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**SITTING DAYS—2019**

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FORTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST 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 Kevin John Hogan 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, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Hon. Dr David Arthur Gillespie MP, Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Hon. Dr John Joseph McVeigh 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. Christian Porter 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. Michael Francis McCormack MP
Deputy Leader—Senator Hon. Bridget McKenzie
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

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<td>O'Connor, WA</td>
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<td>Wilson, Mr Timothy Robert</td>
<td>Goldstein, VIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyatt, Hon. Kenneth George, AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young, Mr Terry James</td>
<td>Longman, QLD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
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<td>Zimmerman, Mr Trent Moir</td>
<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
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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 Stefanić
Parliamentary Budget Officer—J Wilkinson
# Morrison Ministry

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<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Scott Morrison MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet</td>
<td>The Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Australians</td>
<td>The Hon. Ken Wyatt AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
<td>The Hon. Ben Morton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael McCormack MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management</td>
<td>The Hon. David Littleproud MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure</td>
<td>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government</td>
<td>The Hon. Mark Coulton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport</td>
<td>The Hon. Scott Buchholz MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Andrew Gee MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories</td>
<td>The Hon. Nola Marino MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure</td>
<td>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael Sukkar MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Jane Hume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Finance</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities and Electoral Matters</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Zed Seselja</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Jonathon Duniam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for International Development and the Pacific</td>
<td>The Hon. Alex Hawke MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Trade and Investment Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Mark Coulton MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Jonathon Duniam</td>
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<td>The Hon. Christian Porter MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Health</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck</td>
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<td>Minister for Youth and Sport</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Home Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>**Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>The Hon. David Littleproud MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and</td>
<td>The Hon. David Coleman MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multicultural Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>**Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural</td>
<td>The Hon. Jason Wood MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Minister for Education</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Dan Tehan MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td>**Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and</td>
<td>The Hon. Steve Irons MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Resources and Northern Australia</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Matthew Canavan</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Angus Taylor MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Environment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Trevor Evans MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Linda Reynolds CSC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Defence Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Alex Hawke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel (Deputy Leader of the</td>
<td>The Hon. Darren Chester MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Families and Social Services</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Michelle Landry MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Children and Families</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Luke Howarth MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>**Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator Jenny McAllister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Richard Marles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Shayne Neumann MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting for Defence</td>
<td>Mr Pat Conroy MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence Industry</td>
<td>Mr Matt Keogh MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Penny Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Mr Pat Conroy MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator Jenny McAllister</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Kristina Keneally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</td>
<td>Mr Andrew Giles MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business in the House of Representatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</td>
<td>The Hon. Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Government Services</td>
<td>Ms Emma McBride MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Carers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Education and Training</td>
<td>The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Education and Training</td>
<td>Mr Graham Perrett MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Skills</td>
<td>Ms Ged Kearney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Mr Stephen Jones MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Financial Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Treasury</td>
<td>The Hon. Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Charities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Financial Services</td>
<td>The Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Mark Butler MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Catherine King MP</td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Tasmania</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Special Minister of State</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Constitutional Reform</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Communications</strong></td>
<td>Ms Michelle Rowland MP</td>
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<td>Mr Tim Watts MP</td>
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<td>Senator Katy Gallagher</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Government Accountability</strong></td>
<td>Senator Kimberley Kitching</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Linda Burney MP</td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Reconciliation</strong></td>
<td>Senator Patrick Dodson</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Indigenous Australians</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Ageing and Seniors</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Julie Collins MP</td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Aged Care</strong></td>
<td>Ms Ged Kearney MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Employment and Industry</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Small and Family Business</strong></td>
<td>Ms Clare O'Neil MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Innovation, Technology and the Future of Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting for Small and Family Business</td>
<td>Mr Matt Keogh MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Manufacturing</td>
<td>Senator Louise Pratt</td>
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<td>The Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Youth</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for the Environment and Water</td>
<td>Ms Terri Butler MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for the Environment</td>
<td>Mr Josh Wilson MP</td>
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The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 12:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

DOCUMENTS

Statements of Thanks and Appreciation

Presentation

The SPEAKER (12:01): For the information of honourable members, I present a copy of statements of thanks and appreciation by former members of the 45th Parliament.

COMMITTEES

Road Safety Joint Select Committee

Appointment

The SPEAKER (12:01): I have received a message from the Senate informing the House that the Senate concurs with the resolution relating to the variation of appointment of the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety.

DELEGATION REPORTS

Australian Parliamentary Delegation to the 141st Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Belgrade, Serbia

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (12:01): I present the report of the Australian delegation to the 141st Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, held in Belgrade, Serbia, from 13 to 17 October 2019, and seek leave to make a short statement in connection with the report.

Leave granted.

Mrs WICKS: The IPU is an international organisation of parliamentary delegations dedicated to promoting peace through diplomacy and dialogue. I had the privilege of leading the Australian delegation at the 141st assembly, in Belgrade, Serbia, where over 1,700 delegates attended, from 149 member parliaments. The member for Fisher, the member for Bruce and Senator Deborah O'Neill joined me as members of the Australian delegation to the IPU. Parliamentary delegations were invited, as part of the IPU Assembly, to speak to the general debate, which this year was on the topic of strengthening international law through parliamentary roles and mechanisms and the contribution of regional cooperation. On behalf of the delegation, I addressed the IPU Assembly on Australia's long and proud history of strengthening international law and other norms of responsible state behaviour, including through our parliamentary roles and mechanisms.

The IPU provided opportunities to meet with other parliamentary delegations from across the globe, including through our involvement in geopolitical groups. The Australian delegation participated in the Asia-Pacific Group, which consisted of 27 delegations from across our region, as well as the Twelve Plus Group, which met on five occasions during the assembly. Members of our delegation actively took part in these activities. I also had the opportunity to attend the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, with the parliamentarians present considering a draft resolution on achieving universal health coverage by 2030 and...
workshops on making sure that universal health coverage is responsive to the needs of women and girls.

Outside of our duties at the IPU Assembly, the Australian delegation held bilateral meetings with Vietnam and North Macedonia, where we discussed matters of mutual interest and concern. In addition, the Australian Ambassador to Serbia hosted a reception at the Australian embassy with delegates and staff, with our Pacific neighbours Fiji, Tonga, Timor-Leste, the Federated States of Micronesia and New Zealand attending. I thank my fellow members of the delegation—the member for Fisher, the member for Bruce and Senator O'Neill—for the valuable contributions they made to the IPU Assembly throughout the trip as well as using the opportunity to present Australia's interests on a global stage. Thank you also to the Australian Ambassador to Serbia, Her Excellency Ruth Stewart, and the staff at the Australian embassy in Belgrade for their support during the delegation's time in Serbia and for being such welcoming hosts.

Finally, I'd very much like to thank the Parliamentary Library staff, including Cat Barker and her colleagues, for putting together the delegation's briefing material; Raymond Knight and his colleagues at the International and Parliamentary Relations Office; and the ever-reliable delegation secretary, Toni Matulick, for making this trip possible.

COMMITTEES

National Disability Insurance Scheme Committee

Report

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies) (12:05): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme, I present the committee's report entitled *NDIS planning interim report*.

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

Mr ANDREWS: It's apposite that this report is being tabled today, as it's international day of disability. Planning is fundamental to the operation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the NDIS. The plan sets out the goals of the NDIS participant and the funded supports that will assist the participant to realise those goals. In effect, the plan determines how the participant will experience the NDIS. Given the significance of the planning process, it is crucial that planning is effective, robust and meets the needs of all NDIS participants.

It is therefore concerning that the committee has heard that there are a number of significant issues with the operation and the implementation of the NDIS, particularly in relation to process. It is troubling that many of these issues are not new and have been raised in previous inquiries. In light of these matters, the committee considers that urgent action must be taken to improve the operation of the NDIS and, in particular, the planning process, to maximise choice and control for people with disability and ensure that NDIS participants are fully supported to achieve their goals.

Evidence presented to the committee throughout the inquiry indicates that more time is required to fully consider issues associated with the planning process. Further time is also required to consider the impact of recent government initiatives to improve the NDIS, several of which are in their trial stages. Consequently, the committee has decided to present this interim report, which contains 14 recommendations, mostly directed to the NDIA to improve
the operation of the planning process and the NDIS more generally. Many of these are proposed as a means of addressing issues with the planning process in the immediate term while initiatives to improve the planning process are implemented. The committee has also highlighted other areas that it will consider more closely in the coming months.

The committee emphasises that the issues raised in this report are not intended as a criticism of individuals involved in the planning process, who are often doing a very good job under trying circumstances. Rather, the committee's focus has been on the planning process as a whole, and the recommendations are targeted at bringing about systemic improvements to help the NDIS realise its full potential.

The committee heard that the planning process does not involve NDIS participants in a meaningful way. In particular, submitters were concerned that participants do not have the opportunity to review and alter their plan before it is approved and often do not meet with or speak to the National Disability Insurance Agency officer with authority to approve their plan. The committee considers that face-to-face meetings between participants and the NDIA delegates should be an essential part of the planning process. Participants should be given all opportunities possible to communicate their goals and required supports and to challenge planning proposals that do not meet their needs. This is crucial to realising the principles of choice and control that underpin the scheme.

The committee notes that the NDIA recently trialled a joint planning approach where participants meet face to face with their local area coordinator and the delegate with authority to approve the plan. The committee is pleased that the government proposes to roll out joint planning on a national basis from April 2020. However, it's not clear that joint planning will be an adequate substitute for the provision of fully costed draft plans to participants.

In this regard, the committee heard that the current approach to joint planning does not allow participants to review fully costed draft plans before they're approved. As such, the joint planning process may not on its own be sufficient to ensure that participants and representatives are adequately prepared for planning meetings and feel able to advocate for the supports and funding they need. Consequently, the committee considers that, in addition to the introduction of joint planning, participants should be provided with fully costed draft plans ahead of planning meetings. This proposal was strongly supported by the majority of the submitters to the inquiry and has been previously recommended by the committee.

At present, a full plan review is required for all changes to a participant's plan, even where those changes are minor or routine. The committee heard that this requirement is causing distress for participants and may be limiting their ability to effectively advocate for reasonable and necessary supports. The committee also heard evidence that delays in review processes may be causing undue burden for participants, limiting their ability to access supports and undermining the effective administration of the NDIS. The committee supports, strongly, allowing participants to request reviews of only part of a plan and a requirement that reviews be completed within a specified time frame. The committee also supports publishing, in a de-identified form, settlement outcomes associated with review processes as a means of increasing transparency and accountability for stakeholders.

Submitters indicated that the information disseminated by the NDIA is overly complex and bureaucratic and that the NDIA often fails to use consistent language. The committee acknowledges that the NDIA is working to simplify language it uses when communicating
with stakeholders. However, evidence received during the inquiry suggests that the communication issues persist and are creating challenges for people seeking to navigate an already complex scheme.

The committee heard that additional training is necessary to ensure that all persons involved in the planning process understand the diverse experiences of NDIS participants, particularly those with complex support needs, and to ensure that service delivery is consistent, effective and culturally appropriate. The committee also heard that gaps in plans may be limiting participants' ability to access necessary supports, limiting choice and control and undermining the effective administration of the NDIS. The committee acknowledges that the NDIA has implemented enhancements to its internal processes, which goes some way to ensuring continuity of supports. However, evidence suggests that more needs to be done to ensure that participants are not left without funding for reasonable and necessary supports and to ensure that funding in participant plans remains appropriate.

The committee heard that the delays in approving first plans may be creating barriers to supports. The committee notes that the government announced an initiative to resolve delays in approving first plans for the early childhood cohort and supports the implementation of similar initiatives for all NDIS participants. The committee heard that children with acquired disability and children with complex support needs are often under-served by the NDIS and that approval delays may be limiting access to supports. The committee considers that a mechanism is needed to prioritise these cohorts in appropriate circumstances to ensure that they're able to access supports as quickly as possible.

Finally, the committee heard that that current NDIS funding model may not be giving participants adequate access to transport services. The committee notes that work is in progress to increase funding for transport services and to allow participants to use funding more flexibly. However, these measures may not be sufficient to ensure that the NDIS meets transport needs of participants in the short term, and the committee has made recommendations in relation to this matter as well.

In conclusion, the committee thanks all who participated in the inquiry by lodging submissions, giving testimony or expressing their views through correspondence. In particular, the committee acknowledges those NDIS participants who attended the committee's public hearings to share their experiences. The testimony of people with lived experience is crucial to identifying issues and making improvements to the NDIS. The committee will give further consideration to the issues associated with the planning process in the coming months and will hold additional public hearings. The committee proposes to present a final report to the parliament on this subject in 2020. May I, in conclusion, thank all members of the committee and the secretariat, headed by Bonnie Allan, for their work on this inquiry. I commend the report to the House.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong) (12:13): by leave—On behalf of Labor, I would like to welcome this committee report. I think the chair and all the members of the committee have worked with an open mind. I think they have identified important and necessary reforms. When Australians look at the state of politics in 2019, I think this committee report is a little pinprick of bright light in that it shows what people can do. It shows what the Labor MPs and senators—Senator Chisholm, the member for Corangamite, the member for Canberra and the deputy chair, Senator Carol Brown—can do.
The NDIS is a good idea, but it's a good idea which I worry is bogged in the sand. There are plenty of good examples of life-changing support, which this scheme was set up to deliver. But I do worry that sometimes the bureaucratic red tape which surrounds people seeking modest supports for disabilities is in danger of strangling the process. I get concerned, as I've reimmersed myself in the world of disability since the federal election, that sometimes the decision-making structure within the National Disability Insurance Agency is designed to protect the agency from criticism rather than to focus on choice and control for participants.

People will recall the Terminator series of films back in the day when the former governor of California was an actor. They go back in time to fix up the Skynet system. In this fictitious world of Terminator, Skynet is a computer system designed to protect the human race. The problem is that, at some point, Skynet flips over and becomes the enemy of the human race. I'm not saying that NDIA is Skynet, but I am saying that this is now an organisation which too often is about protecting itself and not about the participants in the scheme.

So, on 3 December, the International Day of People with Disability, this report refocuses the scheme onto looking after participants. There is a saying on the Facebook groups of people with disability and participants and their families that dealing with planners can sometimes be planner lotto. You can get a very good planner or sometimes you can get planners who just aren't aware of the world of disability and how it all works and the struggles and the challenges of participants and the people caring for them.

I have to say that the member for Menzies is taking a legislator's approach to reforming the system. Reforming NDIS is not a left-wing idea or a right-wing idea. It's not a Liberal, National, Green, One Nation or Labor idea. It should be governed by common sense. But I would encourage the government, as opposed to the legislators on this committee, to take the same approach to these recommendations that the people on the committee have. The recommendations include the hardly revolutionary notion that a detailed plan which may cover tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars for a participant in a year should be presented to the participant and their family as a draft before it's finalised, so, rather than presenting a final plan as a fait accompli, but where the planner may have missed important parts, if they get the draft, the family can work it through. This only makes sense. Do a rough copy before you submit the final version. That's what we tell people.

The second thing is that we think that having planners meet the participants face to face is hardly revolutionary but eminently sensible. So much grief and delay could be obviated by just talking to people. I think that you should be able to review part of the plan. These plans are quite complex documents, and, if there's something which isn't right or over time hasn't worked out as intended, you should be able to review part of it rather than the whole plan. For example, if you get a taxi allowance and it's not meeting your needs, the whole plan shouldn't be put up in the air to review the taxi allowance. We should have more flexibility on that. If a participant says, 'I'm not happy with the plan,' and wants a review of it, what happens under this scheme is that you can ask for a review but there is no deadline for the reviewer to review the scheme. Australians don't have the luxury of telling the tax office, 'I'm not ready yet on my tax return this year.' There is a deadline. Citizens have deadlines that the state puts upon them. It is not unreasonable to guarantee to a participant that, at a certain point, if the decision-maker hasn't got around to your review, it's deemed accepted at a drop-dead date. That will certainly focus the mind on decisions.
There should be standardised terminology across the scheme and clear language. I know the minister has used the words 'ontology of classifications', 'swim lanes', 'sprints' and 'cohorts'. We need less corporate jargon and less cover-your-backside jargon and more straight talking. The planners need training and skills. They are good people, but if you are, metaphorically, selling Telstra phones one week and then all of a sudden you are preparing plans for people with disability the next week, you do need training and familiarisation. The area of complex needs is a particular area that needs to be developed further. We need faster implementation of approvals and supports.

This is a report with recommendations which I think pass the common-sense test. In the legislation governing the NDIA and the NDIS, there's a principle of choice and control for participants, and there's also a principle that they should be funded for what is reasonable and necessary. What has happened is that, in the seesaw of these two competing objectives, 'reasonable and necessary' seems to have all the weight and 'choice and control' is sometimes given insufficient weight, so there is more to be done here. You shouldn't have to wait months and years for wheelchairs, home modifications or car modifications. Australian disability enterprises need to be funded properly and not at a rate which will lead to them closing their doors, as we keep hearing about. People with disabilities come in all shapes and sizes, like all of the Australian population, and if you have complex needs they need special attention. They can't just be treated with a cookie-cutter mould.

The challenge of mental health, of course, and the interface with people with disabilities, is inadequately dealt with currently in the NDIS. There needs to be more focus on employment. We need to also understand that people with degenerative conditions, whilst they might not have stabilised, are not getting any better and therefore should be eligible for the NDIS. I notice that the member for Warringah has put forward a petition seeking for people over 65 with profound and severe disabilities to be included in the NDIS. Labor don't have a fixed view on that, but we do accept that, whatever bucket of money the support for people comes from, if you've had a catastrophic stroke at 66 as opposed to a catastrophic stroke at 64, you need support, whether it's aged care or disability care. Aged-care funding is not meeting the needs, and of course we need to do a lot more work with the workforce.

Nonetheless, in a year when politics has been complicated, in a year when Australians perhaps sometimes feel that politics isn't delivering, I commend this report, because I think it is actually common sense steps in the right direction to ensure that the citizens of this country are in charge, not an organisation, and the right to an ordinary life for people with disability is indeed something to be upheld.

Ms COKER (Corangamite) (12:21): by leave—There are 13 recommendations included in this interim report on the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I urge the Morrison government to act on these recommendations which will improve the lives of participants—better training for planners, set time frames for reviews and face-to-face contact between planners and participants to get the best plans to help participants who have a disability reach their full potential. That's what the NDIS is about.

As a member of the NDIS joint standing committee, I've heard many stressful stories from participants and their families: waiting for a wheelchair for many months, waiting for a review, waiting for funding for a plan, young participants living in aged care and wanting to live independently. These stories have been very difficult to hear, and I want to see the NDIS
become a much better system. When I stood with Julia Gillard when this system was first announced many years ago, when I was the mayor of Surf Coast Shire, we had great hope for this plan and for the NDIA. Now, through the NDIS joint standing committee, we have the opportunity to put forward recommendations to make it what it truly should be: a means for people to do their best in order for participants to live full lives. Our interim recommendations will go some way to resolving the barriers to participants living full and fulfilling lives.

I once again urge the Morrison government to act on these recommendations. Some do involve more funding. Some are just common sense and involve a more thoughtful and strategic approach. I would like to thank my fellow members of the committee, led by the chair, the member for Menzies, who has taken an amazingly bipartisan approach to this. It has been a real pleasure to work with the member for Menzies. I would also like to acknowledge the deputy chair, Senator Carol Brown; my colleague and member for Maribyrnong, the shadow minister for NDIS; and of course the member for Canberra, who is here today to speak as well. Thank you.

Ms PAYNE (Canberra) (12:23): by leave—I rise today to make a brief statement about the interim report of the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS, tabled today. And I want to give my thanks to our chair, the member for Menzies, the deputy chair, Senator Carol Brown, the member for Corangamite and all my fellow members of the committee for what has been a really important process and what I think is a really good interim report. I also want to thank the secretariat, headed by Bonnie Allan, for their brilliant work in supporting the community.

But most of all I really want to thank and take my hat off to the people with disability, their families and carers, and health professionals and providers who have yet again fronted up to tell their stories in the hope that we can get the NDIS right. The reason we have the NDIS is that people with disabilities and their families campaigned for years for a better system to give people real choice and control over their lives, something that most of us take for granted every day. They have kept fighting for that on this committee. We hear some of the same issues we've been hearing for years. The NDIS is a great idea, as the member for Maribyrnong has said, but we need to get the implementation right. The recommendations of this report will go to that, and I urge the government to adopt them. I think it's important to note that there is bipartisan agreement on these recommendations from the committee. All members have agreed because it is about addressing issues that have been ongoing.

Through this process we heard a lot of evidence that is quite disturbing. Obviously there are many things I would like to talk about, but I can't mention them all. But one that really struck me was Mark Tonga from the New South Wales Disability Council. He's a quadriplegic and has been for around 10 years since an accident. He was speaking on behalf of the people he represents but also his own story, and he said that he just hopes that one day he can live at home with his partner and receive the supports that he needs. This is so basic. This is why we have the NDIS, but it's not delivering that for everyone, and it needs to. I pledge to those people who gave their stories in this process that we will not give up the fight on seeing the NDIS really deliver on what was promised.

I just want to focus on one recommendation, the first recommendation of the report, which is around draft plans. It is so important and so obvious that people should be able to see their draft plan before it's locked in. Currently the only way it can be changed is through a time-consuming review process. We heard through the committee that there is a soft launch of a
joint planning process, and people have been hopeful that this might be the answer, but, in the
careful questioning of understanding that process, it appears that it is not, because what is
being proposed is that people see only part of their plan, without all the costed supports in it,
and then, when they have the meeting with the planner and the local area coordinator, there's
actually no scope for them to change that plan without going to review. This is not good
enough. It will be so much more efficient for the NDIA to get plans right the first time and not
send people through a cycle of reviews.

I want to echo the comments of the member for Menzies—that this isn't a criticism of the
hardworking people at the NDIA, who are understaffed and don't receive the training they
need. That is another key recommendation of this report. People need to receive training in
different areas of disability and in basic understanding of the needs of people with disability,
because we heard some really troubling things about the lack of the understanding and lack of
sensitivity to these people's needs. In my personal view what we've heard does point towards
a sort of cultural problem with the NDIA. We're not focusing on choice and control; we're
assuming that people are somehow asking for things they don't need or trying to get
something they're not entitled to. They're asking for the basic things to let them live their lives
and achieve their goals in the way that most of us take for granted every day. Again I urge the
government to accept the recommendations of this report and I pledge that we will keep up
the fight for the NDIS to deliver for people with disabilities.

**Treaties Committee**

**Report**

Mr SHARMA (Wentworth) (12:28): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on
Treaties I present the committee's report, incorporating additional comments, entitled *Report
188: investments Uruguay, ISDS UN convention and convention SKAO*.

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

Mr SHARMA: by leave—Report 188 contains the committee's review of three treaty
actions: the Agreement between Australia and the Oriental Republic of Uruguay on the
Promotion and Protection of Investments, the United Nations Convention on Transparency in
Treaty-based Investor-state Arbitration and the Convention establishing the Square Kilometre
Array Observatory. Australia's approach to investment treaties has evolved over time to keep
up to date with modern investment treaty practices. To reflect these changes the government
has undertaken reforms to update our older-style treaties. This is the case for the new
investment treaty with Uruguay. The agreement replaces a 2002 bilateral investment treaty.
Updated provisions include explicit procedural and substantive safeguards for investor-state
dispute settlements, or ISDS.

