their communities.

### COVID-19: Vaccination

**Dr FREELANDER** (Macarthur) (15:07): My question is to the Prime Minister. Yesterday the Prime Minister said, 'Ultimately, everything is a state matter.' Is it the states or is it the Prime Minister who is responsible for vaccinating children aged 12 to 15? When will they be vaccinated?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (15:08): I thank the member for his question. It is, indeed, the federal government's responsibility to run the national vaccination program. I've made that point very clearly, whether it be from this dispatch box or any other place which I've been speaking from. We've made that very clear. When we received the final advice—I know the member does follow these things earnestly—from ATAGI last Friday, we made the immediate decision to proceed with the vaccination of 12- to 15-year-olds, and bookings will be available from the 13th of this month. That will follow the expansion of the program to 16- to 29-year-olds from earlier this week. We did that knowing full well that we'd be able to give greater support to that vaccination program for 12- to 15-year-olds because of what we knew was in the works in terms of accessing additional Pfizer supplies, particularly out of Singapore.

*Dr Freeland interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Macarthur has asked his question.

**Mr MORRISON:** We were able to announce those decisions this week because of an additional half a million doses that we were able to bring forward to ensure that that can support the vaccination of children aged 12 to 15. We will report those figures of vaccinations, of those 12 to 15, as we have reported all other figures throughout the course of the pandemic and been very transparent about them, because I know that parents—as a parent of two children aged between 12 and 15—will be very interested to know about how we're progressing with those vaccinations for that age group. It's an important group to be vaccinated. That's why we moved immediately to ensure that they, more broadly, would be able to be vaccinated.

We had already taken the decision, some weeks ago, for those in Indigenous communities and remote places and those with other health conditions to be vaccinated prior to that, and that program has already been running for many weeks as the member is, I'm sure, aware. And I want to thank—as the member himself, a local health professional in his own community over many years, greatly respected, knows—the tremendous job that general practitioners are doing in supporting that vaccination program.

When you're talking about young children, as I'm sure the member knows—I'm sure he's given many injections to young children—the opportunity for them to go and sit there with a local GP who's helped them with every other sneeze and snuffle or even more serious things over time and to be able to see a face they know, to be able to get that injection and to have that assurance from that health professional, is extremely important. I want to thank the GPs as they go about that job of vaccinating our children. That's an important trust we give to our GPs and nurses and everyone else who's doing it. I thank you for doing it, and I thank you for the way that you will engage in that. I'm pleased that we've been able to get the additional doses to support that, and there are more irons in the fire for that outcome as well.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Mackellar. The member for Boothby?

**Ms Flint:** There is a technical issue. Am I able to ask the question on behalf of the member for Mackellar?

**The SPEAKER:** Yes, this is questions without notice—anyone can ask a question!

### Small Business

**Ms FLINT** (Boothby—Government Whip) (15:11): Great, let's go! My question is to the Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business. Will the minister please update the House on why sticking to the national plan is vital for Australian small and family businesses, especially in light of today's national accounts and especially for those residents of the member for Mackellar's electorate?

**Mr ROBERT** (Fadden—Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business) (15:12): I thank the member for Boothby; I was expecting the member for Grey to ask the question. Today's national accounts, of course, have got a pleasing number at 0.7 per cent growth for the June quarter. But, importantly for small business and whilst the results are better than many expected, small businesses still are doing it tough.

Unpacking the numbers today, we see one of the biggest contributors to the 0.7 per cent growth in the quarter is household consumption driven by expenditure on services, and many of the providers of those services are our small and family businesses—services like cafes, restaurants, hotels, transport services and the like. This demonstrates that the fundamentals of the economy, under the stewardship of the Morrison government, are strong and they bounce back strongly once restrictions are lifted. It also shows that Australian households are doing their bit by supporting our small to medium enterprises through local consumption, and it's important that we continue to do our bit as well.

It's clear that supports the Morrison government has put in place during the pandemic are working and they're working well, but it is fundamental that we continue to stick to the agreed national plan if we're going to follow this through. The national plan is our national hope. It's the national hope for small and family businesses right across Australia. If we stick to the national plan, our small and family businesses, our families operating them, can actually plan with certainty. If we move away from our national plan, we will take national hope away from them.

Our small businesses have been fundamentally impacted by COVID-19. We all know that. It's why the Morrison government has put in place the largest package of financial supports in our nation's history—\$291 billion worth, everything from JobKeeper to business support payments and the SME Recovery Loan Scheme, all there to assist small and medium enterprises. They buy us time, but they aren't a permanent solution for our small business community. The Prime Minister has said that, as we fight our way towards 70 and 80 per cent vaccination rates, as per the agreed national plan, we can open up Australia, and that means our small and family businesses can open up. The national plan gives us certainty. The CEO of COSBOA, Alexi Boyd, made this point very well, saying, 'Small businesses need to be able to plan.' She welcomed the national plan. Her words were: 'It's great we've now got this. It's imperative all states work together to support the reopening as fast as we can.' The Morrison government is on a unity ticket—we're all on a unity ticket over here—with small businesses on the national plan. It's now important that everyone else, and every other parliament, joins that unity ticket with us.

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

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

#### COVID-19: Economy

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (15:15): Mr Speaker, I wish to add to the answer to the first question from the government side today.

**The SPEAKER:** The Prime Minister may proceed.

**Mr MORRISON:** I table an open letter from the business community, representing some 80 different organisations, encompassing Australia's largest businesses, in particular asking for governments to work together to implement the national plan and chart a path out of the current lockdowns. I table that letter.

## DOCUMENTS

### Presentation

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

## PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (15:16): I wish to give a personal explanation.

**The SPEAKER:** Does the Leader of the Opposition claim to have been misrepresented?

**Mr ALBANESE:** I do.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition may proceed.

**Mr ALBANESE:** Again today the Prime Minister repeated his statement, in relation to COVID, that I was 'hoping for the worst'. This is wrong and offensive. The worst outcome from COVID is the loss of life, which, tragically, over 1,000 families in Australia have felt. The suggestion by the Prime Minister says a lot about his character and undermines the dignity of the House. It should not be repeated in this House.

## MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

### Economy

**The SPEAKER** (15:17): I have received a letter from the honourable member for Whitlam proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The failure of the government to manage the economy in the interests of working people and small business.

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 STEPHEN JONES** (Whitlam) (15:17): The Prime Minister of Australia is an economic failure. He was the last person in Australia to learn that a health strategy in the middle of a pandemic is an economic policy. He is the root cause of the pandemic and lockdown misery that is ripping its way through eastern Australia. His negligence is costing Australia and the Australian economy \$3.2 billion every week. That's \$19 million every hour. The nation is divided, and he is the cause of it. Western Sydney is at a flashpoint right now—divisions, small businesses on their knees, the health system in crisis. In my electorate and in the Illawarra, according to Regional Development Australia, we have lost 10,400 jobs through this latest wave of COVID-19. Our unemployment rate is estimated to be 12.4 per cent. Small businesses are in real trouble. They aren't getting JobKeeper, and JobSaver payments simply aren't coming through. With insufficient support for small businesses, they are closing their doors.

The Prime Minister's answer to this bin fire that he has started in New South Wales and Victoria is to pick a fight with the two big states that aren't actually in lockdown. Can you imagine what the people in Western Australia are thinking today? Yesterday it was announced that they're getting the AFL grand final, a big economic boost to that state. But, at the very same time, the Prime Minister, who makes a habit of protecting the Neanderthals on his own backbench, is comparing Western Australians to cave dwellers. In Queensland, today and tomorrow and the next day, kids are going home from school in the normal fashion. On the weekend they'll be participating in school sport. In the evening they'll be going to a restaurant or a club. They'll be going to a pub. On Sunday they'll be going to church and they'll be going to places of worship. But this Prime Minister's answer to the bin fire that's going on in New South Wales and has spread to Victoria is somehow to blame the people and the premiers of Queensland and Western Australia who are quite rightly trying to protect the public health and the small businesses in those states. He is the bloke who starts the bushfire and then starts telling the people who are trying to put the bushfire out to put down the hose. If this Prime Minister wants to know what a dangerous and ignorant cave dweller looks like, he should grab a mirror. Eight long years and no economic plan—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Andrews):** Order. The minister on a point of order.

**Mr Robert:** The member knows full well that imputations upon members is not within the standing orders. He's been here long enough.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member will withdraw the imputation.

**Mr STEPHEN JONES:** I withdraw. Eight long years and no economic plan. If you're an ordinary working Australian and you look at economic policy, the things that matter to you are the ability to put a roof over your head—a house you can call home—a steady job that gives you the ability to pay your bills, hope that your kids will get a good education and set them up for good jobs in the future, hope that the government gets the big calls right and puts the interests of Australians ahead of their own political interests, and hope that the government is going to put the country's interest first. But instead of all of that, we've got a government that has racked up record deficits and record debt with nothing to show for it.

At the very time the Prime Minister was congratulating himself about how well the economy was going, just a few short weeks ago, real wages in this country actually went backwards by two per cent. The Prime Minister was saying the economy was going gangbusters, but ordinary Australians were finding it harder to pay for the things that they need on a daily and weekly basis. There's a housing crisis. Parents around the country today are wondering whether their kids will ever be able to afford a house, put a roof over their head and call it their home. We've had a boom in insecure work. One in five jobs are now so insecure that people find it almost impossible to get access to credit or to even dream of a day when they'll be able to get a mortgage to buy their own home. We've seen a crash in productivity. The trade deals that this mob brag about are not worth the ink they are written with. The very moment when it matters the most, the very moment when we think these trade deals should matter, they fall apart, and this government thinks it's a great idea to go and pick a fight with our biggest trade partners.

This is the mob that call themselves great economic managers. They are abject failures. They are looking after themselves and not the people of Australia. They've put \$4 billion in the last budget away in secret slush funds so they can repeat the travesties that Australians have been horrified by over the last few months. The Leppington Triangle—this mob who say they are so good with money spent \$30 million on a parcel of land you could have picked up for \$3 million. Tell me again how good you are at managing money! The sports rorts and the 'pork and ride'. At the time when we're looking for infrastructure projects that are going to set us up for the future, this mob's idea of nation-building infrastructure is six car parks in the Treasurer's own electorate, most of which will never get built.

They have no plan for the future. A government that was interested in ensuring that we were going to get out of this pandemic and out of this economic crisis in better shape than we went into it would have a plan for the future. But this Prime Minister's just got a plan for the next election.

We've got a skills crisis in this country, and we've got a productivity crisis in this country. If you want to set yourselves up for the future, what will drive the future is going to be investment in skills, investment in ideas and ensuring that we've got the energy to drive industry. But this mob over here are afraid of new ideas and they're afraid of the causes of new ideas. There is no other explanation for a government that in the middle of a pandemic, when we should be rebuilding and retraining, rips the guts out of our university system and rips the guts out of our vocational education and training system. Instead of training our kids, instead of ensuring that we are using this crisis as an opportunity to build the capital and ensure that our kids have the skills for the future, their big plan is to hope for the day when we can open the borders up again and bring in skilled tradespeople from overseas. Australians want this government to train our own kids, to ensure that they are fit for the jobs that are going to get us out of this pandemic and not be relying on the lazy pathway, divesting in our universities and divesting in our vocational education and training. This mob have no plan for the future.

The core message that this mob are going to take to the next election is that things were going very well until the pandemic came along. The fact is that they weren't. They had doubled the debt before the pandemic, and they have tripled it now. We saw business investment falling off a cliff, wages at a 10-year low and productivity going backwards, and the simple fact of the matter is that they've got no plan to get us out of this mess. Their core message at the next election is going to be: 'Trust us. Things were going well before COVID, and they'll go well somehow, magically, after COVID'!

We've seen enough of this lot. You can't trust the bloke who started the fire to put it out. That is the simple fact of the matter. You can't trust the bloke who started the fire to put it out. He won't hold a hose, and he's got no plan for the future.

**Mr ROBERT** (Fadden—Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business) (15:27): It's all hyperbole today, the same rubbish talking points we've heard, year in, year out, from an opposition with no ideas. Today's matter of public importance, a matter that the Labor opposition believe is of such importance at a time when the national accounts have come out showing our economy in such strength considering the position we're in, is to talk about a failure to manage the economy! So let's speak about the economy, not gesticulating and hand waving like the member for Whitlam does, thinking that blustering noise and volume alone substitute for hard facts and realism. Let's go to the hard facts from today.



From the national accounts: nominal GDP growth was strong for the financial year and increased 4.1 per cent ahead of the budget forecast of 3¼ per cent. Real GDP grew by 0.7 per cent in the June quarter, a staggering 9.6 per cent higher throughout the year and the strongest through-the-year rate on record. Growth was stronger than market expectations and ahead of what was forecast, with reputed economists forecasting a 0.1 drop to a 0.7 realisation. Our economy is now 1.6 per cent above its prepandemic level, with the recovery continuing to lead the pack ahead of advanced economies. And this apparently is the failure of the government's economic approach—extraordinary!

Household consumption increased 1.1 per cent to the June quarter, contributing 0.6 percentage points to GDP, up 15.4 per cent through the year. Consumption increased in 12 out of 17 categories. New business investment rose by 2.3 per cent in the June quarter, with continuing strength in new machinery and equipment investment, increasing 2.4 per cent to a staggering 19.5 per cent higher throughout the year. Since the October budget, investment in new machinery and equipment has increased 22.4 per cent, a staggering increase right across the board, from tradies to small and family businesses through to the medium- and large-business sector. It is the strongest period of growth since 2002, but those opposite believe that it's a failure of the government to manage the economy. It's the strongest period of growth since 2002, with almost 115,000 jobs created in the quarter and the unemployment rate now below pre pandemic, below March 2020. This is the only industrialised nation on earth that's got more of its citizens in employment now than pre pandemic. Apparently, though, there's a failure of the government, except we're the only industrialised nation on earth to have more of its citizens employed. I say to those opposite: wake up, and have a look. Household gross disposable income continues to be supported by the government's tax relief, with a further \$3.8 billion flowing to more than 11 million households.

We have a vaccination program that continues at enormous speed, with over 300,000 doses administered per day. Today it is likely we'll move towards 20 million doses having been given. This is one of the reasons that we've laid out a national plan. The state premiers and the territory leaders have agreed to the national plan, and we call on all of our state and territory leaders to continue to adhere to the national plan. The national plan is our national hope. It gives hope to individuals in our small- and family business sector. It gives them the confidence to plan. The current phase we're in has got a range of measures, including lockdowns that are hurting so much. As we move to 70 per cent of adults aged 16 and over having been fully vaccinated, we'll move to a transition phase and then, at 80 per cent, to a consolidation phase. The consolidation phase is about living with the virus and minimising serious illness and deaths. Measures may include lifting inbound and outbound travel restrictions for vaccinated Australians and students, workers and humanitarian visa holders being able to return. There will be baseline community restrictions only—that is, getting back to life and allowing us to plan. That's why the national plan is so important.

Whilst right now there are restrictions imposed through state based public health orders, the federal government is stepping up and providing much needed support. Despite the national accounts to June showing the strength of our economy and the record numbers of Australians getting jobs, the support continues to roll out. As at midnight on 31 August over 1.8 million Australians had received a COVID disaster payment, with \$5.14 billion going to citizens in need and 52,000 claims for COVID disaster payment being processed by 31 August 2021. Since 1 July, 1.7 million claims have been granted for New South Wales alone, and the list goes on. The support measures for business, especially the small to medium enterprises and the small and family businesses, are extraordinary. COVID-19 disaster payments are lump-sum payments for workers unable to work, with eligible workers now receiving up to \$750 a week, if they lose 20 hours or more, and \$450, if they lose between eight and 20 hours. Small-business support is also offered outside of New South Wales across every state and territory on a fifty-fifty funding basis with the Commonwealth. We're helping businesses to employ staff by providing wage subsidies of 50 per cent of an apprentice's or a trainee's wage, with \$3.9 billion in the Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements scheme. Upwards of 200,000 apprentices are coming through the scheme, which is expected to support over 70,000 employers. It is the single biggest kick-up that we have looked at in the last decade across the apprenticeship space.

We've introduced new insolvency frameworks to help small to medium enterprises to restructure. Through the Coronavirus SME Guarantee Scheme, we're providing guarantees of 50 per cent to lenders for new unsecured loans, and guarantees of 80 per cent are available for firms that were previously on JobKeeper through the SME Recovery Loan Scheme. We're increasing the instant asset write-off threshold from \$30,000 to \$150,000 for assets that were previously purchased. Business investment and economic growth are benefitting from advanced depreciation. We're providing temporary full expenses incentives and cash-flow support through temporary loss carry-backs. Increased mental health funding support for small-business owners is, I think, one thing we can all genuinely agree is so important in terms of mental health support for those who are finding it difficult. There is targeted assistance for severely impacted regions. We are extending digital solutions, including the Australian

Small Business Advisory Service, to include general business advice for ongoing digital. We are backing in the Go Local First campaign to encourage businesses. On top of that: for small to medium-sized enterprises, from 1 July this year their tax rate went from 30 per cent to 25 per cent. It will progressively go down from 30 per cent over a number of years, but it is now down to 25 per cent. That is extraordinary for small businesses.

We're improving payment times by ensuring that bills are paid on time. From 1 July we are paying invoices of up to a million dollars within 20 days. That's the government's commitment to what it's doing with small businesses. We are requiring large businesses and certain government enterprises with a total income of over \$100 million to report on how and when they pay small businesses. We will change the law so that the ATO cannot commence recovery against small business whilst there's a dispute in place. This government has put in place a small-business court within the AAT, where there are no lawyers. If you're going up against the ATO, there are no lawyers, there are judgements within 28 days and there is a set fee under \$1,000 so that someone can go in and get quick justice.

This is what this government is doing to stand up and support small and medium-sized enterprise businesses. We're not sitting on our hands, looking at the current account numbers coming through and going, 'Those numbers aren't bad; the economy and the fundamentals are strong.' We are continuing to do more and more to assist. We're reducing regulatory compliance costs. We're moving through our automotive franchising reforms, and the franchising reforms have moved through in the last few weeks. And we're continuing to provide funds for financial counselling and assistance.

We will continue to secure our recovery. We will continue to lean in strongly to support the economic fundamentals of our nation. Those opposite would have you believe that 115,000 more Australians employed now than before COVID—the only industrialised nation on earth to do this—is a fluke. Those opposite would have us believe that the strength of our economy, as shown in the national accounts, is somehow a fluke. I've got news for the opposition: it's careful economic management that's delivered those results for Australians.

**Ms McBAIN** (Eden-Monaro) (15:37): [by video link] Let's be real: this government has no plan to help in a disaster, whatever nature it is. It doesn't understand that its lack of planning has major flow-on effects to real people. Its lack of foresight and its governing by focus groups has plunged it into a series of reactive decisions. This government will always be remembered as the 'I don't hold a hose' government, which is a metaphor for so much.

So much of my electorate was devastated by the Black Summer fires. The whole country saw the effects of these catastrophic fires, and most understand there is significant trauma associated with these events. People lost their lives. Others lost homes, properties, businesses, livestock and their livelihoods. But the bushfires didn't just impact those who were on the front line; they had flow-on effects to the whole community, and these effects are still being felt today. Imagine you earn 70 to 80 per cent of your income in a short period of time over summer, and, because of this disaster, your entire area is deemed a tourist evacuation zone, seeing literally 80,000 tourists leave your area in a short window of time to keep them safe. Rather than proactively working with communities and businesses to support the economies of towns devastated by fires, this government sat idle and waited until community pressure forced them to act. The Morrison government did not understand that the flow-on effects of these fires meant businesses lost a whole summer of income—income they rely upon to get through the quieter winter months. This lack of planning has continued under the Morrison government, and it has caused immense damage to Australia's economy, to the economies of towns across my electorate and to individuals and small businesses.

This year the Prime Minister had two of the most important jobs—a speedy vaccine rollout and effective quarantine. They were the most important things he needed to get right to keep Australia's economy ticking over and to keep communities safe. But the Prime Minister's lack of proactive planning has flow-on effects. Who on earth wouldn't order enough vaccines for the country? He chose not to ensure we had a variety of vaccines available. He squandered the position that the Australian community and our premiers and chief ministers put us in by not being actively involved in the vaccine rollout. He said it wasn't a race. But it was. The Prime Minister ignored the calls for purpose-built quarantine facilities. The Morrison government made these choices, and the result has been an economic disaster. The Prime Minister's choices and his failure on vaccines and quarantines have plunged half the nation into lockdowns, which are devastating businesses, workers and communities in my electorate.

Small communities in my electorate are calling for support, but the Morrison government fails to deliver. When Sydney first went into lockdown in June, the Morrison government didn't offer to support businesses across the country that were impacted by this lockdown. Support was available for people who lost their jobs in Sydney. Support was there for Sydney businesses. But this lockdown crippled our snow industry. Businesses in the Snowy Mountains make 80 per cent of their annual income in the winter months. Sydneysiders account for 70 per cent of

all visitors to the ski fields. Support needed to be rolled out immediately; but it wasn't, and it wasn't rolled out to our community. The result has been workers losing jobs. With no-one on the slopes, you can't employ ski instructors. With accommodation empty, cleaners were let go.

Right now, small businesses in my electorate are in crisis and workers are suffering. Businesses on the coast are usually preparing for September school holidays and for the summer influx. Businesses in Braidwood, Bungendore and Cooma would usually be getting ready for the huge amount of traffic transiting through their towns in the warmer months. It's usually a push to hire more staff and get them trained up. But businesses can't do that; they can barely keep their heads above water, let alone plan for the future. How can Eden-Monaro plan for the peak tourism season when it has lost most of the last seven school holidays? How can businesses continue when they are constantly cut off from their main sources of income?