The need for greater transparency in relation to ISDS proceedings has been a longstanding
matter of public concern, including here in Australia. The United Nations convention will
enhance transparency and public accessibility to ISDS arbitration. It will allow for the
existing UN rules on transparency in treaty based investor-state arbitration to apply to a wider
pool of investment treaties. The convention will update Australia's network of older-style
bilateral investment treaties and bring them into line with the modern transparency provisions
of more recent free trade agreements.
The last treaty considered in this report, the Convention establishing the Square Kilometre Array Observatory, provides for the establishment of the governing body of the Square Kilometre Array Observatory. The Square Kilometre Array, or SKA, is a global big-science project to build the world's largest and most capable radio telescope. The project began in the early 1990s and is an international partnership to build and operate the world's largest, most advanced radio observatories. Australia and South Africa will each host SKA arrays of telescopes. Australia's involvement in the project is expected to provide a range of benefits. These will include reinforcing Australia's commitment to international cooperation in scientific and technological fields. Australia's Astronomer-at-large, Professor Watson, promised the committee that the SKA is expected to generate Nobel prizes. He went further and said he expects some of those to come to Australian scientists.

The committee recommends binding treaty action be taken for all three treaty actions reviewed in this report. I would like to thank fellow committee members and the secretariat for their work on this report. On behalf of the committee, I commend the report to the House.

BILLS

**Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Special Operations and Special Investigations) Bill 2019**

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Mr MARLES** (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12:31): Labor supports the Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Special Operations and Special Investigations) Bill 2019 before the House. Labor believes that the safety and security of Australians and our economic and social wellbeing demand action against serious and organised crime. The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission plays an important role in gathering intelligence and undertaking investigations that help to inform the nationwide picture of and response to crime in Australia. The work of the commission includes developing strategic criminal intelligence assessments and advice on national crime; working with partners, both domestic and international, to disrupt the activities of serious and organised crime; conducting special operations and special investigations of priority areas; and developing and maintaining national information- and intelligence-sharing services and systems. Last financial year the work of the commission led to the discovery of 95 previously unknown targets, the disruption of 28 criminal entities, the arrest of 169 people, the laying of 607 charges and the seizure of drugs and precursors with a street value of $2.3 billion. This is vital work that helps to combat serious and organised crime and to keep Australians safe.

Labor will always work in a cooperative and bipartisan manner to ensure our police and national security agencies have the powers and resources they need to keep our nation secure and our people safe. Labor supports the work of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission and we support sensible and appropriate measures to ensure that current and previous operations and investigations are lawful. This bill will ensure that the commission can continue its work to detect, prevent and disrupt serious and organised crime. It will amend the Australian Crime Commission Act 2002 to streamline the authorisation process for future special operations and special investigations and it will confirm the validity of existing special
operations and special investigations determinations. The bill will also make consequential amendments to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement Act 2010 and the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979.

As the Minister for Home Affairs noted in his second reading speech, through this bill the government is not seeking to expand or otherwise amend the powers available to the commission 'in the course of undertaking a special operation or special investigation'. Labor supports this bill because it wants to ensure that the commission can effectively fulfil its statutory functions and continue its important work.

I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the bipartisan manner in which the Minister for Home Affairs and the government have acted with respect to this matter. I note that the minister has also provided Labor with an assurance that within 12 months of this bill passing the parliament the government will refer operation of the legislation to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement for review. I thank the minister for providing that assurance.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the assistance provided by the CEO of the commission, Mr Phelan, and express Labor's appreciation to the staff of the commission for the work they do to protect our community from organised crime and serious criminal activity.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (12:35): The Australian Crime Intelligence Commission can access a specific suite of powers, under the Australian Crime Commission Act, to carry out a special operation or investigation. These include access to broad examination powers which enable the examiner to regulate the conduct of proceedings as he or she sees fit. But the bill does not expand or in any way alter the powers available to the ACIC in the course of undertaking a special investigation or operation. Rather, the bill streamlines the authorisation process for the ACIC board to determine special future operations and investigations and to confirm the validity of current and former special operations and special investigations. It is the latter that does concern Centre Alliance.

The retrospective application of a law to provide legitimacy to investigations into private citizens is one that should be scrutinised very closely. I am also concerned about the short time frame, in this place, between the introduction of this bill and us voting on the bill. I also note today reports that the High Court is considering the validity of these laws in the context of an alleged unlawful investigation. I do not suggest that the minister has sought to avoid an adverse outcome in the High Court, but I do believe that the consequences, even if unintended, should be explored by the appropriate parliamentary committee.

While I support the bill today in this chamber, I do so with some reservation. But Centre Alliance most certainly reserves its position, in the other place, pending further and deeper consideration of this bill.

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Home Affairs) (12:38): I'd like to thank all of my colleagues for their contributions to the debate on the bill. The Australian government's first priority is to ensure the safety and security of all Australians and the Australian way of life. To this end, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission has a critical role in collecting intelligence and investigating the evolving and emerging threats of organised crime, cybercrime and national security threats that directly endanger the prosperity and unity of Australia.
The measures in this bill are technical in nature. They confirm existing special operation and special investigation determinations and streamline the process for the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission board to make future determinations. These measures are essential to ensuring the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission is able to fulfil its statutory functions as Australia's national criminal intelligence agency without interruption. I commend the bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Georganas): The question is that this bill be now read a second time. There being more than one voice calling for a division, in accordance with standing order 133 the division is deferred until after discussion of the matter of public importance.

Debate adjourned.

Farm Household Support Amendment (Relief Measures) Bill (No. 2) 2019
Second Reading

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

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (12:40): I begin by moving:
"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House criticises the Government for:
(1) its ad hoc approach to drought assistance;
(2) failing to deliver a comprehensive drought plan; and
(3) forcing drought-affected farmers off the Farm Household Allowance".

If you were to serve a constituent in any electorate today around this country and ask them what they thought was the most pressing issue in our local communities, I'm very, very confident drought and water would be at the top of their responses. There is no doubt that Australians everywhere—not just those living in rural and regional Australia, but those living in our capital cities and on the urban fringes of them—are fully aware and conscious of the plight being faced by Australia's farming communities, and the rural communities which support them, which they in turn support. Yet I ask: where are the speakers on this bill? Where are they?

Mr Drum: Here I am.

Mr FITZGIBBON: I hear one voice, one voice from the member for Nicholls. There he is, Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Nicholls. Where is the National Party these days? Why isn't the National Party in here supporting our farmers, talking about the challenges they face, talking about their plight? The answer is: they're too busy fighting amongst one another outside. They're in a couple of fights. They're also in a fight with their coalition party. They are also in a fight with the Liberal Party. They are in a fight with the most arrogant Prime Minister in the history of the Federation, who does not give a toss about the National Party unless he needs their votes.

But in the good old days under 'Black Jack' McEwen, Tim Fischer and many others you could be sure that the National Party vote wasn't given over easily. You could always be sure that in the cabinet room 'Black Jack,' Sinclair and all those who followed him would be putting a price on their vote and that price would be a defence of those living in rural and
regional Australia. But suddenly the National Party has gone silent. Their silence is deafening—deafening on a daily basis. It is clear to all Australians that the government's response to this drought has been piecemeal, ad hoc and even chaotic. You'd think members of the National Party would be in here talking about that today but they are not.

This is the 13th occasion since 2014 that this government has amended their farm household allowance. This is the legislation that Barnaby Joyce, the member for New England, told us in 2014 was the thing that would fix all things for our farmers in drought. Well, of course, it's been proven to be anything but. Think about that: 13 bills since 2014, each of which has a package of amendments, not just one amendment. The last time we dealt with a bill amending this legislation in this place was on 23 October. This is how regularly they are now coming to this House.

Back in 2014, the member for New England just said, 'There's nothing to see here. You just apply. You don't have to wait and you get the payment, no problem at all.' But, of course, farmers were pretty quick to realise that would not be the case and he was pretty quick to realise it would not be the case, because he doctored his Hansard to correct the record. An incident which led to the dismissal of one of the most highly respected departmental secretaries in this capital city. That was an event which remains of great regret to me and should be of great regret to all those who sit opposite—that a senior, respected public servant was forced out of his job because he had the audacity to stand up to the member for New England and challenge him for dragging his departmental people into the Hansardgate scandal. So that's where farm household allowance began. Back then the member for New England told us it was the best thing since sliced bread and here we are in 2019, almost in 2020, and the government is still trying to get it right.

This bill, of course, does a number of things.

Mr Chester interjecting—

Mr FITZGIBBON: I'm glad the minister's pleased. It adjusts the assets test again. I think we adjusted it to $5 million last time—I will stand corrected—and now it's going to $5.5 million. I don't know why; it's hard to say. Maybe it's because the government is now including water rights within the assets test. Maybe that's an add-on to accommodate that. If that is true, I'm not sure what the policy rationale is.

It creates an opportunity to offset farm losses against off-farm income from related businesses and vice versa. It liberalises the farm financial assistance rules so you no longer need, for example, an accountant to determine your farm liability; you can get some other adviser to do that. The information about the rules around that are pretty skinny. I'd be interested to hear the minister say some more about that measure.

It removes the taper rule on the income test. So, unlike for anyone else who is on government support of any sort, the income test won't have a taper rate. So if you qualify under the income test for $1 you get the lot, which is a pretty unusual measure. That will be given effect by an amendment to the Social Security Act. And, of course, it increases to $10,000 the activity supplement.

They're all improvements, and the opposition will support this bill on that basis, but it doesn't change the fact that this has been a problematic piece of legislation from the beginning
and we'll probably be back here in February dealing with other amendments—you can almost bet your house on it.

The bill we dealt with last time did a number of things, including basically cutting people off the farm household allowance. The government say: 'Oh, no, we're not going to say now that you can have the farm household allowance for only four years; we're going to say that you can have it for four years and every 10 years.' That sounds great, doesn't it? That sounds like an improvement. But what it means is that someone who was cut off on 30 June this year will be able to apply in 2024—that's what it means. We all pray that the drought is not still ongoing in 2024.

I'll tell you what else it means. They tell us that now when they cut these people off farm household allowance—I don't know what the number's up to now; it's got to be up to a thousand farms by now—they'll get this supplementary payment of $7,500 for singles and $13,000 for couples. What they don't tell you is that, if you were cut off on 30 June this year, you won't get the payment until the last bill we dealt with becomes law and is proclaimed. So, for six months, 600 families cut off from the farm household allowance have been waiting for their supplementary payment—six months. Think about that. Some of these people have been in drought for up to six years. People in some parts of the country have been in drought for nine years. Many of these people have probably been in drought for six years. These are the people most challenged by this drought, otherwise they would not have been on the farm household allowance in the first place, because it's a very, very tough benefit to secure—very tough on so many fronts. So the government say: 'On 30 June there'll be no more payments for you. But don't worry—we'll give you a $7½ thousand payment or a $13,000 payment for the six months on your way out.' What they didn't say is that you wouldn't be able to get that payment until that last bill we debated is proclaimed—six months. They don't tell you that. They only like to tell you the good bits, like the Prime Minister's last announcement.

I haven't counted how many announcements there have been, but there have been plenty of them. It's always piecemeal—make the announcement, put a big dollar figure on it and hope it rains. That's the government's model. The last time the Prime Minister made an announcement, he talked about zero-interest loans. I didn't have time to check when the announcement was made, but it was many, many weeks ago now, probably months. What he didn't tell you is that the zero-interest loans aren't available until January next year, at the earliest. In fact, we won't see the guidelines until then. So maybe saying January is fairly optimistic in itself.

The government love loans. They love announcing concessional loans. Why? Because it allows them to talk about the capital value of the loans. They say, 'We're putting $2 billion worth of loans on the table' and people out there think, 'Two billion dollars for our farmers—that sounds like a lot of money; that sounds pretty good, Prime Minister.' But what the Prime Minister doesn't tell people is that that's the capital value of all those loans if they were lent. The government borrow at the bond rate and often dish these concessional loans out at what they call a concessional rate, but a rate higher than the bond rate. I accept that's not true of the zero-interest loans, but, again, they're not going to be available until at least January next year. It's always been about concessional loans for this government. That's so they can talk about the big dollar figure.
The fact is that, for most farmers in trouble as a result of the drought, in this record low-interest environment—the lowest interest rate environment in our lifetime—more debt or shuffling debt is not the answer. They need cash for food on the table and they need cash flow for their business. They need cash to keep their stock alive, including their breeding stock, so they have a business to rebuild when the drought breaks. That's what they need. Concessional loans do not deliver that for most farmers. But that's been the focus of the government's announcements, or at least where the government has wanted the focus to be.

Then there was the Future Drought Fund and all the fanfare that was created around it. Remember: they stole the money out of the Building Australia Fund—$3.9 billion—money which would have been used in large part for investment in road projects in regional Australia. They robbed that to put it into this new Future Drought Fund. They hope to grow that to $5 billion. It will grow to $5 billion because they will not be taking much out of it along the way. From, I think, 1 July next year, they are going to be drawing down a hundred million dollars to build, they say, drought resilience in our farming communities. A hundred million dollars is a lot of money in anybody's language, but in this context it's chicken feed. Already you can see the states asking: how much are we going to receive in our states? With six states and one territory affected, divide that by seven and it's getting pretty skinny straightaway. It shouldn't be spent in proportion in each of the states—that would be the wrong way to spend the money—but that's where the expectation is growing already.

The key point is that drought affected farmers won't see one cent of that dollar. The Prime Minister likes to say we've got a future drought fund—a hundred million dollars coming down every year. Well, not till next year, Prime Minister, not till midway through next year, but not one cent of that will go to our farmers. I support the idea of building a fund to do the research and to develop the innovation and technology to build further resilience in our farming communities—to work on soil health, to embrace the latest innovation in water efficiency, whatever it might be. But don't pretend, Prime Minister, that you're spending a hundred million dollars a year from 1 July next year on our drought affected farmers, because it simply is not true.

Prime Minister, you should stop misleading the Australian community, which is what you've been deliberately doing since you took the top spot and said you would make drought and our farmers your No. 1 priority, something you clearly have not done. Your constant repeat of this $7 billion figure—thankfully now exposed both in our newspaper and in Senate estimates as a lie—has been designed to do only one thing: pretend you are making our farmers your No. 1 priority.

Prime Minister, they see it. They understand it. They see this $7 billion figure and they say: 'Well, where is it? Because I'm not getting any of it.' I don't know who the Prime Minister thinks he is talking to, although I do suspect. I acknowledged earlier that people in our capital cities and our suburbs of our capital cities are as concerned about our farmers as are people in rural communities. So in fact he's talking to the people in the capital cities and on the urban fringes, where he thinks he needs the votes most. He knows that they don't know the $7 billion is not getting there, because they're not out suffering on the land. But, when people suffering on the land hear him say it, they certainly ask the question. No wonder they are angry. No wonder they are parked on the front lawns of Parliament House as we speak, complaining not only about the government's inadequate response to the drought but about its
total mismanagement of the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. It is a total failure on that front.

I saw the Deputy Premier of New South Wales muscling up this morning, threatening again to walk away from the plan. He is not prepared to say, of course, whether he has the support of his Premier, which is a rather interesting dynamic, but that takes me back to where I began. National Party members of parliament aren’t in here defending their dairy farmers, because they're too busy outside this chamber, fighting with their state counterparts, fighting with their coalition partners or, indeed, fighting amongst themselves. We know about the great divide between the southern and the northern Nats and how they are ripping themselves apart.

Mr Chester: Deputy Speaker, on a point of relevance: the member has had fair leeway, but he's straying very widely from the topic of discussion of the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Georganas): I think the shadow minister is being pretty relevant. There has been a lot of talk on water.

Mr FITZGIBBON: Out of respect to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will try even harder. I know it hurts very much when you are a junior coalition partner and you're being pushed around by the Prime Minister. I know it hurts. It's a tough time. Black Jack McEwen would be rolling in his grave. Black Jack, Sinkers, Anderson, Fischer—none of them would have allowed themselves to be pushed around like this National Party is being pushed around by this bullying Prime Minister. So I'd be up on my feet too, Minister. I'd be embarrassed too. It is never too late to start counting the numbers either, Minister, because the vulnerability is writ large and very obvious.

The other thing that is most critical to the agriculture sector, of course, is our biosecurity. How is that going for the government? Wendy Craik did a review of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity back in, I think, 2017. She recommended a levy be put in place to build the resources we need to properly defend our borders on the biosecurity front. Here we are, almost Christmas of 2019, and where is the levy? Again, we don't have a levy after all that time, because they're fighting amongst each other on that side. They can't get agreement.

The Prime Minister managed to turn this not into a scheme to build our biosecurity defences but into a plan to build a budget surplus. Here we are again, watching the Prime Minister putting his trophy surplus ahead of the needs of our farmers and, more than that, ahead of the security of the food supply system in this country. No wonder they've gone into hiding.

The National Farmers Federation has a strategy to grow Australia's agriculture sector to the value of $100 billion by 2030. That's a great aspiration to have. We on this side have been happy to support it and to commit ourselves to doing all we can to make sure that our farmers are able to secure that objective. Sadly, it isn't looking too good. We have no overarching strategic plan to respond to the drought. As the president of the NFF, Fiona Simson, has said, 'This government does not have a plan to grow our agriculture sector.' This government does not have a strategic plan for Australian farmers or the agribusiness sector. How do we get to $100 billion by 2030 when there is no strategic guidance from government? And how do we get to $100 billion by 2030 when we are still facing what is almost undoubtedly now the worst drought in our history? You can't. It's hard enough, but you can't get there without a comprehensive response on drought from the government and without a strategic plan for the agricultural sector.
I heard the Prime Minister in question time yesterday boast that greenhouse gas emissions have fallen in the last quarter. It's hardly surprising that he would be taking this opportunity and boasting, because it's the first time. They've been growing every quarter since 2014. The interesting thing is this: why did they fall? I think it was by about 0.3 of one per cent, by the way.

Mr Brian Mitchell: It was 0.1—

Mr FITZGIBBON: It's even skinnier, I'm told. But they fell because our cattle herd—

Mr Chester: He shouldn't be obliged to use all his time, should he?

Mr FITZGIBBON: It would pay the minister to listen to this. He's a southerner. He is in the southern faction, and he might not understand this: our cattle herd is now the lowest it has been for 30 years. And, of course, our cattle make a very substantial contribution to our greenhouse gas emissions.

So here's our Prime Minister taking the first opportunity in six years to claim a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, as small as the fall was, but what he's celebrating is not his capacity to get them down in the energy sector or the transport sector; he's celebrating the fact our agricultural sector is in crisis. He is putting it up on the mantle like a trophy. It's that he's allowed the agriculture sector to fall into such a bad state. If there were any farmers listening to question time yesterday, they must have been well and truly shaking their head at the fact the Prime Minister was celebrating the challenges they are facing in their own farming communities and in their own farm businesses.

The bill is okay. It further improves the farm household allowance. Each bill has, actually. But you wouldn't want to have been a farmer in 2014-15, trying to secure farm household allowance or trying to survive on farm household allowance, because, on this 13th occasion, you can see what the improvements have built. If you were there before these improvements, you were in trouble.

This bill is another admission that since 2014 this government has been getting farm household allowance wrong. Again, I suspect we'll be back some time in the new year doing another amendment. Income support is just one piece of the jigsaw puzzle. Income support is important. By the way, I think the government has spent $375 million, or thereabouts, allocating farm household allowance to a total of 12½ thousand farmers over time. Again, $375 million sounds like a lot of money, and it is in anybody's language, as I said earlier, of the $100 million, but if you said to an elector in Blacktown, 'Does $375 million for our farmers sound like a lot?' they would say: 'What? Didn't the Prime Minister promise the Americans $150 million to send a man from the moon to Mars?' That's what they would say. They would say, 'That doesn't sound like a lot of money to me.'

The government can't have it both ways. They can't say, 'We're spending $7 billion' one day, when we know that to be untrue, and then make out that farmers everywhere are benefitting from the farm household allowance when, in aggregate, the total spend has been $375 million. I think that figure alone gives people who aren't close to this subject a pretty good indication of the investment the government is making in our farmers who are facing drought.

I want to return to the supplementary payment because there's been a lot of spin from the other side about this. The government decided to cut the farmers off again—probably a
thousand farming families have already been cut off, and many more will be cut off into the new year—and then, when they realised they were in trouble, they decided to give them what was described not by them but by the media, rightly, as an 'exit payment', a payment on the way out. What is the policy rationale for cutting people off and then giving them an upfront six-month payment? There is none. Again, that's not very helpful to those who didn't qualify for that, because that bill had not yet passed this parliament. No, the rationale here is to set up an arrangement where the government can defer expenditure to chase that trophy budget surplus again. This is all smoke and mirrors so that the Prime Minister can grab that trophy surplus.

Then, of course, when this gained momentum and the government realised they were in trouble, they said: 'Oh, there's a ministerial rule. We can give them another bonus payment six months after that.' But there is no guarantee. They made that announcement only because they were in trouble politically. Farmers have no way of developing a budget, because they have no way of knowing whether or not the government will make good on that promise. They're on the never-never there. They don't know what is next. Why can't the government simply say, 'We won't take any more people off farm household allowance while this severe drought is ongoing?'

Some on the other side will say, 'Well, everyone agreed back in 2012 that farm household allowance should be time limited.' Yes, they did. It seemed a reasonable proposition. You were given three years and, during that period, you either remodelled your farm business, grew your farm business, or thought about getting out and doing something else. But no-one could have conceived in 2012 that we would have a drought so long and so severe as this, and, when the facts change, you change your mind. We on this side certainly have had a very significant change of mind. We've supported in a bipartisan way every proposition the government has put forward, and I say again: 'Put the proposition forward to just leave people on farm household allowance while this drought is ongoing, and we will support it. You do not have to have concerns about opposition resistance to that change; in fact, you will have our very, very strong support.'

In closing, I offer bipartisan support on another matter. Our dairy industry is in crisis. We heard last week that, in Queensland, we're losing a dairy farmer a week. When does it end? When will the Prime Minister finally recognise we have a very significant problem here? When will he realise that we are at real risk now of losing our dairy industry and being almost entirely import dependent for our dairy products, including our drinking milk? That's how bad it is, and there are plenty of people out there on the lawns who agree with this proposition today.

We gave the government the opportunity in the Senate this week to support a bill to put in place a minimum farmgate price. I know it's not strictly in the economic textbook, but we have a real problem here and it will get fixed only through significant structural intervention. The refusal by those on the other side to join us on this matter is, quite frankly, a disgrace and has dairy farmers everywhere shaking their heads.

A code of conduct is great. We've supported that for four years, at least. The ACCC recommended a mandatory code of conduct 20 months ago now, but do we have one? No, we still don't, because, again, those on the other side are fighting about what it should look like. But, even if we do finally get a mandatory code of conduct, it will not be enough. It won't
address the market failure that Senator Susan McDonald spoke about last week in the other place. We need something more than that. We need intervention, and we need to ensure that our dairy farmers know that for the next 12 months and the 12 months after that they will get a payment for their milk somewhere above their cost of production. Their costs continue to rise, exacerbated by drought, but the price they receive for their milk remains very stubbornly flat, and it's about time we did something about that, and it's about time those on the other side, particularly those from the National Party, joined us in doing something about it.

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

**Mr Brian Mitchell:** I second the amendment and reserve my right to speak.

**Mr DRUM (Nicholls—Chief Nationals Whip) (13:10):** I look forward to these amendments to the Farm Household Support Amendment (Relief Measures) Bill (No. 2) 2019 that have been put forward by the government in relation to the farm household allowance making its way through the parliament. These amendments are further refinements of farm household allowance and effectively come in four sets of amendments. The first of those sets is to provide a rate of farm household allowance that is not varied by a person's income, effectively making it so that if you are eligible for one dollar then you are eligible for the full amount. The second is to simplify the asset test and effectively take onboard the value that many farmers have—the value of their water—and make sure that it doesn't preclude farmers from having access to farm household allowance.

A series of ministerial rules have been prescribed against somebody who is set to receive farm household allowance. Again, that financial assessment will not be pushing people away from the farm household support that they are currently eligible for. And the fourth set of amendments is simply to strengthen the management approach to better support farm household allowance recipients through periods of financial difficulty, with an amount to $10,000 to extend the amount of activity supplement to include travel and accommodation costs for eligible activities, provided that the costs are reasonable as determined by the secretary.

The member for Hunter has effectively taken every opportunity to complain and whinge and bellyache about the changes that we continually bring to this place in relation to the worsening of the drought. Quite simply, that is exactly the way I think a responsible government should treat this worsening drought. If the drought starts to bite, the government starts to act. If the drought persists, the government pushes harder. If the drought continues to bite, even harder, the government goes away and comes back with a new set of support mechanisms that are going to enable their farmers to work their way through the drought. The drought bites differently in different regions, so the government reacts with different proposals in each of those different regions. Many of these drought assistances are simply rolled out through regulations, through a grant program. Other support mechanisms need to be put through the House as changes to legislation.

I also want to pull up the member for Hunter, because he spent an awfully large amount of his 30 minutes talking about those farming families who are going to be coming off farm household allowance, as they have reached the four-year maximum. He was effectively telling the House, telling Australia, that those farmers are going to have to wait until the middle of next year. I will take this opportunity to say that the member for Hunter is wrong.
Mr Fitzgibbon: I didn't say that. Future drought fund, I said, not that.

Mr DRUM: I think you'll find that you said that money will not be available for those families until the middle of next year. So, if you've been waiting for four years and you have effectively just come off farm household allowance—saying that they're going to have to wait six months for their supplement payments, that is not true. Those support payments will be available in a couple of weeks. So I think we need to have an opportunity for them—

Mr Fitzgibbon: They were taken off six months ago!

Mr DRUM: The member for Hunter will have an opportunity to come into the House and correct what he has said, once he has gone away and read his transcript. He can then come back into—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell): The member for Hunter, on a point of order?

Mr Fitzgibbon: The member is misleading the House. I did not say that. I said they were cut off on 30 June and they have been waiting six months for the payment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Nicholls has the call.

Mr DRUM: Thank you. The way that the government has reacted to this current drought is very sensible, very reasonable, and these new sets of amendments are simply the way a responsible government should continue to act. The Labor Party needs to have a very strong think about the way it is handling itself in this drought. To bring up a drought water policy on the edge of an election will make most farmers in a drought's life go through more pain, go through more doubt, about the future of their business. But introducing a policy that included mainly buybacks in the water policies on the eve of an election is something that was incredibly painful for people looking at a very tough period.

We all know that water buybacks are the most dangerous and destructive of all policies, and to have the then shadow water minister pushing a policy that was going to see more and more water purchased out of agriculture and returned to the environment is exactly why we have 3,000 protesters in Canberra today. They are calling on the politicians in this House to, effectively, see things through their eyes as opposed to seeing things through the eyes of the environmental watering purposes.

The Labor Party need to have a really strong look at this. If the Labor Party want to stand up in this House and say they're ready to take a bipartisan view to this, how about they come on board with some of the views that we have in relation to water policy? Look at the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and the damage it is causing agriculture. Why don't the Labor Party put their hands up and say, 'We are happy to come and support the government if it's looking to change the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and some of the opportunities within that'? But they won't do that.

Mr Fitzgibbon: I take a point of order under standing order 66(a) and suggest the member might take a question from me, because if he's prepared to indicate what policy change he wants under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan we'll be happy to consider it. Which policy change would the member like?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the member for Nicholls take the intervention?
Mr DRUM: I'm not going to take questions while I'm in my presentation. But I'm happy to sit down with the Labor Party at any stage and put forward changes to make agriculture the beneficiary of some of the environmental water we have.

We have 450 gigalitres, still hanging around the necks of our farmers, referred to as the '450 upwater'. We have dodgy science based around the Lower Lakes of South Australia. We have a whole range of opportunities for changes to improve the lot of our farmers. At the moment, our farmers are being asked to carry the losses associated with the running of the rivers. They're commonly referred to as conveyancing losses. This is coming out of the allocation that is annually available to our farmers. But the environment bears none of these conveyancing losses. When the environment is asked to help agriculture, their answer is generally a flat no.

We have to look at this in a serious manner. This is a Labor Party in opposition calling for a floor price in the dairy industry as a way of helping those farmers who are going through very tough times, when they know in their heart of hearts that a floor price in the dairy industry cannot work, when they know that the dairy industry itself is not calling for a floor price—because the dairy industry itself knows that a floor price in the dairy industry cannot work.

This is what the Labor Party are doing, with a whole series of what we would generally refer to as hoaxes, right throughout the whole industry. How can you set a floor price in the dairy industry that is above the cost of milk production? How can you do that? It's impossible to do it because every farming business produces milk at a different cost. They have different levels of debt. They have different access to water. They have different sized herds. They have different feed systems. And on it goes. From farmer 1 to farmer 2 to farmer 3 to farmer 4, they will all be producing milk at a different price. They'll be producing different-quality milk and getting different prices for their milk throughout the sector. The Labor Party, with this hoax, are effectively saying that they're going to fix this with the flick of a wrist—they're going to put in place a floor price that's going to be across the price of production. They know it is wrong. They know it is false. They know it simply cannot work. But they're happy to keep perpetuating this throughout the whole sector. They must understand that the dairy industry are not calling for this.

However, what we're here today to talk about is the farm household allowance. My first intensive look at this was after the milk price collapsed in 2016 and many farmers were being asked by their processors to go into a repayment plan of anywhere from $50,000 to several hundreds of thousands of dollars to pay back what were called clawbacks once the floor price crashed—on the back of, firstly, Murray Goulburn and, secondly, Fonterra following them. There was a collapse in the price of milk, one of only three times in the history of milk pricing when the price actually went backwards, and it went dramatically backwards. That caused an enormous amount of pain and anguish throughout the dairy industry, and many farmers have been on the back foot ever since then.

This is a really, really tough time, and many of the farmers who went through that clawback process had not got their heads above water when they were hit with this drought. Prices for water are spiking up to $600 and beyond on the temporary market, and many farmers are simply not able to compete at that price. Dairy farmers have always had to be in a...
market against horticulture and fruit, and now they're finding themselves in a market against other commodities that can pay considerably more.

This is a very, very serious issue. The government is doing whatever it can to help in relation to putting food on the table for our families, ensuring that they can pay a few household bills, trying to give them the dignity of an existence. It is not enabling them to supplement their farming business in any way, but it is at least enabling them to put some food on the table, pay some household bills, get the kids off to school and make sure that they can live that modest life around the household while they go through the trials and tribulations of their farming business as the drought worsens. I think the government is acting in a very responsible manner. These changes will enable these farming families to stay in the industry at a greater rate. They will ensure that the farmers coming off farm household allowance can receive this once-off supplementary payment on the way out in a timely fashion. We get whingeing, complaining and bellyaching from the opposition. Sometimes they just need to come along and say: 'We support these measures. The government is doing the right thing with this, and we all support this.'

**Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (13:23):** The Farm Household Support Amendment (Relief Measures) Bill (No. 2) 2019 incorporates the third tranche of amendments to the Farm Household Allowance Program as foreshadowed by the government last month. Centre Alliance supports the steps taken by the government to bolster the financial standing of farmers and promote a resilient business model. The bill makes four changes to the program, aimed at addressing difficulties within the existing farm household allowance scheme—namely, reporting variable income, simplifying the assets test, broadening the class of persons able to conduct a farm financial assessment and, finally, increasing the activity supplement.

Many of the issues were explored in the independent review of this scheme, prepared on behalf of the department earlier this year. The report, entitled *Rebuilding the FHA: a better way forward for supporting farmers in financial hardship*, made six strategic recommendations, including strengthening the mutual obligation requirement in order to prioritise a meaningful mutual obligation process and putting the focus on long-term viability and structural change. Schedule 1 of the bill seeks to support long-term viability by ensuring farmers are able to pursue opportunities to improve their financial standing without fear of incurring a debt. Currently farmers are required to estimate their income each fortnight to ensure that they receive an appropriate rate of payment, noting that the income earned may reduce the payment they receive. The bill amends the scheme such that, provided a farmer does not earn more than the payability threshold of $984 for each member of a couple or $1,075 for a single, they're eligible to receive the full allowance for that fortnight. This will allow a single farmer to earn $1,074 per fortnight without any reduction in the payment received through the farm household allowance scheme. The measure provides farmers with certainty in an unpredictable business environment.

The independent review heard evidence of perverse outcomes whereby farmers were reluctant to generate additional off-farm income for fear of accruing an overpayment debt. While I recognise that farmers operate in a sphere that is dependent on a number of external factors, and that that fact should warrant some exceptions to the ordinary social services framework, the amendments proposed are unusually generous when compared to other welfare payments. For example, Newstart recipients often work in casual roles with ad hoc
shift arrangements where pay cheques can vary wildly from week to week, yet they must report their income on a fortnightly basis, knowing that, when they do so, their payments may reduce as a result. My comments should be viewed not as a criticism of those who will receive the farm household allowance, nor of the amount they are entitled to receive, but rather as a need to review the adequacy of other welfare payments and the manner in which they are administered. Setting to one side the generous framework proposed by the bill, I also question whether this measure will achieve the long-term structural change that was recommended by the independent evaluation of the farm household allowance scheme.

Similarly, schedule 3, which amends the farm financial assessment requirement, is unlikely to promote an attitude of long-term behavioural change. The farm financial assessment has attracted criticism from both farmers and the Rural Financial Counselling Service for being little more than a tick-box exercise. While some farmers have meaningfully engaged with the process and have undertaken activities to improve their long-term circumstances, the review concluded that it did not promote behavioural change and did not provide farmers with a plan to escape their financial fate, only to delay it. The bill does not remove the requirement for a farm financial assessment but will instead widen the class of people who are able to conduct an FFA. This will enable more Rural Financial Counselling Service providers and other suitably qualified advisers to carry out farm financial assessments in regions that do not always have access to the prescribed assessors. It's a sensible amendment and one that I believe will improve the administration of the scheme.

However, if a farmer makes the agonising decision to leave their farm and pursue another career, it is reasonable to expect that there be some form of additional training required to facilitate that transition. This will be provided through the Farm Household Allowance Program as part of an activity supplement payment. The activity supplement payment is currently $4,000; however, in schedule 4 of the bill this will increase to $10,000. The $10,000 activity supplement sits as a credit to be drawn down once the activity is added to the financial improvement agreement and can be either reimbursed or paid upfront for a recipient to undertake an activity, whichever the person prefers. The increased payment takes into consideration the additional travel and accommodation costs often incurred by rural, regional and remote farmers who must travel to metropolitan centres to complete valuable training courses.

While it's disappointing that the bill makes no change to the mutual obligation requirements, it does address some of the issues raised in the report and supports the overarching objective of the scheme, which is to promote financial resilience. Another way to improve the financial standing of our farmers is not to increase welfare payments or make them jump through irrelevant administration hoops but to change the way our banks deliver their financial services to our farmers. That is what I've tried to achieve in my private members' bill, the Banking Amendment (Rural Finance Reform) Bill 2019. It's currently before the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell): The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour.
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (13:30): Today, to celebrate International Day of People with Disability, I'm very pleased to have in parliament my old patients and now friends, Kathryn Millar, Brooklyn Taylor and Ethan Campbell, together with their family and carers, Bill Millar, Shayne Perkins, and Mark and Michelle Campbell. It's very common for my office to be contacted by my old patients and their families who have disabilities to try and enrol in the NDIS. The NDIS has really been a remarkable thing in Australia. It really enables us to give back to people who have disability. They, like us, deserve their place, and we need to make sure that they get their place in the sun. As Australians, I believe we're all equal and we all deserve an equal share in our society. The NDIS has been a wonderful change. However, there are systemic problems which I do not believe this government has addressed. I've certainly been lobbying for almost four years to try and get the government to see the systemic problems, such as poorly trained planners, long delays in getting plans, arbitrary reductions in plans on review, poor service, difficulty in accessing services through the NDIS, and the long delays for people like occupational therapists, speech therapists et cetera to get their bills paid. There are systemic problems and we need to change it.

Page Electorate: Local Sporting Champions

Mr HOGAN (Page—Deputy Speaker) (13:31): The Local Sporting Champions grants allow regional athletes the opportunity to compete at elite levels. This is certainly what Grafton's Tahlia Marsh has achieved. Recently, Tahlia won a bronze medal at the Union Cycliste Internationale World Championships in Belgium. Not only did this win add to the medal tally of the Australian team; it lifted Talia's 13 to 16 girls ranking to third in the world. In 2017, I awarded Tahlia with a Local Sporting Champions grant to attend the BMX World Championships in South Carolina, and in April this year I presented her with a grant to attend the very championships that I just mentioned. Tahlia has been able to build on her continued success due to the commitment of her parents, Grant and Jenny. I also acknowledge that the Clarence Valley BMX Club had two other representatives competing in the championships. Glen Swain made the quarterfinals in the 30 to 34 years Motos category. Glen is also the current state and national champion. Kai McGregor is a relative newcomer to the sport. That said, he made the quarterfinals in the under-12 boys category, which is an outstanding effort considering he is just seven years old. Ammie and Dion McGregor do a wonderful job making sure that Kai has every opportunity to excel. I'd also like to congratulate the Clarence Valley BMX Club on having three of their members selected to represent Australia. What a wonderful achievement!

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Ms COKER (Corangamite) (13:33): On this International Day for People with Disability, it is incumbent on all of us to look at every person through the prism of their abilities, not their disabilities. It is our job to empower those with disabilities to live life to the fullest. I'm delighted to be joined today by constituents Dylan Logan, his dad, Marc, and Lynne Foreman. Dylan is profoundly deaf, but, as a talented teenager, he competes as a member of the Australian Deaf Swimming Team. Lynne is a remarkable advocate for Every Australian Counts, an amazing organisation responsible for many advances like the NDIS. The NDIS has
been life-changing for tens of thousands of participants, and I thank the member for Maribyrnong. But the scheme does have significant problems, many of which are preventable. They are preventable because the government has withdrawn $4.6 billion from the NDIS to prop up its dodgy budget surplus. They are preventable because the NDIA doesn't provide enough properly trained staff, respite services or independent housing, and it makes participants jump through unnecessary hurdles. But I'm pleased that many of the planning problems are being addressed in a bipartisan way by the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS. Our committee's interim report on the planning process was released today and makes 13 substantial recommendations. I urge the government and the NDIA to implement every recommendation. (Time expired)

**Agriculture Industry**

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (13:34): Apple and pear farmers across Western Australia will soon be able to access a fund of $1.5 million to install new netting or replace damaged netting. The majority of orchards in WA are not netted as the up-front costs of installing the protection are a major barrier for most farmers. However, netting delivers clear productivity boosts by protecting crops from extreme weather and predators. Netting increases protection from sunburn, wind and hail, not to mention birds and bats. Importantly, netting also delivers a dramatic improvement in water efficiency. A recent three-year trial in WA found that netting reduced water requirements by around 20 per cent. Apple and Pear Australia Limited estimate the cost of netting at up to $60,000 per hectare.

The scheme will commence in 2020 and operate until 31 December 2021 or until funds are fully committed. Eligible growers will be required to at least match the Commonwealth contribution, and the trial program will be capped at $300,000 per grower. This initiative will make a big difference for apple and pear growers across the Perth Hills.

WA's fruit growers punch above their weight in a tough market. I'm proud to represent many of them in this parliament, and it's right that we should be doing what we can to back Australian horticulture. This is an important part of the Morrison government's plan to increase the value of Australian agriculture to $100 billion by 2030.

**International Day of People with Disability**

Ms PAYNE (Canberra) (13:36): Today is the International Day of People with Disability, and the member for Maribyrnong, our shadow minister for the NDIS, hosted a special morning tea this morning to meet with people with disability and their families to discuss some of the issues they are facing. I was very pleased to welcome from my electorate Jesusa and her beautiful daughter, Gabriela, who is an NDIS participant.

Gabriela is three and doesn't walk or stand. She has been waiting the best part of a year to receive a walker and a standing frame that may enable her to walk and stand. At that age, every week and every month is so important to a child's development and sets them up for the rest of their lives. I see this with my own son who's 21 months old—how he changes every week and every month. When I look at that little girl, I see my son. I think that if someone were stopping him from having the best start in life—what every parent wants for their child—I don't know what I would do.

We need to get the NDIS right, because people with disability deserve so much better than this. We need to keep up the fight. Today the Joint Standing Committee on the National
Disability Insurance Scheme, of which I'm a member, handed down its interim report with recommendations, and I urge the government to adopt these recommendations.

**Queensland: Roads**

**Mr LAMING** (Bowman) (13:37): The suburb of Redland Bay—Queensland's largest—has 15,000 people all having to leave on a single-lane road because of the small thinking of state Labor. This suburb needs roads. They voted for them. They were promised them by Labor, and nothing's eventuated. It's been six years, and there's no road work apart from an 800 metre extension of road duplication.

Take the drive with me from Cleveland: two lanes at South Street, one lane at the bottom of the hill; two lanes at Island Outlook, one lane at the bottom of the hill; two lanes at Ziegenfusz, one lane at Pinklands; two lanes at Waterline, back to one lane at Finlandia; two lanes at Faith Lutheran, back to one lane at Magnolia; two lanes at Beniër, back to one lane at the bottom of the hill; and then two lanes at Giles Street back to one lane again. Labor has the temerity to introduce one more intersection upgrade for another bottleneck at Redland Bay.

This is appalling small thinking about roads driven by minister Mark Bailey. You get the photograph in the local paper of these beleaguered councillors asked to sign off on planning when no money is coming in. You get a state Labor MP, Kim Richards, who says to get councils to get more money out of developers. That upgrades local roads, Kim Richards. He is joined at the hip with Lance Hewlett. They campaigned together for a Victoria Point bypass that now is no bypass whatsoever. Labor can't think about road duplication. They build bus stops the size of the Taj Mahal, but they can't think about local commuters. It's time for a change in Queensland.

**National Disability Insurance Scheme**

**Ms RYAN** (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:39): I'm pleased to rise with my colleagues today for 90-second statements to commend to the House the National Disability Insurance Scheme. On the International Day of People with Disability, we want to mark the importance of the NDIS. It's about changing lives, and I want to acknowledge that, for some people, it has delivered. But today I rise to speak for those in my electorate and across the country who have been let down by the underfunding and the mismanagement of those opposite of the NDIS. This Prime Minister and this government claim that $4.6 billion wasn't needed for the NDIS. They used it for their political needs to meet their promise of a surplus.

There is a mother in my electorate who has to lay her son with cerebral palsy across the seat of the family car to transport him, because vehicle modifications are delayed by the NDIS due to 'complexity'. This is a story that too many families understand, not just in my electorate but across the country. We all know that all taxpayers are contributing to the NDIS, and I would like to think gladly so. I'm sure that they, like me, are incredibly disappointed that this government and this Prime Minister have put their own political ends in front of people with a disability across this nation. Thank you.

**Infrastructure**

**Dr GILLESPIE** (Lyne) (13:40): Investment in rail projects by the federal government around the nation is at historic high levels. The federal and Queensland governments have just signed a bilateral agreement to provide certainty for the Inland Rail project through Queensland, which will support 7,200 jobs and boost the Queensland gross state product by
$7 billion. Sixty per cent of the $9.3 billion project, up to $6 billion of Inland Rail monies, will be spent in Queensland. Four-hundred kilometres will be in Queensland. It will be an amazing freight and business boost for everyone along the corridor. It's 1,800 kilometres of improvements. Forty per cent of the trains will be double stacked. It will remove 110 B-double trucks every time a train goes by. It won't just move freight off roads onto trains; people on the Pacific Highway on the coast will not have all the freight going up through their road corridors. It will also remove them from the Warrego Highway and Ipswich Motorway areas.

There are $2 billion on the table for Melbourne to Geelong, but we are awaiting Victorian government support. Passenger rail is also being upgraded. There are federal funds on the table of $5 billion for the Melbourne Airport rail link.

There are Regional Rail Revival funds of $884 million, $2.3 billion for METRONET in Perth— (Time expired)

**Petitions: National Disability Insurance Scheme**

Ms STEGGALL (Warringah) (13:42): On this the International Day of People with Disability I rise to present important petitions of 19,446 signatures of fellow Australians who are calling on their parliament to take urgent action to enable people with a disability over the age of 65 to get proper support. In doing so, I note the petitions have been approved by the Standing Committee on Petitions. I commend these petitions to the House.

*The petitions read as follows—*

We draw to the attention of the House that legislative changes are required to eliminate discrimination of older people with a disability. Older people are unable to access the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) after the age of 65. The maximum aged care Government subsidy of $50,250 per annum is insufficient for people who have extensive care needs, such as people who have quadriplegia. Regardless of age, people over the age of 65 with a disability should be entitled to access NDIS benefits to support them in receiving the care they require.

We therefore ask the House to: Change the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 to enable people over the age of 65 with a disability to access NDIS benefits.

from 5426 citizens (Petition No. EN1113)

This petition by the citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House that legislative changes are required to eliminate discrimination of older people with a disability. Older people are unable to access the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) after the age of 65. The maximum aged care Government subsidy of $49,000 per annum is insufficient for people who have extensive care needs, such as people who have quadriplegia. Regardless of age, people over the age of 65 with a disability should be entitled to access NDIS benefits to support them in receiving the care they require.

We therefore ask the House to: Change the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 to enable people over the age of 65 with a disability to access NDIS benefits.

from 14020 citizens (Petition No. PN0442)

Petitions received.

Ms STEGGALL: I note today the presence in the gallery of Chris and Bobbie English, who started this petition, and many who support it. The petition is about drawing attention to the changes that are required to eliminate discrimination against older people with a disability. Chris English was enjoying his 69th birthday with his family when he suddenly fainted and
fell. He became a quadriplegic. Had Chris English been aged 64 when the accident happened, he could have accessed an NDIS plan and up to $300,000 in support to meet his needs. Instead, being over 65, Chris is not eligible for NDIS and can only receive $50,000 under a My Aged Care plan. This is not meeting his needs. It is age discrimination and is impacting many others in Australia. We either need an exemption to NDIS for people aged over 65 who have an accident or illness, or My Aged Care needs to better cater for those with a disability unrelated to ageing. Thank you.

Small Business

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:43): As this is likely my last opportunity to speak before parliament rises for the Christmas break, I would like to send a special thank you to all those working in small business over the Christmas holiday period. While many of us in office work find Christmas time a time of parties and celebration, many of those that work in small business, especially in our retail sector, will be working 18 hours a day. The sales that they make between now and Christmas, which is a make-or-break period for them, will see if they are successful through the year.

Christmas is a time for us to reflect on family and friends, especially the ones that we have lost this year, who have left this earth for other places. In Australia, Christmas is also a time of great tragedy. We still have extreme bushfire weather, it is our cyclone season and it is a time when it is always very dangerous on the roads.

I encourage all Australians to support your local small businesses this Christmas. Stay safe, and let's see you all back here in 2020.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Mr CONROY (Shortland) (13:45): On International Day of People with Disability, we celebrate the achievements of the NDIS but we also must be mindful of its shortcomings, due almost entirely to the $4.6 billion shortfall in funding from this government. I want to speak briefly about two constituents.