Last summer, thousands of people left the region due to the Victorian border closure because of the Northern Beaches outbreak in Sydney. In the space of one day, businesses lost a week's worth of income that they were relying upon. Right now, these businesses need reassurance that support will continue when these lockdowns end. They need to know that, if borders are closed and lockdowns continue, this government will have their backs. Businesses and workers in my electorate need a government that has a real plan to repair the economy. They need a government that considers the flow-on effects of their decisions, a government that proactively plans for our communities. They need a government that will deliver for workers and small businesses. They need a Labor government.

**Ms LEY** (Farrer—Minister for the Environment) (15:42): I'm pleased to speak on today's MPI. Labor speakers are high on invective, insults and indignation; they are high on their respective high horses. What I would love them to do is get down on the ground and walk through the streets of my town and see the effects of the current global pandemic on the businesses and workers that I represent.

*Ms McBain interjecting—*

**Ms LEY:** With great respect, Member for Eden-Monaro, the bushfires were 18 months ago. As environment minister, I'm closely involved in our continuing response. I know how hurtful they were and how important they are.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Ms LEY:** With great respect, members opposite, the experiences that you are bringing to the chamber today are experiences and problems from the past. You never articulate a strategy for the future. You never bring solutions to this chamber; you only bring nastiness, negativity and a lack of hope. To any small businesses or workers who are listening to this today, please don't believe what you hear from the Labor Party. It's really easy to talk about how bad things are; I know how bad they are. Maybe it's a bit difficult for Labor to get on board with a national plan that looks to the future. The one thing people don't want to listen to us arguing about in the chamber today is the difficult circumstances of people's lives and making it political. This shouldn't be the subject of an MPI. This shouldn't be the subject of a nasty debate across the chamber.

In the middle of a global pandemic, a conversation about the economy is quite relevant. I don't think it's a bad debate to be having. With that in mind, we can talk about the good indicators the Treasurer has brought to the parliament today. New business investment has risen by 2.3 per cent. Since the October budget, investment in new machinery has grown by over 22 per cent because of the instant asset write-off. That gives businesses confidence about the future. Labor is giving businesses no confidence about the future at all. Labor is just saying to business: 'Look at what happened last month, six months ago, 12 months ago and base everything that you see on those times with respect to what's going to happen in the future. Don't listen to them.'

Now, come on. Listen to what the Prime Minister and members on this side of the House have been saying. What we have said is that we cannot hold the economy back. Look, the indicators today are really good when you consider the global pandemic. The indicators today should give people confidence that we can bounce back. We know that the economy can bounce back. So, hold that thought if you are a small business or a worker that is worried. Hold that thought and recognise—when lockdowns lift; when vaccination rates lift to 70 and 80 per cent; when border closures are lifted—the economy and the businesses that you work for and the businesses that you own can bounce back.

The Morrison government are making the decisions that will help you. We're not wringing our hands, we're not looking at the past like Labor, we're not raking over old coals. We're working out what you need, what your business needs, what your family needs and what will make a difference in your community. We absolutely want to do that for you, and we are doing that for you. No-one knows that better than me. I represent border communities. I've seen four savage lockdowns. I have tourism operators with amazing sites to show visitors, but no visitors can come to them. I have family businesses that have mortgaged their houses, that have taken loans

from parents, and those businesses are sitting in motels while nobody rings up, or, when they do, it seems it's only to cancel. They're desperate for a future income stream and confidence that means they can go on.

It is absolutely appalling that Labor would seek to take that hope away, because that's what they're doing today. That's what this MPI is all about. The only thing that sustains these businesses is faith in the reopening. Do not take that away, that faith the economy will reopen as per the Prime Minister's and the government's national plan. We will learn to live with the virus. We will increase the vaccination rates. We will lift lockdowns and open borders and we will allow you—as members say, it's not about support funding. It's about opening up and allowing us to go back to work.

**Dr ALY** (Cowan) (15:47): [by video link] I'm just astounded that this minister stood up and basically told the member for Eden-Monaro and all her constituents to 'get over it, the fires were 18 months ago'. It is incredibly insensitive of the minister to stand up and say that in response to the member for Eden-Monaro raising, very rightly and very sensitively, the concerns of her constituents.

On the matter before us, the member for Whitlam's matter of public importance on the economy, when I was a researcher and a professor, I used to tell my students three things about research. I used to say to them: always look at the source of the research and the claims that are being made, always look at the methods that were used to collect the information and always look at the interpretation of those results. Now, there's an old saying—that, quite honestly, I'm just about to make up—that goes 'you can take the girl out of the research, but you can't take the research out of the girl'. One wouldn't, for example, take on face value any health advice offered by the member for Dawson. Now, in question time today, the Prime Minister continued to spin the claim that the policies of the Morrison government put one million people back into work. He has also made the claim that the so-called coronavirus recession is 30 times more dire than the GFC. In response to that claim, Professor John Quiggin at the University of Queensland's School of Economics said, '30 times is nonsensical and an illogical calculation.' Professor Jakob Madsen from the University of Western Australia said:

... the Prime Minister's comparison was "amateurish" and "ludicrous" and demonstrated the inherent danger in measuring changes from rates of figures close to zero.

Again, look at the source, look at the methodology and look at the interpretation of results.

It's a fairly lofty claim for the Prime Minister to make, to say that his government has put one million people back into work. It's actually marketing spin, if we're honest. If you can trust Prime Minister Scott Morrison to deliver anything more than just big announcements and smoke and mirrors, then you really need to look at the source of the information and the source of the claims made. The fact is that the employment which has been available since the start of COVID has not been spread evenly. In fact, most of that employment—most new jobs—have been created in two states: Western Australia and Queensland. Well, hello! Those two states, particularly Western Australia—and I feel very blessed to be coming to you from Western Australia—have been kept safe because of the actions of their premiers in shutting down with short, sharp lockdowns that have not only protected the health of Western Australians and Queenslanders but have protected the health of the Queensland and Western Australian economies.

The Prime Minister said, 'Ultimately, everything is a state matter.' But it appears to me that he only wants to make it the responsibility of the states when something goes wrong. But when something goes right—when employment and jobs are created—it's due to the federal government; it's due to his policies! There's no credit to the states when things go right. But the absolute fact is that in COVID ravaged states, which are COVID ravaged because of the abject failure of this Prime Minister on quarantine and vaccines, the employment rate has declined, whereas in states where the premiers have taken resolute actions against COVID, often in defiance of the Prime Minister's attempts to open borders—siding with Clive Palmer against Western Australia, for example—those states have done well.

But the health of the economy is not only measured by employment. As members on the Labor side noted, there are many more measurements of our economic growth that disprove the claims that this government makes. Remember the source, remember the methodology and remember to look at the analysis. (*Time expired*)

**Mr STEVENS** (Sturt) (15:52): This is one of those great oops moments. This morning, at the opposition's strategy meeting—which is probably a term I use sarcastically—they discussed the fact that the national accounts would be released today. In their great hope and delight that the figures would not have been positive for our economy, some genius decided to move a matter of public importance related to economic management. The national accounts were released, later in the morning, and, thankfully for both the government and the people of Australia, Labor's wish and dream did not come true. Our economy grew in the quarter by 0.7. So now they're stuck with a motion that maybe someone else from the opposition was intending to speak to if that result had been slightly different. Instead, the poor member for Whitlam was sent in with that very cobbled together and half-

hearted effort to make a case which is completely not borne out by any economic data—most particularly, the data released today, being the national accounts. That data saw our gross domestic product increase by 0.7 per cent, or 9.6 per cent over the last 12 months, and a 1.6 per cent growth in our economy since the beginning of this pandemic. So I apologise to the Labor Party, but not to the people of Australia, that we are a government which is growing our economy and creating jobs for the people of Australia.

The MPI talks about working Australians. Thank God we've got so many more working Australians than we would have had if some of the more dire predictions at the start of this pandemic were to have come true. Obviously, we're all aware that, early on, the Treasury, the Reserve Bank and eminent economists all believed we could have been heading for double-digit unemployment in this country. Instead, the most recent unemployment numbers see a 4 in front of them, which is an unbelievable achievement. There are challenges within that data, to be sure, but, thank God, we are where we are, as opposed to where the working people and, indeed, the small businesses that the topic this discussion speaks to could have been had some of the worst predictions occurred.

I have the honour and privilege, like most members of parliament, to visit so many small businesses in my own electorate, and I can tell you that the message is resounding. The support provided by our government over the last 18 months has made an enormous difference for them, not only in keeping the doors open but, in many cases, in giving them confidence to make decisions to grow their businesses. The instant asset write-off is a great example of that. So many businesses I visit have made decisions to invest in plant and equipment, putting money into their businesses that they might not have otherwise if they hadn't got the encouragement of being able to immediately write off the value of that asset in the next tax return.

Other decisions for small business support that we've made throughout this have given businesses the confidence to know that their government is there to support them in tough times. There is no better example than JobKeeper. If we want to talk about working people, working Australians and supporting them, I think the JobKeeper program will go down as one of the great public policy legacies in the history of this nation's economy. It was that decision, coupled with the other measures of support, that I believe led to this unbelievable outcome when it comes to employment statistics, compared to the very grim predictions in the early days of the pandemic.

There's more work to be done. We've got a lot more to do. With an election due by next May, we will be looking forward to talking to the people of Australia about our plans for the future. But what we've had in the contributions so far from those opposite is a glimpse into their vision for the future of the economy, which is nothing at all. So we're campaigning against a question mark at the next election, evidently. I look forward to that, because I've heard so many contributions—not just in this discussion but in so many discussions on things like the pandemic over the preceding months—where the Labor Party, as previous speakers from the government have pointed out, are only hoping for terrible economic news, which does not eventuate, and continuously praying for that into the future. Shame on you! Your dreams have not come true. The economy is growing. We have not shed jobs in the hundreds of thousands, as the early predictions showed. In fact, we've got a very bright outlook for this economy. The only danger to this economy would be a change of government. The only thing that would see the bright future turn in the reverse would be if those opposite were elected at an election next year. Thankfully, all indications are that there is no chance of that occurring.

*Government members interjecting—*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

*Mr Dick interjecting—*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Oxley.

**Mr Dick:** Sorry.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I call the honourable member for Bruce.

**Mr HILL (Bruce) (15:57):** I can see why Christopher Pyne sent Mr James Stevens here as the member for Sturt. We do miss Christopher Pyne every time he gets up. What the Prime Minister has done to my home state of Victoria and our biggest state of New South Wales can never be forgiven or forgotten, as the Prime Minister's desperately hoping. The lockdowns are on him, the fake who sits over there in the Prime Minister's chair. He let this disease into our country before our population was vaccinated, because he failed to build quarantine. That's the hard truth of it. His failure to manage COVID-19 is not just a health crisis—or, now, a mental health crisis—engulfing the eastern seaboard; it's an economic disaster. Australia's economy is bleeding hundreds of millions of dollars every day and billions of dollars every week. Now tens of billions of dollars of extra debt has been added to the debt that the next generation will have to repay. That is paying economic support that we would not have had to pay if this bloke had done his two jobs. The economy is now held hostage, frankly. Families are being kept apart across the country, people are out of work and small businesses are failing from a lack of support, because the Prime Minister failed to do his two jobs: build quarantine and get enough vaccines.

Today, we learned the government is trumpeting, 'We have economic growth at 0.7 per cent.' They think that's a good result! Have a look at the United Kingdom, which is properly vaccinated. They have growth of four per cent. We've got fewer jobs, lower pay, higher debt and now the risk of another recession. The government's failures have diminished the hard-won gains and the sacrifice made by millions of Australians, including those in my home state of Victoria. Last year Australians did their bit, but their government has let them down and failed them. Now we have the gaslighting champion of the world. The Prime Minister's going for that title. He's telling us he's for freedom. Move over, freedom boy over there; we've now got freedom daddy coming at you. He's hoping that Australians will forget that he's the reason they're in lockdown. He's the reason we're facing the risk of another recession. As has been said, it's like getting the arsonist who lit the fire to come and try to put out the fire.

Even before the pandemic Australia's economy was weak. The government's also hoping that Australians just forget this. In the eight years that this government has been in office, real wages have been lower than when they were elected. Australian workers are taking home less pay in real terms than eight years ago when this mob were elected. Real wages fell by 0.7 per cent between 2013 and 2019, before the pandemic even hit. The Prime Minister can't blame COVID for this. This is the result of his failed economic management. Economic productivity has declined after eight years of the Liberals. Household debt is up. Housing affordability is stuffed. We have the third-highest household debt in the world. A housing bubble is emerging, it seems. Inequality is worse. We have a trillion dollars of Liberal debt now, with nothing much to show for it. They've spent \$100 billion of new money in this budget and they spent \$100 billion of new money last year in the last budget, yet their projections are that real wages will continue to go backwards.

They are not managing the economy in the interests of small business or ordinary workers. But we could ask: who is actually benefiting? The answer's pretty clear. It's big, profitable companies. From the biggest rip-off in the history of Australian public administration, \$13 billion of JobKeeper was wasted. It was paid to firms whose revenues were rising. The wage subsidy is good. It was Labor's idea. It was to save jobs, not to pay executive bonuses or increase profits for big companies. As Peter Strong, the former CEO of the Council of Small Business Organisations Australia, said, it's pretty close to theft. The government has turned the Australian Treasury into a giant ATM where big business back up the truck—probably in the dead of night with the Treasurer there—shovel the cash into the back of the truck and drive off. It's like a money-laundering scam, because this is not money the government had in the bank; this is money that they're borrowing—billions every week—for the next generation to repay. Meanwhile, they're paying it to businesses now to increase their profits and pay executive bonuses. Big business couldn't believe it, could they? They thought they'd won the lottery. They thought, 'Who would be so stupid and so incompetent as to pay us to increase our profits and not create jobs?' The Morrison government. That's the answer.

As I said, it is the biggest single rip-off in the history of Australia. It's no wonder the government is desperate to keep the list of companies who got JobKeeper a secret. Citizens in every other country know who got the wage subsidies, but not in Australia. I wonder how many of them donated to the Liberal Party? That's a topic yet to be explored.

**Mr CONAGHAN** (Cowper) (16:02): I will start by commending the member for Sturt for his outstanding contribution earlier in the day. I acknowledge that there are so many businesses across Australia and throughout my electorate who are suffering emotional and financial distress through the current lockdowns. I thank you for doing what you've done over the past couple of years. We have a road map out of these lockdowns and we will get there as soon as we possibly can.

One thing I do know is that the people in our communities are sick to death of discussions like these. We are treating them like fools. We are taking them for mugs. They know what's happening on the ground. They're on the ground. They're in those businesses. They're working hard. They're doing it tough day after day after day, and this type of nonsense does nothing to raise their confidence. It does nothing to give them hope that we as politicians are doing what we should be doing every day out there: urging and helping.

We know, and they know, that, as a result of this government's swift economic actions at the start of the global pandemic, GDP grew. In this quarter alone, as we know, GDP grew 0.7 per cent. It's a positive. We shouldn't be trying to turn that into a negative. Being 9.6 per cent higher through the year, which is the strongest through-the-year rate on record, is a positive. We shouldn't be trying to turn that into a negative. We need to put that information out there to the public, to the businesspeople, and say, 'Good on you. This is as a result of your efforts.'

We as a government are helping them. I'd like to use my own electorate of Cowper, population of 165,000, as the perfect microcosm, representing what's happening across the country when it comes to this government's support of the economy. This motion talks about managing the economy. This government has done that. We've done it through tax relief. There are 56,600 taxpayers in my electorate who, with their families, will benefit from

tax relief of up to \$2,745. This is a result of the coalition's decision to extend the low- and middle-income tax offset 2021-22 and bring forward stage 2 of the government's tax plan. This is managing the economy. These people are grateful, and I know that because they tell me.

We've also extended the JobTrainer fund that supports over half a million new places across the country to upskill jobseekers and young people. There are 2,195 apprentices in Cowper, and, through this measure, there will be more opportunities for apprentices and trainees with the expanded wage subsidies. It's good for the economy. It's good for morale. There are more jobs. And, when we come out of these lockdowns, people can go back to work. They're not glued to the television watching question time or MPIs; they're worried about whether the lockdowns in the New South Wales regions are going to be lifted on the 11th.

This government has supported our employees and employers over the past 18 months. The JobKeeper payment supported 5,800 businesses and 19,900 employees in Cowper to help them through the pandemic, to keep employees connected to their employer and to give them that hope for the recovery. And that's exactly what we did: we recovered well. Nobody had a crystal ball. Nobody saw delta coming. We had a plan. And, because this is a one-in-a-hundred-year pandemic and there's no handbook for it, this government has pivoted and changed to move with the circumstances. We saw, through the budget, investment in roads, rail projects, and safety and community infrastructure programs. The Coffs Harbour bypass is just one project. Out of \$3.8 billion in New South Wales, \$1.8 billion is for the bypass alone. It's going to create around 12,000 direct and indirect jobs, and it's already engaging with the community in providing jobs.

We've got to stop these cheap shots. We need to be honest with the public. We need to be honest with ourselves and do the right thing by the public and provide them with the hope and the confidence that they need.

**Ms TEMPLEMAN** (Macquarie) (16:07): Those opposite must be breathing a sigh of relief that they can blame everything on COVID—that they have no power over anything, that they can't predict it. Hello! We know that there are going to be different versions of COVID that hit us, not just this year but in years to come. There is ample capacity to plan—but not this mob. What they're going to do is blame everything on COVID. They're going to say, 'We don't have enough jobs. Oh, that's because of COVID. We don't have enough workers. Oh, that's because of COVID.' Every problem they come across, every problem we see now and every problem we see in the future, is going to be put down to COVID. But they cannot hide their economic mismanagement behind the veil of COVID.

Let's be really clear. There's a trillion dollars of debt, a figure this country has never before seen. Forget the GFC and the ridiculous allegations that were made during the GFC about a commensurate spend to tackle that. It was the right spend at the right time. This mob have spent a trillion dollars—but it wasn't all on COVID. They can't hide behind COVID here, because two-thirds of that trillion dollars was spent before a single COVID case landed on our shores. It is something that they will hide. They'll pretend it didn't happen, try and rewrite history, but the facts are there for all to see.

I want to talk about workers. This discussion is about how the economic mismanagement happens and how it affects people. Those people are workers and small businesses. Let's talk about workers. I want to talk about real wages, which we know have fallen. Again, this is not just a point of view we have; this is fact. There is evidence. The government's own evidence shows us that real wages have fallen and that they're lower than they were when the Liberals came to office eight years ago. So that's one side of it. The other side of it is how this government has tried to support workers in this second wave of COVID, in the delta wave of COVID. But they haven't bothered to support every worker. They've been very free to say only some workers matter, just as they did with JobKeeper, when arts workers didn't matter, when university workers didn't matter, when local government workers didn't matter.

Let me give you an example of one of the groups that does not matter to this government, and that's 16-year-old apprentices, who are excluded from the COVID disaster payment because of their age. Once they turn 17 they're eligible, but for some reason the effort that a 16-year-old makes as an apprentice isn't worth as much as the effort a 17-year-old or an 18-year-old makes. I know many young apprentices—kids who've got off their backsides, gone out and found an apprenticeship and said, 'This is for me.' They get up early. They work their long days, they study, they help their families financially, and they save for their own future. Travis from Hawkesbury, who lives in South Windsor, is a diesel mechanic who's one of those affected, as is Madison, a 16-year-old full-time apprentice.

Madison wrote to the Treasurer and explained that she's no longer in school and has been stood down without pay from work, from her apprenticeship. She wrote: 'I'm unable to claim COVID disaster payment because of my age. I'm bringing this to your attention as it may not have occurred to you how the age restriction on the COVID payment is affecting apprentices like me around Australia.' She said: 'We've all been working full-time and we're

told we have to go on youth allowance. We're losing more than half of our income. However, we still have financial commitments. I would love to hear back from you concerning this issue.' That's nearly a month ago, and the Treasurer hasn't even bothered to get back to Madison. Madison is an electrician apprentice. She wants to work in that trade and she deserves to be supported throughout this time. It's an absolute disgrace that no-one from government has bothered to get back to her. What message does that send to young people?

If small business was as poor at planning as this government is, or spent so wildly, they'd be out of business. For small business to buy something and pay 10 times more than it's worth—that's what this government has done, paying \$30 million for land valued at \$3 million. This government wouldn't have a hope running a small business, and it's not doing anything to help workers survive this.

**Mr PASIN (Barker) (16:12):** Well, I'm flabbergasted. This is the gotcha moment you have when you don't have a gotcha moment. They were planning at a strategy meeting this morning and they thought, 'Do you know what we're going to do—we're going to make the economy the subject of the day, because the negative June quarter figure will be out and that will look really bad, so we'll really double down.' But, while we're on this side cheering on the economy and backing the resilience of Australian people, those opposite, quite frankly, are hoping in their heart of hearts that the Australian people and the Australian economy falter. They're like a gymnast who's in second position waiting for someone else to come along and hoping that they drop the baton, the hoop or the ball—smiling all the time so as to pretend to be backing their compatriot, but really, deep down, they're hoping, 'Drop the ball.'

I want to double down on something I did last week, which was to call out those opposite, in particular the Manager of Opposition Business—but, in fact, anyone—to come to the dispatch box. If they're so keen on running down the Australian people, the Australian economy and our approach to this one in 100-year global pandemic, come to the dispatch box and tell me what other country in the world you would rather be in today. I saw the Manager of Opposition Business move forward when I made the challenge. When he realised what the challenge was he slunk back onto the front bench, because he knew that, even with his immeasurable oratory skill, and it is significant, he couldn't deal with that question.