One sought help for her nine-year-old son, who has autism and anxiety and struggles at school. When his NDIS plan for the second year was cut, his mother was told by his coordinator, 'Your son should already have improved, and he'll not need the NDIS forever, because he'll grow out of his autism.' His shocked mother said, 'With hard work from me and his specialist, he might get to a point where he deals better with life, but there is no cure for autism.' She made a complaint and went to the tribunal. After seven months, her son's plan was more than doubled, with weekly speech therapy, fortnightly OT and social groups through the holidays. And she has a new coordinator, who appears to have a better grasp of autism. But this is the No. 1 complaint I get about the NDIS—the view that autism is something that you recover from and you eventually escape.

A second constituent, who is an amputee, has been seeking home modifications for two years to allow him to live on the same level of the home as his family. He was refused this assistance. He sought to have his decision reviewed. I intervened, and, in so doing, we discovered the NDIA was working with incorrect plans and incorrect quotes. We have now rectified this decision, but it took two years.

The NDIS is a national treasure, but it's being abused by those in government.
Ms SWANSON (Paterson) (13:48): Everyone in this House sees the highs and lows of those with a disability trying to work their way through an often unfair and often unscrupulous system. It can be an extraordinary challenge for so many, on a daily basis. On this day, International Day of People with Disability, I want to look at one of the highs. I want to talk about a wonderful young woman in my electorate, Georgia Talbot. I first came into contact with Georgia and her mum in 2016, after I was first elected. Georgia graduated from year 12 this year and, with the help of a disability support worker, Linda Harris, Georgia made her graduation dress.

Congratulations, Georgia. It just goes to show what you can do with the right help, the right support, and having control and choice over your life, over what you wanted to wear to your graduation—and making it yourself. It makes such a statement for everyone with a disability. We need to give people with a disability the right control, the right choice, that they want to have in their lives. Georgia, you looked amazing in your dress; well done for making it. I hope you have an awesome summer and a terrific life. All the best to you and all the best to everyone on this International Day of People with Disability.

Ms LIU (Chisholm) (13:49): I would like to take this opportunity to update the chamber on some great news for some young sporting stars in my electorate. Congratulations to all the recipients of the Local Sporting Champions grants in Chisholm. From table tennis through to skiing, the diverse range of sports that Chisholm locals compete in is very impressive. Congratulations to Grace Connell, Adam Stecher, Nicholas Lum, Bailey Wallace, Amelie Holah, Mia Holah and Finnegan Castor. Thank you to all the parents, grandparents and volunteers who sacrifice a great deal to support these young athletes. As a parent, I know how hard it is with the early morning drives across the state on weekends so your child can attend their sporting events. The children's success would not be possible without your dedication, so thank you for all you do. Finally, if you're aged between 12 and 18 and participate at a state, national or international level, the current round of Local Sporting Champions grants closes on 31 December. You could receive up to $750 to put towards the cost of attending your championship event.

Ms McBRIDE (Dobell) (13:51): I rise today, on the International Day of People with Disability, to acknowledge the many people in my community who live with disability. I also want to pay tribute to their family carers for their love, support and advocacy. Today I want to speak about a friend of mine, an impressive young athlete whose name is Kallan Strong, who is growing up in Wadalba. Kallan is a talented tenpin bowler living with a disability. Kallan has won a string of state and national competitions, and, in June, Kallan competed at the 31st national championships, where he won the New South Wales state team gold medal, bowling and winning all seven games as lead bowler, and the all events silver medal. Kallan also made the top 16 masters, with 1,655. Kallan was also recognised with a plaque for being the first one to bowl the high game of the tournament, with a 278. More recently, Kallan won the New South Wales country junior cup, in Orange. I was really pleased to see Kallan and his mum recently, at a high school graduation at The Entrance Campus. She is rightly proud of Kallan.
and his string of outstanding achievements in sport and outside of sport. I want to take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to mums and dads like Lee-anne. Lee-anne does everything that she can so that Kallan can train, compete and excel. Congratulations. (Time expired)

Reid Electorate: Korea Day Festival

Dr MARTIN (Reid) (13:53): I am proudly the member for one of the most culturally diverse electorates in Australia. Last month I had the pleasure of attending the Korea Day Festival in Croydon Park. It is an annual event which celebrates the rich traditions and customs of our Korean Australian community. The Korea Day Festival is a day of family fun and entertainment that anyone can enjoy, regardless of their cultural background. The crowd particularly enjoyed the Korean music performances, which were a fantastic fusion of modern and traditional styles. The event, hosted by the Korean Society of Sydney, celebrated Korean cuisine as well as traditional and contemporary cultural performances. I commend the president, Kwang Hong Yoon, who I know as Bob, and the executive committee of the Korean Society of Sydney, for their hard work in organising the event. Reid has a large Korean Australian community, who maintain a strong connection to their cultural heritage and history. I have seen how much the Korean Australian community contribute to society and admire their hard work and willingness to give back to the country. I admire them very much. I have met many Korean Australians who own family businesses in Strathfield, and they represent the hard work and family values of all the people of Reid. Multicultural events like the Korea Day Festival that was held in Croydon Park celebrate our electorate's diversity and social cohesion. (Time expired)

International Day of People with Disability

Ms THWAITES (Jagajaga) (13:54): Today is International Day of People with Disability. I join my Labor colleagues in celebrating the achievements of people with disability. I want to pay tribute to all the people with disability who, today, are speaking out about the society they want and need.

Today I think about all the people with disability who fought so hard to establish the NDIS under a Labor government and how they have been comprehensively let down by this Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government. People with a disability fought for an NDIS that would let them live an ordinary life. Instead of this, they've stepped into a bureaucratic nightmare.

This year, a young man named Pedro Silva, who lived in my electorate, died at the age of 24. Pedro had muscular dystrophy, which severely affected his movement and his mental and physical wellbeing. He applied through the NDIS for a new wheelchair because his old one was causing him severe pressure injuries. Although the new chair was supposedly approved, the NDIS process for approving new equipment left him waiting. Repeated appeals to the NDIA and lobbying efforts to ministers failed to produce his chair. Finally, 10 months later, an NDIA delegate approved his plan. That was on 28 August this year. Unfortunately, Pedro had died at 11.30 the night before. In the last months of his life, he and his family were unnecessarily put through pain because this government just doesn't care.

Lindsay Electorate: Schools

Mrs McINTOSH (Lindsay) (13:56): Students in my electorate of Lindsay are working hard—students like Diya from Claremont Meadows Public School. The teachers and students
at Claremont Meadows Public School know Diya as someone who is hardworking and always ready to drop everything for her fellow students. These qualities make Diya a great pupil and peer and a fantastic young person.

Another outstanding student in Lindsay is Aarin from Kingswood Park Public School. Aarin's school motto is 'strive for success' and Aarin embodies this spirit. Success doesn't always mean winning. Aarin strives to be a respectful, diligent and reliable student and friend. That's why I was proud that Diya and Aarin are the two local students to first receive my Lindsay Quiet Achiever Awards. Students going about their work with dedication and commitment deserve to be recognised and applauded for their efforts. As we head into the school award season, I want to make sure students quietly and humbly achieving are amongst the cohort of award recipients.

I care very much about the future of all students in Lindsay. Our local students will be at the forefront of emerging industries and technologies in defence, space, advanced manufacturing and more. That's why I established the Lindsay Jobs of the Future Forum. I look forward to presenting more local students with the Lindsay Quiet Achiever Award, recognising them for their outstanding efforts this year.

International Day of People with Disability

Mr Shorten (Maribyrnong) (13:57): Today is the International Day of People with Disability. I acknowledge the very good speeches that have been given and the advocates in the gallery. Today is a day where you talk about the successes of Australians living with disability and their carers. They're stories of love, but not everything is positive for Australians with disability. They finish school less. They have lower home ownership. They're poorer. They experience higher unemployment. Parents of children with disability often experience higher divorce rates. Carers retire with less income themselves. People with disability experience discrimination on a daily basis. But this is not the natural order of things. Disability can affect any of us at birth or in the blink of an eye or through the onset of disease.

How we treat people with disability is how we want to treat our own families. I think of the mothers who are told off when their kids with autism are acting up in the supermarket and they're reprimanded by unthinking people. I think of the age carers who will be lying awake at midnight tonight wondering who will care for their child. I think of the rejected jobseekers. I think of the people who want to go out but only go into restaurants being shuttled through the kitchens. This is not the natural order of things. It's parents who have to relinquish children because they can no longer get respite. Today is the day we think about Australians with disability, but I hope one day that every day is a day for people with a disability and we no longer have one day for people with a disability.

Inland Rail

Dr McVeigh (Groom) (13:59): Last Friday saw the signing in Toowoomba of the intergovernmental agreement on Inland Rail by the Deputy Prime Minister, representing the Commonwealth government, and Minister Mark Bailey from the state Labor government, representing that state government. It was a great day indeed. I note the member for Lyne raised some of the statistics around Inland Rail, particularly in the state of Queensland. Some $7 billion will be invested in our state in this nation-building project—7,200 jobs for Queensland. Many of those will be in my electorate in the Toowoomba region. I raised with
the Deputy Prime Minister and the state minister, most respectfully, two key issues that I will continue to campaign on as this project comes to fruition. First of all, any large infrastructure project has impacts on landholders—

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE
Veterans: Suicide

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:00): My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. Every member of this parliament agrees that reducing the appallingly high rate of veterans' suicide in Australia should be an absolute priority. We both met with Julie-Ann Finney, whose son, David, a veteran, died earlier this year and whose petition has already attracted a quarter of a million signatures. Will the Prime Minister agree with Mrs Finney's calls, join with Labor and establish a royal commission into veterans' suicide?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:01): I met with Julie-Ann Finney just last week here in Canberra, and we had another very productive discussion. Her son, David, had died by suicide earlier this year. I also met with many other parents in Sydney recently to discuss their proposal for a royal commission to be held into veterans' suicide. We all know that the rate of mental illness amongst veterans is unacceptably high. The suicide rate for ex-serving men aged under 30 is 2.2 times that for Australian men of the same age, and about a third of those who have left the ADF in the past five years have reported high to very high levels of psychological distress.

This matter has been made a national priority by my government as part of its broader focus on our 'towards zero' goal to address mental health issues and to address suicide prevention. Christine Morgan has been appointed as the National Suicide Prevention Adviser. We have held quite a number of detailed policy sessions with officials, including with the heads of the Defence Force and those directly responsible in the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and have been working through the many challenges. I want to stress that many changes are being made both in the way that the Defence Force operates and in how the Department of Veterans' Affairs operates. I thank the department and I thank the ADF for the changes that have been made. I said to Julie-Ann: 'I wish that those arrangements had been in place when her son was in the Defence Force. I wish they had been in place for all of those Australians who have served in our defence forces and have passed away by their own hand.' The lessons are being put into place.

I have remained open to this question and I remain open to this question. I'm working closely with the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and, I must say, I'm working closely with the veterans who are in this chamber and I would welcome that input and feedback from veterans on the other side of the chamber. Only today I met with the member for Herbert and many of his serving friends to talk about these very issues. I've given an undertaking that we will continue to reflect on these things over the break before making a decision on this matter, but I can assure you of this: what I'm seeking to do is ensure that, whenever a veteran has, sadly, taken their life, whether in the past or, sadly, in the future—I would like to say it would never happen again, but no-one can stand at this dispatch box and say that—on every single
occasion there must be justice, there must be accountability, there must be learnings and there must be change. That's what my government and I are committed to.

**Economy**

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Chief Government Whip) (14:04): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister outline to the House how the Morrison government's strong economic management is ensuring the delivery of essential services for Australians, including in my electorate of Forde, that they so heavily rely upon?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:04): I thank the member for Forde for his question and the role he plays, with all of the government members, to ensure that we are able to deliver on our commitments to the Australian people. The most important one of those is that the Australian people know they can trust the Liberals and Nationals with money, and they certainly know, as they demonstrated at the last election, that Labor cannot be trusted with money. It's because we do know how to manage money—the hard-earned earnings of Australians and the taxes they pay. As a result of what we've done in this place, including in the member for Forde's electorate, they are paying less tax. They will always pay less tax when it comes to the Liberals and Nationals, because we believe, unlike those opposite, as demonstrated at the last election, that Australians should keep more of what they earn. This means that our government trust Australians to do the right thing and make the right decisions about the money they earn. They trust us with the hard-earned earnings they have provided through their taxes, because they know we'll manage that well. That's why we are bringing the budget back into surplus for the first time, as the Treasurer has said, in 12 years. We are doing that at the same time, and this enables us to do it.

When you know how to manage money, as our government does, it means you can look the Australian people in the eye and you can say to them: 'We have guaranteed record schools funding on the basis of student need and we are investing $310 billion in our schools over the decade to 2029. We can guarantee the funding will be there for the National Disability Insurance Scheme.' We can guarantee that because we know how to manage money. We can guarantee record health and hospitals funding, including an extra $31 billion through the National Health Agreement and record support for mental health and suicide prevention, because we know how to manage money. We're doing this by keeping the budget in surplus, not increasing the debt and not increasing taxes as those opposite proposed.

What is amazing is that at the last election the Labor Party came up with $387 billion of higher taxes. They say now that Newstart should go up, but when they were taking $387 billion of higher taxes to the last election they still couldn't make that commitment. There are no taxes high enough to satisfy the spending appetite of the Labor Party. But on our side the bulk-billing rate has now gone to 86.2 per cent—a record. There is increased investment in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme—2,200 new and amended items. There's a $503 million youth mental health and suicide prevention plan, a further $496.3 million for an additional 10,000 home care packages— *(Time expired)*

**Economy**

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (14:07): My question is to the Treasurer. Given the Reserve Bank has already cut interest rates three times since the election to a quarter of the emergency lows during the GFC, downgraded growth three times since the budget, contemplated
unconventional monetary policy and confirmed that low wages growth under this government is the 'new normal', what will it take for the Morrison government to be shaken out of its complacency on this floundering economy?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:07): I'm pleased to tell the House that the IMF and the OECD have the Australian economy growing in 2020 faster than any G7 country.

Dr Chalmers: They downgraded it.

The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin is now warned.

Mr FRYDENBERG: I am pleased to tell the House that, when it comes to real wages, they've been growing at 0.6 per cent. When we came to government, they were 0.5 per cent. I'm pleased to tell the House that employment growth is at two per cent, and when we came to government it was around a third of that. And, at two per cent, it's more than double the OECD average. I'm pleased to tell the House that, since we've come to government, more than 1.4 million new jobs have been created. And I'm pleased to tell the House that today the ABS have announced the current account surplus is the highest on record at $7.9 billion. That's because this Prime Minister and coalition prime ministers before him have entered into free trade agreements, creating some new markets with nearly two billion new customers for Australian businesses to export to. So the coalition is not only cutting taxes but creating jobs, while those opposite will always be the party of $387 billion of higher taxes.

Economy

Dr WEBSTER (Mallee) (14:09): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development. Will the Deputy Prime Minister outline how the Morrison-McCormack government's stable and certain budget and economic management are guaranteeing the essential services that rural and regional Australians rely on?

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of the Nationals) (14:09): I didn't see any of the Labor members out the front this morning. I always come up and talk to farmers, because farmers are the lifeblood of the nation. They grow the food and fibre.

Mr Fitzgibbon interjecting—

Mr McCORMACK: We've got a bit of reaction. What are you standing up for? You don't stand up for anything!

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Prime Minister will resume his seat. The member for Hunter will resume his seat. He doesn't have the call.

Mr Fitzgibbon interjecting—

The SPEAKER: No, I'm not calling you. You could only raise a point of order on relevance, and I'm making a judgement: there is no point of order on relevance. Unless you've got a point of order on another matter? If people are surprised by that, I refer to a Harry Jenkins ruling on the same matter—

Mr Dutton interjecting—
The SPEAKER: ironically with respect to the member interjecting, the Minister for Home Affairs! The Deputy Prime Minister has the call, and I remind him his microphone is in perfect working order!

Mr McCormack: Indeed it is, just like the Liberal and Nationals government—perfect working order, backing workers, backing farmers, backing the electorate of Mallee, that wonderful rural Victorian electorate, home to just some of the 8.8 million Australians who call regional Australia home. We are backing them too. The member for Mallee is certainly backing her community. She's out there every day of the week, fighting hard for the farmers, fighting hard for the people who want better digital connectivity.

This government is building the infrastructure to boost growth and to unlock the potential for farmers, for families—certainly in the member for Mallee's electorate. In the member's electorate, as well as investing in road, rail and air infrastructure, we've invested in the essential services people living in regional areas deserve. When I was in Mildura during the election campaign, the mayor of Mildura, Simon Clemence, said the investment we made—$2 million in the landing instruments system at the local airport—was the best investment that we had ever made for his community. He knew that it was going to grow the aviation opportunities for those communities. We've delivered $8.9 million in Mallee through the Mobile Black Spot Program. Forty-one mobile black spot towers have been funded, with 32 already installed.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr McCormack: I hear them cry out. They didn't deliver one—not one—mobile phone tower in six sorry years of government, and I was there for three of them. You didn't deliver one—not one, not a single one. A big fat zero, zilch for you guys over there.

Mr Fitzgibbon interjecting—

Mr McCormack: Oh, I've cut a nerve. What a soft touch you are!

The SPEAKER: The member for Hunter on a point of order?

Mr Fitzgibbon: He's not listening to our farmers, and our farmers long ago stopped listened to him!

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

The member for Hunter then left the chamber.

Government members interjecting—

Dr Freelander interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my right. The member for Macarthur will cease interjecting. I haven't called the Deputy Prime Minister.

Mr McCormack: I'm waiting.

The SPEAKER: Well, you can resume your seat for a second. Just for the information of all members raising points of order: I'm not going to keep repeating myself. If you're seeking to raise a point of order, you need to state what the point of order is. If you seek my call to raise a point of order and then just give a speech, that's a gross misuse of the standing orders, and as I treated the member for Hunter I will treat anyone else raising frivolous points of order. If you can't find an opportunity to—well! The Deputy Prime Minister has the call.
Mr McCormack: As I said, digital connectivity is important for regional Australia. And 1,047 mobile blackspot towers have been either funded or installed, and the 750th—

Dr Freelander: Lies, lies, lies.

Mr McCormack: No, it's not lies. It's not lies at all. It's the absolute truth—funded or installed. The 750th is now on air in Mallee, in the small town of Nullawil. It's not a big town, but it's an important town. It punches well above its weight, just as the rest of Mallee does, providing the food and fibre that our nation needs and that others need as well. The regional Australia migration package that was recently announced by the minister for agriculture in Mildura—a $20 million package—is also going to bring benefits for Mallee and benefits for regional Australia. (Time expired)

Economy

Mr Brendan O'Connor (Gorton) (14:15): My question's to the Treasurer. Given that the government has presided over the worst wages growth on record, the Reserve Bank has declared that lower wage rises have become the new normal and the finance minister has said that low wages growth is a deliberate design feature of the government's economic policies, why does the Treasurer pretend that the economy is delivering for working people when plainly it isn't?

Mr Frydenberg (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:15): The jobs numbers speak for themselves. When we came to government, unemployment was 5.7 per cent, and today it's 5.3 per cent. And we have helped create more than 1.4 million new jobs—more jobs for young people, more jobs for seniors and more jobs for women. When it comes to wages—and the honourable member may not have been listening—we have seen real wages growth at 0.6 per cent. When we came to government, it was 0.5 per cent. When Labor was last in office, the real minimum wage fell in three out of six years. Since we've been in office, the real minimum wage has been up every single year. Compensation of employees, which is the wages bill for the economy, is about five per cent. Again, when we came to government, under Labor it was 3½ per cent. And the employment growth is today at two per cent, more than double the OECD average and around three times what it was when Labor was last in office.

So, we are continuing to cut taxes, invest in infrastructure, cut regulation—all designed to boost the Australian economy and to create more jobs. Labor's solution is only higher taxes and reckless spending, the result of which is fewer jobs and lower wages.
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Bushfires

Mr WILKIE (Clark) (14:17): My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, access to foreign heavy firefighting aircraft is now problematic, as the Northern and Southern Hemisphere fire seasons overlap because of climate change, while domestic resources are stretched to fight simultaneous fires across Australia. Despite this, my repeated calls for a specialised RAAF capability have been dismissed by the government every time. The reality is that aid to the civil community is an accepted use of ADF assets and existing RAAF aircraft, like the C-17 Globemaster, the C-130 Hercules and the C-27 Spartan, could all deploy roll-on, roll-off tank systems for water bombing. Prime Minister, as the country deals with a shocking bushfire season, will you now direct Defence to develop a heavy firefighting aircraft capability?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:18): I thank the member for his question and his concern about all Australians who have been suffering under these fires, and their terrible losses. I know he would join with me in thanking all those Australians who have been out there volunteering, supporting in so many ways not just those on the fire grounds themselves but also those who are supporting back at base—those who are providing catering and support in so many other functions. I also thank all the businesses that have been supporting all those volunteers out there, who have enabled them to come to the support of their fellow Australians. I also thank the men and women of our Australian Defence Force, who have also been very much engaged in the most recent fires that we've seen, as they always are. They form an important part of the various support and logistics and uplifts and other matters that they are involved in, using their special expertise. The government takes its advice on the matters that you've raised from the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council. That represents the fire and emergency service chiefs, who have told the government that engaging the ADF in support and capability enhancement that would take it away from direct firefighting is supported.

I will, as the minister responsible in this area, respond further to you on these matters, but I want to assure you that whatever decisions the government takes are taken on the basis of the advice of those fire chiefs. They recommend to us what assets should be used, where those assets should come from, how many there should be and how they should be deployed. These are matters that are responded to directly by our state and territory governments, and they've been doing an extraordinary job. I think the coordinated effort between federal, state and local agencies in these recent fires has been exemplary, and part of the reason for that has been the outstanding work done by the Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council. We will continue to take their advice and we'll continue to support their recommendations. I will ask the minister to add to that.

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management) (14:20): I thank the honourable member for his question. I respectfully don't agree that the access to fire and heavy firefighting equipment is problematic at the moment. I say that because only in the last three weeks I wrote to AFAC, the chief council that represents fire commissioners, and they assured me in writing that at the moment there are suitable assets. But they do make the point that, if the season is protracted,
we will have to be agile enough to work with them. That is a commitment our government has
given to them.

They also, in that letter, outline the fact that they are comfortable with the arrangements we
currently have with the Australian Defence Force and the support that they provide and the
logistic support that they provide our firefighters. In fact, I met with those former fire chiefs
that raised some concerns only today, and I assured them that they should take comfort but
great pride in the professional men and women who lead our fire agencies around this state
and take great comfort that they are leading us through this season.

Economy

Mrs McINTOSH (Lindsay) (14:21): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer
explain to the House how the Morrison government's strong budgetary position enables us to
deliver the essential services that Australians rely on? Is the Treasurer aware of any
alternative policies that may undermine this approach?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:22): I thank the member for Lindsay for
her question. I acknowledge her extensive experience in small business before she came to
this place and that there are more than 70,000 taxpayers in her electorate that will get the
benefit of the tax cuts that pass this parliament as well as more than 14,000 small businesses
in the electorate of Lindsay that will be able to access the instant asset write-off.

On 2 April I announced that the budget was back in the black and back on track without
increasing taxes. What we have seen since the coalition have come to government is more
than 1.4 million new jobs being created, welfare dependency at a 30-year low, the biggest tax
cuts in more than 20 years and the first balanced budget in 11 years. And today the ABS have
confirmed that the current account surplus is the highest on record: $7.9 billion.

The benefit of a strong economy is that we can guarantee the essential services that
Australians rely on—like fully funding the NDIS, like increasing funding for schools and
hospitals by around 60 per cent as well as the most recent announcement of a new aged-care
package, with aged-care funding also at a record level. We've also brought forward $3.8
billion of infrastructure spending. We have announced since the election more than $1 billion
of additional funding in drought support and in our drought response, which has been critical.
These are all the benefits of a strong economy with responsible budget management.

That is in stark contrast with what those opposite have taken to the Australian people. We
know that the former Labor Treasurer, the member for Lilley, Wayne Swan, promised four
budget surpluses—budget surpluses that he's still looking for. We know that those opposite
enjoyed iron ore prices that were more than double what they are today, but they still racked
up $240 billion of accumulated deficits.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney is warned.

Mr FRYDENBERG: We know they took to the Australian people $387 billion of higher
taxes that are still on their books. We know that they attacked the small businesses across
Australia as being from 'the top end of town'. Those opposite attacked the millions of
Australian retirees and said that they were complaining from the back of their yachts. That's
how they treated retirees. That's how they treated small businesses. That's how they treated
the workers of Australia. Only this side of the House can be relied on to deliver a stronger economy, to lower taxes and to create more jobs.

**Economy**

**Dr CHALMERS** (Rankin) (14:25): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister's answer in question time today in which he claimed the Liberal government has not increased debt. Can the Prime Minister confirm that, since coming to office, the government has more than doubled Australia's debt, meaning more than half of Australia's debt is Liberal debt? Can the Prime Minister confirm he has just misled the parliament again today?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:25): If the member would like to go and look at the budget that the Treasurer handed down this year, for 2019-20, it shows the budget will be in surplus for the current year, and it shows that this year and over the forward estimates, in the budget forecasts that were provided for 2019-20, the levels of net debt fall by some $50 billion over those four years.

*Honourable members interjecting*

**The SPEAKER:** Members will cease interjecting. The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order?

**Mr Albanese:** Mr Speaker, it goes to relevance. It wasn't about forecasts; it was about this government's record of doubling the debt. That's what the question was.

**The SPEAKER:** The Prime Minister, I believe, is in order. He is addressing the topic.

**Mr MORRISON:** I know, for Obi-Swan's Padawan over there, it is a complex sort of thing for him to understand, because in the Labor Party they haven't had a surplus since 1989. When you go into surplus, it means you're able to reduce debt. That's what's happening. What I have said is that, in the 2019-20 budget, the budget is coming into surplus this year, which means that we are able to pay down debt. In 2019-20 we did not put up taxes. We actually delivered, again, generational tax relief for Australians.

Those opposite were saying very clearly at the last election that they thought the remedy to the challenges the Australian economy was facing was to load it up with $387 billion of higher taxes on the Australian people. We don't share that view. We share the view that Australians should keep more of what they earn. What I said very plainly is: in our budget, we are delivering record funding for schools, we are delivering record funding for hospitals, we are fully funding the NDIS and we are doing that in our budget without increasing the debt and we're doing it without increasing taxes and with responsible financial management.

I understand responsible financial management is a complete mystery to those who sit on the other side. The Australian people do not trust Labor with their money. We know that the Australian people know that, when Labor run out of their own money, they come into the pockets of the Australian people. They know that Labor cannot be trusted with money, and we have demonstrated time and again that only the Liberals and Nationals can be trusted with the finances of this nation, to ensure we can guarantee the essentials that Australians rely on. Labor make all sorts of promises, but they write cheques that their own poor financial management can never cash.
Economy

Mr SHARMA (Wentworth) (14:29): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer explain to the House why disciplined and responsible economic management is so important at a time of global headwinds and uncertainty? Is the Treasurer aware of any alternative policies that would compromise this stable and certain approach?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:29): I thank the member for Wentworth for his question and acknowledge his extensive experience as a leading Australian diplomat before he came into this place. In his electorate, there are more than 80,000 taxpayers who will benefit from the tax cuts that we on this side of the House have supported. More than 30,000 small businesses in the electorate of Wentworth will be able to access the instant asset write-off again, which we announced in this year's budget. The Australian economy faces significant global and domestic headwinds. We know, with the trade tensions globally, that the IMF have said that, if they don't abate next year, you could see $700 billion come off global GDP. And we know, in terms of the devastating drought here in Australia, that agricultural output in the last two years is down by more than 14 per cent and that this drought is affecting around two-thirds of Queensland and about 95 per cent of New South Wales.

Despite those economic headwinds, domestic and global, the Australian economy continues to grow. We're in our 29th consecutive year of economic growth. While Germany, the United Kingdom and South Korea all experienced negative growth this year, the Australian economy continued to grow. We have a AAA credit rating and employment growth is around two per cent, which is around three times what we inherited from the Labor Party and more than double the OECD average. And today the current account surplus is the highest on record: $7.9 billion. It's through the work of this government that we are opening up access to markets for nearly two billion new customers across the region, as a result of the FTAs that we've entered into.

I'm asked about any alternative approaches. Now, despite S&P saying this week that the outlook for Australia is sound, despite Deloitte saying that the growth momentum is picking up, despite the Reserve Bank of Australia saying the economy has reached a gentle turning point and despite the IMF and the OECD saying that Australia, next year, will have faster growth than any G7 nation, those opposite, particularly the member for Rankin and the Leader of the Opposition, talk down the Australian economy. It's probably the first time and the last time I'll say it in this place, but the Leader of the Opposition should listen to Wayne Swan when he says: 'It's important our political leaders not be out there talking down the economy. Relentless negativity from the doomsayers insults the hard work so many Australians put in to make our economy strong.' I say to the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Rankin: they should dwell on that fact when they continue to talk down the Australian economy, despite this side of the House and this government cutting taxes and creating more jobs. (Time expired)

Prime Minister

Mr ALBANSE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:32): My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister confirm that he has misled this parliament on every one of the past four sitting days? Why does the Prime Minister have a problem with the truth?
Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:32): The assertion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition is simply not correct. It's simply not correct. This opposition has shown themselves to be interested in only smearing people in this place and not engaging in the serious issues and the real issues that Australians want this place to focus on, and it's what our government is 100 per cent focused on. What the Leader of the Opposition has demonstrated during his time over the last six months in this role is that he has no interest in engaging in the critical issues and driving our economy forward. He has no interest in talking about jobs. He comes into this place with his tricky little stunts and his clever little lines, treating this parliament like some sort of second-rate, high school debating chamber, engaging in punctuation points and commas, and extolling his great virtues, apparently, as the great master of parliamentary procedure. If he wants to be Manager of Government Business again in the government, if that's the job he's seeking, on those sorts of pedantic points about parliamentary procedure he could engage himself on any day of the week, but, if he actually wants to be a prime minister, he's got to deal with the real issues.

The SPEAKER: Has the Prime Minister concluded his answer? The Prime Minister has concluded his answer.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left! Member for Barton, I fear we're about to lose you for an hour.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (14:34): My question is to the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services. Will the minister outline how the Morrison government's stable and certain budget position is guaranteeing the delivery of the NDIS?

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services) (14:34): Can I thank the member for his question and for his interest in the 666 participants in the NDIS in his electorate, noting of course that WA won't come into full scheme for a number of years. It's important also for the House to understand that this government is absolutely backing in Australians with disability, their families and their carer, and we are absolutely committed to making the NDIS deliver for people with disability. We can make that commitment because of one reason and one reason only, and that's the strong economy and the certain budget position and the full funding of over $18 billion this year, rising to $22 billion in the coming years.

Today, of course, is the International Day of People with Disability, which is an opportunity for all of us to reflect on how we can continue to improve the services we provide not just to the 500,000 Australians who will be in the NDIS over the next five years but to the 4.4 million Australians—everyday, quiet Australians in our communities—who live with some form of disability.

As at 30 September there were 311,000 Australians in the NDIS, and what is extraordinarily pleasing is 114,000 of these Australians—

Mr Khalil interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wills is warned!
Mr ROBERT: are receiving a service for the very first time in their life, which is extraordinary. We've seen an 11 per cent decrease in the number of younger Australians in residential aged care and a 22 per cent decrease, quarter on quarter, in the number of new young Australians coming into residential aged care. A full joint agency task force has now been put onto that issue to ensure that there'll be no younger Australians in residential aged care by 2025.

Further improvements have also been made. Access decisions in relation to progress into the NDIS have reduced to an average of only 12 days. Similarly, the time for first plans being approved is now at 88 days compared to 133 days previously. Huge improvements have been made in younger Australians aged zero to six gaining access into early childhood early intervention. In terms of assistive technology and home modification quotations, they've reduced to only 5,000 in terms of a waiting list, and this will be cleared by the first quarter next year. Of course, the NDIS provider market continues to grow, up six per cent this quarter to 13,434. The number of houses for specialist disability accommodation has increased in the last 12 months by a staggering 89 per cent, up to almost 3½ thousand.

This is what a strong economy and a strong budget position delivers. It delivers great outcomes for Australians with disability. (Time expired)

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:37): I would like to inform the House that we have present in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon the Hon. Curtis Pitt MP, the Speaker of the Queensland Parliament. On behalf of the House, a very warm welcome to you.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction

Mr BUTLER (Hindmarsh) (14:38): My question is to the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction. Has the minister been interviewed by detectives from Strike Force Garrad?

Mr TAYLOR (Hume—Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction) (14:38): No.

Hospitals

Mr PEARCE (Braddon) (14:38): My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government's stable and certain budget and economic management are helping to guarantee critical funding for our hospitals?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:39): I want to thank the member for Braddon, who has been a great advocate for better funding for hospitals and also for drug and alcohol services, including the $6 million for the City Mission residential rehab service for drug and alcohol in Tasmania. In particular, though, he's also advocated for the $20 million for elective surgery, which we have now brought forward in conjunction with the Tasmanian government. The member for Braddon, the member for Bass, coalition senators from Tasmania, the Tasmanian Premier and the Tasmanian health minister have all asked if we could bring forward this funding, and we've done that. What that means is that there will be 6,000 additional elective surgeries in Tasmania over the course of the coming year as a consequence of the ability to
manage the budget, to therefore support those additional services and to therefore support Tasmanian patients. But these are only things you can do if you have a strong economy. If, by creating trade arrangements, you create additional trade, therefore you create jobs, and therefore you create more income for the country and fewer people who are dependent on welfare.

What that means for Tasmania is that we are going from an inherited Commonwealth payment in the year before we came to government of $294 million, to this year $424 million and, by the end of the new health reform agreement, $524 million a year. That's a massive increase, which you can only do when you have a strong economy. But that increase is being played out around the country, where we are adding an extra $31 billion over the course of the next five-year agreement, and I am delighted to affirm that all states and territories have now signed the heads of agreement.

Victoria and Queensland have recently signed that heads of agreement, which I think is a breakthrough and which will be welcomed, no doubt, by all sides of this parliament. Very significantly, what that means is that, in terms of our hospital funding, we are going from the $13 billion that we inherited to almost $23 billion, $24 billion, $25 billion and $26 billion over each of the years of the forward estimates. We're able to do that because strong fiscal management and strong microeconomic reform create the circumstances where there's confidence for businesses to invest and create jobs. The government then receives the revenue. It has less to pay out because more people are working and, therefore, we're able to invest that money in more hospital services. These things come together. It's also allowed us to invest $80 million in the Peter MacCallum national centre for cellular immunotherapy. One of the things I am most pleased about is $100 million for the Sydney Comprehensive Children's Cancer Centre.

Prime Minister

Mr BUTLER (Hindmarsh) (14:42): My question is to the Prime Minister. Today, the Leader of the Government in the Senate refused to produce documents recording the Prime Minister's call to the New South Wales police commissioner on the grounds of an ongoing police investigation by Strike Force Garrad. Why is the Prime Minister not willing to provide documents to the parliament citing an ongoing police investigation but willing to background journalists to downplay the nature and the substance of that strike force?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:42): I advise the members opposite that this is question time, not smear time. That's what it is. You're supposed to ask questions, not make baseless assertions as part of partisan political games, which I—

The SPEAKER: Prime Minister, just pause for a second. The member for Lyons will leave under standing order 94(a), as will others who continue to interject.

The member for Lyons then left the chamber.

Mr MORRISON: Mr Speaker, I'll wait for the opposition leader to finish his interjections, if that's fine. It is the practice of governments of either persuasion to claim public immunity exemption from Senate orders for various reasons where disclosure would be contrary to the public interest. I note that, in the case of the former government, they claimed those matters, according to Senate StatsNet, on numerous occasions—on matters of freedom
of information, the Australian Road Rules and the Australian vehicle standards rules. They claimed them in relation to carbon permits, the Australia Network and on communications policies. On any number of occasions, when those opposite were in government, they undertook a very similar response to the one that the Leader of the Government in the Senate has done on this occasion. What this highlights is something very important. The Leader of the Opposition wants to apply standards to the government that he's not prepared to apply to himself. He's not prepared to apply the standards that he seeks to impose on this government, which were not followed by Labor when they were in government and nor have they followed them in opposition.

I'm very happy to consider the matter which is being looked at by the New South Wales police. They will finish their investigation, and they will report on the outcome of that. I will consider that matter when it comes to its conclusion. But let's make something very clear: the Leader of the Opposition has set a clear principle that he believes should be followed—that is, if any member refers an issue to any law enforcement authority and that matter is then followed up with an investigation, the member referred should stand aside. That is the test that this Leader of the Opposition has set for himself. In my case, I'm happy for them to conclude this investigation, and I will respond once that conclusion has been drawn and I will report on the matters that are within my responsibility. What I want to know is if the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to come into this place and hold himself to the same standard and, if he doesn't, he's just the hypocrite people know him to be.

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

**Mr Albanese:** It is. I ask that the Prime Minister withdraw.

**The SPEAKER:** Yes, that is a term that's—

**Mr Morrison:** I withdraw.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the Prime Minister.

**Schools**

**Ms Hammond** (Curtin) (14:45): My question is to the Minister for Education. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government's record funding for schools is underpinned by stable and certain economic management?

**Ms Plibersek:** You are kidding, aren't you?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Sydney has already been warned. She will not interject again. Let's see if you can make it to 10 past three.

**Mr Tehan** (Wannon—Minister for Education) (14:45): Can I thank the member for Curtin for her question. She's got a passionate interest in education and also understands how important a stable economy is to providing record funding for schools—a record $310 billion investment in schools, an increase of 62 per cent per student. There is record funding for government schools, record funding for Catholic schools and record funding for independent schools. As a matter of fact, our funding for state schools is growing at around 6.4 per cent, which is higher than what it is for our Catholic and independent schools, at 4.9 per cent. But, while providing record funding is important, we also have to make sure that that record funding turns into outcomes and results for our students. That's where the focus of the government is at the moment.
Next week, I will be hosting the Education Council in Alice Springs, and on the agenda will be very, very important reforms for the school sector. We want to bring in a unique student identifier number so that we can map the progress of students throughout their primary and secondary schooling. And, as importantly, we want to bring in learning progressions on literacy and numeracy for students. We all know and understand how fundamental literacy and numeracy are for a student's educational outcomes, so we want to start mapping those educational outcomes so that, for every year of study that a student undertakes, they progress when it comes to literacy and numeracy at least 12 months of learning, if not more. This is absolutely fundamental. If we are going to improve the flatlining results of our students then every state and territory across the country needs to get on board with these reforms. I will be putting to the state and territory education ministers that it's time to be bold; it's time to back these reforms. Put the interests of the teachers unions behind you and back these reforms. We need literacy and numeracy at the heart of what our students are learning. We need to be able to map the progressions that our students are making when it comes to literacy and numeracy. It is going to be one of the most important COAG meetings of this year, and I need every state and territory minister to put their self-interest behind them—to come, be bold and back this agenda.

Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction

Mr Butler (Hindmarsh) (14:48): My question is again to the Prime Minister. Yesterday the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction told the House that his interests are declared in accordance with the rules, despite his failure to declare the partnership's 55,000 shares in a company reportedly worth $150 million. The minister's office has dismissed his disclosure obligations, saying, 'The rules require that direct and controlling interests be disclosed.' Does the Prime Minister accept this interpretation of his ministerial standards?

The Speaker: Is the Leader of the House rising on a point of order or is he answering the question?

Mr Porter (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (14:49): No, I'm answering the question.

The Speaker: The Leader of the House and Attorney-General will resume his seat. The Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order?

Mr Burke: Yes, on a point of order. I accept under the Practice it's well established that the Prime Minister can refer to anyone who has ministerial responsibility, but this question goes solely to the ministerial standards, which are entirely within the remit of the Prime Minister, not the Attorney-General.

The Speaker: That is right but, as he points out, the Practice makes it very clear the Prime Minister—that title obviously means he is the minister for everything—can refer a matter to another minister. In this case, he's referred it to the Leader of the House in his capacity as Attorney-General. Whilst I can see the Manager of Opposition Business has a difficulty with it, according to the well-established practice, that's the way it is. It might be something for parliaments to consider in the future, but he is certainly entitled to do that.

Mr Porter: In the Prime Minister's previous answer he did note that, with respect to standards and the standards in this case that apply to disclosure on the ministerial and
parliamentary interests register, there seems to be a standard that the opposition apply exclusively to the government—or, indeed, one or two ministers in the government—but don't apply to themselves. In this interest and in this matter, it's simply a question of the way in which traditionally members of both sides of the House as ministers have disclosed matters on the parliamentary register and to the Prime Minister. The way in which that disclosure has always occurred is, where there is a trust or where there is a company with interests in subsidiaries, the trust is declared and the company is declared but those things inside the trust or the subsidiaries are declared by virtue of declaring the head company or the trust. In fact, if applying that standard or the standard that members opposite now seem to think applies or should apply, the member for Spence and the member for Makin have both disclosed shares in BHP, a company with interests in close to 400 subsidiaries.

Now, according to the standards of the Leader of the Opposition, if they were to apply their own standard to their own members, they would be required to list every single one of those subsidiary companies. The member for Gellibrand has declared an interest in Telstra but failed to list the subsidiaries. The member for Sydney has disclosed a family trust that holds shares but has not disclosed the shares—

**The SPEAKER:** The Attorney-General needs to pause.

*Mr Bowen interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for McMahon will cease interjecting. I need the Attorney-General to resume his seat for a second. I listened very carefully to the question. I had a caution about it until the very end, which was when the member for Hindmarsh said that the question related to the ministerial standards rather than the Register of Members' Interests. What the Attorney's doing is obviously referring to the Register of Members' Interests, but the Prime Minister has no responsibility for that whatsoever. The Prime Minister has no responsibility for the Register of Members' Interests of the House of Representatives. He can't even be questioned on it on his own. That is crystal clear. Not only can he not be asked a question on it, no-one can answer such a question on his behalf. The question was about the ministerial standards. So I'm happy to call the Attorney-General.

**Mr PORTER:** Indeed, Mr Speaker, and the principle that applies to the disclosure of trusts and those matters that sit inside a trust applies equally to the ministerial standards. It always has done. If it were not the case, we would have the member for Sydney having to disclose all of the shares that are held in the trust that she holds.

**Aged Care**

**Ms BELL** (Moncrieff) (14:54): My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the minister outline how the Morrison government's stable and certain budget is guaranteeing the essential aged-care services that older Australians rely on?

**Mr HUNT** (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:54): I want to thank the member for Moncrieff. As I mentioned earlier, one of her passionate areas of interest and activity since coming to this place has been aged care. She has been a great advocate for action in relation to reducing the practice of chemical restraint and making sure that it's never allowed to be misused or abused again, in line with the views of the royal commission. I thank them for their findings. She has also been an advocate for action and research on dementia, a condition which will
increasingly affect more and more Australians as our population ages. This is our great combined sacred trust. We're able to take steps in this direction because we do have a budget that is strong. It's a budget which allows us to move from the $13 billion of funding which we inherited when we came into government, from the year prior, to now $22 billion, $23 billion, $24 billion and $25 billion approximately over the forward estimates.

What we said only last week, when we announced our response to the royal commission, was to deal with the interim priorities that were identified. The Prime Minister was the person who called the royal commission. It was on his watch, in his time, in a way that no other person in Australian history has done before. He did that coming off the back of the tragedy and scandal that occurred in Oakden, under the previous South Australian government, in a state-run facility. He recognised that more needed to be done around the country.

As a consequence of that, we have been able to invest $537 million in our interim response to the royal commission. In particular, that has included the commitment to unify—in line with the royal commission's recommendations—the home care and home support programs; to invest $496 million immediately in additional home care places; to make sure that we're focusing on the needs of higher level patients, those older Australians who need that support. In addition to that, though, it's about bringing younger Australians who are in aged-care facilities out of those facilities. We've accepted the royal commission's goals of taking all those Australians under the age of 45 out of facilities by 2022, subject to some exceptions, and similarly taking under 65s out of facilities by 2025. In particular, we have accepted the need to do more to prevent chemical restraint of patients with dementia. That is why we have taken steps so that, as of 1 January, Respiradone will not be available for more than a 12-week period without special authorisation. This is about ending the practice of abuse of—

(Time expired)

Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:57): My question is to the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction. Yesterday the minister's office provided a response to claims that he's been misleading the parliament ever since his first speech, when he claimed that Naomi Wolf was living a few doors down the corridor when, in fact, she was on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Given the minister has been misleading the parliament since the day he arrived, is he proud of his consistency and that he has continued his career as he began it?

The SPEAKER: I'm going to be ruthlessly efficient here. I'm going to call the next question.

Domestic and Family Violence

Ms FLINT (Boothby—Government Whip) (14:58): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Women. Will the minister outline how the Morrison government's stable and certain budget is delivering critical funding to help address the issue of family and domestic violence?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for the Environment) (14:59): I thank the member for Boothby for her question, for her keen interest in women's issues and for the support she provides to services in her electorate that, in turn, support women and families, including MarionLIFE and UnitingCare Wesley Bowden, who do such important work.
Because of our careful management of the economy, the Morrison government is able to make the single largest Commonwealth investment of $340 million to support the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. This investment is improving frontline services to keep women safe, to provide safe places for women who are escaping violence and to support prevention strategies to end violence against women. This is a significant achievement—one that I know is supported by all members of the House. Expanded services under the government's investment in the fourth action plan will, in particular, provide increased services to children who either experience or witness violence, along with their families. These specialist family violence services provide support to children, individuals and families. It's important to note that funded services do not require women to leave or stay in a violent relationship, nor do they force or promote couples counselling. All services funded under these programs must apply robust risk management principles.

As the Prime Minister said a couple of weeks ago in talking about this incredibly important issue, the numbers are damning, but they aren't just numbers; they're people. They're girls, women, daughters, sisters, aunties, mums and grand-mums. When you think about it in that context, it's hard to think about anything else. It's so important that we look at prevention, we look at addressing the issue and we talk about the safe places. The Stop it at the Start campaign, the national primary prevention campaign, is yielding really positive results. It's exceeding expectations. The television commercials have been viewed over 45 million times, the website received 1.3 million page reviews, and so on. It's not about 'It's on a website'; it's about changing behaviour. We already have evidence that the behaviour change is happening. Forty-two per cent of all people in a position of influence took action as a result of that campaign.

Responsible economic management and surplus budgets will ensure that the priority we all in this place give to supporting women experiencing and escaping domestic violence continues to be well funded. Indeed, we've been able to increase the funding towards it. It's an important national priority. For information, support and counselling, please phone if you need to: 1800RESPECT.