The good news, in my view, is that the Australian people have an opportunity to compare and contrast. There was the global financial crisis during which those opposite were in charge of the Treasury benches. Remember, this was the crisis that never actually arrived on Australian shores. The Australian people have an opportunity to compare that with the way we've dealt with a once-in-100-years global pandemic, the greatest challenge to global economies effectively since the end of World War II. In making that comparison, they will of course look at the things we have done to support the economy in the face of that pandemic: JobKeeper, instant asset write-offs, instant expensing, cash flow boost—all the measures we've gone about supporting businesses with. On the other hand, the Australian people will consider schemes like—

*An opposition member interjecting—*

**Mr PASIN:** Mr Deputy Speaker Andrews, you had a front row seat to this. I'm sorry to trigger you. Do you remember the minerals resource rent tax? That was a doozy. That was a tax that was going to assist with the economic fallout from the global financial crisis. The problem with it was that, for the first time I think in political history, it was a tax that was incapable of raising any revenue. They'll be comparing our measures, such as JobKeeper, with the minerals resource rent tax.

Let's not stop there. What about cash for clunkers? That was my personal favourite. When I first heard about it, I thought it was the then government talking about a remuneration scheme for their MPs—cash for clunkers. It wasn't. It wasn't even the worst of the programs. In my view, in penultimate position in the list of worst programs implemented by those opposite when in government to deal with the GFC was the overpriced school halls. I still visit schools today that have three-quarter basketball courts. Like others, I enjoyed so much watching Patty Mills and the Boomers do so well at the Olympics. I noticed they played on a full-sized basketball court, not a three-quarter-sized basketball court, but schools in my electorate have three-quarter-sized basketball courts. The most tragic of their programs was of course pink batts. We shouldn't laugh about this program, because its implementation led to the death of Australians. Quite frankly, those opposite can come in here and put up these fake fights about running down the Australian economy. The reality is that no-one is prepared to stand at the dispatch box and tell me or indeed anyone else what country they'd rather be in, because quite frankly they know this is both one of the safest jurisdictions in the world and one of the best led, with the strongest economy.

Within nine months the Australian people will have an opportunity to compare and contrast the disastrous programs of those opposite during the GFC versus our management of this pandemic.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Andrews):** Order! This discussion has concluded.



## COMMITTEES

### Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Joint Committee

#### Report

**Mr TED O'BRIEN** (Fairfax) (16:18): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, I present the committee's report entitled *One nation, one family, one future: deepening relations with the Pacific nations through trade*.

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

**Mr TED O'BRIEN:** by leave—Before I go into the nuts and bolts of this report, can I just reflect very quickly on the title—one region, one family, one future—because it encapsulates not a summary of the report's recommendations per se but the outlook of the committee when deliberating on and formulating this final report. You see, together with Pacific island nations, we of course do share one region. We are their backyard as much as they are ours. But we're more than neighbours that just happen to live close to each other. Indeed, we have an affinity between our people that goes far deeper, something that is more akin to a family, and as a family in one region, indeed, we have a shared destiny—thus one future.

After 56 submissions and eight public hearings, including round tables with diplomatic representatives of Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Kiribati and also with many businesspeople within the Pacific region who are trading and investing, the inquiry looked at both the challenges and the opportunities. We as a committee have therefore together put forward this report for government consideration. In doing so we make five recommendations to government.

Firstly, we recommend the government prioritises its support for the Pacific region to recover from COVID-19 by increasing development assistance, providing vaccine coverage and assistance in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak and assessing opportunities to restore international trade and travel when it is safe to do so.

Secondly, we recommend the government prioritises activation of greater trade and investment with countries of the region by considering measures and reforms to the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations, known as PACER Plus; providing support to make it easier for Pacific islanders to access the Australian market; supporting further research into trade and investment; supporting the establishment of national standard bodies; supporting the Pacific Quality Infrastructure Initiative; promoting pilot investor tours to Pacific island countries; and assisting countries wishing to join Australia's kava commercial importation pilot.

Thirdly, we recommend the government improves travel and mobility between Australia and countries of the Pacific region by establishing a Pacific travel bubble subject to health advice and related processes; investigates potential for improving infrastructure; introduces a Pacific travel card: that is, a Pacific business travel card; and improves labour mobility arrangements.

Fourthly, we recommend the government works towards deepening people-to-people ties between Australia and countries of the Pacific region through sport, churches and media. In particular, a centrepiece of this recommendation, and indeed of the report, is a proposal to introduce a new program called Team AusPac, which would be spearheaded by the Australian government and, in partnership with relevant sporting organisations, would create a special program for Pacific island athletes as part of the Australian Institute of Sport; expand the number of sports to receive special focus under the PacificAus Sports program; build greater capacity for sporting coaches and trainers; and lend support for consideration of a team from a Pacific island country to enter the Australian rugby league competition, the NRL. Team AusPac would also maximise opportunities for Pacific island countries to be closely associated with, and actively participate in, the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Australia, in South-East Queensland, which we have branded as Brisbane 2032.

Fifthly, we recommend the government recognises the important role played by Australian states and territories in our relationship with Pacific island countries, in particular the state of Queensland, which acts as a gateway to the Pacific. It follows, therefore, that the committee recommends the government analyses the outcomes in this report within a Queensland context; undertakes a feasibility study on expanding the services of a Pacific focused office of DFAT, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in Queensland; and engages the Queensland government and its relevant local government authorities to work collaboratively on aspects of this report.

I thank all witnesses and those who kindly shared their insight and advice with the committee, in particular the diplomatic and government representatives of Pacific island countries. I also thank my deputy chair, Senator McCarthy; chair of the joint standing committee, Senator Fawcett; and my fellow committee members. I also say thank you to the dedication and professionalism of the secretariat, in particular Andrew Dawson.

This report does not pretend to be an all-encompassing report or a roadmap about deepening ties with Pacific island countries across all areas. Rather it builds on the great work that the Australian government has been doing

in this field and focuses in particular on areas of trade and investment. While we make these recommendations for how we might deepen relations with Pacific island nations and their people, we do so believing that we are indeed one region and one family with one future. With that, I'm happy to commend the report to the House.

## BILLS

### Defence Legislation Amendment (Discipline Reform) Bill 2021

#### Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Mr PASIN** (Barker) (16:25): Before question time, I was taking the opportunity when leaning into this bill to acknowledge the 70th anniversary of ANZUS. It's often said that blood is thicker than water, and that is true. But what I've also found is that bonds formed in trenches, in combat and in circumstances of particular difficulty are the strongest bonds of all. The Australian people and our Defence Force personnel have stood shoulder to shoulder with US defence force personnel in every conflict and skirmish, every theatre of war, for over more than 100 years. That camaraderie and mateship was confirmed 70 years ago with the establishment of the ANZUS treaty.

I'd like to also quickly reflect on the events most recently at Hamid Karzai International Airport. The anniversary today brings into the cold light of day that relationship but also causes all of us to reflect on the efforts at that airport, where reportedly 13 US defence force personnel lost their lives in the last hours of the evacuation as a result of the evil actions of ISIS-K, who snuffed out the lives of both the brave and the innocent as a result of that disgraceful act of terrorism.

I of course support the bill, the Defence Legislation Amendment (Discipline Reform) Bill 2021. The bill in essence does three things: the reform measures set out in the bill will result in the military discipline system being easier to understand, they will reduce unnecessary delay and they will allow commanders to more simply and quickly address poor behaviour and create an opportunity for early intervention to better support our incredibly professional and brave ADF personnel.

Like you, Mr Deputy Speaker Andrews, I've got a background in the law. I spent my professional life before entering this place defending individuals facing criminal charges. I know a few things about criminal law systems. The first of which is that they need to be easy to understand. They operate in both the general deterrent and specific deterrent spaces. If these systems aren't well understood then it derogates against the ability for that system to operate in a specific deterrence capacity but equally—and I'd argue more importantly—in the general deterrence space. People need to understand very easily what the systems are that will see them brought to trial. It's trite to say, but obviously justice delayed is justice denied. So we owe at least as much to our Defence Force personnel in that, if they are subject to disciplinary action, that action is taken as expeditiously as possible and we do everything we can to mitigate against delays. That's because, ultimately, a delay in these proceedings creates unfairness and, in many cases, it avoids there being a fair outcome.

Finally, we need empowered commanders and leaders to be able to deal with matters quickly to address poor behaviour. There are issues that pertain to morale which sit around questions of how one deals with poor behaviour, particularly within an organisation such as Defence. These are unique beasts, if you like—not the personnel, but rather the organisation of Defence. It's a unique beast, and commanders need to show authority and need to be able to move simply and quickly. They need to be able to nip certain behaviours in the bud quickly, if you like. Equally, those who are subject to allegations of an invariably minor nature—of course, serious matters are referred to the requisite police force for more serious consideration—need to have them dealt with as quickly as possible, both to nip those behaviours in the bud, as I said, but, equally importantly, so that the anxiety and stress around minor skirmishes can be dealt with.

On reviewing the detail, as I did after this matter was discussed within our party room, I was quite surprised to form the view that many of these issues haven't been dealt with at this point before. I'm pleased they're being dealt with now and I hope that this will provide our Defence Force personnel with a greater degree of certainty around the disciplinary system to be used, that it will limit delays and empower our commanders to deal with minor matters as quickly and expeditiously as possible. I thank the House.

**Mr GEE** (Calare—Minister for Defence Personnel and Minister for Veterans' Affairs) (16:32): I would like to thank all members who contributed to the debate on the Defence Legislation Amendment (Discipline Reform) Bill 2021. I would particularly like to thank and acknowledge those members who have served our nation in uniform and brought their considerable experience and understanding to the debate on this bill. I also acknowledge the member for Blair and those opposite for their support of this bill in this House.

This bill will reform the system of military discipline for those who serve in our Defence Force by improving the way discipline officers and summary authorities operate under the Defence Force Discipline Act 1982. It builds on the success of the Discipline Officer system and will enable minor breaches of discipline to be managed as a disciplinary infringement. In doing so, it will remove the stress of lengthy criminal-like investigations and court-like procedures that apply to matters dealt with by summary and superior military tribunals. It also introduces a new cyberbullying service offence. This will send a very strong message to those in uniform that the use of social media to cyberbully another person is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the Australian Defence Force.

Discipline lies at the heart of military service. These reforms will better support Australian Defence Force commanders and give them the tools they need to defend Australia and its interests. I commend this bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

### Third Reading

**Mr GEE** (Calare—Minister for Defence Personnel and Minister for Veterans' Affairs) (16:34): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

## National Health Amendment (Decisions under the Continence Aids Payment Scheme) Bill 2021

### Second Reading

**Mr TEHAN** (Wannon—Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment) (16:34): I present the explanatory memorandum to this bill and move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The National Health Amendment (Decisions under the Continence Aids Payment Scheme) Bill 2021 (the bill) makes minor amendments to the National Health Act 1953 (the act) to expressly provide for the Continence Aids Payment Scheme Instrument 2020 (the CAPS Instrument) to confer review functions on the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).

On 16 January 2021, the CAPS Instrument was amended by the Continence Aids Payment Scheme Amendment (Merits Review) Instrument 2020 (merits review instrument 2020), to provide for internal review of decisions by the Secretary of the Department of Health (the department) under the CAPS Instrument. The secretary delegates power and functions to the executive in the department with responsibility for the CAPS Instrument.

The merits review instrument 2020 also enables CAPS participants or their nominated organisation affected by the secretary's internal review decision to apply for an independent merits review by the AAT of the initial review decision made by the secretary.

The bill amendments to the act will validate AAT review decisions made under the CAPS Instrument.

CAPS participants are unlikely to seek an independent merits review by the AAT, as Services Australia who administers the program works with CAPS applicants to resolve issues relating to their eligibility.

**Ms KEARNEY** (Cooper) (16:36): [by video link] I rise to speak on the National Health Amendment (Decisions under the Continence Aids Payment Scheme) Bill 2021. Labor supports this bill. It makes important changes to the Continence Aids Payment Scheme, otherwise known as CAPS.

CAPS is an annual or six-monthly payment available to people who suffer from permanent and severe incontinence. The changes made by this bill will allow people to apply for an internal review or go to the AAT for a decision made by the department secretary with respect to their representatives or payments made under the scheme, because continence aids are not cheap. They are expensive, yet they are a vitally important product to those who need it. For many, the CAPS goes a great way to making people's lives vastly better, so we support this bill.

For the vast majority of Australians, incontinence is not a subject they discuss on a regular basis. It often doesn't make headlines or feature at the barbecue banter or the water cooler chats, and rarely does it make its way to the chamber. But, if you look at the statistics, chances are at least one person around the barbecue or the water

cooler might just be experiencing incontinence of some sort—as might several people right here in this chamber now. You see, incontinence affects one in four adult Australians.

Men do suffer with it, but mostly it affects women. Urinary incontinence affects up to 10 per cent of Australian men and 38 per cent of Australian women. Eighty per cent of those with urinary incontinence in the community are women. And it's not only the aged that have this issue: over half of women living in the community with urinary incontinence are aged under 50 years. Women who have had two or more vaginal deliveries are at higher risk of developing urinary incontinence. In fact, injury during childbirth is the most common cause of the damage leading to stress incontinence.

Although women are more predisposed to this condition, men are also commonly affected. Generally, males who have had their prostate removed or resectioned are more likely to suffer from incontinence, and another population that has that higher incidence is male and female athletes. This includes both endurance athletes and powerlifters. However, this condition can be tricky, because it can result from many different stresses and causes, and of course it's important to note that incontinence can be both urinary and/or faecal. Damage to the nerves, muscle and connective tissue of the pelvic floor can be a cause of stress incontinence, which happens when physical movement or activity, such as simply coughing, sneezing, running or lifting heavy objects, happens. These things put stress on your bladder.

Other causes can include weakness or tightness in the pelvic floor muscles, lower back problems, pain, excessive weight, nerve injuries and more serious pathology. Additionally, surgery in the abdominal area can lead to incontinence. Other risk factors commonly linked with it include pregnancy, younger women who have had children, menopause, urinary tract infections, constipation, reduced mobility, neurological and musculoskeletal conditions, and health conditions such as diabetes, stroke, heart conditions, respiratory conditions and prostate problems, and some medications. Of course, many Australians with neurological, genetic and other disabilities require aids. Sadly, a risk factor for faecal incontinence is urinary incontinence, so one follows the other.

I mention all of this, uncomfortable as it may be to hear, because, as you can see, incontinence is not some vague mystery illness or rare disease. It is as common as all get-out and it's all around and amongst us, so it's important to talk about it in places like this, outing it as an everyday experience that deserves attention. It's important to show that we are informed, that we understand and that we care. It is an issue that is too often hidden, and people are often reluctant to come forward and get treatment. We know that 65 per cent of women and 30 per cent of men sitting in a GP waiting room report some type of incontinence, yet only 31 of these people will seek help. We also know that 70 per cent of people with urinary leakage do not seek advice or treatment, and this is especially true for men. For example, urge incontinence, a strong and sudden need to urinate, occurs commonly with prostate disease. It has a low incidence in young men and increases as men age. As it's a sign of potential cancer, it's extremely worrying that people don't feel they can report it or seek treatment.

Research tells us that many people with incontinence don't seek help. Depending on the individual's personal beliefs and feelings about the condition, they might not be bothered by it or try to hide it or deny it or not want to talk about it. It can cause anxiety, frustration, anger and even grief. There are feelings of embarrassment and shame, and often an overwhelming sense of loss and grief because of the inability to control this bodily function. Understandably, it comes with low self-esteem or confidence. People feel lonely and isolated. There can be a loss of desire for intimacy and an impact on sexual activity. The impact on mental health is immeasurable. As I said, this is far from a condition limited to the elderly, as people imagine. So many young people are affected. For example, 44 per cent of women living in the community with faecal incontinence are under 50 years of age—astonishing.

But, with respect to older Australians, the outcomes are stark. It's a major risk factor for admission into residential aged care. In fact, faecal incontinence is one of the three major reasons, along with decreased mobility and dementia, for admittance to residential aged care. Another study found that 81 per cent of women and 75 per cent of men in permanent residential aged care had some degree of incontinence that was not self-managed. We were shocked by some evidence given to the royal commission into aged care on the prevalence and lack of management of incontinence in aged-care facilities. So often the smell of urine permeates from the nursing homes where the problem is not well managed. The commission heard that some management practices actually lead to residents becoming incontinent. I know that such practices can be related to understaffing, where carers and nurses simply don't have the time to toilet residents frequently. As a nurse, I remember good nursing practice is toileting a resident every two hours, and what we know now about current staffing issues in aged care is that that would be impossible, so incontinence pads are used instead. Some poor residents sit in wet pads and beds for long periods of time. Consequently, they lose bladder tone and they become prone to urinary tract infections, which again contribute to incontinence. It is a vicious circle.

Carers and nurses in residential aged care have reported to me that incontinence pads can be rationed. They are locked away. They're not changed as often as they should be, and this is shameful and avoidable. Any review of funding for aged care should of course ensure enough staffing to properly attend to hygiene needs, including toileting. But also residential aged-care facilities should be held to account for poor continence practices. I believe the Continence Foundation of Australia has commissioned the National Ageing Research Institute to develop and test a best practice model for continence care in residential aged care. That's great; I welcome that. But will there be enough staff to implement their recommendations? The royal commission recommended an increase in care minutes and a registered nurse on shift in every nursing home. Yet the Morrison government has only accepted part of that recommendation; it's only gone halfway. Those extra minutes of care, those extra staff, could mean residents sitting in soiled incontinence pads and soiled beds for less time. It might even mean more staff to properly toilet their residents so that incontinence pads are not soiled or needed at all.

Worryingly, recent data has shown we are facing a critical aged-care workforce shortfall of more than 110,000 workers in the next decade. CEDA chief economist Jarrod Ball said:

We will need at least 17,000 more direct aged-care workers each year in the next decade just to meet basic standards of care.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research has revealed that since the government came to office there are over 4,000 fewer health and welfare support workers and over 3,000 fewer aged- and disability carers. This is a cut of more than 7,000 workers to those coming through the skilled workforce.

The workers in aged care and disability are exhausted, overstretched and under-resourced to the limit, and they lack the resources they need to take care of older Australians and people with disability. I wonder if the minister for aged care understands this. I wonder if he gets the real-life implications of an acute shortage of workers and of aged-care workers not having enough time to properly care for their charges. Imagine how you would feel as a carer, knowing an elderly man has soiled his incontinence pad and you can't get to him to change it because you're tending to dozens of other residents at the same time. I ask the minister to imagine if that elderly man was himself. He isn't exactly a young man—not that there's anything wrong with that; I'm not being ageist here at all! But he isn't all that young and his elderly years are indeed ahead of him, as they are for all of us, me included. I wonder how he would feel knowing he may find himself in a nursing home in need of incontinence pads. I hope that is a sobering thought. Maybe incontinence and this subject isn't something he turns to but something he turns his nose up at. Better management of incontinence and indeed maintenance of continence where possible means prioritising.

It takes specialist care and knowledge to care for an incontinent person. As a nurse, I saw close-up the role of specialist continence nurses and the important work they do in helping people deal with a life-changing development. Their role is so intimate, so personal and vitally important. They deal with so many questions, about coping at home, managing while at work, dealing with embarrassment and dealing with intimate relationships, that impact on personal lives. Continence care nurses are specially trained nurses with advanced practice skills in continence care. They are experts in its management. They are skilled to help people from different cultural backgrounds at different stages of their life across a multitude of communities in a range of settings. A nurse continence specialist provides services as an integral part of the healthcare team along with other allied health professionals such as physiotherapists and pharmacists. Their roles need to be fully recognised and resourced to help people with incontinence have the best lives they can.

Our experts spend a lot of time working with and helping carers of people with incontinence. Carers, I must add, can feel overwhelmed with the stress arising from life and relationship changes. There's the huge financial burden of continence care. There's increased time and costs spent on cleaning clothes and bedding. They may find their behaviours in their loved ones difficult to understand and accept, making it harder for them to help the person achieve the best outcomes for each of them. For carers, it's especially important to recognise their own changing emotions and feelings—especially carers for people with disability, who may be a child, a sibling, a partner or another relative. It can be exhausting and straining.

That brings me to mental health care needs for someone with incontinence and their carers. As I've mentioned, the impacts of incontinence on people's lives can lead to depression, poor self-image and even suicide. People with incontinence must be able to access affordable mental health care. So, while we support this bill, and it is an important bill for all of the reasons I've mentioned, it's imperative that the government understand the broader impacts of incontinence on the community and their failings, especially when it comes to aged care, disability care and mental health care. I'd just like to finish by adding that, if anyone by chance is listening to this speech and thinks they need assistance, you can find out where your local nurse continence specialist is by calling the National Continence Helpline—it's a free call—on 1800330066.

**Dr FREELANDER** (Macarthur) (16:50): I thank the member for Boothby and the member for Indi for allowing me to talk ahead of them today on the National Health Amendment (Decisions under the Continence Aids Payment Scheme) Bill 2021. This is a speech I really want to give, because I want to give the perspective of people with disabilities and incontinence. I've cared for many children as they grew into adult life with severe disability, and I remember the difficulties that their parents faced with them as they approached adult life with faecal and urinary incontinence. Of course, we're all born incontinent. For most of us, as our children grow, we toilet-train them and, at around two to three, most kids are toilet-trained. It's a very exciting time for a parent when your little boy or girl—it's usually girls earlier than boys—is finally toilet-trained and you can go out without the need to take nappies with you. You go out knowing that you will be doing an exploration of all the local toilets as your two- or three-year-old wants to use them all! That's a really exciting time.

For many of the kids that I looked after, that didn't happen. I can remember the excitement that some parents had when they would bring their 16- or 17- or 18-year-old child in to see me, and their child was finally toilet-trained after all those years. But of course many children with severe disability progress into adult life still requiring continence aids. That is a really difficult problem. My secretary, Cheryl Roberts, has worked for me now for over 35 years. Her daughter Stacey had severe disability. Even in her 20s she was not continent. I asked Cheryl just today, before I gave this speech, what the problems were that she faced. The first thing that people face with this issue is the cost. I looked today, and the cheapest price for small adult sized nappies was \$29.95 for a pack of 28. That's only relatively small ones. For medium sized ones it was \$49.95 for a packet of 28. And for the large sized ones, which many of these now-adults need, it was \$61 for a packet of 30—\$2 a nappy. It's a huge cost.

In days gone by, before these were subsidised, the parents had to meet those costs themselves. Many of the kids that I saw didn't come from wealthy families. On several occasions I actually paid for nappies for an adult child. It was the introduction of the PADP scheme, the Program of Appliances for Disabled People, run by state governments, that allowed some subsidies to be provided for incontinent older children, over the age of five, and incontinent adults. That was a huge positive in their lives. Subsequently federal government funding became available, and now, with the NDIS, there's been a dramatic improvement in the lives of these families and these kids. Cheryl explained to me that the difficulties were not only in paying for the cost of the nappies. Cheryl's daughter Stacey, towards the end of her life, weighed over 80 kilos. Cheryl herself is only 60 kilos, and she had to not only find a place where she could actually change her adult child's nappy but be able to lift her and manipulate her. That was a real difficulty because even baby change rooms don't cater for incontinent adults. Cheryl said she often resorted to changing her daughter on the floor without any help to manipulate her.

This is a very important bill because it allows more access to continence aids for people who are incontinent, and appeal rights for them. There is not only the cost of it; there are physical, psychological and social costs. Having a child with severe disability who is incontinent as they approach adult life is a real difficulty. Not many places are designed to deal with this. As Cheryl and many families have pointed out to me, they are very restricted as to places to change their adult child. The Continence Foundation of Australia mentioned this in the snapshot they did a couple of years ago about what incontinence means for disabled people.

I think this bill is very important in allowing people more rights to appeal decisions about funding for continence aids and supports. I would also add that we need to make venues more understanding of how to manage continence difficulties in adults—in particular, adults with disability. This bill is a very good beginning of that. As the shadow deputy minister mentioned, we need also to be aware of the importance of proper continence management in special aged-care facilities and disability-care situations. We know that, if continence issues are not dealt with for adults who have mobility difficulties, lying in wet nappies for long periods of time not only increases the risk of urinary tract infection—and that can be an end-of-life event in very old fragile people—but can lead to the development of pressure sores, extreme discomfort, pain and a lot of suffering. Continence is a really important issue as adults approach the end of life.

We support this bill, and I think there's much more that could be done to support those with continence difficulties. In particular, I really want to make the point that continence is a specialised issue both for people with disabilities and older Australians. I fully support the development of continence clinics which are able to deal with this very special condition in a specialised way and in a way that shows understanding of the difficulties that it causes. We know that continence in adults can relate to a whole range of neurological difficulties, mobility difficulties and dementia. For men, it can follow prostate surgery. For women, it can follow childbirth and gynaecological surgery. These are issues that all of us may face as we go through life. It is a highly specialised area and one that can be managed much, much better if the people that are dealing with it understand the issue and are able to access the services and supports that are needed for people with chronic continence issues. The Continence Foundation of Australia has studied this deeply. At any stage, around 15 per cent of the Australian

population have some issues with continence—and many of them are quite severe, particularly with an ageing population. It is very important that these issues are addressed for quality-of-life management and also to help families who may be dealing with an adult with continence difficulties.

I don't want to talk for too long. I support this bill strongly, but there is much more that could be done. An investment in the management of continence in Australia would be very worthwhile for people with disabilities and for our ageing population. I support the bill, particularly for my clients who have disability and continence difficulties in adult life. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms FLINT** (Boothby—Government Whip) (16:59): I would just acknowledge the contributions and expertise of the members for Cooper and Macarthur on this very important issue. They have both had very successful careers within medical services in Australia. I know that they have just provided a lot of information that will be of great use to people watching today or listening at home.

The National Health Amendment (Decisions under the Continence Aids Payment Scheme) Bill 2021 will reform the review of decisions made under the Continence Aids Payment Scheme Instrument, conferring review functions of decisions to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. This will allow for Australians who are using the CAPS program, or their nominated representative, to apply for an independent merits review by the AAT for decisions made under the program. This is a commonsense reform to the scheme's operation and brings it into line with many other programs and benefits offered by the federal government to Australians in need.

I think it's important to reiterate what the members for Cooper and Macarthur have said and explain a little bit about why this program is needed, who this program assists and how the program helps people before again reiterating why the changes to this legislation are needed. The CAPS program assists people suffering from incontinence. This, like many other health issues that involve bodily functions, is not something that many people are comfortable talking about or letting others know that they suffer from. So I hope that by discussing this bill today, and the broader issues, we might help someone watching or listening to get the help they need or to discuss their problems with somebody—to assist in understanding and to gain support. Again, I thank the members for Cooper and Macarthur for lending their medical expertise. The member for Cooper was a nurse and the member for Macarthur was a specialist paediatrician, and they have both had personal experience in supporting people and families with incontinence issues.

Incontinence is described as follows by the Continence Foundation of Australia:

Continence is the ability to control your bladder and bowel. Incontinence is the involuntary loss of bladder and bowel control. This affects approximately 15 per cent of the Australian population. If you would like more information about continence and incontinence, please visit the Continence Foundation of Australia website, which is [continence.org.au](http://continence.org.au). You can find a lot of very clear and easy-to-understand information, and you can find out more about where to get help and support. The Department of Health also provides the National Continence Helpline, which is staffed by a team of continence nurse advisers and is available to anyone in Australia. It operates from 8 am to 8 pm, eastern standard time, Monday to Friday. You can contact the hotline on 1800330066, and that's a free call.

It's really important to understand that incontinence can affect anybody: men, women, young adults, teenagers and children. For sufferers, it can be deeply embarrassing and affect and impact every part of their daily life. But, as the Continence Foundation of Australia explains, there's a lot of help available to people, so, again, please visit their website at [continence.org.au](http://continence.org.au) or call the Department of Health's national hotline from 8 am to 8 pm, eastern standard time, Monday to Friday, on 1800330066.

There are many specific health issues that can cause incontinence. In men it may be because of prostate issues, or perhaps after prostate cancer surgery or perhaps because of pelvic floor issues. In women it may be because of menopause, pelvic floor issues or as a direct result of childbirth or prolapse. It can also affect children and teenagers for a variety of reasons. A range of other serious diseases and medical conditions can also cause incontinence, from stroke and diabetes to dementia and Parkinson's disease, and arthritis and mental health conditions may be linked with incontinence, even if they don't directly cause it.

People with incontinence often need careful planning in their days; they need to make detailed plans for travel and ensure that they have the continence products they need, which is what this bill is all about. Those who care for people with incontinence also take on an involved and taxing task. It can complicate even the simplest of tasks that most of us take for granted. It can often be one of the most difficult aspects of caring, as the member for Macarthur has just powerfully described. It can be unpredictable and add a lot to a carer's workload. For this reason, there's a huge psychological toll and impact on carers but also, of course, on the person who is suffering from incontinence. If the condition is not managed well, people may experience feelings of rejection, social

isolation, dependency, loss of control, and may also develop problems with their body image. These immense pressures can, of course, also impact carers, overwhelming them with stress and straining their relationships.

While the CAPS program could be considered small within the context of the broader health budget, the subsidy and provision of incontinence products can have a huge impact on a person's life. In addition to the social cost, this has an impact on Australia's overall health system. A Deloitte Access Economics report commissioned by the Continence Foundation of Australia estimated that incontinence cost Australia's health system around \$450 million last year alone. The report estimates that further costs born by the economy generally include productivity losses numbering into the tens of billions, the costs of formal care and aids that this program assists with directly, and the burden of the problems themselves. This is why the effective delivery of this scheme to all who are entitled to it is so important.

Every year, the CAPS program helps around 130,000 Australians by providing financial support of more than \$620 to each person to assist them with the cost of incontinence products. This benefit is non-taxable, it's offered on an annual or six-monthly basis and it is provided to those who are over four years of age and have permanent and severe incontinence. Earlier this year, the CAPS instrument was amended to provide for an internal merits review of decisions by the secretary of the Department of Health and, following internal review, an independent merits review of the internal review by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. This bill amends the National Health Act to make it clear the results of merits reviews conducted by the AAT are valid. This amendment will take effect immediately after the royal assent, and it is an important administrative improvement to the program's operation and to the previous reform. The program is administered by Services Australia, who work with CAPS applications, and applicants, to resolve issues relating to their eligibility, ensuring there are very limited numbers of applicants who wish to have decisions reviewed. In instances where an applicant wants to have a review, they should be entitled to one, and this is what this bill achieves.

Resources such as continence products provided through the CAPS program work hand in hand with such things as the federal government's National Continence Helpline, which I have previously mentioned, and also the National Public Toilet Map app, which shows the location of 19,000 public toilets Australia-wide and is a resource also provided by the Department of Health. If you have a google, you'll be able to track down both of these very important information resources. These initiatives also, importantly, work alongside the NDIS funding, which the member for Macarthur mentioned, and have had such a huge impact for people suffering from incontinence. There are also state and territory run resourcing and funding schemes so that everybody receives the support they need to manage their incontinence.

We know that independent merits reviews are key to accountability and transparency in decision-making that affect Australians in many ways, and, as such, this is a sensible reform. The bill is designed to provide more support to those that need it most, and it builds upon the Morrison government's strong record of investment in health and health care. We could not afford to provide this sort of support without the Morrison government's strong economic management that allows a range of health investments such as this. Broadly speaking, the Morrison government is investing a record \$121.4 billion in the year 2021-22, and \$503 billion over the next four years, to provide more support to Australians as we face some of our greatest health challenges in a generation, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

I've already referred to the mental health impact that incontinence has on sufferers and also on carers, as did the members for Cooper and Macarthur. I do just want to note that we have made a record Commonwealth government mental health investment through our \$2.3 billion investment in the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan. This includes creating a landmark national network of up to 57 additional mental health treatment centres and satellites for adults around Australia, as well as more centres for youth and children through the Head to Health and the headspace programs. I'm incredibly proud the Morrison government is delivering this record mental health support at a time when the nation most desperately needs it. Improving the mental health of Australians is one of the Morrison government's key priorities and, of course, it has never been more important following the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. I know in my electorate, for example, we are already seeing the benefits that further mental health investment has, through the recently opened headspace centre in Marion, in the heart of my electorate of Boothby. We know that early intervention is essential to minimise longer-term impacts on mental health, and headspace was created to serve precisely this purpose.

The Morrison government is also guaranteeing the future of Medicare through an investment of \$125.7 billion over four years, which is an increase of over \$6 billion since last year's budget. It is extending a series of primary care measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic through to 31 December 2021, including telehealth. It is continuing to implement reforms to the MBS from the Medicare Benefits Schedule Review Task Force recommendations and Medical Services Advisory Committee recommendations. The Morrison government also has a health reform agreement which will deliver more doctors, more nurses and more services across public



hospitals in every state and territory. These are all completely related to making sure that people, whatever their health issue may be—but particularly on the issue we're discussing, which is incontinence—can access their GP, can call their GP if they're not able to travel at the moment or leave their house because of all the COVID restrictions that we're seeing. Our national mental health investments mean that people can access the support that they need when they need it.

I note that we are also listing a record number of medications on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. As part of our funding measures, we're also investing \$43 billion over four years in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. This has an absolutely critical role in making sure people can access the medications they need at an affordable price, especially where those medications are for rare diseases and people would never be able to afford them if they had to pay the retail price on the market without the support of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. The listings that we've made recently represent an average of around 30 listings or amendments per month, or one each day, for an overall investment by the government of \$13.6 billion. This reaffirms our commitment to making sure all Australians can afford the medicines they need.

We're also doing a lot of work with the medicines and technology sector to continue streamlining and deregulating processes to apply for reimbursements for new products and services. We have invested \$36 million in the Health Products Portal, where we are creating a new one-stop shop for applying electronically to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee, the Medical Services Advisory Committee, and other mechanisms for listing new medicines and medical devices.

In conclusion, the health care of Australians is absolutely paramount. This bill is just one small part of a raft of achievements and record funding amounts that support the health of everyone in the community. The National Health Amendment (Decisions under the Continence Aids Payment Scheme) Bill 2021 will reform the review of decisions made under the Continence Aids Payment Scheme instrument, conferring review functions of decisions to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. It will allow for Australians who are using the CAPS, or allow their nominated representative, to apply for an independent merits review by the AAT of decisions made under the program. So it's a commonsense reform, and I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr HAINES** (Indi) (17:15): I rise to speak on the National Health Amendment (Decisions under the Continence Aids Payment Scheme) Bill 2021. This provides a mechanism for internal review of decisions of the secretary of the Department of Health under the CAPS instrument, and for independent merits review by the AAT. I want to acknowledge the contributions that have been made in the House this evening on this bill. The member for Boothby just then made the very real connection between mental health and incontinence. We know that a fear of incontinence raises anxiety and great uncertainty for people, which is directly connected to their mental wellbeing. I want to thank the member for Macarthur, who so beautifully humanised this bill. It's not a glamorous bill. It won't make a headline. Probably no-one outside this chamber but the people who really rely on these kinds of aids will even know about this. For all the work that we do in this place, it's actually bills like this that make me feel better about being an MP, to be honest.

One in four Australians experience incontinence. It's much, much more common than people think. More than 4.8 million Australians have a bladder or a bowel problem. Incontinence can impact just about anybody: women, men, children. It impacts people from all walks of life and at all stages, as we've heard this evening: young and old, expectant and new mothers, and the elderly. Sadly, though, over 70 per cent of people with urinary leakage never seek advice or treatment for their problem. They're embarrassed and they put up with it as best they can. In my long career in health care prior to coming here, I stumbled upon this with people I met coming into hospital or into health care for other reasons—their embarrassment when they had to undress and it was revealed that they had homemade continence products because they'd never sought any help.

Incontinence impacts people's social and emotional wellbeing and their ability to engage with their community. Some people with the condition haven't gone out for years. They can't go grocery shopping. They've relied on family members to support them with their essentials. There are plenty of people who never play sport or who won't go to a concert for fear that they can't sit through the length of the concert. There are people who don't go out because they know that there's no public toilet anywhere near where they live. Again, I was pleased to hear the member for Boothby talk about the app that helps people find a public toilet. It's such a basic thing, but so important if you need it. There is so much stigma still associated with incontinence and, sadly, it prevents people from seeking help for what we know is a really commonplace problem that actually can, in many cases, be managed and, in some cases, be completely fixed.

Under the CAPS, an annual or six-monthly payment is available to people over the age of five who suffer from permanent and severe incontinence caused by particular kinds of conditions specified in the CAPS instrument, and who meet other eligibility criteria. These payments help offset the costs of purchasing incontinence products from a supplier of choice. Again, anyone listening to the member for Macarthur might have been very surprised at how

expensive these continence pads are. Introducing a review mechanism is a really sensible change, and highly commendable and wholly commendable, and I'm grateful to the government for doing this. There should always be accountability when a government bureaucrat makes a decision about a matter which affects a person's rights and entitlements, and, in this case, such a basic right and entitlement. There should be the right to challenge it on the grounds that perhaps it's wrong.

This government, by its own admission, said that CAPS participants are unlikely to utilise the review pathway of Services Australia, who administers the program and often works with CAPS applicants to resolve issues. Further, the Continence Foundation of Australia points out that participants are really unlikely to bother going through a bureaucratic process when the annual maximum payment for these products is only \$635.10. Many of these people say it's just not worth the time and the fuss.

While one in four Australians experience incontinence, only about 135,000 people are actually eligible for this CAP Scheme. Some are deemed ineligible for CAPS because their health professional hasn't described the condition in the precise way required by the scheme. I really support calls for the decision-making around eligibility for the scheme to be more transparent. Perhaps there needs to be some education of our GP workforce around the precise definition so that they can describe it in the way that is required. We need transparency, with an annual publication of statistics around the use of the scheme, including waiting time for a decision and the number of new applicants. We need to know this because if we know this we get a better understanding about what's happening in our public health system and perhaps where there's greater prevalence than we ever thought. We need transparency around the total number of ineligible new applicants or participants and the grounds upon which they're denied access. That's really important.

As I've said, continence care is expensive. The Continence Foundation of Australia says it receives over 6,000 calls to the National Continence Helpline every year from callers seeking financial assistance and trying to get help with the cost of continence products. Callers regularly report financial stress, particularly in that period leading up to the annual payment in July, because the CAPS provides for less than a quarter to a third of their annual expenditure on continence aids. It's estimated that \$1,698 is the expense for someone who uses around 18 incontinence pads per week, and we know that there are some people who require many more than that. Incontinence is not only a huge personal cost but also a huge cost to the economy. A 2010 Deloitte report estimated the cost of incontinence to the nation at around \$67 billion, and that includes money spent on health systems, productivity loss in the workplace and in employment, aged care and carer costs.

I really support the calls from the Continence Foundation of Australia to review the CAP Scheme as a matter of urgency to address the following things: (1) the adequacy of the payment in meeting the hygiene and dignity requirements of Australians living with permanent and severe incontinence; (2) the adequacy of the payment in ensuring Australians living with permanent and severe incontinence do not experience financial stress or hardship due to expenditure on continence aids; (3) establishing a mechanism for regular review of the schedule of eligible conditions causing permanent and severe incontinence; (4) review of the policy rationale for the difference in eligibility for CAPS between neurological conditions and other health conditions causing permanent and severe incontinence; and (5) review of the pension card requirements for CAPS applicants with non-neurological conditions, including comparison to other schemes, such as the Stoma Appliance Scheme, which provides free stoma appliances and products to nearly 50,000 Australians—quite a big difference.

I'd also like to turn the House's attention to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety findings. The aged-care royal commission looked into the prevalence and treatment of incontinence in residential aged-care homes. It heard that 75 to 81 per cent of all the people in residential aged-care facilities live with incontinence—that's a very big number. The royal commission also reported that it heard that staff members don't have the time needed to assist residents to go to the toilet in a timely manner, and too often there's actually routine use of incontinence pads to manage workload—again, when we think about people's dignity, a fundamental dignity is to be able to go to the toilet.

I've worked in aged care and I've been the director of an aged-care facility, so something I'm very aware of is managing workload. Many of our elderly people, of course, are frail. It's difficult for them to walk. They need assistance to go to the toilet, so those findings from the royal commission are really, really worrying. Again, it speaks to the urgency that we have as a nation to get cracking on the findings of the royal commission and make sure that we've got the workforce in our residential aged care to provide the most fundamental element of human dignity: going to the toilet.

We need our aged-care workforce not only to have the numbers to provide that kind of care but also to be adequately trained so that they can respond to the needs of people with incontinence, so that they can provide that dignity and respect and so that our elderly have the best possible quality of life that they can. The 2021-22 budget included an investment to support an additional 33,800 training places for personal care workers to attain a

certificate III in individual support in ageing, and it's crucial that continence care is part of any training and education. The Continence Foundation of Australia has recommended that incontinence is recognised as requiring both basic and specialised care and support, and is incorporated into the foundational courses for aged-care workers. This needs to be back on the curriculum, but it's fallen off. This is so fundamental. It's fundamental so that both the current and the next generation of care workers are suitably qualified and trained in safe and effective continence care and incontinence management. Continence care includes things like nutrition and hydration. It's about recognising signs and symptoms of bladder infection. It's about recognising signs and symptoms of muscular dysfunction. There are many elements to this; it's not straightforward. Until recently, Australian registered nurses seeking to specialise as nurse continence specialists had the option of undertaking one of two post-graduate courses. Sadly, these graduate courses are no longer available, and there's little scope for registered nurses to gain the necessary specialised knowledge required to become a competent nurse continence specialist. The Continence Foundation of Australia is calling on the government to ensure that these courses are placed back on the national curriculum, and I join the foundation in that call. It is projected that, by 2030, 6.2 million Australians will be living with incontinence. Despite the growing prevalence, there's currently no funding commitment or action plan from the federal government beyond June 2021. I said tonight—and I mean it—that the government are doing good work in this space, but they need to fix that. They need to make sure that there's ongoing funding.

I'd like to recognise some of the champions out there who are working to provide fantastic support for people who suffer from incontinence. Continence nurses are key to this, as are physiotherapists. They enter people's lives with compassion and without judgement. They're people like the member for Macarthur, who shows such humanity. They talk about an issue that, for many people, they will be discussing with them for the very first time. They listen carefully, they provide advice and they go on that journey with these people to make sure that these people are getting continence care that fits with their lifestyle. It takes a pretty special person to do this. I know a few of them: Nicci Malcolm, at Northeast Health in Wangaratta; Kath Thomas, who's a physio and has been working in this area for a long time; Deborah Gregory is also a nurse who's been working in this area for decades; and Associate Professor Helena Frawley, a specialist academic who's looked at this area for many years. She has been a leader in research and the training of many physiotherapists.

I also want to recognise that there are some fantastic programs in my electorate that are doing really good work on incontinence awareness. Gateway Health ran a bladder health education program in Wangaratta and Benalla earlier this year. They educated participants, who learnt about how bladders and bowels actually work and how to keep your bladder and bowel healthy with the skills to manage urinary incontinence. Northeast Health in Wangaratta announced during World Continence Week in June that it's supporting the BINS4Blokes initiatives, which promotes the installation of incontinence bins in male public toilet facilities. At Northeast Health in Wangaratta, they will provide bins for blokes in male toilets right throughout the health service—good on them. Gateway Health's Below The Belt program for local men is also a terrific program. It looks after men's incontinence and chronic prostate health. Many people don't realise that men who've undergone a radical prostatectomy very often suffer from incontinence for some time after that surgery. The Below The Belt bladder health program provides men in the community with an opportunity to explore a variety of treatment options to suit their individual needs and helps them to develop a plan that's really going to make a difference to their lifestyle. At Albury Wodonga Health, they're absolutely in this space as well, with their continence nurse advisory service, which has outreach to many small rural towns as well. In conclusion, as I said at the beginning, this is an important bill. It's not a glamorous bill, but it's an important bill, and it brings to this chamber the voices of many people who are never heard. I thank the government for this work and I commend the members who've had something to say on this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr WYATT** (Hasluck—Minister for Indigenous Australians) (17:29): I present an explanatory memorandum to this bill.