Prime Minister

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (15:02): My question is to the Attorney-General. Malcolm Turnbull; the former anticorruption commissioner, David Ipp QC; and former counsel assisting the Independent Commission Against Corruption, Geoffrey Watson SC, have all said the call from the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General to the New South Wales police commissioner about the instigation, nature and substance of the criminal investigation into the minister for emissions reduction was inappropriate. Does the Attorney-General now accept that call should not have been made?

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:02): Is that the same Geoffrey Watson who made an inappropriate statement in questioning in the New South Wales ICAC? Is that the one? Ah, that's interesting, isn't it? It's a question of judgement, and Mr Watson's judgement is incorrect. In fact, shadow Attorney-General, your judgement has been fairly poor on these sorts of matters, I'd have to say.

A government member: What's the score?
Mr PORTER: The score is 8-0. So, if we're talking about judgement in these sorts of matters, I had a very interesting occasion. I quickly read through the Legal Profession Uniform Conduct (Barristers) Rules, which apply, of course, to someone in your eminent circumstances, being a Queen's Counsel. 'QC', by the way, doesn't stand for 'quality control' in this particular instance. They say:

A barrister must not allege any matter of fact amounting to criminality, fraud or other serious misconduct against any person unless the barrister believes on reasonable grounds that:

(a) available material by which the allegation could be supported provides a proper basis for it; and

(b) the client wishes the allegation to be made ...

You would think it's the case that, if you referred eight matters and zero of them resulted in anything at all, that would indicate a lack of material providing a proper basis for it. So this is about judgement. The judgement that was exercised quite properly by the Prime Minister was that the call was perfectly appropriate. He informed the House that he was going to make it. He informed the House that it was made. The judgement of the police commissioner, who was at the other end of the call, was that it was appropriate. My judgement is that it was appropriate. What you have determined is that you don't think it's appropriate. Your judgement is simply awful—absolutely awful. I know that you're very interested in the next time that you might be able to exercise your judgement, perhaps as a judge in a Court of Appeal.

The SPEAKER: The Attorney-General will resume his seat. The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order?

Mr Albanese: My point of order is that I'm concerned that the Attorney-General is attacking the chair in the way that he's addressing his remarks not through the chair.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition is technically correct, I would point out to the Attorney-General. But the chair hasn't taken offence, so the Attorney-General has the call.

Mr PORTER: And when we were talking about the shadow Attorney-General, he was down on his phone, and I worked out what website he was looking at: it was seek.com! He was looking for the next job. And you could see the advertisement he was looking at: 'Court of Appeal judges wanted; must have sizeable ego'! Upholding the high standards of Queen's Counsel—

The SPEAKER: I will just say that the Attorney-General is now straying from the question.

Mr PORTER: Having the shadow Attorney-General, after having exercised appalling judgement in eight matters, come to this box and question the judgement of people who actually exercise it in a reserved and cautious fashion—and perhaps finally appointment of senior counsel in Victoria: they must be worthy of confidence and implicit trust by their colleagues at all times. I can tell you what, it's very hard for your colleagues to trust you when you refer eight of them for criminal investigation with zero evidence, zero result, zero judgement.

Mental Health

Mr LEESER (Berowra) (15:06): My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the minister outline how the Morrison government's stable and certain budget and economic management are guaranteeing critical investment in mental health services?
Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (15:06): I want to thank the member for Berowra for a question about mental health. He has told this House about one of the greatest agonies that any family could face, and he did that with immense courage, with immense honesty and in a way that has changed this House and this parliament for the better. He is not alone in the courage with which he has talked about these circumstances. He has joined with the member for Eden-Monaro, who has known too many veterans who have lost their lives, in raising the issue of suicide and mental health. In doing that, he has done all of us a great service. It's our privilege to be able to invest and to support and to develop the capacity of the government and the Australian people to provide better mental health services and to receive better mental health services.

As a government, this year we'll be providing over $5.2 billion of funding for mental health services. In particular, the Treasurer and the Prime Minister, because of the circumstances, have been able to allow us to invest in the largest youth mental health and suicide prevention package on record. That package is over $700 million, with over $500 million specifically for youth mental health and suicide prevention. That includes the expansion of headspace. It includes the increase of services at existing headspaces. It includes, in particular, support of $15 million for Indigenous services, and it's allowed us to support groups such as batyr. The Prime Minister and I had the privilege of joining the member for Reid and seeing the way they were able to work with young women in the later school years, giving them confidence and giving them an understanding that it's okay to reach out.

In exactly that vein, tomorrow a series of groups which have been supported by the government, including beyondblue, with $37 million, and Lifeline, with $33 million, are launching the YouCanTalk campaign. It in many ways parallels and complements what's being done with R U OK, where each of us reaches out to someone else if we believe they are at risk of a serious mental health problem, or worse. The YouCanTalk campaign says to any of us that we can reach out ourselves, that you can talk—that, as an individual; you can seek that help. There is no shame. There should be no barrier. It is a hard step. We know that it is a hard step for people to seek that help. But, precisely because of the courage of people such as the member for Berowra, the YouCanTalk campaign speaks to Australians of all ages, in all places, and says to them: there is help; there is no shame. It's our great obligation as a nation to look out for each other, and now is the moment that we do it.

Attorney-General

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:09): My question is to the Attorney-General. Why is it that, when it comes to a criminal investigation into one of his own ministers, the Attorney-General has publicly dismissed the investigation, but, when it comes to the criminal investigation of journalists, he sits back and does nothing?

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:10): Ironically, who was it who wrote to the Prime Minister seeking the investigation into the matter pursuant to which a warrant was issued at a journalist?

A government member: Who was it?

Mr PORTER: Who was it? The shadow Attorney. You could basically ask the question, 'Who was it who referred it?' and, one out of three times, it would be the shadow Attorney-
General. Of course, we've noted eight from zero. Do you know that the absolute world record number of test ducks in a row is five? Eight ducks in a row, but he's still batting on the team, and he shouldn't be.

Veterans: Mental Health

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (15:10): My question is to the Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government's stable and certain budget and economic management are guaranteeing investment in veterans' mental health and support?

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel and Deputy Leader of the House) (15:11): I thank the member for Canning for his question and I note his service to our nation. This government is absolutely committed to putting veterans and their families first. Australians have every right to be proud of the fact that more than $11 billion of taxpayers' money is provided every year to support veterans and their families in our community. Because of the strong budget position, we've been in a position to fund new measures in this term of government. As a matter of interest, there is $230 million provided per year specifically to support veterans mental health and wellbeing measures. Over the last three budgets, there has been $500 million in additional funding to support the Department of Veterans' Affairs in its transformation work.

As the Prime Minister indicated in an answer earlier this afternoon, the government is listening. We do understand the concerns that are being expressed by our veteran community and the families that support them when it comes to matters of suicide prevention. Just like the Prime Minister, I have met with family members directly impacted by mental illness. I know some members opposite have also met with members of the defence community who have been impacted by suicide and mental wellbeing concerns. As a minister, as a government and, I'm sure, as a parliament, we all agree the only acceptable number for us all when it comes to suicide of veterans and Australian Defence Force personnel is zero.

The Prime Minister has made it very clear that all options are on the table when it comes to additional measures that may be required by this government. I support the Prime Minister in his assessment. I also want to associate myself with his answer in question time earlier today. Good government requires consideration of all the options, and then we make decisions in the long-term interests of veterans and their families. I would suggest that the Prime Minister's action in considering all the options is the right approach in working in the long-term interests of all veterans and their families.

I want to reassure those veterans today who may be listening who may have some concerns about their own mental wellbeing—or the families who support them—that help is available through the Open Arms free counselling service on 1800011046. That help is available, and action is being taken right now by this government. Just this week we announced additional peer support in suicide prevention—veterans with their own lived experience working across our nation—following a successful trial in the member for Herbert's seat. We've announced, in this term, free mental health support for all veterans—anyone with a single day of service in the ADF. We have provided for a new veteran payment for vulnerable veterans and their families, and, for the first time, the Department of Veterans' Affairs is providing for the purchase of psychiatric assistance dogs to support veterans in their mental health. So I would say that support is available and I'd encourage veterans to reach out and seek that support.
Finally can I say a special thankyou to the team at DVA—to the secretary of my department, Liz Cosson, and her hardworking team; to the Open Arms counsellors, who are at the front line every day in this difficult fight; and to the thousands of volunteers and the veterans who are helping their mates who are struggling with mental health issues every day. I believe that by working together we can do better and we will do better.

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

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney) (15:14): Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

Ms PLIBERSEK: I do.

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney may proceed.

Ms PLIBERSEK: The Attorney-General sought to equate the failure of the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction to declare shares held in a family trust with my declaration of a trust established by my 87-year-old mother-in-law decades ago. I have no knowledge of the operation of my mother-in-law’s finances, nor am I a beneficiary of the trust. The Attorney-General should be ashamed for dragging my mother-in-law, who lives in a nursing home, into his grubby political attack.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations 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.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Economy

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

The need for a comprehensive economic plan to get the economy moving again.

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—

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (15:15): I suspect that the Treasurer is secretly happy about the scandal which is engulfing the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction, the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General. This is not just because it makes life very difficult for his rivals, which is obviously his overriding, highest priority, but also because it obscures what has been his serious mismanagement of the economy over his time as Treasurer. For the past six months at least, we've seen one humiliating number after another from this incompetent Treasurer and this arrogant Prime Minister. These are the same two blokes who ran around Australia during the election and said that they would make the economy 'even stronger' when in reality they've made it even weaker. They are two guys who presided over the weakest
growth in decades and who doubled the debt, something that the Prime Minister misled the parliament about earlier on today.

Whether the number in the national accounts tomorrow is 1.6, 1.7 or 1.8, it will show that in this country we are getting below-average economic growth from a below-average government. It will show that growth hasn't been strong enough or broad enough, it hasn't trickled down to the people and it hasn't trickled out to the suburbs. It will show that an absence of a plan from this Morrison government has cost Australia, its people and its economy very dearly, because growth with a '1' in front of it has not been enough to ensure good, well-paid jobs for enough Australians.

The day before national accounts, it's traditional for there to be lots of predictions flying around about what the numbers will be—what the quarterly number, the annual number and the components of growth in this country will be. People are hunched over their spreadsheets in the banks and other institutions—the Reserve Bank and elsewhere—working out what the number might be tomorrow. But I think only one thing can be predicted with absolute certainty: no matter what the number is tomorrow, the Treasurer will say he's doing a really good job. He has always been his own biggest fan, this Treasurer. He is a massive admirer of his own performance. And he will expect the people of this country to form an orderly queue to pat him on the back and tell him what a genius he is even if growth is once again below average as it has been for some time. That's how horrendously out of touch this Treasurer and this government are. If he gets put under pressure as he was again in question time today, he'll say it's all our fault. It's all somehow Labor's fault.

He'll say that the economic fundamentals are strong, that the policy settings are right, that ordinary Australians have never had it so good. But those same policy settings from those opposite have been a recipe for feeble growth, for record debt, for stagnant wages, for rising unemployment and for weak investment, and it's time that a government in its third term and in its seventh year actually took responsibility for the weakness in the economy on their watch. It's not enough just to pretend that you're good at managing the economy, when the facts tell a very different story. Just in the last week we learned there's been a decline in job ads, a decline in sales, a decline in building approvals, a decline in inventories, the first decline in multifactor productivity in eight years and the first decline in labour productivity since that record began a quarter of a century ago.

If you don't want to take just last week, think about what we have learned in the last month. Wages growth slowed even further; unemployment and underemployment both went up; 19,000 jobs were lost; retail trade went backwards, the worst result since the recession of the early nineties; capital expenditure declined further, more than 30 per cent lower under this government than before that; and the RBA said that they were contemplating unconventional monetary policy. If you don't want to take the last month, consider that, since the election, economic growth is the slowest in a decade; household debt is at new record highs; business investment is the lowest since the early nineties; there have been three interest rate cuts; the RBA, the IMF and the OECD all downgraded their expectations for growth; and net debt hit $400 billion for the first time in Australia's history. If you don't want to take last week, last month or what has happened since the election and you want another set of evidence about this government's chronic mismanagement of the economy, think about this. These are all the
things that have gone backwards on their watch. The domestic private economy? Backwards. Productivity? Backwards. GDP per capita?

**Opposition members:** Backwards.

**Dr CHALMERS:** Manufacturing production?

**Opposition members:** Backwards.

**Dr CHALMERS:** Private business investment?

**Opposition members:** Backwards.

**Dr CHALMERS:** Retail volumes?

**Opposition members:** Backwards.

**Dr CHALMERS:** Construction work?

**Opposition members:** Backwards.

**Dr CHALMERS:** Capex?

**Opposition members:** Backwards.

**Dr CHALMERS:** The list goes on and on. Tomorrow, when we go beyond all the spin, all the finger-pointing, all the buck-passing and all the excuse-making from those opposite, one thing is incredibly clear: the economy is not delivering for working people. Our side of parliament understands that; that side of the parliament will never understand what's going on in real communities for real people. The economy is not delivering for the almost two million Australians who are looking for work or for more work. It's not delivering for the broad swathes of the Australian community who feel, with some justification, that, no matter how hard they work, they just can't keep up with the rising costs of child care, electricity and private health insurance.

It's not delivering for working people, because this government actually has the worst record for wages growth of any government ever. This record on wages is so bad that the Reserve Bank has now told us that, under those opposite—a government in its third term, in its seventh year—weak wages is now 'the new normal'. Think about that for a moment. What a remarkably pessimistic thing for the Reserve Bank to say about wages under those opposite! After six-and-a-bit years of those opposite you can come to no other conclusion that, with the policy settings of those opposite, working Australians are never going to get a look in. They haven't been getting a look in and they won't get a look in.

Most Australians would consider the Reserve Bank saying that weak wages growth is the new normal is a damning indictment of those opposite. Most people would think that is something a government should be really embarrassed about, if not ashamed about, but those opposite consider it a triumph. We know this because the finance minister, in a burst of honesty, said low wages growth and weak wages growth was a deliberate design feature of the economic policy of those opposite. The Reserve Bank considers weak wages growth to be the new normal; those opposite consider it to be mission accomplished. That's what they've been going for. I say to every Australian who is working hard but just can't get ahead: that is how those opposite want you to be. That is the permanent position they want you to be in. That's a deliberate design feature of what those opposite want for you.
As I said, the economy is not working for working people, and those opposite should stop pretending that it is. No matter what the numbers tell us tomorrow, we already know enough about weakness in the economy to know that something needs to change. We can't continue down this path of a Morrison government without a plan to boost growth and wages in our economy. Since the election, the government has been faced with an avalanche of disappointing data. At every point, at every juncture, they've had a choice. They could dismiss it, deny it, play politics and pretend they've had nothing to do it, or they could come up with a real plan to deal with it. So puffed up have they been with post-election hubris—as we've seen in almost every answer the Prime Minister has given in this place—and with their own self-importance, their arrogance, their belief that they are above the rules and shouldn't be held accountable for anything, that they get that simple choice wrong every single time.

Whatever the growth number is tomorrow in the national accounts, whatever the Treasurer says about it tomorrow, annual growth with a 1 in front of it, if that's the outcome, just isn't enough. It's not enough to make communities thrive, not just survive. It's not enough to ensure that the working people of this country, when they put in effort, can get ahead and not just get by. What we've seen in the six months since the government's election and the six years since their first election is that ordinary Australians are paying the price for a government which has a political strategy but not an economic plan. It's way beyond time for the government to change course and look after working Australians for once.

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Housing ) (15:26): The problem with the shadow Treasurer making a speech like that is that he lacks all credibility on these issues. He lacks absolutely any credibility on economic issues. He sets tests for the government that he never met when he was the senior adviser to our worst Treasurer ever, Wayne Swan. When we came to government, we inherited a slowing economy, we had rising unemployment and we had a worsening budget position. So, on every single measure that the shadow Treasurer referred to, things were in a worse position when he had control of the levers. Yet every achievement by this government is not enough for the failed shadow Treasurer, who was the failed chief of staff to Australia's worst Treasurer, in Wayne Swan.

The reality is that the Australian economy is in good shape, and the Treasurer outlined that in question time today, whether he was quoting ratings agencies or quoting the Reserve Bank. If you compare Australia to the nations we should compare ourselves to—big, established, stable democratic economies—we are growing faster than any country in the G7. Wages growth is higher than the wages growth that we inherited from the Labor Party. This is the irony of the debate. The Labor Party come in here every day bemoaning wages growth, yet it was lower when they were last in government—never heard a word about it from the Labor Party when they were in government, never. Minimum wages under the Labor Party, the great champions of the workers, decreased in three of the six years that they were in government. Under the coalition government, they have risen every year.

When you come to the dispatch box to make these statements, you've got to have credibility, and the absolute worst person for the opposition to put up in these sorts of debates is the failed shadow Treasurer. Perhaps the only worse person that you could put up in this MPI is the member for McMahon—the member for McMahon, who's still got extraordinary power within the Labor Party, because every single one of his policies is still on the books.
Every single one of the Labor Party's policies, the failed policies that they took to the election, is still on the books. We saw it this week, and I outlined it in question time. There was an extraordinary report in the *Fin Review* this week that the shadow housing minister, in a speech, had said that Labor's negative gearing policies were not dead. So we've got the shadow housing minister, in some sort of alliance with the shadow Treasurer, clinging on, holding on for dear life, to all of the higher taxes that the Labor Party took to the election and on which the Australian people delivered their verdict.

There were the one million retirees who would have been hit by the Labor Party's proposed removal of franking credit refunds. The member for McMahon very helpfully before the election quite strongly recommended that those people vote against them—and, boy, did they take that advice! Boy, did those retirees take the member for McMahon's advice! So that's still on the books.

What about the $30-odd billion of extra superannuation taxes? I think we all remember the former opposition leader who magically forgot about those at a doorstop during the election campaign—$30 billion is just a bit of a rounding error for the Labor Party when you're talking about increasing taxes by $387 billion!

Ms Payne interjecting—

Ms Murphy interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): The member for Canberra and the member for Dunkley are warned.

Mr SUKKAR: What about increased taxes on family businesses? What about increased taxes, essentially, on electricity and cars? What about the taxes that we have seen a devastating impact just from the prospect of—those being Labor's housing taxes that I referred to earlier? We now categorically know the shadow housing minister is arguing around the opposition ministerial table that they should keep those housing tax policies. We saw what that did to confidence in the housing market—the prospect of Labor's housing taxes doubling capital gains tax and abolishing negative gearing for the tens of thousands of Australians, most of whom are on average incomes, who seek to invest in a property to provide for their future. We see the shadow housing minister still arguing for those. I suspect most people on the front bench here will be making the same arguments.

Ms Payne interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Canberra will remove herself under 94(a).

The member for Canberra then left the chamber.

Mr SUKKAR: What do we see from the Labor Party now? We see a Labor Party that's got no credibility. We've got a Labor Party that puts up the shadow Treasurer, who's failed in everything he's done, to then set bars and tests for this government that the Labor Party never met. As the Treasurer said in question time today, I understand the instinctive reaction of oppositions to be relentlessly negative. I understand that. An opposition feels the need to criticise the government of the day. An opposition feels the need to see bad things in everything that happens. But they should take the advice of that failed former Treasurer of theirs, Wayne Swan, when he said:

It is important that our political leaders work hard to build confidence in our economy and not be out there talking down the economy.
If you listened to the shadow Treasurer's speech here today, he would essentially go into any forum of a G7, where we've got a faster growing economy, and trash every single one of those economies based on the test that he set at this dispatch box. If you look at a whole range of other statistics—these are unarguable statistics—unemployment now is lower than when we came to government. Employment growth under the Labor Party was just 0.7 per cent. Now it's at two per cent—twice the OECD average.

This is what Labor don't understand. We believe that the first object of government, of course, is keeping our citizens safe and the second is doing everything we possibly can to create the environmental certainty and the economic circumstances for them to get a job. That's absolutely the most critical thing that a government can do. When the Labor Party were last in government and employment growth was 0.7 per cent and unemployment was at 5.7 per cent, I didn't hear Labor members criticising their own government. They are trying to rewrite history. We know the Labor Party are replete with people who write books about themselves. They're absolutely replete with former members who get a kick out of writing about themselves and genuflecting to the Labor Party. Not one of them apply the same test—

Dr Chalmers: Malcolm's is coming out soon. He's got a few pages about you.

Mr SUKKAR: That's probably the only contribution that's been correct from the shadow Treasurer today. None of them will criticise their own government for the tests that they set that they could not meet. That's why they have no credibility on economic issues.

In the end, I say to the shadow Treasurer on the big battle that they are no doubt having within their party between those who believe that $387 billion of taxes was the right way to go and those who believe, 'Actually, maybe we should listen to the Australian people,' that we know who's going to win.

We've seen $24 billion of tax refunds flow into the economy in the last 12 to 14 weeks. We believe that $24 billion of tax cuts and refunds are better in the pockets of Australians, rather than Labor politicians deciding how it can be spent. We saw from that lamentable period when they were in government, when they took Howard's $70 billion in the bank and turned it into $240 billion of debt, that there's no crazy spending idea they won't go for. Whether it's pink batts or school halls or cash for clunkers, there's no crazy scheme they will not fall for. We are very different, and we have credibility on these issues. So I suggest the opposition put somebody up with credibility, in future, on an MPI on the economy.

Ms CATHERINE KING (Ballarat) (15:36): If you ever want an example of this third-term seven-year government not having an economic plan, you just saw it. They just spent 10 minutes of the minister's contribution talking about Labor, completely and utterly unable to talk about the things that they should be doing. And as the shadow Treasurer pointed out, this third-term government that is now in its seventh year is presiding over an incredibly sluggish economy. Economic growth is at its lowest levels since the global financial crisis. The RBA, the IMF and the OECD have all downgraded their forecasts for Australia's economic growth.

We didn't hear the minister talking about that. The RBA has cut interest rates three times now to record lows, and they are at one-quarter of the emergency lows during the global
financial crisis. I could go on. We know that people are struggling with their living standards, that their living standards are going backwards, because under this government wage growth has been stagnant. That is what's happening across the economy. So there's no plan for the economy at all. If you want an example of that, you just heard it from one of the ministers of this government. All he can talk about is Labor. All he can do is relitigate the election they won—now six months ago. That is all they can do, because they do not have a plan to turn this economy around.

What is your plan for wages growth? What is your plan to lift productivity across this country? The problem is, we have presiding over this government someone who is more focused on the next headline and getting the next front page of a newspaper than they are on managing this economy. They're not managing the economy in the interests of working Australians. They don't have a plan to turn the economy around. I suspect it's because they just don't care about working Australians. That is what we're seeing writ large from this government.

I particularly want to focus on the area that I have responsibility for, which is the area of infrastructure and transport. We know that over the first five budgets of this government they underdelivered, overpromised and underspent to the tune of $5 billion. That's money that they said they were going to inject into the economy to build infrastructure across the country that they did not deliver on. And we see, time and again, projects being delayed, funding being pushed out well into the never-never—big claims, big headlines: 'Look at what we're doing, we're busting congestion all over the country; we're doing this, we're doing that.' But when you look at the delivery and what they've actually done, there are some very big problems.

This economy deserves better. Time and again, the Reserve Bank governor, the Master Builders Association and industry groups have said, 'You need to spend money on infrastructure and, particularly, across the economy in our regions, because that is where there is capacity for that.' But with an underspend of $5 billion, what did we see? We saw six months of inaction, and finally the government said, 'We're going to bring a bit forward.' But if you look at the detail of what they've brought forward, it's not the $5 billion they've already underspent. It's a fraction of that. Then, if you look at the detail of what they are actually going to spend in the next three to four years and what they are actually going to spend today, most of it is, again, in the next three to four years—and on the never-never—not in the immediate vicinity the economy actually needs. I want to ask the government to specifically say what they are actually going to be spending in the member for Gilmore's electorate on the Princes Highway in the next six months. We know what that figure is. I want the government to actually come clean with the people of Gilmore about what that figure actually is. I want to know what they're going to be spending on the Newell Highway in the next six months, which spans the Deputy Prime Minister's electorate. They've talked a big game on this area, but they've not delivered.