I thank all those members who have spoken on this issue. It's one we often overlook if we're not involved within the sector or the industry. We often forget about the impact it has on the social, emotional and mental health state of an individual.

The National Health Amendment (Decisions under the Continence Aids Payment Scheme) Bill 2021 makes amendments to the National Health Act 1953 to expressly provide for the Continence Aids Payment Scheme Instrument 2020, the CAPS instrument, to confer review functions on the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, the AAT.

On 16 January 2021, the CAPS instrument was amended by the Continence Aids Payment Scheme Amendment (Merits Review) Instrument 2020 to provide for internal review of decisions by the Secretary of the Department of Health under the CAPS instrument.

The merits review instrument also enables CAPS participants or their nominated organisation affected by the secretary's internal review decision to apply for an independent merits review by the AAT of the initial review decision made by the secretary.

The bill's amendments to the act will validate AAT review decisions made under the CAPS instrument.

I thank members for their contributions, and commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

### Third Reading

**Mr WYATT** (Hasluck—Minister for Indigenous Australians) (17:31): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

## Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Amendment Bill 2021

### Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Ms BURNEY** (Barton) (17:32): [by video link] I rise to speak to the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Amendment Bill 2021. This bill will introduce significant changes to the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 following a recent review carried out by the National Indigenous Australians Agency. The CATSI Act, as it's known, establishes a special form of incorporation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. It is designed to make it easier for First Nations people to form and manage corporations that reflect their unique needs and practices.

As a special measure under the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 the CATSI Act is intended to promote First Nations rights, particularly the right to self-determination. Critically, the act is intended to provide the flexibility for First Nations people to run organisations in accordance with their cultural practice and traditions. It also functions to ensure strong governance. Many of the most valued and recognised organisations are registered under the CATSI Act. They are part of the backbone of our communities, carrying out essential tasks and advocacy on behalf of First Nations people across the country.

Nowhere has this been more plain than in recent times with Aboriginal community controlled health organisations, ACCHOs, which have played such an important role in the pandemic response. There are 143 ACCHOs across Australia employing over 700 workers, half of whom are First Nations people. The majority of ACCHOs are registered under the CATSI Act. Over the course of the pandemic they have been the front line of the response in First Nations communities. Where they have been listened to and adequately resourced we have seen their capacity to provide flexible and effective services to First Nations communities.

Labor strongly supports the continued operation and improvement of the CATSI Act. It is a special measure to promote First Nations economic advancement and self-determination. We welcome the parts of this bill that will make it easier for First Nations organisations to do business and to strengthen transparency. However, if we have learned anything from the pandemic, it's that we must listen to and support First Nations organisations. At a minimum, we owe it to them to ensure that the adjustments we're making to the CATSI Act strike the right balance. We owe it to them to make sure they're supported, not impeded, by the changes to this critical act.

While many First Nations organisations support aspects of this bill, they have also raised significant concerns, including about the consultation process in the development of this bill. Labor notes that the exposure draft bill was available for consultation for just a month, from 8 July to 9 August this year. This was a time when many First Nations organisations, including ACCHOs, were dealing with the growing COVID-19 outbreaks in First Nations communities. This made it difficult for organisations to respond, especially given the complexity of the proposed reforms.

NACCHO, the peak body representing Aboriginal community controlled health organisations has criticised this lack of engagement. In their submission on the draft exposure bill they said:

NACCHO has been disappointed in the cursory approach to engagement undertaken in the review. It is NACCHO's view that the National Indigenous Australian Agency (NIAA) has lost a valuable opportunity to not only demonstrate its commitment to the new process of partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership as set out in the priority reform areas of the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

They went on to say:

The main criticism we have of the process with the review of the CATSI Act is that all we have had is consultation and there has been no clear and systematic engagement with senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in the process of the review and in the decision making in relation to the drafting and the preparation of the exposure draft.

They called on the government to delay the progress of the bill to rectify these failures. They also proposed the establishment of a joint governance review group, with key leaders of the community controlled sector. This would provide a vehicle for partnership and shared decision-making in the reforms of the CATSI Act. As far as we can tell, neither of these requests have been fulfilled. These are requests from the Aboriginal health services who, as we speak, are battling to protect the most vulnerable communities.

Other concerns have been raised in relation to the impact on registered native title bodies. These are the organisations established to manage and protect native title on behalf of the traditional owners. Native title bodies are required to and must comply with the onerous regulatory obligations under both the CATSI Act and the Native Title Act. Many native title bodies operate with very limited resources. They also have the challenge of bridging traditional and mainstream law to manage the rights and interests of native title holders.

The Native Title Council raised concerns that the bill ignores the recommendations from the review to create a separate chapter, or division, of the act specifically concerning native title bodies. The Native Title Council supports parts of the bill, but it also identifies a number of impractical and overly onerous changes. They're concerned that the framework could see many organisations, including native title bodies, breach the act because they're too poorly resourced to comply. Others are concerned that changes could increase the risk of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being manipulated by parties seeking to profit from organisations with Aboriginal status. I am glad to note that the bill has been referred to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee for inquiry. Labor supports the changes in this bill that make it easier for First Nation organisations to do business. We also support improved transparency and accountability of First Nation organisations. It is essential that representative corporations operate for the benefit of their members and do so in a way that is consistent with strong governance principles, but we must be sure that the right balance is struck and ensure that the self-determination of First Nation organisations is not undermined.

In closing, while we will not oppose the passage of this bill through this chamber, it is important that the broader impacts of the bill are examined. This process will enable the parliament to hear directly from First Nation organisations and interest groups that are most closely affected, including ACCHOs and registered native title bodies corporate. Labor will reserve its final position on the measures in this bill until we've had an opportunity to consider the inquiry's report, which is due to be completed by 14 October 2021. In the meantime, we urge the government to support and adequately resource all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, particularly those community controlled health services that are on the front line of the COVID 19 crisis currently unfolding in western New South Wales.

**Mr RAMSEY** (Grey—Government Whip) (17:42): I rise to speak on the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Amendment Bill 2021. The electorate of Grey covers over 92 per cent of South Australia. It has an Indigenous population of around eight per cent and includes all of the remote Indigenous communities that sit within South Australia, so I have a deep interest in the outcomes and fortunes of those people. I often say there's quite a category of difference between those who live in remote communities and those who live in urbanised communities, on a lot of different levels. Sometimes it's as simple as language, but there are a lot of other things at work as well. We need respect and to have the ability to deal with them as different organisations with different needs and wants and give them the room to make the decisions that affect their future. That is what this government endeavours to do.

It would be fair to say that over a period of time—I've been the member for 13 years—I have been shocked and disappointed at the income streams that some of these bodies receive, from mining royalties in particular, and yet seem to be doing almost no good at all on the ground. There are a number of them that have been under administration or investigation by ORIC in recent times, but I think it's a far wider and broader issue than just this. This bill recognises the important role that the corporations play in the current management of Indigenous communities.

When we seek, as we do with this legislation, to improve the transparency and accountability of corporations by requiring them to lay any reports they're required to prepare for the registrar before their annual general meetings, including the new remuneration report which will give members an insight into what the key management personnel in their corporation are being paid and how the corporation funds are being spent, I think that's a very important point, because I'm well aware of organisations that don't always have annual general meetings when they should and they do not provide that information. In fact, a complex web of companies can be set up around these organisations—all with the help of highly skilled lawyers who are very expensive—making it very difficult to chase the money trail. I'm appalled at some of the services provided to these organisations by their

appointed lawyers. It's not easy for governments to legislate for smart appointments or to come down in this area, because, of course, these organisations are autonomous. They need to operate within the rules that are set and policed by ORIC. But it's difficult and hard work, and there are some things going on with corporations within my electorate at the moment—with payments and lawyers and whatever—that are in dispute.

I think these are very important recommendations. There have been a number of times when I've had people come to me and say: 'We haven't had our meeting. We haven't had our meeting notice. They don't tell us anything. We don't know anything about the finances of our organisation.' You can reach nothing more than the conclusion that people within their own community are taking for their own benefit and that of their friends and families at the expense of others. If there are these significant streams of income coming to these corporations, why don't we see investments in really useful things like low-cost housing projects? We know there is an ongoing issue with finding housing for Indigenous people in Australia. There is overcrowding. We are looking at Wilcannia at the moment, where 12 people in a house is not uncommon. I know some Indigenous people choose to live in bigger groups, but we also know that we could do with more housing. On one hand we have corporations taking millions and millions—tens of millions—of dollars, yet, on the other hand, we don't see them investing in things that would actually be really important to their people.

Anything we can do to improve that process and sharpen up that focus is good. I think reporting on the remuneration of directors and employees is excellent as well. But, at the same time, we need to be able to provide them with the flexibility to make those decisions. I'm very hopeful this legislation will do that. At the other end of the scale, you have corporations that aren't in receipt of the rivers of gold—with income of less than \$1,000 per year, for instance. This will allow them to apply not to hold an AGM, because they may not be doing anything of great significance, and that's a perfectly viable case to make.

There's a point to be made here about the application for membership of a corporation and how that needs to be decided within a specific amount of time. These organisations can become a closed shop. Who they accept as contributing members or franchise members can be up to the organisation itself. Once again, it is very difficult for governments to implant themselves in this process, because we want to these communities to make these decisions for themselves. But I'm aware of organisations where this has become a corrupt practice—organisations where only certain people are admitted or where a bit of muscle is exerted on those who might be jumping out of line. So, while we need those corporations to run themselves, manage themselves and make their own decisions, they also need a framework to operate within which, just as it would a district council or any other corporation, compels them to hold the normal meetings and processes which allow for the unbiased and uninfluenced appointment of those people who might become their directors or employees.

We've got to work with the corporations; we've got to try and help them. I know the minister is more than aware of all these situations. I've had long and deep conversations with him. This legislation we see in front of us is an effort by a very committed minister to try and bring about structural change that will actually change the way these communities operate. It will change the way that the committees that control these communities' assets operate and the way they reinvest in their communities' futures, and ensure that individuals do not take the lion's share and leave the rest of the community to scabble over the crumbs and crusts that fall off the table.

There is provision within the bill to allow for the adoption of modern technology. Madam Deputy Speaker Claydon, you're probably just about as sick of Zoom meetings as I am, but it seems that it is the way we are going to have to deal with things through the COVID crisis. I suspect it's one of those changes in society that, in a lot of ways, is here to stay. In the federal parliament, for instance, we do allow contribution online, but we don't allow people to vote online yet. I don't know if we're ever going to get there or not. I'm not arguing for change in this particular place, but I think it makes sense that an organisation meeting in an electronic fashion should be able to carry out a vote, certainly at committee level. It is a little harder at a general meeting, as such, so provision is allowed for in that.

Of course, in general we need these organisations to be fit for purpose and we need them to have a purpose which is more than just being in receipt of moneys and doing what they feel like at the moment. We need them to have a real vision, a plan and an idea of where they want their community to be in five years, for instance. A five-year plan would be a wonderful thing, particularly when you're in receipt of an income stream, and then set parameters that draw the board of the day to make those decisions to achieve those outcomes, and not just focus on the short term every step of the way.

I have been saddened by what I've seen across my Indigenous communities over a period of time. We do a lot of good work. We've got some good people out there working very hard for good outcomes. We've also got some people who are not, and they are the blockers of the system. We need to find a way to get around them and take these people forward and get the most out of all the assets and benefits that are provided to them.

**Mr SNOWDON** (Lingiari) (17:53): [by video link] I understand that we've only got until six o'clock and then we'll be going on to other matters—is that correct?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon):** That's correct. We will be adjourning for a condolence motion at 6 pm.

**Mr SNOWDON:** I'll attempt to wind up my comments before six o'clock. Can I firstly say that I'm very pleased to be able to speak to the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Amendment Bill 2021. I acknowledge the contributions of the member for Barton and the member for Grey, and I'll come back to the member for Barton's contribution in a moment. The member for Grey talked about how big his electorate is and how many Aboriginal people, First Nations people, reside in it. I don't want to one-up him, but Lingiari is 1.34 million square kilometres, and 43 per cent or thereabouts of the population are Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. So, I have had the experience, over many, many years now—over 30 years—of working directly and indirectly with Aboriginal organisations and corporations. I've seen some that are good and some that are not so good. But I recall the debate that took place around the introduction of the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006, CATSI Act, when it was introduced. If my memory is correct, it was done to replace the old Commonwealth councils and associations act. It was done to give us a better body of law for recognising that, as the member for Barton said, it was a special measure. It was designed to give effect and acknowledge First Nations people's right to self-determination and to recognise and incorporate the need for cultural practices within organisations as they were developing. Of course, they vary across the country.

As the member for Barton rightly pointed out, there is some concern which is being registered about the consultation that has taken place around the development of this particular piece of legislation, which the government claims will modernise the CATSI Act and strengthen the governance of First Nations organisations. It has a number of objectives, including to make it easier and less costly for organisations to register and operate under the act; provide more flexibility in business structures that can be adopted by corporations; increase the transparency of corporation operations; streamline the process of winding up defunct corporations; increase corporations' access to modern technology, including for managing membership; and expand the powers of the registrar to respond to noncompliance. As the member for Barton pointed out, First Nations people and organisations have welcomed some of the changes in the bill but have registered their concern about the lack of consultation.

I think it's worth just contemplating for a moment the need to appreciate the range of organisations that might be caught up in this CATSI Act. We could be talking about very small community organisations in remote parts of the Northern Territory, for example, or we could be talking about complex business enterprises and community enterprises in Western Sydney or in South-East Queensland or, indeed, in Darwin. So there is a diverse range of interests. And, of course, what we know is that in remote communities there is an absolute need to provide the assistance that people require to understand the governance obligations they sign up to when they form these organisations. They need to be assisted in managing the governance of those organisations, there needs to be flexibility in the way in which they are administered and the oversight of them needs to be flexible.

I note, as the member for Barton said, that there are 143 Aboriginal community controlled health organisations around this country all doing magnificent work. By and large, they are employers of a large body of people with professional staff. They have good administrative structures, good compliance—their books and their administration are very transparent—and that's to be applauded. But, as NACCHO has pointed out, there's a great deal of concern about the cursory nature of the engagement undertaken by this review for First Nations communities and organisations. It reminds us of the national reform of the Closing the Gap agenda—shared decision-making, building the community controlled sector, improving mainstream institutions and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lead data. It's very clear from the process which NIAA has undertaken on behalf of the government for the review of this legislation that they seem to have lost sight of those obligations and those undertakings as priority reform areas, because we really do need shared decision-making. So, who are the shared decision-makers with the government around these particular proposals, who have they discussed it with and whose approval have they sought? They say they want to build the community controlled sector. Well, the only way to build a community controlled sector appropriately is to engage properly and not from afar. I'm concerned about the lack of engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in the development of this legislation, and there have been many critics who have similarly raised their concerns. The shadow minister has made it clear that our intention is to support this legislation but refer it to a committee and reserve our final position until that committee has undertaken its work.

I understand it's now close to six o'clock, Madam Deputy Speaker. If it is close to six o'clock and you would like me to sign off, could you just raise a hand? If I've got more time, raise your other hand!

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon):** You can continue if you have a few more brief remarks to make.

**Mr SNOWDON:** The member for Fenner is very keen to shut me up.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Sorry, Member for Lingiari; you will be able to continue your speech, but just at another time.

**Mr SNOWDON:** I appreciate that. I'm just giving him prod. I'm quite happy to complete my remarks right now. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Dr LEIGH** (Fenner) (18:01): I move:

That debate be adjourned, and resumption of the debate be made an order of the day for a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

Debate adjourned.

## BUSINESS

### Rearrangement

**Mrs MARINO** (Forrest—Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories) (18:01): I move:

That order of the day No. 5, government business, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

## CONDOLENCES

### Gallacher, Senator Alexander McEachian (Alex)

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That the House record its deep regret at the death, on 29 August 2021, of Senator Alexander (Alex) McEachian Gallacher, Senator for South Australia, place on record its appreciation of his service to Australia, and offer its heartfelt sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

**Ms RISHWORTH** (Kingston) (18:02): [by video link] It is with great sadness that I join with my colleagues to mark the life of one of the giants of the union and Labor movements. Many know Alex Gallacher as a senator, but of course he was also a loving father, husband, brother, grandfather and friend. The statements given in his honour from those in this place and the other place, across the aisle and from all works of life is a testament to his character. A dedicated member of the Labor Party and the union movement, he fought tirelessly to improve the lives of working people. He was a passionate, humble man who could make you laugh with his dry wit. Alex's passing is a huge loss to the parliament, our party and to the state of South Australia. He will be greatly missed.

Over the last few days, I've taken the time to speak with those who worked very closely with Alex over many years before he was in parliament and also while he was in parliament. One of his long-term staff members, Matt Marozzi, told me that the staff always appreciated that they knew where they stood with Alex. He was no nonsense and a straight-to-the-point kind of guy. Matt said that beyond his tough exterior he was a kind man who looked after his staff—evidenced by the fact that many had been with him for such a long time. Matt wanted me to stress that he not only cared for the working lives of his employees but cared deeply about their personal lives too. Matt said, 'For those who worked for Alex, they became like family to him.' This was echoed by those who worked for Alex in the TWU who reflected that, whether it was giving someone a start or helping an employee through family difficulties, Alex was always generous with his support.

Now, many have said that when you won Alex's trust, then the loyalty Alex would show would be replicated in spades. Matt Burnell, Labor's candidate for Spence, worked with Alex for many years and echoed these sentiments about Alex's fierce loyalty. Matt said: 'You had to work hard to get Alex's trust. But when you had that trust he was someone who would always be there for you as a sounding board, providing honest and wise advice and always helping you find clarity.' Ian Smith, the TWU secretary for South Australia and the Northern Territory, and one of Alex's long-term friends and colleagues, repeated those same sentiments. Ian, who has also been battling health problems recently, relayed to me that Alex was by his side all the way through his treatment and recovery, always encouraging him to stay positive. I think Ian would also want me to mention that he was grateful not only for Alex's support during this time but for that of Alex's wife, Paola, as well, who fed him during every visit. Ian told me that he is forever grateful to Alex for so many things, from taking a chance on him and employing him to supporting him in his role as secretary of the TWU, and for being a great listener and a mentor, as well as just a good bloke to catch up with. They say imitation is the best form of flattery, and to demonstrate the esteem that Ian held Alex in, Ian told me that he tries to emulate Alex in his leadership at the TWU.

Many have taken this opportunity to quote from Alex's first speech, but, for me, it was something he said at night in an adjournment speech in 2015 which I think best describes Alex's legacy as a senator. He stated:



For me, South Australia is first, second, third, fourth and fifth. I do not care who I have to advocate for or argue against. Whether it is in my own party, in the opposition or in the government ranks, I will be putting South Australia first, I will be putting South Australian jobs first, South Australian economic opportunities first, and South Australian small businesses first.

Alex was a fierce advocate of the things he believed in, the desire for a better Australia and a better deal for the people he represented in South Australia. That never wavered.

His passion was born from his own experience as a labourer, truck driver and ramp operator, and, later, as a union secretary. The issues of universal super, road safety, better pay and ensuring that the voices of the voiceless were heard are just some of the achievements he added to his legacy. Ian Smith also shared with me, though, that Alex worked hard during his time at the TWU not just to ensure that transport workers had a voice, although he did this very well. He also understood how important it was that these workers had a real influence within political decision-making. The respect that TWU members had for Alex is reflected in the fact that the TWU's new training room at its SA premises is named after him: the Alex Gallacher Training Centre. True to Alex's humble personality, he played down this honour publicly. But it has been revealed that, privately, he was grateful and honoured by this gesture. Alex had an unfaltering faith in members of his union. He trusted workers to be the authors of their own destinies through organised labour. He was known to say to those he worked with at the union, 'The members will always get it right, and, if they don't like what you're doing, then you're probably wrong.'

In his parliamentary work, Alex was deeply committed to making sure that those in rural and regional South Australia had representation. This was evidenced by his work on the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport. He rejected the notion that Labor should only campaign in the cities and spent a significant amount of time being a regional voice for Labor, particularly in the seat of Grey. Importantly, he fed back to the party the thoughts and views of those working people in regional and rural South Australia.

In conclusion, I will share some words from his family. They said that they would like to thank everyone for their condolences and kind words since the passing of Alex: 'We've been truly touched by the acknowledgement of his hard work and personal character. He would be deeply honoured to be remembered by so many from both sides of politics. Our family will deeply miss his love and support.'

My thoughts go out to Alex's family; his wife, Paola; his staff; the team at the Transport Workers Union; and all his friends. We share in your heartbreak, we mourn his passing and we will take time to celebrate his life. May he rest in peace.

**Mr RAMSEY** (Grey—Government Whip) (18:10): Alex Gallacher, Senator Alex Gallacher—I think maybe we should keep these titles. I don't claim to have known him incredibly well. I certainly don't know his family, and my thoughts and condolences are with them. My encounters with Alex come through this job and our interaction as parliamentarians representing South Australia. The member for Kingston just said he had a special interest in Grey. It's hard not to when you live in South Australia. It's a big place, Grey.

My first impression on meeting Alex was: well, he's a genuine kind of bloke, really. Genuine, I think, is a good thing for people that come to this place and the other place to be. I won't point out some that I think maybe aren't as genuine as others, but, in Alex's case, I don't think there was any doubt. He didn't hide where he came from; he didn't hide what he represented. And he was proud of it, and he was proud of being a Scotsman, but he was prouder of being a South Australian. And I think that's a good ground to build any kind of relationship on.

You would wonder what a Scottish born and bred—I always actually get it the other way round; I think we're bred then born—anyway a Scottish bred and born trade unionist and a farmer from Buckleboo would have in common. But when we actually did get to know each other a little bit, we found a lot more things that we agreed about than the things we disagreed about. We had a lot to do with each other through the period when we'd been trying to steer the National Radioactive Waste Management Facility through both Houses of parliament here. And Alex had sat on that committee, and he and I were in full agreement that this wasn't any kind of facility to be feared. It'll be one that'll be prized by the community that actually hosts it, and, as it turns out, it's the community I come from. I appreciated his work within the Labor Party to convince his colleagues to support it. It's not exactly in the form we put forward, and there'll be more to come on that, but we got it over the line and we are progressing down that way. That's where we probably came to know each other best, but it gave us an opportunity to talk about a lot of other things as well, including remote South Australia and obviously his interest in the transport industry, which has great interest to me as well, because the wheels on the road is what keeps an electorate like Grey going. We not only need to bring in goods; we need to send out goods. It is all to do with trucks. So, trucks and the transport industry.

When Alex first made it known that he was battling cancer, I did give him a ring. And it's something I haven't spoken about in this chamber before, but I'm now a close on eight-year survivor of cancer—7½ years. While it

wasn't lung cancer—I don't often go out and tell people about it, and I am today because we're talking about Alex—it was a battle that I fought. I fought the law and I beat it, there you go—as the song goes. The reason was I think sometimes those who have been through it, particularly those who are lucky enough to have, God's good will, a good outcome, to share our experiences with those that are dealing with it on a day-to-day basis—that's why I reached out to him. I don't know if it made a difference. He said he appreciated it. I hope it did. I hope it made a difference, but we certainly know that he served to the end, and I think that's an admirable thing to do.

One thing I would say, though, was I thought we'd developed a reasonable kind of relationship and then, just around election time, I'd go to the post office box, get my mail out, and there was something from Alex Gallacher saying something really horrible about me—lazy, useless, out of touch, too old, too young, too short, too fat. I don't know. I said to Alex one day, 'You've been sending out stuff, saying awful things about me again.' He looked at me rather blankly and said, 'Have I? What was I saying?' I suspect he didn't know what he was saying. Maybe he'd signed off on the expenses sheet and it was going into South Australia and he'd ticked all the boxes but he didn't really know what he'd said about me. So I consoled myself with the fact that it wasn't personal.

Just in closing, let me say to his family: I know you'll miss him because—and I pay him about the highest accolade, in my opinion, you can pay an Aussie, because that's what he was in the end—he was a bloody good bloke.

**Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (18:15):** I join other colleagues in paying tribute, with a great deal of sadness, to Alex Gallacher. Greek writer and philosopher Plutarchus is credited with saying some 2,000 years ago:

The whole of life is but a moment of time. It is our duty, therefore to use it, not to misuse it.

It's a quotation that well describes Alex Gallacher's attitude to life—a life committed to making a difference. Alex pursued that ideal throughout his life until the day he left us.

Although he didn't openly discuss it, I very much suspect that Alex's character was moulded by his early years in Scotland. He was born in the coalmining village of New Cumnock. I'm told that Alex's mother passed away when he was just two years old. In the post World War II years, life was pretty tough right around the world, but growing up without a mum in a coalmining community, Alex would have lived the struggles, the hardship, the injustice and the loss of lives all too often seen within poorer communities. It may even have been the origin of the lung cancer that prematurely took his life.

Alex migrated to Australia in 1966 at 12 years of age. Five years later, he began working as a labourer and truck driver. Between 1976 and 1988, he worked at TAA, as I recall it—otherwise known as Trans Australia Airlines—as a ramp service operator. From 1988 onwards he worked for the Transport Workers Union as an organiser and, subsequently, as state secretary for the South Australian and NT branch, rising to be national president from 2007 until 2010, when he was elected to the Senate, taking his position here on 1 July 2011. He became a tireless campaigner, campaigning right through to the very end for road safety and better rates and conditions for transport workers. His efforts did make a difference.

During his time here, Alex was one of the few people with what I would refer to as a traditional blue-collar working-class background. He knew where he came from. He knew who he was and what he stood for. He was not pretentious. He never let his election to the national parliament change him and he never lost sight of his journey to this place.

Alex has been described as a straight talker. He called it as he saw it and he was nobody's lackey. I first met Alex some 20 years ago. I was seeking preselection for the federal seat of Makin and I asked him for his support. After I had outlined my credentials to him, Alex said that he would support me. True to his word, and going against the tide at the time, Alex threw his support behind me. I have never forgotten that. We didn't always agree on internal Labor Party matters, but the mutual trust between us never faded. In parliament, Alex and I served together on the Public Works Committee. Alex's respectful but direct interrogation of public works projects was invaluable, and his presence will be sorely missed.

In Adelaide, Alex lived with his wife, Paola, in Kilburn, an older, working-class and now very multicultural suburb. As testimony to who he was, in recent years, when Alex was in a position to upgrade his home, he did so by rebuilding his home in Kilburn, rather than moving out to a more affluent suburb, which I'm sure he could have done. Sadly, he wasn't able to enjoy his new home. In what I think may have been his last two trips to Canberra, I crossed paths with Alex at Adelaide Airport. On the last occasion, he was accompanied by Paola, who cared for him until the very end. Over coffee, we discussed the political issues of the day and the outlook for the future. It was clear to me from that chat that Alex had lost none of his determination to pursue the issues that he was so passionate about. For Alex, his cancer was a setback, but it was not the end. He knew it was serious, but it was not going to distract him from what he needed to do, nor was it going to interfere with his golf. But, in the end, it did take him.

Alex will be farewelled in Adelaide on Friday. My regret is that, because of COVID, I will not be able to attend his service. To Alex's long-serving and loyal electorate staff, to which the member for Kingston quite rightly alluded and to whom Alex reciprocated that loyalty, I extend my sympathy. You have lost a mentor, a friend and a guardian. To Paola and his children, Caroline, Ian, Terry and Frank, and their families, whom meant so much to Alex, to his extended family and to his close friends, including Senator Glenn Sterle, whom I spoke with recently, I express my personal sadness and sympathies. I say to them all: you have lost a pillar of strength in your lives, but his spirit will be with you forever. To return to the Plutarchus quotation, Alex did not misuse his moment in time in this world. Through his work in parliament and before that in the TWU, he made a difference for the better to the lives of so many. It's a wonderful legacy for a kid who came to Australia as a 12-year-old from the village of New Cumnock in Scotland 55 years ago. Vale, Alex Gallacher.

**Mr McCORMACK** (Riverina) (18:22): A straight shooter; somebody who said what he meant and meant what he said—that was Senator Alex Gallacher. We all knew him as somebody who was old-style Labor. Senator Gallacher, as we've heard, was born on New Year's Day 1954, in Scotland. I commend the fine words of the member for Makin, the member for Grey and the member for Kingston. Of course, they're all South Australians. I'm not from South Australia; I'm from New South Wales, but my respect for the late senator is no less. Of course, he was also a member of the other place, the Senate, and yet he was fondly thought of in this place, the House of Representatives. I know that the Prime Minister and the opposition leader, amongst others, have also spoken highly of Senator Gallacher for the work that he did and for the part that he played. Certainly, he will be sadly missed. My condolences go to his wife, Paola, his children, Caroline, Ian, Terry and Frank, and his grandchildren.

He had a long involvement in the Transport Workers Union for 22 years. He was a labourer—a truck driver—for several years, between 1971 and 1976. We've just been joined by the member for Flynn. The member for Flynn, of course, has got a lot of experience in the transport industry as a fuel distributor as well. He would also appreciate the importance of the transport industry to keep this country moving. Alex played a big part in doing just that, in fighting for rights for truckies, as an integral member himself in that industry, which is indispensable. In his first speech, he mentioned transport and road safety as some of his priority interests, and he has certainly lived up to what he said. Many people make all sorts of promises in their inaugural speeches, but he lived every word of what he said by his actions and by what he did following on from that.

He was appointed commissioner for the National Road Transport Commission and held that role in 2003 and 2004. He was the director of the South Australian Motor Accident Commission, an organisation he served until 2010. He was acting chair of the Road Safety Advisory Council of South Australia.

Alex was elected to this place, and he made his inaugural speech on 17 August 2011. In that speech, he said:

A lifetime on the road in my working life and capacity as a TWU official has made me aware of the ever-present dangers that each Australian faces every day when they drive their vehicle. I have a real passion for road safety. Our country's prosperity is reflected in our love affair with the motor vehicle. The freedom and mobility achieved by owning a car are tempered with the sickening human and economic cost of vehicle accidents.

I could put it no better myself. He lived that experience. He wanted to make a difference and, indeed, he did. He continued:

I have always believed that we should adopt the Swedish model of Vision Zero, which requires a move from traditional thinking. Vision Zero starts with this statement:

We are human and we make mistakes. Our bodies are subject to biomechanical tolerance limits and simply not designed to travel at high speed. Yet we do so anyway. An effective road safety system must always take human fallibility into account.

Somebody I admire greatly in the road safety advocacy space is Peter Frazer. Peter lost his beautiful daughter, Sarah. She was travelling on the Hume Freeway to Wagga Wagga to begin a university degree, and lost her life. Peter then began Safer Australian Roads and Highways—the acronym, of course, is SARAH—in her honour. He had this to say about Senator Alex Gallacher on social media: 'We are saddened by the death of Sen. Gallacher and our thoughts are with family, friends and staff. Alex dedicated his life to those who are vulnerable, and his passion for justice remains an inspiration to so many, including myself. I was privileged to know him. Vale, Sen. Alex Gallacher.' I could put it no better myself.

Alex was inspirational. He was a man of honour, a man of his word. He contributed mightily not just to this parliament but to road safety measures that will, in the future, save people's lives—people who will not even know that they wouldn't be alive except for the fact that he had done the work advocating better roads and highways, advocating more money for infrastructure, advocating Vision Zero. The sum total of those things have saved people's lives and will save people's lives into the future, and they can thank him for just that. May he rest in peace. My condolences and sympathy go to his family and wide circle of friends, particularly in the Labor Party.

**Mr HAYES** (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (18:28): Alex Gallacher was a truck driver. He worked airside as part of the aircrew for TAA. He became a union organiser. Importantly, he was elected secretary of the South Australia/Northern Territory branch of the Transport Workers Union. In 2010 he became a senator of the Australian parliament, representing the great state of South Australia. That's a significant and telling curriculum vitae for a working-class man. He never lost sight of who he was and those he was determined to represent to the best of his ability. Alex was a committed Labor man and fiercely loyal to the people of South Australia.

For those of us that knew him, I think the best words to describe him are that he was down to earth, genuine and direct. There was no pretence about him. He was honest. Those are words that would probably come to mind for all of us who have dealt with him. Alex's great mate is Senator Glenn Sterle. Together they formed a dynamic duo in our Labor caucus, particularly when it came to matters of road safety or matters affecting the road transport industry. They were passionate about those causes.

Alex, as I said, was a working man in a workers' party. He was never slow to remind colleagues if he thought they were straying from what he saw were the key principles of the Labor Party and if we were slow to move to protect workers' rights. He was fiercely loyal to the party itself. He was a strong advocate for improving road safety and the conditions of the road transport industry. By the way, it's an industry which tragically has a fatality rate almost 10 times higher than the average of all other Australian industries, so clearly his passions were well directed in that respect. I remember he once addressed caucus and said words to this effect: 'Truck drivers work hard to make a living, but they shouldn't need to die to make a living.' His contribution was short, direct, considered, but always, always compelling. Alex didn't waste words. He didn't believe in long speeches. He simply conveyed to those who listened what he genuinely believed. It was raw honesty.

One thing is certain, and that is that Alex Gallacher made a difference for the better for workers, particularly those in the transport industry. But, more than that, he made a difference for the better in the way he represented the people of South Australia. To his wife, Paola, and to his children and grandchildren, please accept my condolences and know that Alex was much loved and respected by all who knew him and those who had the privilege to work with him. Alex Gallacher, great man, good mate, rest in peace.

**Mr O'DOWD** (Flynn—Deputy Nationals Whip) (18:31): It was a pleasure and an honour to know Senator Alex Gallacher. Sadly, his life came to an end on Sunday, aged 67. I first met Alex on a political trip to Korea and Japan. That's where our political lives crossed, and we became very good friends. It was a lasting friendship to the very end. On that delegation we visited coal-fired power stations and nuclear power stations in Korea. From the start I think we bonded. We had a fair bit in common, Alex and I. Was it the fact that we were both truck drivers and earned our living from driving trucks? He was long-haul; I was more fuel trucks in my area. We both loved golf. We started our lives in Canberra in the latter part of our lives. We both came here in the 2010 election.

I fully support all the accolades that have been bestowed on Alex by members of the House and I concur with the kind words that everyone has to say about Alex. I have not heard anyone say anything bad about Alex. He was one of those types of guys and, I tell you what, if you had something bad to say about him, you'd want to duck. He was a lovable bloke. My fondest memory of Alex was sitting in a bar in Seoul in Korea. He had a beer in one hand and a nine-inch cigar in the other. He said to me, 'Well, that was a great day, Ken, but a better night to come.' He said, 'I just love sitting at a bar and being able to smoke at the same time.' He said, 'You know you can't do that in Australia anymore.' That was correct. Smoking in a bar in Korea was quite acceptable. You walk into a bar over there and you've got to look through this haze to see who's at the other end. My condolences are with his wife, Paola, his children and his family. Rest in peace, my friend.

**Mr KEOGH** (Burt) (18:35): [by video link] I rise to express my condolences on the passing of Senator Alex Gallacher. We all know that Alex had been unwell, but that didn't make the shock of his passing any easier to take. Many others who knew him better than me have said and will say many great things about Alex, all well-deserved and, I'm sure, better expressed than I could do.

For me, what I always appreciated about Alex was that he was a straight shooter. He always told it like it was. Importantly, he was also happy to share the benefits of his experience, to provide wise counsel and to provide guidance to us newer MPs. I always valued that about Alex, and I'm sure I'm not the only one.

Alex didn't feel the need to contribute on every issue and debate, but when he did you listened. His was always a considered contribution. That doesn't mean I agreed with Alex on every point, but I appreciated the way in which he always articulated a well-formed argument. His arguments came with passion, too—a real, heartfelt expression of how things really are and how policies would affect workers.

Alex dedicated his life to the interests of working people both as a trade unionist and as a senator. Politics didn't change him. He was no-nonsense and plain speaking. He wasn't going to let his illness stop him either. He was sitting in the parliament as recently as June. A little thing called cancer wasn't going to get in his way. Alex was a

champion of common sense and fairness, and had one of sharpest minds in the parliament. He was, as many have said, a great bloke.

I can't speak about Alex without also speaking about my friend Senator Glenn Sterle, who was such a close mate of Alex's. They were two peas in a pod—or, as many of us thought of them, the Statler and Waldorf of our caucus, not just in demeanour but also in the physical location they took in the room! I must also acknowledge that I know Alex's passing is particularly hard on Senator Sterle. Both were truck drivers before working for the TWU and then becoming senators. They were also flatmates in Canberra.

The caucus, the TWU, the union movement, the Labor Party and, of course, Alex's family are all grieving his loss. Australian workers, especially truckies, and all road users are better off for Alex Gallacher's advocacy and dogged commitment. We lost Alex far too soon. Alex was also a family man who was dedicated to his wife, Paola, his children and his grandchildren. I express my condolences to his family and to his friends. Vale Senator Gallacher. May he rest in peace.

**Dr GILLESPIE** (Lyne—Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment and Minister for Regional Health) (18:38): I rise to pay tribute to Alex Gallacher. I first met Alex in my first term in parliament, as a young fresh-faced, first-term member, having come out of medicine. I wouldn't go as far as saying I was getting my feet on the ground or being oriented, but committees were a whole new experience for me. Alex and I sat together on the joint standing committee for oversight of the NDIS. Having come into this building from a totally different field, I was preconditioned to think that, between people on that side and people on this side, it was always full of argy-bargy. But, as we all know, that is not the case. We fight the good fight and the principles, but often, after the debates are over, you've got someone who you get on with, and that was Alex Gallacher.

He gave wise counsel to a first-termer, and, as other people have said, he called it how it was. He was a straight shooter. He was the old-school Labor that I knew as a kid; some in my family are from that family, and my father himself was a DLP advocate. But, like many people, the Labor Party moved in one direction and other people went their way. But we're not talking about that; we're talking about Alex. He was a great guy to play a game of golf with. Many times I would have a bad shot, and I tend to internalise my stuff-ups, but with Alex you knew exactly where you stood in golf, as you did in a political argument. The member for Burt mentioned Glenn Sterle. Playing with them, you could see they were mates. They were sort of the yin and yang of a greater thought bubble. They sort of knew by mental telepathy what was going on. And I am sure Glenn is grieving as much as Alex's family.

Alex had an amazing career. Because of my medical background, when I saw how much he'd deteriorated from the lung cancer, I thought, 'Oh, gee, this is not good.' But, look, he bore up, amazingly. He was going to be in this place. He was losing his voice, and he still turned up. I was really honoured to have him be a co-chair with me. He faced the wrath of maybe the factions or the wrath of some of the people who were supporters of his party, who've had distorted and out-of-context views about the capability of nuclear technology to help us in the transition to a sustainable industrial base and a better climate outcome, but he was quite proud and loud about putting his hand up to be a co-chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Nuclear Industries. I would like to thank him and other members of the Labor Party who have joined this bipartisan group, and we've had some great discussions about modern technology, Australia's involvement in nuclear, and Alex was at the forefront of that. So I really tip my lid to him, because, in the Labor Party, it's sometimes a bit stricter. The National Party—we can go off on our personal ideas about policy without risk or fear of being sent to Siberia.

I would also like to say thank you to other people who, like me, who have stood here and tipped their lid or said a salute to Alex, because he really was a charming fellow. I am sure his family and children, his wife and grandchildren are grieving, because he was a very likeable bloke. I can see his background in the TWU, grounding him in a serious base of reality. I was really impressed that he worked for TAA for a long period of his life—all these things that I'm learning about Alex after his passing. I knew he was a unionist; I knew he was TWA. But I was in the TAA Juniors Flyer Club, and TAA was a great airline. Unfortunately it's no longer here. I thought, 'Oh well, I can see why he worked for them,' because they were seen as the good guys against Ansett and were a big part of my life when I was a youngster.

So many people have things to say, but I would like to express my public and deepest condolences to everyone who was a friend of Alex, his family, his children and his grandchildren. And everyone else is, I'm sure, equally as sad as I am that he's passed.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Frelander):** The question is that the motion be agreed to. I call the member for Lingiari.

**Mr SNOWDON** (Lingiari) (18:43): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It's strange seeing you so far away. And this is a surreal experience, really, trying to talk to a parliament through this system, because you can miss all the

nuances of the parliamentary theatre, and that's a bit sad, in my view, just as it's sad that we're here to commemorate the life of a good person, Alex Gallacher. I come at this from a slightly different perspective, because, whilst he made his life in South Australia, he actually began his life in Australia up here in Darwin, where I am at the moment, on Larrakia country. He joined the Labor Party up here in 1988, which is a year after I was first elected. I remember vividly his role in the TWU in the Northern Territory and as part of the South Australian division of the TWU. He was involved in the union movement up here at a time when it was a pretty robust place. You were unable to hide. You needed to be a participant and be involved and engaged, and you needed to be able to stand up for your corner. He was one of those people who were able to stand up very well for their corner.

I was reflecting on the fact that he had this huge life and career prior to entering the federal parliament, and thought about what it brought to us—a lifetime of experience, of struggle, of advocacy, of representation, of looking after the interests of others in terms of his union and union membership. He had a particular and, I might say, because of his life, peculiar view of the world which is not shared by a lot, because there are not many of us in this parliament who have had the opportunities or experience that he had and that he brought with him to the place.

As you would know, Mr Deputy Speaker Freeland, when you see people who are straight up, who are not chameleons, they are what they are. When they say something, they mean it. They're straight. They don't change to suit the circumstances or because they might be ambitious and be looking for a promotion. That wasn't Alex. He was just such a straight bloke, and his word was definitely his bond. You knew that if Alex expressed a view he wasn't going to be shifted from it lightly, and when he expressed a view you needed to take notice. Of course, we're a happy little family in the Labor Party, but we do have different points of view at times, and sometimes those differences are reflected in very strong arguments. But I never saw Alex in a position where, despite the argument, despite the difference of opinion, he wasn't prepared to sit down and talk, share a drink or break bread. He was that sort of person. He is someone who we will sadly miss.

I reflected on his role as a TWU official and thought about his experience in the trucking industry, and I reflected on how important that role was and remains for those in the TWU. It's particularly important in the north of Australia, in the Northern Territory, because of our reliance on long-haul transport and the trucking industry. I know that when Alex was representing those workers he did so with a great deal of diligence and, indeed, a great deal of inspiration, which he took from his members but was able to articulate because of his own life experience.

I think those of us who had the great fortune to meet and know Alex would know that he was a unique individual and someone who demanded respect. Others have spoken about his first speech in the parliament and his observations about particular issues. I don't intend to repeat those, but I do want to repeat the words of the TWU national secretary, Michael Cain, who said:

Senator Gallacher was a straight-talking, no-nonsense, and hardworking man prepared to speak truth to power to support workers.

That's a terrific dedication. You could just replace the word 'workers' with 'truth to power to speak for the people of South Australia,' which he did so avidly and so well.

We'll miss him. There aren't many like him. I watched Glenn Sterle's contribution the other day and I was taken by how close those two men were. I say to Glenn: you've lost a mate and a great friend. We in the broader labour movement have lost a comrade—someone who was worth listening to and someone who could take great credit for what he achieved during his working life.

I extend my deepest condolences to his wife, Paola, to his children and grandchildren, and to his many friends. But I say to his comrades in our caucus, in the union movement generally—particularly in the TWU—and to those who may be thinking of him that it's vale, but it's not goodbye, in a sense, because we can continue to celebrate his life and his contribution.