They've got the minister for urban infrastructure out there saying, 'We're actually delivering on this Urban Congestion Fund now.' Well, he's certainly delivered—$17 million worth of advertising—but we have yet to see construction, actual construction, start on a project. There has been lots of talk. He's promised that there's going to be construction underway by Christmas—not planning, not design work, but construction underway by Christmas. By my
count he's got about three and a bit weeks to actually get on with it and get those diggers out there. So far we've seen no evidence of that plan and no evidence of a plan for the economy.

Mr SIMMONDS (Ryan) (15:41): It's a pleasure to speak on this MPI because it gives me an opportunity to reinforce for Australians and for the residents of Ryan just how important it is that we stick with the Morrison government's stable and certain economic plan. What you have just heard from Labor members opposite is the same thing they say every time, which is talking down the Australian economy time and time again and the politics of economic panic. That is what the Labor members want to foster—a climate of economic panic. Why? Because they think it will move them on from the last election result, so they can ignore the last election result and not learn any lessons from it and get back to their tax-and-spend agenda. That's why they're still holding onto Labor's economic plan of $387 billion worth of new taxes, because they hope that, if they hang on to it long enough—if they hang on by their fingernails, knuckles going white—somehow the Australian people will forget how much and how far they wanted to reach into their pocket, and that the tide will turn. Well, the simple fact is, it won't.

The Australian people understand how much they need the Morrison government's stable and certain economic plan now. Every time the Labor Party get in, they wreck the joint. They absolutely wreck the budget. We've seen it time and time again. They inherited a surplus last time they came into government, and they racked up $240 billion in deficits over six years. It is extraordinary stuff, superhuman stuff to achieve that kind of turnaround in economic performance in such a short period of time. I was four years old last time Labor managed to deliver a surplus—four! That is their economic record, because they have never found a problem that they can't tax and spend their way out of, and that's in sharp contrast to the Morrison government—$387 billion worth of taxes is Labor's economic plan. On their economic plan—taxes on retirees, housing, income, investments, family businesses, electricity and cars—the Australian people have already had their say. In contrast, the Morrison government has a stable and certain economic plan.

I was just sitting here during question time jotting away how comprehensive this economic plan is: a budget back in black so that we can start to pay down the debt. Employment growth is three times what we inherited from Labor. We have 5.3 per cent unemployment, down from 5.7 per cent under Labor. The shadow Treasurer should be listening, because I know he loves stats. Well, here's a few stats that he's no doubt finding it hard to hear: 1.4 million jobs created under this government; real wage growth compared to real wage decrease under the Labor members opposite; and tax cuts for 10 million Australians—Australian families now have more money in their pocket to look after and support their families and make the decisions about their family and their family spending that they want to make, not that the Labor Party want to make, not that the shadow Treasurer wants to make on their behalf, but that Australian families want to make on their own behalf. And there are free trade agreements which will account for 80 per cent of our trade by 2020, $100 billion in our infrastructure pipeline, a fully funded NDIS, a 60 per cent increase in school funding, record funding for hospitals, funding for 80,000 new apprenticeships, 10,000 new home care packages, on average a new medicine on the PBS every day—and what an achievement that is after the Labor Party, the Labor members opposite, had to stop listing life-saving medicines on the PBS because fiscal circumstances wouldn't allow it.
I could go on and on, but I just wanted to give the chamber a bit of a flavour—that when the shadow Treasurer stands in this place and claims that we need an economic plan what he's really saying is that he wants Australians to have Labor's economic plan—the tax-and-spend plan—as opposed to the Morrison government's plan, which is clearly yielding results, creating jobs, creating higher real wage growth than the Labor Party ever managed to do, and putting more choice in the pockets of everyday Australian families. Australians can trust this government with the economic security of our country, and they can't trust the tax-and-spend Labor members.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (15:46): Well, it's lovely to see how the coalition rolls out the heavyweights when there's an economic debate! The fact of the matter is this. When Australian families are out shopping for presents this Christmas they're going to have less money in their pockets than they did six years ago, because real household income is lower now than it was in 2013. And whether you're an average family in Western Sydney or in the Illawarra, you've got less money to go around at Christmas time this year than you did in 2013. Australians are coming home from work with less money in their wallets because wages and wages growth are at their lowest rate on record. Businesses are feeling the pressure as well. The shop owners you go and speak to are going to be telling you that they're feeling the pressure because retail sales are down. No money in your pocket means no money in the till.

These guys just don't seem to get it. The Prime Minister and the Treasurer love to talk about global headwinds, as if the cause of all of these problems is somehow somewhere else, not to be blamed on them. But the last budget update, on 2 December, showed the lie in this, because all our problems are home grown, because the government does not have a plan. They didn't expect to win an election, and they don't have a plan to govern the country. There is record demand and record prices for our commodities. The rest of the world wants the stuff that we've got to sell, but still we can't manage to get ahead.

When you raise these problems with the Prime Minister, the glass jaw shatters, as we saw in question time today. There is a very good reason that he refers to quiet Australians. When he refers to quiet Australians, it's a direction, not a description. It's a direction to Australians to be quiet and stop complaining about robodebt. It's a direction to Australians to be quiet and stop complaining about the government's woeful record on implementation of the banking royal commission's recommendations to the government. As we go to Christmas, fewer than six of the 76 recommendations from the Hayne royal commission have been implemented, and the member for Hume—more gates after his name than the average cattle yard—is still a protected species, still holds a position on the frontbench. They like to talk about their great achievement in balancing the budget, but here on National Disability Day we've got to bell the cat: $4.6 billion ripped out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme at the same time that people with disabilities can't get the care that they're after or can't get a wheelchair that they need to get out of the house. It's an absolute shame.

The government campaigned for six months about protecting retirees. Obviously they meant only some retirees, because if you're a retiree from an immigrant background and you want to go home and visit your family back overseas, they're cutting your pension. And they voted for it. They voted for $180 million ripped out of the pension system. Their present to
Australians from an immigrant background this Christmas is a pension cut. And they voted for it.

If we are going to have a plan to get us out of these economic woes, we need a plan to deal with productivity. And do you think we saw one? They spent all of last week on a union-busting bill, but they haven't got a plan to deal with productivity in this country. Here's a tip: how about you focus on that 70 per cent of the workforce and that 70 per cent of economic activity which is the services economy? You haven't got a plan for that. A good plan might be able to do something to encourage business investment and small and medium enterprises, but, with no plan for that, business confidence is going backwards. While you're dealing with that, how about a plan for broadband? We know that, if you're going to run a services economy, you need decent broadband, and all you've done is stuff the only plan going.

A modern economy is driven on services and electricity. These guys have had five years to deliver an energy plan and they still can't make their mind up on something. So we won't be copping a lecture, and Australians will see right through this Prime Minister with a glass jaw as they go into Christmas. There's less money in their pockets and there's no plan to pull them out of the problems next year. All they've got is a Prime Minister with a glass jaw who seems to want to evade every piece of scrutiny.

Mr STEVENS (Sturt) (15:51): Nothing gives me a better feeling about the likely outcome of the next election than when the Labor Party want to talk about the economy and economic management. I have to say one of the great honours as a member of parliament was that my first vote in this chamber was to cut income taxes for working Australians, because I'm from a party that fundamentally understands that the Australian people are much better at spending their money than the government is and the more dollars we can put back in the pockets of Australian businesses and Australian families the better. The Labor Party had a completely different approach. It was absolutely rejected at the May election, and I'm very proud to be a part of a government that is reducing costs on businesses and families so that they can spend their money growing our economy.

We of course have a very solid economic plan for this country. It involves cutting taxes. It involves investing in infrastructure. It involves investing in skills and investing in understanding what the future industries are, growing our exports so that the economic pie increases particularly in the private sector of our economy, because that's where the jobs can be created that are sustainable and that will underpin our economic prosperity into the future. We're spending $100 billion on infrastructure over the next 10 years. That's productive infrastructure that is going to contribute to economic growth not just through the mere fact of spending the money and the jobs that that creates but also through the fact that it increases the productivity of our country and our economy.

In my own electorate, happily, we're spending almost $200 million of that money over the next four years alone. That is going to provide major productivity upgrades in my electorate of Sturt. The Portrush Road-Magill Road intersection and the Glen Osmond Road-Cross Road intersection are going to get families and workers to their jobs and, more importantly, homes quicker and safer. They are quality-of-life improvements but also productivity improvements. Every minute less spent in the car on the way to work is a productivity gain for our economy.

We're also, of course, undertaking a spectacular investment in Defence in my home state of South Australia. Obviously, the defence of our nation is fundamentally important, but we're
also ensuring that we have a defence industry and that we're producing the assets, the capability and the sustainability that our Defence Force needs here in this country. We are spending that money—$90 billion just in the two shipbuilding programs in South Australia for frigates and submarines. That is $90 billion being spent in the Australian economy to build frigates and submarines for our Navy and to create jobs—high-quality, high-technology, future industrial jobs underpinning the industrial capability of the South Australian economy.

Also very important, particularly given the economic results today around our current account surplus—you weren't able to say in this country in my lifetime until very recently that we have a current account surplus, which is underpinned by a massive trade surplus since, thanks to this government's policies on free trade agreements and backing our exporters, we are exporting more than we're importing. We have free trade agreements with 70 per cent of the markets that we trade with. That's providing enormous opportunity and growth for export businesses. John Key, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand, had a great saying: 'We're not going to get rich selling lattes to each other.' We've got to produce things and sell them to other economies—not just goods but services as well. In my home state, like the whole country, international student numbers are growing rapidly.

We've got free trade agreements that are facilitating the increase in exports of major commodities, particularly out of my state of South Australia, like wine and beef and grain. These are sectors that have been around for a long time. Then we've got emerging sectors like the Space Agency that's being developed in my home state, which will have jobs that don't exist right now. That will be there in the future. We're going to have exponential growth in the space sector which will provide so much productivity gain for our economy.

The Morrison government has a very proud policy agenda: to continue to grow our economy well into the future. The alternative is dramatically increasing taxes on Australian businesses and families. That's no way to grow an economy. That will do the absolute opposite. We've had 28 years of economic growth in this country. You've got to go back to the 17th century—the Netherlands, I think it was, and the tulip boom—to find any—(Time expired)

Mr JOSH WILSON (Fremantle) (15:56): I think it's fair to observe that there's a substantial gulf between not panicking and being completely comatose. There's substantial room for action between not panicking—which we're being told the government is not doing every day—and just lying face down in the dirt. You can describe lying face down in the dirt, dead to the world, as 'not panicking' all you like. But the casual observer can see it for what it is. They can see that it's this government doing absolutely nothing.

We've heard two extraordinary contributions. The member for Ryan said that this side of parliament was ignoring the recent election. You won the election. You are the government. Governments do things, governments have plans and governments implement plans. The member for Sturt even went one step further. Don't worry; he's not worrying about what happened at the last election. According to the member for Sturt they've already won the next election. They're not doing anything now, and there's no need to do anything between now and then because that one is in the bag.

The government are doing absolutely nothing in the face of serious economic challenges and big economic problems that are hurting ordinary Australian households and businesses: the worst wages growth on record, the weakest economic conditions since the GFC, the
highest level of household debt and nearly two million Australians are either looking for work or looking for more work. That means that Australian households are worse off than when this government were elected. Household living standards have declined. It means people have less. It means that confidence is shot. People are worried. They're struggling to pay for essentials, and they can't afford to consider anything else. So consumption in the economy—the largest part of our economy: people buying and selling goods and services—is thoroughly depressed. That hurts local shops and tradespeople. It means people don't take holidays and they don't contribute to the vital tourism economy. Don't worry, because the government are resolutely not panicking. They've done nothing. They've doubled the debt. Before they were elected they campaigned on what they called a 'debt emergency', but they're not panicking. And they've done nothing because they don't have an economic plan.

They do have some riding instructions. They've got some marching orders. I'm not quite sure where they come from. It could be the IPA, the BCA or any number of state Young Liberals conferences. But they've got some riding instructions. If all we ever did was tag this lot for doing nothing, they would be getting off lightly, because they've done a few things. They've taken away penalty rates for low-paid Australians and they are monomaniacal about attacking Australian unions. So far, since they were elected—the election they've already forgotten as they look towards the election they already assume they're going to win—they have taken away penalty rates for low-paid Australians and they have continued their attack on Australian unions. If you turned those two things around, you'd have the beginning of an economic plan. If you wanted to do something for this economy you could start by giving penalty rates back to low-paid Australians and you could allow Australian unions to do their work, which is to prosecute the case for the broad social and economic well-being of Australian households.

The reality is that the circumstances and the human impacts of our economic situation are harder to take, precisely because this government is not seizing on the basic elements of an economic plan. We could offer that up to them in a gesture at this time of year as we look towards Christmas. Do something about productivity, for God's sake. Stop the war on education and training. Fix the NBN. Lift Newstart. Put some money into the pockets of the poorest Australians, which would flow into the economy and deal with the crisis of confidence and the depressed consumption in our economy. Develop a national energy policy. Follow the RBA's advice. If you boil the RBA's advice down to a simple statement, it is, as John Kennedy once said, 'do something'. For God's sake, do something.

You're not panicking; you're lying facedown in the leaves as the Australian economy grows weaker by the day and Australian households and Australian businesses suffer the consequences. This economy is in trouble. The government does not have an economic plan, and they're resolutely not panicking. They're standing there, arms crossed and fingers in their ears, while things get tougher and more bleak for Australian households. It is a crying shame. It is an indictment on all of those who are sitting opposite. You've been given a great trust by the Australian people. You should respond to that. You should get on with doing something for this economy.

Dr Gillespie (Lyne) (16:01): I thank the member for Fremantle for his five-minute diatribe on talking down the Australian economy. I might remind the people on the other side that we have delivered a growing economy and we have increased the pie, and that's why...
we've been able to balance our budget. We have the lowest number of people relying on income support, and we have 1.4 million people in jobs that weren't there before. We have grown the pie.

Rather than complaining and thinking that taxing your way to prosperity will ever occur, I need to remind the people on the other side in the Labor Party that they promised $387 billion of extra taxes—whether it was attacking people's investment in their investment properties by getting rid of negative gearing, attacking people's franking credits, changing super taxes or putting extra taxes on family business structures. They wanted to have regulations that would make the average car much more expensive, and the list goes on and on and on.

We have 1.4 million jobs that weren't there before. We have cut taxes, and cutting taxes—the income tax cuts as well as the small business company tax cuts that we've put through—means we have had more income. The biggest increase in income for the budget was out of company taxes. But we have cut the taxes. We've also had other tax initiatives, like the instant asset write-off. We've increased the scope of small businesses to up to $50 million of turnover so that they can get a better return on their investment. We were driving productivity changes by getting rid of unproductive union behaviour through the ensuring integrity bill, both in construction and in building schools, highways and roads. That would've raised productivity, but the other side knocked it out in the Senate.

Employment grew by two per cent. As I mentioned, we have the highest participation rate in many, many decades—66 per cent. The wage price index has grown by 2.2 per cent, greater than inflation. We've done this all at the same time as increasing spending on health and education. We've rolled out the NBN, and we have brought in electricity market reforms so that a lot of the rip-offs that the retailers were doing are canned. There are default market offers that are being established, which will give people the opportunity to change their plan and save money.

In the local, regional economy where I live, we have put significant investment into critical projects like the Forster Civic Precinct—a $6 million investment two years ago that has triggered an $80 million project in Forster. Cranes are across Forster, and many tradesman, all local, are working on a fantastic civic precinct development, followed by an aged and seniors living complex down on the waterfront. You have to see the extra jobs that have come out of the seeding of extra investment in an existing small business with a $2 million North Coast jobs and investment plan that promises up to 200 extra jobs in those businesses that were recipients of it. We have improved roads and bridges across the whole Lyne electorate. We have investments coming in Dungog: the Clarence Town bridge and Clarence Town Road. It's an absolute necessity that freight and safety be delivered through our road infrastructure.

We have the Inland Rail happening as well, $9.8 billion. I outlined all the investments in rail infrastructure across the nation. These are the infrastructure spends that we need to get an efficient trade set-up. We have free trade agreements, but we need to get our products to the ports cheaply and quickly. That's what the Inland Rail will do. It will also take a lot of freight movement off the highways in the tourism strip up the North Coast, all those B-doubles. Every train that goes up the Inland Rail will take 110 B-doubles off the freeway system. It will make it much safer and much more efficient.
The tax cuts are part of our plan. We're going to continue dropping taxes over the next couple of years for small businesses. The low income tax offset, up to $2,060 for couples, has been— (Time expired)

Ms MURPHY (Dunkley) (16:06): The Liberals are now in their seventh year in government. The economy is floundering, locals in my electorate of Dunkley are struggling and the government has no plan to turn anything around. Australia's economy is growing at its slowest pace since the global financial crisis, which those on the other side of the chamber seem to want to pretend never occurred. They pretend that Labor didn't steer us through it, but we know that we did. Wages have stagnated. Almost two million Australians are looking for work or for more work. If you want to meet some of those Australians, come to Frankston and speak to some real workers who are struggling to look after their families. Living standards and productivity are going backwards. It seems that weak growth and failing confidence are the price we pay for a government which has a political strategy—smear and slur—but no plan for our economy. One fact stands out above all others: real household median income, the measure that is most commonly used to talk about and assess overall living standards, is lower today than it was in 2013. What an abysmal policy failure!

The Prime Minister and the Treasurer have a populist political strategy. They like to come into this chamber and do a lot of yelling, but what do they have that resembles an economic plan for the people in my community who come to my office to ask for help to buy food to put on the table for their children? What do they have for people in my electorate? Nothing. They won an election without any policies. They've had six months since that election to do something and they haven't done anything to have a comprehensive economic plan. We need a plan to turn the economy around and we need it now.

The Reserve Bank have told us that they can't do all the heavy lifting. The RBA, the IMF and the OECD have all downgraded their forecasts for Australia's economic growth, but this Liberal government has chosen to ignore all of these warnings from economists. You don't have to listen to Labor if you don't want to—it seems your ears are blocked—but listen to the economists and listen to the experts. Oh, that's right; experts aren't very popular over there at the moment! This government stubbornly refuses to act, but it's time to act. Use MYEFO. Don't just update forecasts; outline an economic plan. Here are some options. Genuinely bring forward infrastructure projects. In my electorate the government promised the electrification of Baxter at the last election. They put out flyers saying that they were going to build it. That wasn't mentioned in Morrison's recent 'great infrastructure announcement adventure' around the country. Put your money where your mouth is and fund it. Bring forward stage 2 of the tax cuts and boost our middle class. Better yet, from a stimulus perspective—and a social justice perspective—increase Newstart to kickstart retail. Help people to be able to afford to live while they're looking for work. And how about you have a plan, a real plan, to boost wages rather than returning to Work Choices.

Just while I'm talking about IR, how many times in the last few weeks have we heard government ministers at the dispatch box, trying to claim credit for the Fair Work Commission increasing the minimum wage, despite the Liberal government putting in submissions saying it shouldn't be increased? And yet, when we mention the cuts to penalty rates, they say, 'No, the Fair Work Commission is independent; we're not responsible for that.' This Liberal government couldn't possibly come into this place and do its job and vote for
legislation that would restore penalty rates. You want to take credit for something the Fair Work Commission does, but you just walk away and won't restore penalty rates, saying, 'They're independent.' What hypocrites.

Finally, if you want to do something as part of an economic plan that will actually achieve something, take some action on climate change. Have a real national energy policy. Support job creation in renewable energy and the jobs of the future. I think the last Liberal who said the word 'innovation' was Malcolm Turnbull. How about, government, investing in innovation? Stop cutting funds to the CSIRO. Stop attacking scientists. Stop ignoring the jobs of the future. Invest in our community— *(Time expired)*

Ms LIU (Chisholm) *(16:11)*: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker Hogan, for the opportunity to speak about the great work done by the Prime Minister and his team when it comes to our economy. Australians know that a coalition government is the only government that can be trusted with our nation's economy.

The coalition government is supporting the hardworking Australians that are the backbone of our economy. The Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the rest of the team on this side of the House have worked hard to deliver tax relief to those Australians who are having a go. Our tax relief measures will support stronger consumption growth and stronger economic growth. This government has provided immediate tax relief to lower income and middle-income earners.

In the last financial year, these hardworking Australians received tax relief of up to $1,080, and, as of today, over 12.8 million Australians have lodged their tax return and received this relief. This tax relief gives hardworking Australians money in their pockets to pay their bills, invest in their future or save. In 2022-23, the government will increase the top threshold of the 19 per cent tax bracket from $37,000 to $45,000. We are also increasing the low-income tax offset from $445 to $700. This tax relief is possible for only one reason, and that is the coalition government knows how to manage the budget. We have discipline when it comes to fiscal management, unlike those on the other side. Our government's budget will provide an extra $158 billion in tax relief over the next 11 years simply because we do not waste money like Labor.

Prior to coming into this House, I was a small business owner, and I know the difficulties and the uncertainties that they face. Running a small business is tough and, quite frankly, something the member for Rankin knows nothing about. The coalition government has always been on the side of small and medium-sized businesses. We know that these businesses drive job creation in Australia, and that is why we will always back them. Businesses with an annual turnover of less than $50 million employ around 7.7 million workers, and they need our support. We are backing these businesses. We are lowering their taxes so that they can reinvest in their business and continue to grow. Our government has expanded access to the instant asset write-off, which will see an immediate impact to Australian businesses.

This side of the House knows Australia's recent productivity performance is better than that of any G7 country and higher than the OECD average. However, like all developed economies, Australia faces challenges when it comes to productivity growth. That is why this government has set a plan to help the economy continue to grow. We do have plans. This
government will create more jobs and deliver lower taxes. We will continue to reform company tax, which will encourage more and more business investment into our economy.

There is a lot to celebrate when it comes to our economy. For example, Australia has completed its 28th consecutive year of economic growth. We did this despite ongoing trade tensions, a housing market downturn and of course the weather conditions that our rural sector continues to face. Australians made it very clear at the last election that they do not want Labor’s economy-wrecking, high-tax agenda. I’m proud to be a part of a government that is always on the side of Australians.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): The discussion has concluded.

BILLS

Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Special Operations and Special Investigations) Bill 2019

Second Reading

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

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan) (16:16): In accordance with standing order 133, I shall now proceed to put the question on the motion moved earlier today by the Minister for Home Affairs on which a division was called for and deferred in accordance with standing orders. No further debate is allowed.

The SPEAKER: The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

A division having been called and the bells having been rung—

The SPEAKER: As there are fewer than five members on the side for the noes in this division, I declare the question resolved in the affirmative in accordance with standing order 127. The names of those members who are in the minority will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

Question agreed to, Mr Bandt and Mr Wilkie voting no.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Home Affairs) (16:22): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Customs Amendment (Growing Australian Export Opportunities Across the Asia-Pacific) Bill 2019

Customs Tariff Amendment (Growing Australian Export Opportunities Across the Asia-Pacific) Bill 2019

Assent

Message from the Governor-General reported informing the House of assent to the bills.
Farm Household Support Amendment (Relief Measures) Bill (No. 2) 2019

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
to which the following amendment was moved:
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 criticises the Government for:
(1) its ad hoc approach to drought assistance;
(2) failing to deliver a comprehensive drought plan; and
(3) forcing drought-affected farmers off the Farm Household Allowance".