**Mr THISTLETHWAITE** (Kingsford Smith) (18:51): [by video link] It's an honour to have the privilege of saying a few words in commemoration of my good mate—our good mate in the Labor Party—Senator Alex Gallacher. Alex was a true workers' champion: a straight shooter, a person who called it as he saw it and always stood up for workers, their families and their rights. He will be a big loss to the parliament.

Alex, like so many in the labour movement, was a Scottish migrant; he came to Australia in the 1960s. He found work as a labourer and then as a truck driver before going on to work as a ramp services operator at Trans Australia Airlines, or TAA as it was then known. That's where his long affinity with the Transport Workers Union began. Alex was a member of the union at TAA and worked his way up to become delegate. The leadership of the union saw his talent, his leadership and his promise and they made him an organiser before he went on to become

the state secretary of the Transport Workers Union in South Australia and the Northern Territory in 1996 until 2010.

Alex was also the national president of the TWU and a bloke who never forgot where he came from. When he was preselected to the Senate to represent the state of South Australia he always cherished his years in the union movement and his work for the Transport Workers Union, and ensured that when he went into the parliament he was there to make a difference for those workers and to improve their rights and conditions at work.

Alex was a good mate of mine. We were elected together to the Senate in 2010. I remember fondly the Senate school that we had at the time, just before we actually took up our Senate seats in July 2011. I immediately took a shine to Alex because he did call it as he saw it and he had the endearing features of a wise bloke who had worked in many industries, had graduated from the school of hard knocks and was street smart. More importantly, he knew how to use that shrewdness, that street smart and those life experiences to advocate for and campaign for workers. That's what he did in the Senate. He immediately set about making sure that workers interests were represented. He pushed to ensure that workers had better rights and conditions at work and, importantly, that their safety was looked after and cared for—particularly in the transport industry.

Alex knew the dangers that truck drivers and people who work in the transport industry faced on a daily basis. He'd rung the members and he'd rung the widows to tell them of the deaths of their husbands on the road. He'd seen the carnage of owner-drivers being forced to work ridiculous hours to make deadlines that were imposed by those whom they were carrying for. That's why he was a champion of safer rates and for the establishment of the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal that came to fruition under the Gillard government. It's a great shame that the Abbott government forgot the wise words and the knowledge of blokes like Alex Gallacher and Glenn Sterle in the Senate when they got rid of that important body, because it did have an effect in ensuring that workers weren't pushed to run and drive irresponsible hours, putting at risk the health and safety of workers and causing death to others on our roads. Alex was part of that campaign and an important part of raising those issues.

Strangely enough, Alex loved the Economics Committee of the Senate, and he was very proud to have become the Senate Economics References Committee chair. He brought to the committee not a theoretical perspective about economics but a real-life one, and that is so important. Often we forget about that in the work of committees such as that. Alex brought that reality and that worker's perspective, being someone who had worked for many years in the industry on behalf of workers as a union representative. It was under his chairmanship that that committee undertook some very, very important work, particularly around the notions associated with workers and a living wage, housing affordability, access to quality education and access to training for skills improvement, which are all fundamentally important—and Labor ideals—to advancing the rights of workers and making sure that they have a better life.

Alex was a funny bloke as well. He loved a beer, loved a joke and loved a game of golf. I had the good fortune of travelling to Brazil with Alex in 2018. One Sunday morning when we were due to go somewhere the tour guide said, 'Does anyone know where Senator Gallacher is?' and I said, 'I think you can bet your life that on Sunday morning he's on the golf course.' And, true to form, he was. We were also keen to go to a football game, a soccer game, when we were in Rio, because two of the top teams were playing in a final and we knew it would be something that would be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. So we asked the Australian embassy staff if they could possibly arrange for us to buy tickets to go to the football game, and the embassy staff said, 'Look, I think that's going to be a bit hard. It's a sellout. It'll be too much. I think you'd better just forget about it.' Anyway, the next morning Alex came down to breakfast and said to everyone, 'Don't worry. I've got us all tickets to the soccer.' He'd managed to work out with the concierge a way to get tickets for everyone, and we all went along and had a great time at that soccer game.

That was Alex. He knew how to relate to people. People like him. They warmed to him. He had a great spirit and a great character that will be sadly missed by all, not only in the Labor Party but in the Senate more generally. I particularly want to pay tribute to his good mate, Senator Glenn Sterle. They've had a mateship that has lasted longer than that any of us in the parliament have had with Alex. It's a deep bond, and I know Glenn has been hurting over the last couple of days. We send our commiserations to Glenn. But, in particular, we also send our commiserations to Paola, Alex's wife, and to his kids and grandchildren.

He was a great bloke—a workers' champion. He'll be sadly missed in the parliament. May he rest in peace.

**Mr GEORGANAS** (Adelaide) (18:59): [by video link] I too wish to express my deep sadness and regret at the passing of Alex Gallacher. I pass on my condolences to his wonderful wife, Paola, and his children and grandchildren. We're all going to miss Alex. Alex was a great trade unionist, and I believe that the trade union movement, even though he was in parliament, has lost one of its giants, and so has this parliament.

We've heard over the last couple of days Alex's history and his beginnings. Alex was a worker. He was a blue-collar worker, a truck driver that delivered goods from point A to point B. He never lost that affiliation with the workers movement. He knew what it was like to work in a tough job, in a hard job, driving trucks and delivering goods. You could see that throughout his entire parliamentary career in his speeches and in his communications with his electorate.

He spent 22 years at the Transport Workers Union, where he successfully campaigned for improving workers' conditions and wages. He was a fierce advocate for the industry, for the state that he represented and for his nation. He was dedicated to his loving family. He was dedicated to his wife, Paola, his children and his grandchildren. They're going to miss him so much, as all of us will. His loyalty to industry and workers, and his service and contribution to our state and our nation, will be sorely missed.

But Alex has now left us with another important legacy. I know that, since he was diagnosed with lung cancer, Alex spoke frequently to the people from Lung Foundation Australia, a wonderful organisation advocating for better care and more research into lung cancer. I recently spoke with Mark Brooke, who rang me to pass on his condolences for Alex, as a deputy convenor of the Parliamentary Friends of Lung Health and Lung Cancer. He rang me yesterday. He conveyed to me that they expressed their deepest sadness at Alex's passing. What Mark said to me was that he and Alex spoke regularly over the last few months about the importance of specialist lung cancer nurses. There is an urgent need that exists to fund these roles to support patients like Alex and what they go through in their cancer journey. They also discussed the importance of nationwide targeted lung cancer screening programs to ensure that we catch the disease earlier, when optimal care and treatment can be provided. I'll continue to work with Lung Foundation Australia and parliamentary colleagues to promote this legacy and achieve what Alex was also fighting for in the last few months of his life.

I first met Alex in 1996-97, when he came over from the NT to take up the leadership position of the TWU in South Australia. In 1998, I was the candidate, the first time, for the seat of Hindmarsh. I remember Alex working on my campaign. Alex was introduced to me by another fellow TWU colleague of mine, who I knew very well, Steph Key, and we became friends ever since. Alex was a down-to-earth sort of person. There were no airs and graces. What you saw is what you got. Basically, you knew that if you had his commitment to something, his word was his word. He operated in that manner. Basically, throughout my political career he was one of my greatest supporters, whether he was secretary of the TWU or a senator.

We know Alex's background. He born in Scotland in 1954. He migrated to Australia when he was 12 years old with his parents. He came from a tough life. A working-class life in Scotland in those days was tough. Alex began his working life as a labourer, a blue-collar worker, and was a truck driver from 1971 right through to 1976. In 1976, Alex started at the old TAA, the Trans Australia Airlines, as a ramp operator until 1988. He then joined the Transport Workers Union, the South Australian-Northern Territory division, or branch, as they were in those days, becoming a union organiser in 1992. In 1996 Alex was elected as secretary and treasurer of the TWU SA-NT branch. That's when I met him.

He was involved, as well, in the Labor Party in South Australia. He was one of those people, as I said, who was committed to workers, committed to the labour movement and committed to the betterment of entitlements and workers' lives, because he had been a worker himself. Not many people like Alex are in parliament today, but we know that what he brought to the parliament was an absolute understanding of what workers go through—their trials and tribulations.

In fact, I had the pleasure and the honour of going to Afghanistan on one of the Defence programs with Alex in 2010. We were in Tarin Kowt. Those of you who have been on Defence programs know that when you go there you actually live like one of the defence personnel. We were in a bunker in a dormitory, and I was in the same room as Alex. I'd wake up in the morning fairly early, at 6 am, and I'd look over and Alex was gone. I always wondered: where on earth is he? I'd go off and shower and meet him at breakfast in the mess room in Tarin Kowt, in Afghanistan. I'd say to him: 'Where did you go? What were you doing up so early?' He said: 'I got up early, because I like to go out and talk to the soldiers. I wanted to hear their view. I wanted to hear what they've got to say.' Mind you, while we were there, we had all these meetings with all the big brass and top notches of the Defence Force. Alex wanted to go and speak to those on the ground. He said to me: 'That's how I always operated as a union official as well. I always spoke to the workers to hear what the true story is.' And he would do this every morning. For the 10 days we were there, he would get up at 6 am and just walk out and talk to the different defence personnel that were going to their shifts et cetera. He'd say to me, 'You hear and you learn the most out of those people that are working on the ground.' That's the type of person Alex was. He did that in his union life, he did that in his parliamentary life, and it was a good example—a good lesson to me at that time as well—that you talk to those people on the ground.



Alex was elected to the Senate in 2010 and commenced his position in 2011—I think it was on 1 July when the Senate began its term. He served on many standing committees in that period, and he especially took great pride in the Economics Committee. Alex would say his mind. There was no doubt if he believed something; he'd pick up the phone and he'd say to you: 'Steve, XYZ. This is what's happening. This is what I believe in.' And there were, as I said, no airs and graces. He was straight, his word was his word, and he's going to be missed by us all. In fact, we need more people like Alex in this parliament. He was a true believer in workers, who understood workers, who had actually been a worker himself and who had seen the trials and tribulations and what people go through in everyday life. He continued that throughout his career, whether it was as a trade unionist or whether it was in the parliament—to speak to those people on the ground, just like the example I gave you about Afghanistan. That's what Alex was good at. That's what he did. He understood people at the lower echelons of life and always advocated for them.

To his family, to Paola, to his children, to his grandchildren: our deep condolences. He will be missed immensely in this place that we are in and that we have the honour to represent people and workers in, especially on my side of politics. People like Alex are absolutely the salt of the earth. I pass on my condolences to his family and my deepest sympathy.

**Mr ROB MITCHELL** (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (19:09): [by video link] Tonight's is one of those speeches you make that you don't want to make. We often rise in this place to talk about bills and motions and other things, but tonight we're talking about a mate. When I think about Alex, the only words I can say about him are that he was a mate, a good bloke, straight down the line, honest, as honest as the day is long and genuine. There aren't many people that you meet in this game of politics that you can say that about. I say that because, from the first time I met him at a pizza shop in Canberra on the first night I came here to the very end, wherever you were with Alex, he stopped, he spoke, he was your mate. As Matt Keogh, the member for Burt, pointed out earlier, we used to lovingly call him and Sterlie 'Statler and Waldorf', sitting in the caucus room and always putting in their two bob's worth. But you'd know that every time they put in their two bob, you got 10 bucks worth because it was always genuine gold that they'd give you.

I don't know what I could say that's going to change the pain or the feelings of his family. We think about what we've lost, but that's nothing compared to what they've lost. They've lost someone who was a husband, a father, a grandfather a brother, a cousin. We've lost a friend and a colleague. We look back and we think about what Alex did with his life: coming out here from Scotland, working as a rampie and driving a truck, being involved in the union. His whole story tells you about the genuineness of the person and what he believed in. It's very difficult to find words when you talk about someone like Alex on an occasion like this, which made me think about Linda Ellis's poem called *The Dash*. The closing lines say:

So when your eulogy is being read, with your life's actions to rehash, would you be proud of the things they say about how you lived your dash?

It's about the dash between the date of birth and the date of death. I really want to say to Alex's family, you can be very proud of the dash that Alex had. There are not many people who can go through life and just be a genuine, honest, decent person of moral values and integrity. He did that in spades.

As the member for Flynn said earlier, there was not a bad word you could say about Alex. If you did, you'd be wrong and you'd have a queue a mile long of people that would get up behind you to say, 'That's just not right,' because he was a remarkable person to know, to call a friend, to have a beer with, to have a chat with and to get an opinion from. But it wouldn't be fair to say goodbye to a Scottish person without a few words from Rabbie Burns. Rabbie Burns wrote a poem called *Epitaph on my own Friend*:

An honest man here lies at rest,  
As e'er God with His image blest:  
The friend of man, the friend of truth;  
The friend of age, and guide of youth:  
Few hearts like his, with virtue warm'd,  
Few heads with knowledge so inform'd:  
If there's another world, he lives in bliss;  
If there is none, he made the best of this.

I think that poem sums up Alex perfectly. So vale, Alex. Thank you for giving me the privilege of being your friend. And to Sterlie, I can't wait to see you, mate, all the best. Thank you.

**Ms TEMPLEMAN** (Macquarie) (19:13): I'm very grateful to have a few moments in the chamber to pay tribute to Senator Alex Gallacher on behalf of the electorate of Macquarie. There's a really strong link between

Alex and my electorate, especially the Blue Mountains, which may seem odd for a South Australian. But it's due to his commitment to road safety. Alex was such a proud co-convenor of the Parliamentary Friends of Road Safety, and when Peter Frazer, a Blue Mountains resident and president and founder of the SARAH Group, reached out for support for his yellow ribbon safer driving initiative, it was an absolutely perfect match. Peter established SARAH Group in honour of his daughter Sarah. Her car had broken down, and when a tow-truck driver was hooking up the car, a truck side-swiped the car, collided with them both and they both died. In 2017 Alex described the work of the SARAH Group, which the family set up after Sarah's death. He said:

Peter ... has made a personal tragedy into a campaign for road safety. He has done a fantastic job in bringing greater awareness of road safety.

And then Alex quoted the SARAH pledge, and I think you'd agree that the more people who hear this and take the pledge the better. The pledge is:

Drive as if my loved ones are on the road ahead;

Remove distractions, and never use my smartphone while at the wheel; and

I will be aware of, and take care of, vulnerable road users around me.

I know how important it was for Peter and his family to see that work recognised by the Senate, and I want it on the record how deeply Alex's efforts in this area have been appreciated.

Of course, everything he did to promote road safety and to promote safer trucking had implications for the major roads that go through my electorate—the Great Western Highway and the Bells Line of Road. I was in Canberra as a candidate on the day the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal was established. I think that was 2012. I was very pleased to celebrate on the front lawn with the TWU and with those senators who made it possible. We know it wouldn't have occurred without Alex's work.

So my deep condolences go to his family, his Senate and South Australian colleagues, his TWU mates and the people that he got to hang out with here in his years in Canberra. I want everybody to know that his work reached Macquarie and it made a difference.

**Mr DAVID SMITH** (Bean) (19:16): Alex Gallacher was born in New Cumnock, a small coalmining village in East Ayrshire, a village that, despite its name, dates back to the 13th century, with connections to William Wallace, Robert the Bruce and Robbie Burns. A few miles down the road lived Keir Hardie, a founder of the UK Labour Party and a giant of the trade union movement. While organising in Ayrshire for the miners union, Hardie had a significant influence on a young East Ayrshire union leader and future Australian Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher. The connection between East Ayrshire, the union movement, the Australian Labor Party and this parliament was set in those early days of the Federation. It should then come as no surprise that another son of East Ayrshire would have such an impact on the Australian labour movement.

Alex Gallacher's family, like so many migrants, like Fisher himself, came to Australia seeking a better chance for themselves. Alex worked for the Transport Workers Union for more than two decades, holding key state and national positions, working as an industrial officer, organiser, South Australian and Northern Territory state secretary and also national president. He channelled his early experience as a truck driver and aviation ramp worker into his passionate advocacy to improve safety and conditions right across the transport industry.

In 2010 he was elected to the Australian Senate and brought his staunch advocacy for working people and their families to this place. He fought tirelessly for truck drivers to receive safe rates of pay and conditions and would have been proud to be part of the Senate's landmark report into the road transport industry tabled only last week in the Senate. Despite his ill health, he was still active in supporting aviation workers in their fight against deplorable treatment last year. He was a passionate believer in the importance of superannuation for a just and dignified retirement and he was deeply concerned by the increase in uncertain work in all its forms.

It was through Senator Gallacher's tireless work across committees that I first met him. Before coming to this place, I worked for Professionals Australia and appeared before Alex a number of times in the course of Senate inquiries. He was sharp but understanding and treated inquiry witnesses with respect and, at times, with kindness if we deserved it. He didn't suffer fools, but, in Alex, our members felt they had someone who not only heard them but understood and cared about the issues they raised. Invariably that understanding of issues was reflected in the recommendations coming from committees he was involved in.

He showed me particular kindness and wise counsel when I briefly served in the Senate from 2018 until 2019, and he extended that kindness to my family. I came into the Senate at an unusual time and in unusual circumstances, mid-term, and it's an unusual place; the rhythms of the Senate are quite different than those of this place. But Alex took it upon himself to share his experience and knowledge of all the vagaries of that place, with no agenda other than generosity of spirit. His enduring agenda was advancing the interests of working people in this place, an agenda we share. And he opened up his friendship group with the same spirit of generosity. He was

a great example to someone new that there was a place for hardworking, passionate people who could get outcomes across the aisles and through hard work. And I hope I have learned just from observing how Alex went about his business in the chamber, during inquiries and party meetings, with his staff and with constituents. I had hoped to continue learning.

As the TWU national secretary, Michael Kaine, said earlier this week, transport workers, the TWU and the parliament have lost a giant. Senator Gallacher was a straight-talking, no-nonsense, hardworking man prepared to speak truth to power to support workers. Alex was someone on whom workers could always rely and was resolute in his belief that no obstacle should prevent working people from achieving their best. His passing is a significant loss to the labour movement and to the parliament. My deepest condolences go to Alex's wife, Paola; his children; his grandchildren; the rest of his family; his staff; and all those who worked with Alex in the labour movement. Keir Hardie, Andrew Fisher, Alex Gallacher—all 'flowers of Scotland'. When will we see their like again?

**Mr STEPHEN JONES** (Whitlam) (19:22): I would like to thank the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition for the gracious way they have worked together to share some kind words about our fallen friend and comrade Senator Alex Gallacher of South Australia and for the many fine words that have been said during this debate. It's a truism in this place—and 'upstairs'—that some of the kindest and most honest words about our colleagues are said when they depart from this place, whatever the means by which they depart. Many members on our side were truly moved by the words that were offered up in tribute to Alex by members of the coalition parties.

I've had the privilege of knowing Alex since he and I joined this place. We both joined in 2010. I think it was the 43rd Parliament, and we referred to those years as 'the troubles'. And separately we've engaged in our own measure of troubles in the 11 years we have been in this place. I didn't know Alex before he joined this place, but I worked with him in many separate capacities since he joined the Senate. I also had a long association with the organisation that he is a life member of, the Transport Workers Union, and they are a different breed, it has to be said. They are a very tightknit family—the sort of closeness and camaraderie that is only born of people who share an occupation that is as hazardous, has long hours and is risky. They're truly a community to and of themselves. They keep this country connected and they keep it fed and clothed. They supply our industries and offices and workplaces. We are truly thankful to them. It's a risky business, a dangerous business. Too many transport workers in this nation lose their lives in the service of their occupation, something Alex dedicated his 11 years in the Senate to addressing in the ways he could. That was whether it was through the 'Safe Rates' campaign that was kicked off by his union, the TWU, and was continued through the parliamentary representation of people like himself, Senator Sterle and Senator Hutchins before him—Senator Hutchins now deceased—with Senator Sheldon in the other place as well.

I also had the benefit of working with him on the issue of superannuation, something that Alex was incredibly passionate about. He experienced, over his many years in manual labour and transport work, the fact that somebody could have given their entire working life to an occupation, often working in a single business for 30 or 40 years, and then on their last day leave with nothing but their last pay cheque. Superannuation was something that Alex saw could change all of that. In the industries that were organised by the Transport Workers Union, while why we're battling to protect the 10 per cent superannuation guarantee levy and to see it move through to 12 per cent over the course of the next four years, Alex organised for many, many workplaces to enjoy that benefit already. They're going home and retiring with a bigger benefit and more than their last pay cheque as a result of that.

Nobody would ever have confused Alex with a metrosexual! He was an old-style fella—an old-style Labor representative. But it was a great pleasure to have Alex in our caucus because we've always been best when we're a broad and big church. I want to thank his family for giving up a period of their lives by sharing Alex with us. I want to send our condolences to Paola and the family, to the TWU family and, again, I thank all honourable members of this place who have contributed in such a kind and heartfelt way to this debate.

Question agreed to.

## **BILLS**

### **Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Amendment Bill 2021**

#### **Second Reading**

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Dr GILLESPIE** (Lyne—Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment and Minister for Regional Health) (19:27): I thank the members for their contributions to the debate on the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Amendment Bill 2021.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations play a central role in delivering services and in supporting economic development in Indigenous communities, particularly in regional and remote Australia. The CATSI Act is a specialist regulatory framework designed to make it easier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups to form and manage corporations. While it mirrors many of the requirements of the Corporations Act 2001, it establishes a unique regulatory framework that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations to succeed. In doing so, the CATSI Act demands high standards of governance while, at the same time, recognising the special cultural requirements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The corporate regulatory framework established by the CATSI Act has been very successful. It has improved the efficiency, sustainability and accountability of Indigenous corporations, and this has benefited their members and the communities they serve. However, the CATSI Act is no longer meeting the needs and expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and requires modernisation. The CATSI Act has not kept pace with incorporation statutes and it does not reflect the reality of running a corporation in this day and age. Moreover, the CATSI Act, in its current form, does not provide the type of flexibility that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples want when structuring their corporations.

These amendments strengthen and improve the CATSI Act, remove unnecessary regulatory burdens and empower members by increasing transparency. The amendments in this bill were years in the making and some have been subject to numerous rounds of public consultation through the 2016 review of the CATSI Act and the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations; the 2017 technical review; and a public inquiry on the predecessor of this bill, the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Amendment (Strengthening Governance and Transparency) Bill 2018.

Recommendations and feedback through these processes was consolidated in the National Indigenous Australians Agency's comprehensive review of the CATSI Act undertaken in 2020. People said they wanted this review with a broad scope—

## ADJOURNMENT

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Frelander)** (19:30): Order. It being 7.30, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

## COVID-19

**Mr BURNS** (Macnamara) (19:30): [by video link] It has been a very difficult period in Victoria, in New South Wales and across the country over the last little while. We have a virus that is raging out of control, unfortunately, in New South Wales, and today was a difficult day with the Victorian Premier saying that it's unlikely that the number of people with coronavirus will come down in this state. We are almost a month into lockdown, there is huge economic pain and there are a lot of people doing it really tough, and I wanted to say thank you to each and every person who is making sacrifices on behalf of the broader community to help slow down the rate of coronavirus.

These sacrifices are so important, and we know they are important because, at the moment in New South Wales, there are hospitals that aren't taking more patients, there are limited intensive care beds and there are processes that are unfolding which are causing really difficult ethical decisions about likelihood of survival and other issues around who gets full attention and who gets the absolute best medical care. This is something in Australia that we haven't really had to think about in our lifetimes. We have an incredible healthcare system, we have universal health care. It was the great Bob Hawke who brought in our health system that enabled us to have access to high-quality health care whenever we need it, but we are in a period in this country where that is really going to be tested—probably for the first time in many of our lifetimes. We are really going to be tested as to whether or not we will have access to full care.

The most devastating and frustrating aspect of all of this is that it was entirely predictable, in that we knew that vaccinations were going to give us the best protection in order to prevent people getting sick and prevent transmission of this virus. We have been urging, since the very beginning of this pandemic, for the government to act with speed and purpose in order to manage this. Of course, we famously heard the Prime Minister say that it wasn't a race. And, more than that, more than just saying it, the actions of the federal government also treated the vaccine rollout in exactly that way—that it was never a race. And now we have only 35 per cent of the population fully vaccinated. We're not even halfway and we have most of the eastern seaboard in lockdown, there are cases

constantly creeping into other states and we are in a really precarious situation with our healthcare system at the moment.

Dealing with this virus has always been a race, and at the moment the government is failing this contest and the virus is winning in Australia. The Prime Minister needs to take responsibility for that. He needs to admit his failures, because at the moment people in Victoria and New South Wales are facing dangerous days ahead because of his mismanagement of the vaccine rollout. It is so frustrating, because Victorians and Australians have done so much throughout this pandemic; they have sacrificed so much for their friends and for their families. People are tired of this pandemic, people are angry and people are exhausted. And what have we got to show? We are not even halfway to the 70 per cent threshold, where more options become available to us. That's really frustrating, and it did haven't to be like that.

Whatever the incentives are that people have in the future—not in the past; we can't change that—to get vaccinated, I know most people are going to get vaccinated because it will help them stay out of hospital and spending up to five weeks in intensive care. Some people are going to get vaccinated because they want to protect their families, their friends, their loved ones. Some people are going to get vaccinated to protect their country. Whatever the reason, we have put forward an incentive scheme to ensure we get to the 70 per cent or 80 per cent vaccination target. The Prime Minister, like he has done so many times throughout this pandemic, has played politics with that, and dismissed it because the idea came from the Labor Party. Well, there are other incentives that also need to be brought in.

If you choose not to be vaccinated, that's your choice. I can't say I agree with it or condone it. But then that also means that businesses will have a right to choose to keep you out of their businesses. It means airlines will be able to choose to keep you off their planes. It means that society will choose to separate themselves from you because of your choices—because we want to get out of this, we want to see the back of the lockdowns and we want to see our country move forward and be everything it can be. So my advice to you tonight is to get vaccinated. And thank you for all of the sacrifices that you've made so far.

### COVID-19

**Mr LAMING** (Bowman) (19:34): [by video link] Wow, that was a solo flight for me to follow, from the preceding speaker. No, baristas in this country won't decide whether to make a latte for people based on their vaccination status; let's make that very, very clear. But this is a good opportunity, I think, to range over what the previous speaker said. Victoria admitting that in fact delta is here to stay is exactly what the dynamics have told us for a couple of weeks now; and the race is to make sure that anyone at risk of hospitalisation, serious illness or death is in the vaccinated cohort. There were plenty of people 12 months ago saying that Australia would have the benefit of watching other countries begin vaccination programs. We wanted to see more safety data. There were very good reasons for us starting in late February, and the rollout has been exceptionally good. In many cases, in places in Queensland and WA, the race is not to get a vaccine; it's to get a booking slot. There's ample vaccine; we just can't get it into arms.

I want to take you back, if I could, Mr Speaker, to 7 April, when modelling from Doherty was released by government, predicting catastrophe—and of course this wasn't true. We knew two weeks earlier that this was a finite, not an exponential, spread. We completely over-egged alpha, which led to the shocking border shutdowns and huge costs that we saw last year. If COVID is an 800-metre race and we're in the bell lap—I hope we are—we were certainly wrong-footed by delta, a completely different challenge, as we now understand. On 29 March last year I went public and said Queensland's first wave would be under control in three to four weeks. I was attacked relentlessly by Labor, but I was one day out: on 26 April, the Premier signalled her intention to raise and remove some of these restrictions.

But the modelling didn't help us, and there has been a real failure by the experts, in many cases because we had experts trying to be politicians and politicians trying to sound like experts. I claim to be good at neither, but I'm honest enough to admit that we needed a certain bit of separation. It worked early on. The romance of national cabinet worked for us last year, but it broke down with that wildcard 8 August attack on the Prime Minister and the closure of borders based on the first Melbourne lockdown. This was completely unacceptable.

The public health challenge: is there a simpler one? I see my colleague the member for Lyne in the chamber. Is there a simpler challenge than passing food and loo paper through a hotel room door? We've had Queensland using 13 of their—wait for it—1,977 hotels for quarantine. We should be supporting the hotel sector by doing more quarantine and training more public health workers, but that simply hasn't happened. We should have lent before we spent on JobKeeper. Right from the start, HECS was there to provide long-term income-contingent lending to every business who needed a hand. We wouldn't be chasing Harvey Norman today if we'd provided some lending opportunities through Single Touch Payroll so that employers could have access to that same

amount of money but pay it back if it wasn't needed. And every sector turned out to be different. There'd be more dollars for delta this year if we'd had a more cautious approach and used lend instead of spend last year.

The great story one day, I think, will be how we wouldn't touch a mask 12 months ago and now you get fined for not having one. There are people like Brendon Hempel, who, at a time when our own nation's PPE task force couldn't see it, organised 250 million masks to be imported, on 9 April last year. Everyone else was worried about respirators for an alpha strain that didn't need them.

The closure of international borders and DFAT's management of it, where you self-assess how much at risk you are, failed to ask a simple question of the million Australians overseas: do you have first-degree relatives permanently based in the country you're in, with all the supports you need? The limited seats on our aircraft have been consumed by Australians pulling out passports, too often from under the mattress of convenience, having decided to come home because things look a little cheerier in Australia than in the country they chose to move to two years ago. I think that's a fair point to be made.

Case numbers have been unclear. We haven't been accurately reporting case recovery. Hospital elective surgery shouldn't have stopped, but the reality is that hospitals are so perpetually at risk of being overwhelmed they had no choice.

Lastly, we've ended zero-debt thinking, and modern monetary policy has a new lease on life, but certainly we need to rethink growth theory, the idea that we need to be bringing in a certain number of people to this country to keep the economy strong. We're bringing no-one into this country at the moment and the economy is strong. I hope that promotes in this chamber a renewed debate about populations in this country.

### **Afghanistan**

**Mr BYRNE** (Holt) (19:40): [by video link] I want to talk tonight about Afghanistan, in particular what has happened there more recently, particularly with the evacuation of some 4,000 citizens, visa holders, locally engaged employees and permanent residents from Kabul airport. As you may know, I've had a close relationship with the Afghan community here in Melbourne, in the south-east of Melbourne, for over 25 years. I've had and have many friends in this very remarkable community. I would like to say that my thoughts and prayers are with them as they've been watching those horrific scenes unfolding at Kabul airport, and they are also with those from the Afghan Australian community who are very concerned about their loved ones, family and relatives who weren't able to be evacuated from Kabul in the past two weeks.

One of the grave concerns I have for Afghanistan, having worked in the security space now for some 20 years, is what the reinstatement of Taliban rule in Afghanistan will mean for the people of Afghanistan. I recall watching nearly 20 years ago the World Trade Center towers crash to the ground. I recall what happened in Afghanistan when the Taliban were last in power in the late nineties until 2001, until the international community took action against the Taliban because of its support for al-Qaeda. I remain concerned, as someone who is in the security space, about the Taliban's continuing connection with al-Qaeda. From reports that I'm receiving internationally and locally, that support has not diminished, and there is still a connection between al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

I would like also to take this opportunity to thank the veterans community. They must be feeling what they've seen and heard at Kabul airport very, very deeply. To those veterans who may be listening to this: thank you for the work you did over those nearly 20 years in securing Afghanistan. I've got to say to you that your mission was a success. I do recall that we needed to take—the international community resolved that we needed to take—action to remove that regime from Afghanistan, given that they were state-sponsoring terrorist acts, terrorist acts that resulted not only in the attacks on United States soil but also, through offshoots and connections, the Bali bombings and other acts of terror around the world. Your mission was a success. You removed that threat from the community and protected Australia by your actions. I do recall that we lost 41 soldiers. We had 39,000 veterans who served. I'd like to thank also the 700 Australians from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Home Affairs, the Australian Border Force and the Australian Defence Force who helped evacuate those 4,000 individuals from Afghanistan. I know the conditions were very, very difficult. I thank my staff as well, whilst I have the opportunity. We had literally many, many hundreds of people contacting us, seeking support to get relatives out of Afghanistan, and we were relatively successful in doing that.

What I also say is that our mission there is not complete. I believe that, having been there and uprooted a terrorist state, a state that supported terrorism, and having been responsible through our occupation there for gains for the community in Afghanistan, particularly women, we can't just walk away from Afghanistan. We have a moral responsibility to bring to our shores those we have connections with. I'm not putting a number on that. The Prime Minister has said that he has put in a floor of about 3,000. I would certainly encourage more support. We took 12,000 people from Syria when we had the conflict emerge there.

To our Afghan Australian friends I say: I stand with you in this rather challenging period of time. We will work cooperatively. I don't think there's any point at this point in time in pointing fingers about what went wrong or what happened. What we need to do is work collectively to continue to exercise our moral responsibility and bring people from Afghanistan who have a legitimate connection to Australia—to our shores legally and legitimately. That's the least that we can do for our Afghan-Australian friends here in Australia.

### **Eating Disorders**

**Ms HAMMOND** (Curtin) (19:45): This government has invested significant amounts of money into the treatment of and research into eating disorders, and I commend the Prime Minister, the Minister for Health and Aged Care and the Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention on the efforts they are taking to challenge this cluster of diseases. But I don't want to talk about the treatment or the research efforts tonight. I want to talk about the reality of the disease and the stigma which is, sadly, still attached to it. I can talk about the reality of eating disorders because I'm someone who suffered anorexia for more than a decade of my life, complete with several recoveries and several relapses. If truth be told, I suspect that, like others who have suffered this disease, I will always have an intermittent propensity to it.

I stress that, when I talk about the reality of this disease, I can in fact talk only about my reality of suffering from it. While there are, undoubtedly, common threads to the disease, everybody's experience will be different. I used to be able to tell you the calorie count of nearly every food and drink imaginable. I used to spend time endlessly tallying those calories. I would eat the same restricted calorie intake every day. I was obsessed by routine. I exercised obsessively. I weighed myself daily. I chewed so much gum to avoid eating that my dentist, an old friend of mine from uni days, could have retired 20 years ago if he had chosen to charge me the rates other dentists may have charged. I lost hair from my head but was covered in feathery, downy hair all over my body. I couldn't lie on my stomach because my hip bones would hurt. I couldn't sit on uncushioned couches because my tailbone would hurt. I was always cold. I hated going out with friends because I was always tired.

I put my family and my friends, particularly my darling parents, through years of hell. I remember thinking of my life as akin to simply marking off days on a calendar until the day I died. It was miserable and it was isolating. I was totally self-absorbed in this thing which had overtaken my life. But eating was something—in fact, it felt like it was the only thing—over which I had control. As much as I wanted to get better, and I did, I also didn't want to get better, because somehow this disease came to define me. Success at controlling my eating was how I was defining success for myself. I also remember that sometime after I started to first receive treatment I woke up one morning and looked out the window to see a beautiful blue sky and I knew I was getting better because I had not noticed something as simple as a blue sky for years.

I'm sharing all this not for pity nor for sympathy. I don't want either. I also don't want to be told that I'm brave for sharing this. I am sharing this because there is still so much stigma surrounding this disease—and, to a lesser extent, other mental illnesses—that many people do not seek help, in part because of fear of being silently judged by others and in part because, just as I did, they lose themselves to the disease and are scared to escape its clutches. I won't sugar-coat things: some people do judge you. Some people think that an eating disorder is a sign of weakness, that you need kid gloves, that you can't handle tough stuff. Some people think it's the ultimate narcissistic attention-seeking teenage girl affectation and dismiss it with a wave of the hand—just eat, grow up; you'll get over it.

The fact is that eating disorders are illnesses. They are diseases. One million Australians at any one time suffer from an eating disorder. It has the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric illness. Sixty-three per cent of sufferers are female, and it is estimated the 15 per cent of women will suffer an eating disorder at some time in their life. It is the third-most-common chronic illness in young women. Adolescents are most at risk, but it can happen at any age. There is no single cause, but it is said to be a complex interaction of psychological risk factors, sociocultural influences and biological and genetic dispositions. Some personality traits make you more susceptible: perfectionism, obsessive compulsiveness. The best-known environmental contributor is the sociocultural idealisation of thinness. Because of the stigma, because of the shame, less than a quarter of the people suffering this disease receive a diagnosis, and approximately 90 per cent don't receive treatment.

To all those who are suffering this disease, I say this: while it may consume you at times, if you get help you will find that it does not need to dictate your life; it does not need to impact your goals or impede your achievements. Moreover, your worth and your success is not dependent on how much control you have over what you put in your mouth. This does not define you.

### **COVID-19: Morrison Government**

**Ms BUTLER** (Griffith) (19:50): I commend the member for Curtin on the contribution. The Prime Minister had two jobs this year: a speedy, effective rollout of the vaccine, and quarantine. He has botched both, and now

Australians are paying the price. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister has been trying to strongarm the states to inflict his own inadequacies on them, even scornfully comparing Queenslanders and others to cavemen in a kids' cartoon. If he is looking for cavemen or looking for someone to scold, he should look behind him instead at people like the member for Dawson.

Eighteen months into the pandemic, we are seeing the consequences of the Morrison government's failures. They have not delivered effective national quarantine. The vaccine rollout has been shambolic. Mr Morrison, the Prime Minister, said that Australia was at the front of the queue, but when it became clear that we were at the back of the queue he changed his mind and said, 'This isn't a race.' He's wrong. This is a race. And because of his failures we ended up with half the country in lockdown. Australians are paying the price for the Prime Minister's failures.

Not content with botching his own two jobs, the Prime Minister has also been seeking to inflict his inadequacies on state and territory leaders. He pressured the New South Wales Premier to avoid lockdown, and now New South Wales is seeing the consequences. He and his ministers, including the Minister for Defence, have lectured and hectoring the Queensland Premier. Thank goodness she stood up to them and did not give into their attempts to undermine our state borders. He sided with the likes of Senator Pauline Hanson in demanding that Queensland open its borders. He joined with Clive Palmer in taking Western Australia to the High Court, in an attempt to ram a hole in their state border. And the Prime Minister has even compared Queenslanders and others to cavemen in the kids cartoon movie *The Croods*. He thinks we need to come out from our cave. It's bizarre. The *Betoota Advocate* reported on these comments, with headlines like 'Funny looking cave', says Perth man enjoying a beer at the pub before a movie with mates', and 'Brisbane man pops out of his cave to hunt for some yum cha in a busy shopping precinct'. I thought of these headlines at the weekend, when I attended a beautiful church service to commission the new priest in charge, Reverend Cooper, at St John's at Bulimba. I thought about them, too, when I went to my son's under-9½'s footy game. And I certainly thought 'funny looking cave' when I was at BrewDog at Murarrie having some beers with my family to celebrate my mum's birthday.

The states have been following the health advice and doing their best to pick up the slack where the Morrison government has failed. I'm thankful to live in a state where the Premier has resisted the Morrison government's attempts to badger and strongarm her to weaken the COVID response. And I fervently hope that people in every state and territory will soon be able to be in churches and at kids sport and in pubs, while still being confident that their government is following health advice and standing firm against pressure to weaken the response. We're not in a cave. We're not in a cartoon. We're in a pandemic, and serious times call for serious leadership.

As I said, if the Prime Minister is looking for cavemen or for people to scold, he should look behind him. How about the member for Dawson, who has spread disinformation using this parliament? In this parliament he has described quarantine as imprisonment. He has claimed antilockdown protesters were taking a stand against tyranny. He has demanded no more state border closures. He has opposed QR codes and check-ins. He has said, 'Masks do not work—fact.' He has claimed lockdowns do more harm than good. He has attacked chief health officers, claiming, 'There is no doubt that the power has gone to their heads.' This isn't some crossbencher or a minor-party person; this is a Morrison government MP. Yet what have we heard from the Prime Minister, the man so ready and willing to rebuke our premier in Queensland? We have heard crickets in respect of it. When Labor moved a motion about the member for Dawson's disinformation, the Prime Minister couldn't even bring himself to refer to the member directly. That's the character of this Prime Minister. He won't lift a finger to stop the member for Dawson and others from undermining the public health response.

My constituents are doing their absolute best. They are observing restrictions, including lockdowns when necessary. They are quarantining when necessary. They deserve a federal government that will act swiftly and effectively to keep them safe and well. The state government is doing its part, but the Prime Minister has botched the vaccine rollout and has failed to deliver safe national quarantine. He should focus on getting the federal response right, pulling MPs in line if they spread disinformation and working with the states—not having a go at them and calling them 'cavemen'.

### **Chisholm Electorate: Monash Men's Shed**

**Ms LIU** (Chisholm) (19:55): Today I would like to talk about a truly awful occurrence in my electorate of Chisholm. Two weeks ago Monash Men's Shed, in Glen Waverley, was broken into, with thieves making off with more than \$20,000 worth of tools and electrical equipment. Anything that wasn't bolted down was taken, and damage was also done to the shed itself. This is a huge blow to an organisation that gives so much to our local area.

Over the last two years I have been so lucky to visit the shed for lunches and talks and just to chat with members over a cuppa. You couldn't hope to meet better people. Greg and the rest of the team there do such an



amazing job for our community, providing a space for blokes to talk, cook, make stuff and learn new things. Just a couple of months ago I visited the shed for lunch and to hear a talk from an expert on dementia. It was really informative, and I left feeling so happy and grateful that this incredible resource exists for Chisholm's men.

Men's sheds across the country provide a safe and friendly environment for men to gather and/or work on meaningful projects, with the ultimate aim of improving the health and wellbeing of their members. They address social isolation and boost men's mental health. They also provide vital health information and resources that men may not usually access or may be reluctant to access by themselves. A study in 2013 found that men's sheds members had significantly better scores than non-men's sheds members for physical functioning, general health, vitality and mental health.

There are now more than a thousand men's sheds around Australia. The government recognises the invaluable contribution they make to communities across the country and the substantial positive impact they have on men's mental health, with \$1 million worth of grants each year through the National Shed Development Program.

Forming close friendships with others is particularly critical in supporting men's mental health and reducing the risk of suicide. I know that connections forged through men's sheds have been hugely helpful for members of my community in Chisholm, especially through the pandemic. During lockdown, Greg and other members of the Monash Men's Shed have continued to find ways to reach out to, engage with and connect with their members while they are physically apart. The shed phone continues to be manned between 10 in the morning and 12 pm for any man wanting a chat or support. This, of course, is in addition to the many phone calls that they make to their members and the activities that they offer over Zoom.

It beggars belief that anyone would want to harm this incredible organisation or disrupt its important work. I can only assume that the thieves did not know exactly where they were or who they were stealing from. The alternative is too horrible to think about. Whatever the criminals' motives or intentions, one thing is clear: the Monash Men's Shed and its members truly did not deserve this awful and shameful act. A GoFundMe page has been set up to help replace some of the stolen items, install a security system at the workshop and continue to contribute to the shed's mental health program. I know it is a lot to ask in what are already difficult times, but I encourage locals in Chisholm and anyone listening who can spare it to chip in and help out. Any donation, big or small, would be greatly appreciated.

### House adjourned at 20:00

### NOTICES

The following notices were given:

**Mr Taylor** to present a Bill for an Act to regulate offshore renewable energy infrastructure and offshore electricity transmission infrastructure, and for related purposes. (*Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Bill 2021*)

**Mr Morton** to present a Bill for an Act to make amendments to deal with the cessation of the Council of Australian Governments and to make amendments relating to the National Cabinet, and for related purposes. (*COAG Legislation Amendment Bill 2021*)

**Mr Burke** to move:

That this House notes:

(1) the response to COVID-19 was always a race and relied upon:

- (a) the effective supply of vaccines;
- (b) the effective roll out of vaccines, including to priority groups such as aged care residents and workers, disability care residents and workers and First Nations Australians;
- (c) safe and effective national quarantine facilities; and
- (d) an effective public information campaign; and

(2) failures on vaccines, national quarantine and public information have resulted in extended lockdowns affecting millions of Australians.