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (16:23): Continuing with my speech: the Farm Household Support Amendment (Relief Measures) Bill (No. 2) 2019 requires financial institutions to adhere to additional conditions when making loans of up to $5 million to small primary production businesses. The small primary production businesses are predominantly family run and operate in perfectly competitive markets which are highly responsive to market fluctuations, weather and exchange rate movements largely outside the control of the business. Small primary production businesses ordinarily expect to make profits over a multiyear cycle rather than in each and every season, and their ability to pay creditors or reduce their debt level is grounded in these profit cycles. Operating under such variable conditions places small primary production businesses at a distinct disadvantage in managing their credit arrangements with financial institutions and warrants additional conditions to level the playing field.

I therefore urge the government to consider the measures that are contained in my rural finance bill when considering the merits of this bill, because our Australian farmers do not want a handout. Australian farmers need, want and deserve the right and the support to either pursue a new venture or establish a viable, resilient and sustainable farm for generations to come. If the government refuse to minimise Australia's contribution to climate change then they can at least minimise its impact by helping our farmers who are enduring the current hot and dry conditions, and prepare their farming operations for more to come.

I'm pleased that the state and federal governments are beginning to take small steps towards recognising that the fate of our farmers is extremely linked to climate change. During the Agriculture Ministers Forum, held in October this year, agriculture ministers endorsed a national climate change work program to assist farmers to meet the challenges of climate change. The program will focus on four priorities:

- Delivering information and tools to improve on-farm decisions and risk management
- Driving research and innovation to support adaptation and mitigation technology
- Strengthening market opportunities and farming business models to build resilience
- Preparing for increasing biosecurity risks as the risk of pests, diseases and weeds changes

The national climate change work program will be overseen by the Climate Change Task Group. It's unclear how members of this task group will be selected, or even when the program work will commence; however, I urge the government to attend to this as a matter of urgency. In conclusion, I commend this bill to the House.
Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (16:26): It's interesting where the farm household support scheme came from. A group of farmers in Far North Queensland came together as the Rural Action council, and they were a pretty fiery mob. It probably had a lot to do with my exit from the National Party. What sent them into a fury was that John Anderson had said, 'We have 200,000 farmers in Australia and we only need 100,000.' Well, now we have under 100,000 actually. Their thing was, 'This bloke seems to be saying that we should go: 'We don't need you, so go.'" When the current crisis through the drought occurred, I was absolutely shocked to find that all the National Party members, and the LNP member for Maranoa, talked about exit packages. The farmers are in very deep trouble. So what is the solution? Get rid of the farmers? Then we'd have no farmers. We'd be in deep trouble. The reaction was quite extraordinary. But that was not the reaction by the fighters, and the people that have come down here about the Murray-Darling are the same sort of people.

If up in Far North Queensland it led to the loss of a seat in this place and the loss of four state seats in North Queensland, it's only a matter of time before the Independents movement, as it was under Peter Andren and others—which was totally destroyed by Tony Windsor, who had this farm debt summit to the Prime Minister or to him I'll leave to other people. He had this farm debt summit, here in Canberra, and it was chaired by the president of our little party, the KAP, got out of the then-Treasurer, Wayne Swan. I think the history books will read that Wayne Swan was a very good Treasurer. To bring us through the GFC was quite an extraordinary achievement. Whether it's attributable to the Prime Minister or to him I'll leave to other people. He had this farm debt summit, here in Canberra, and it was chaired by the president of our KAP, but there were members there from all points of the political spectrum, including the LNP. What we got out of that summit was the farm household support legislation. It was a terrific breakthrough.

It's a very sad comment upon agriculture in Australia that Mr Anderson said, 'We only need 100,000 of you,' and now, I think, there are only 84,000 left—half of them have gone, a lot of them in the most terrible manner possible—and of that 84,000 left 9,600 have been on welfare.
payments. That'll give you some idea of where agriculture is today. I keep screaming in this place that your free-market policies are ridiculous in the face of the subsidies provided.

An OECD report from 2007, I think it was—the last report, but it could have been later than that—states that if you're a farmer in the world, on planet Earth, you get 41 per cent of your income from the government. Canada is the lowest. Canadian farmers get 36 per cent of their income from the government. However, if you're an Australian farmer, you get 4.6 per cent of your income from the government. If you think our farmers can give those American cattlemen a 36-metre start in a 100-metre race, you are wrong. There is no way. I've only been briefly overseas but, in that time, I spent two days on what they call a cattle ranch. We call it a cattle station. It's almost identical to my own land, North Queensland's mid-west, in every way. But, I'll tell you what, you'd want to get up very early in the morning if you wanted to get on top of Marvin, and you'd want to get up very, very early to break up the ice on the troughing. You'd want to get up very early in the morning too if you wanted to beat the southern Brazilians in the sugar industry. We've got enormous competition from very astute, very capable farmers in southern Brazil.

Clearly, agriculture is doomed. We can't give our competitors a 36-metre start over a 100-metre race. No-one in here could seriously and sanely think that. Our second problem is we only have two people to sell food to in Australia: Woolworths and Coles. No other country on earth would countenance this situation. It is bad for the farmers but bloody awful for the consumers. The average mark-up on food, when Woolworths and Coles have 50.1 per cent of the market—that was in 1991. By the time they had reached 90 per cent of the market, which they have now—and don't let them tell you they haven't got that. I've got all the reports and records—unless they're lying to their shareholders—that they now hold 90 per cent of the food market in Australia. So we've only got two people to sell food to in Australia. Whereas the mark-up was around 108 per cent back in 1991, the mark-up now is around 300 per cent. A leader in South Australia, Nick Xenophon, did 15 items, and the mark-up was about 330 per cent. I'd done it on a smaller basket of items, and it was about 260 per cent, but now it's moved up to 300 per cent.

So you have free markets. Was it good for the consumers? No. They were buying goods on a mark-up of 100 per cent; now they're buying goods on a mark-up of nearly 300 per cent. Was it good for the farmers? No. More than half of them have gone belly-up—finished. The country is now a net importer of fruit and vegetables. The country is now a net importer of seafood. The country is now a net importer of pork. It's pretty hard to name our cattle numbers. We had 32 million before all this free-market rubbish started. They were 22 million two years ago. I suspect that next year we'll be on 19 million in the cattle industry. Our greatest non-depleting national asset is the cattle herd. Yes, we have mineral resources, but they're depleting assets. I might argue that water is a depleting asset. This place keeps taking the water off us farmers, so it may be a depleting asset as well; I don't know.

But the third element—and I sit under a picture of the great Jack McEwen. I've got a decision to make here as to whether Jack McEwen and Doug Anthony were right or whether the Lilliputians who are in here right now representing agriculture are right, because their policies are complete opposites. The Anthony family made their name by forming the banana growers cooperative. The biggest item sold in stores in Australia is bananas. All bananas got sold through the cooperative, and we put a price on it. If you didn't do that, you got bashed.
One of their forebears came from Sicily, and they reckoned you got a bit more than bashed sometimes if you didn't sell too cooperatively! Whether those stories are true or not is irrelevant. The fact is that they made their name establishing a fair go for the farmers. There's only one way you can get a fair go, and that is to sell collectively and aggressively, and they had the brains to know that.

Larry Anthony is a kid who started off as a postal clerk. He was sent up to Murwillumbah—he hated Sydney and got himself transferred—and every afternoon at five o'clock he raced down, bought two clears of land and cleared it. It became banana farm. He became one of the biggest banana farmers in Australia after about 10 or 15 years. That's the story of Larry Anthony.

Black Jack McEwen got all the dairy farmers in Victoria together and said: 'I'm sick of living on a dirt floor in a galvanised iron shed and eating rabbits, so from now on everyone sells through a cooperative. You all get a quota and we put a price on our product.' He was only 28, and so was Anthony. Coincidentally, they were both 28 when they did this. His case was identical except that he pre-dated Anthony.

As always, our leadership betrays us in agriculture. It's almost a truism to say that our leadership betrays us. Three of the leaders of the dairy industry in Victoria said: 'We're not being told how we can sell. You don't understand it and it won't work.' So he said: 'Well, I'll explain it to you outside. I don't want to take up the time of the meeting.' He took them outside and gave all three of them a big flogging—bashed the hell out of them. He came back in rubbing his fists and asked, 'Anybody else need an explanation?' and nobody else wanted an explanation. But it was the same story as Anthony's.

These were the towering men who gave you the most competitive, aggressive and successful agricultural dimension of any country on earth. This bunch of pygmies and Lilliputians here, here, and here in the chamber have completely destroyed it. Our cattle numbers are down by 30 per cent—probably 40 per cent. Our dairy is down by 50 per cent. We're closing a sugar mill every two or three years. Soon in Queensland there will be no sugar industry at all. It will make a lot of people happy because they'll have no run-off on the Barrier Reef. It won't make a lot of people in Queensland happy, because it's the biggest employer in Queensland—still bigger than coal. So it will completely destroy the livelihoods of everyone that lives in the state of Queensland. There are a lot of elements that are going to close down the coal industry as well, so we'll have nothing left at all. Sugar, dairy, cattle, sheep, the wool industry—and I want to be very specific here, because, when I asked the minister a question, he said that I didn't know what I was talking about, that the wool industry was the example of where minimum pricing doesn't work. Well, he's a very ignorant young man, because, if he knew what he was talking about and got his brain into gear before he shot his mouth off, he would have known that when Doug Anthony—one of the towering figures of Australian history—introduced the scheme, the price went up 300 per cent. Within three years the price went up 300 per cent. It was there on a nice, gentle upward slope for 20 years. When I was burying my father, I had to say, 'What was the most remarkable thing that was ever achieved in rural Australia?' and it was the wool scheme, because for 20 years, at long last, we had a viable national agricultural industry. (Time expired)

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Housing ) (16:41): I thank all members who have spoken on the Farm Household Support Amendment (Relief
Measures) Bill (No. 2) 2019. By keeping the economy strong, the government can support our key agricultural industries to combat, recover from and prepare for drought. We know that farming, in the end, is a long game. Support in times of hardship is part of what's needed to help farmers and their communities through these quite obviously difficult times. There are times like now, when widespread drought conditions impact on all of our primary production and the livelihoods of our farmers and their families. That's why the farm household allowance was originally created, and with strong bipartisan support—to make sure that farmers doing it tough have the support they need.

Since the introduction of the farm household allowance in 2014, over $365 million in fortnightly payments has been made to almost 13,000 farmers and their partners. Let me be clear: the farm household allowance is not a drought measure. However, the government fully acknowledges that many of the proud farmers who access this allowance do so because of drought. This bill will improve the financial situation of farmers and their families who are facing this financial hardship. It's the next instalment by the Australian government to implement the recommendations made in the report of the independent review, Rebuilding the FHA: a better way forward for supporting farmers in financial hardship. Support for farmers, their families and drought affected communities remains this government's most urgent priority, and I therefore commend this bill to the House.

The SPEAKER: The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for Hunter has moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The question now is that the amendment moved by the honourable member for Hunter be agreed to.

The House divided. [16:47]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 62
Noes ...................... 71
Majority ............... 9

AYES

Albanese, AN  Aly, A
Bandt, AP  Bird, SL
Bowen, CE  Burke, AS
Burns, J  Butler, MC
Butler, TM  Byrne, AM
Chalmers, JE  Clare, JD
Coker, EA  Collins, JM
Conroy, PM  Dick, MD
Dreyfus, MA  Elliot, MJ
Fitzgibbon, JA  Freelander, MR
Georganas, S  Giles, AJ
Gorman, P  Gosling, LJ
Jones, SP  Katter, RC
Kearney, G  Keogh, MJ
Khalil, P  King, CF
King, MMH  Leigh, AK
Marles, RD  McBride, EM
Mitchell, BK  Mitchell, RG
Mulino, D  Murphy, PJ

CHAMBER
AYES

Neumann, SK
O’Neill, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakionou, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM (teller)
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Haines, H
Hastie, AW
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Laming, A
Leeer, J
Littlerproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
Pearce, GB
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Sharma, DN
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Zimmerman, T

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hammond, CM
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharkie, RCC
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Question negatived.
Original question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.
Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Housing ) (16:52): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Special Recreational Vessels Bill 2019

Second Reading

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

Ms CATHERINE KING (Ballarat) (16:53): I rise to speak on the Special Recreational Vessels Bill 2019, which was introduced into this place last Wednesday. The bill establishes a means by which foreign flagged special recreational vessels, also known as superyachts, can opt into temporary licences under the regulatory scheme established by the Coastal Trading (Revitalising Australian Shipping) Act 2012. This will allow foreign flagged superyachts to be offered for hire or charter in Australian waters, thereby potentially securing jobs and contracts for Australian workers, service companies and suppliers of premium goods for these yachts in Australia.

However, improved access for superyachts must not be at the expense of Australian tourism cruise operators and must not facilitate the further eroding of pay, conditions and job prospects for Australian seafarers. It is why Labor has worked with the government to secure a number of amendments and conditions that I understand the minister, in summing up, will be moving. Indeed, the interaction of foreign flagged superyachts with the Coastal Trading (Revitalising Australian Shipping) Act is a longstanding issue, and for years Labor has offered to work constructively with the government to try to resolve this matter. For years the government has been bundling these reforms in with other amendments to the coastal trading act that the opposition, frankly, would never support. Last week the Deputy Prime Minister finally introduced this bill, which discreetly manages issues relating to superyachts. At the time the Deputy Prime Minister noted that the bill was urgent and must be passed this fortnight, and he cited industry advice that a large number of superyachts are expected in the Asia-Pacific region over the next 18 months for the Tokyo Olympics and mid next year for the America's Cup in the first half of 2021. Without these amendments it's argued that these superyachts will sail past Australia to New Zealand, Tahiti and Fiji and that we'll miss out on the associated economic benefits.

While the process is far from ideal, it is good that we in this place try to come together to resolve an issue that will potentially open a lucrative market for some Australian workers and small businesses along our coast. I thank the Deputy Prime Minister and his office for their engagement on this issue in the past few days. Labor has acted in good faith and sought to
meet the government's deadline whilst also providing appropriate scrutiny for this bill. I thank stakeholders, particularly the Maritime Union of Australia, Maritime Industry Australia Ltd and Australian tourism cruise operators for their active engagement in what has been a very truncated process. I thank my colleagues, including the Leader of the Opposition; the shadow assistant minister for infrastructure, Senator Carol Brown, who has carriage of coastal shipping for us; the shadow minister for tourism; and our very passionate Queensland senators and MPs for their consultative approach.

Our Queensland senators and MPs in particular are understandably excited about the jobs and opportunities that this bill and this reform is forecast to bring for their home state. The Queensland Labor government has long championed the superyacht industry and released a superyacht strategy last year. The strategy aims to deliver a 10 per cent increase in Queensland's share of the global superyacht industry and for Queensland to be recognised as the key superyacht hub in the Asia-Pacific region. The Queensland government predicts benefits along the coast from Cairns and the Whitsundays in the north all the way to the Gold Coast in the south-east corridor. Off the back of their strategy, over 15,000 Queenslanders are predicted to work across the superyacht industry by 2021, contributing $2 billion to the gross state product. This work spans many roles on board vessels, as well as supplying goods and services and performing crucial maintenance.

Of course, superyachts bring employment benefits nationwide. Superyacht Australia found in their 2016 study that more than 16,000 full-time equivalent jobs nationwide were linked to the industry. While around 200 domestic superyachts were already operating around the Australian coastline in the 2016-17 season, there are more than 5,000 of these vessels globally. This bill does present a strong opportunity to attract more vessels to Australia and, with them, many high-wealth visitors to boost our coastal tourism industries. The superyacht industry predicts that around 160 superyachts will be in the western Pacific for the Olympics and the America's Cup. The industry argues that this bill has the potential to unlock over 11,000 jobs and over $1.6 billion in revenue to the Australian economy by 2021.

Labor will always back improving job opportunities, particularly in our regions; nevertheless, Labor's scrutiny of the bill is very important. There is concern amongst some existing operators of Australian owned tourism vessels that temporary licences could be a backdoor mechanism to allow foreign-flagged superyachts to spend considerable time in Australia, therefore undermining the businesses of Australian owned and operated tourism vessels—many of them, again, in Queensland but not solely in Queensland. I note the government has indicated that it will incorporate Labor's amendments into the bill. Labor's first amendment is to include a sunset clause on the legislation. The justification for the bill's urgent passage relates to two global events in the western Pacific in the coming 18 months: the Olympics and the America's Cup. It's therefore appropriate to include a sunset clause of June 2021 to ensure that the government actually considers the broader impacts of its new temporary licence regime and uses this period, in essence, as a trial to ensure that there are no adverse consequences for Australian businesses and that the wages and conditions of Australian shippers are not undermined by this process.

While we've successfully negotiated these substantive amendments with the government to improve the bill, there may well be unintended consequences for the Australian shipping industry from allowing further foreign flagged vessels to permanently operate commercially
in Australian waters. The government, frankly, has rushed this legislation, and it must improve its engagement with the industry, unions and the opposition in the lead-up to the bill's sunset. It's not just marine tourism operators that may be negatively impacted by this bill. The bill as originally drafted also potentially undermines the Australian sea freight industry by allowing special recreational vessels on temporary licences to commercially transport cargo around the Australian coast. The government couldn't justify this proposal and has accepted Labor's amendments to amend references to commercial cargo from the temporary licence and to clarify the definition of cargo.

With these amendments the bill will now, as I understand it, mandate that superyachts cannot carry cargo for commercial purposes on voyages authorised by a temporary licence. Cargo can be carried only if it is incidental to recreational activities undertaken on the voyage. Whilst I welcome the government's adoption of the amendments put forward by Labor, proposed to the government by Labor, this flaw in the original drafting highlights the risks associated with rushing technical legislation of this nature through the parliament. Labor's final condition for passing the bill was to confirm the requirement under the coastal trading act for crews on these vessels to receive Australian wages and working conditions. I understand that the explanatory memorandum has been updated to reflect this and that the government minister will speak to this in summing up.

Without these amendments properly incorporated, Labor's support for the bill cannot be assured. Our concerns are not without basis. We know that the government has form on repeatedly misusing temporary licences to enable foreign flagged vessels, with crews paid just a few dollars a day, to regularly transport goods between Australian ports. I flag that at the end of my contribution I will be moving a second reading amendment that reminds the House that on this government's watch we have seen the demise of the Australian shipping industry. They have twice, under the guise of reducing costs, sought to rip up the reforms aimed at protecting Australian shipping made by the former Labor government.

The parliament has twice rejected the government's so-called reforms, calling out the legislation as bad for Australian passengers and freight and bad for Australian workers, as well as being bad for Australia's national security. All the while, each and every coalition transport minister over the past six years has undermined the policy settings, put in place by the former Labor government, that sought to enhance and rebuild the Australian shipping industry. In particular, the repeated misuse of temporary licences by this government has enabled foreign flagged ships with foreign crews to trade along our coastline—work that can and should be done by Australian maritime workers receiving Australian wages and Australian conditions.

Three months into this government's third term the Deputy Prime Minister has come into this place and said that it is urgent because the international superyacht industry wants certainty. Well, Deputy Prime Minister, there are thousands of Australians, from Hobart to Cairns, who work in the Australian maritime industry and who also want some certainty. There is no certainty from this government for the captains and crew members of our vessels, for the workers who maintain and build our ships and for those aspiring to enter the industry. This government hasn't lifted a finger to secure our domestic shipping industry. Too many jobs from our maritime industries have already been lost on this government's watch.
Rather than present a vision to support and rebuild Australian shipping, the Deputy Prime Minister has embarked on a new round of consultation on coastal trading reforms. I remind the House that, rather than seeking to build on Labor's shipping reforms as soon as those opposite came into power in 2013, they began a concerted effort to undermine our domestic maritime industry. Labor's reforms would have supported the revival of Australia's maritime industry. Instead, through two failed rounds of legislation and the ongoing high use of temporary licences, the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government has done all it can to weaken and almost destroy the Australian shipping industry.

Six years—almost seven years—into the term of this government, it has now quietly contacted maritime industry stakeholders to begin looking for support to reform coastal trading. Whilst it notionally rules out opening the coast, it leaves open achieving this by stealth through further exploitation of temporary licences. While it claims that protections for Australian vessels are critical, it flags that new approaches are possible. Further, it explicitly rules out even a conversation on proposals put forward to save Australian shipping, like a strategic fleet, mandating use of Australian vessels or large tax concessions and high-cost subsidies.

It is just as bad for those working in the industry, particularly for those aspiring to get a job at sea. The Deputy Prime Minister's consultation fact sheet notes that the 2018 seafaring skill census forecasts a skill shortage of 500 seafarers by 2023. It then goes on to comment that 'Australian mariners are unable to get sea time locally'. The maintenance and development of a strong, skilled maritime workforce is vital for Australia's national security and the viability of our economy. We've got Australian seafarers who want to work and can't in this country. We've got a new generation dreaming of going to sea, but they can't get the sea time to complete their qualifications. And, even if they do get their qualifications, the jobs aren't there for them on the Australian coastline once they've finished. For many of them, working in this industry means living Australia. This in turn means no career pathway for Australian master mariners, tug masters, marine pilots or harbourmasters.

I remind the House that we are an island nation, and our economy includes the fourth-largest shipping task in the world. Strong management of shipping is crucial to our national security, our economic and our environmental interests. But, on this government's watch, we are now in a situation where less than half a per cent of our domestic seaborne trade is carried by Australian ships. That percentage is rapidly heading towards zero, with regular reports of operators removing Australian flagged vessels from service. On this government's watch, some in the industry report that the number of Australian flagged commercial vessels is now as low as 11.

For six years, the coalition government has stood idle when it should have been supporting our shipping industry. No nation should surrender its economic sovereignty in this way. But those opposite see no value in the existence of a vibrant domestic shipping sector—or any other part of the maritime industry, for that matter. Shipping is an important national strategic industry for our broader economy and our national security. Maintaining a domestic shipping industry is critical for Australia as an island nation.

Labor remain committed to working with all stakeholders to revitalise the Australian shipping industry. Unlike those opposite, we believe in a strong and vibrant maritime industry, and we will always support Australian seafarers, maritime workers and Australian
flagged ships, as well as the Australian workers who maintain and build our merchant and recreational fleet. As I said in my contribution before, while the opposition have agreed to support this legislation—with the foreshadowed amendments and conditions—we would also welcome support in this chamber in standing up for Australian shipping and Australian maritime jobs more broadly.

We recognise that this bill does provide opportunities. It provides an opportunity for increased tourism; it provides an opportunity for increased jobs, particularly in Queensland but not solely in Queensland; and it provides an opportunity to have high-wealth individuals coming into our region and spending money in regional economies around the coast. For that reason, as I said, we've worked with the government to secure amendments that provide the opportunity, in this period of time before the Tokyo Olympics and America's Cup, to make sure that this bill does exactly what it says it does: it doesn't undermine jobs, it doesn't undermine working conditions and it actually generates income for traders and for businesses across the community.

As I said, I am moving a second reading amendment to this bill, and I do so now. 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 this Government's record of undermining the Australian shipping industry; and

(2) reaffirms that Australia's tourism industry, marine and coastal environment, and national security interests are best served by a viable and competitive shipping industry".

Labor has a proud history of supporting the vital role Australian maritime industries play in securing our economic, environmental and national security interests. We remain committed to revitalising the industry and supporting all workers and small businesses engaged in our maritime sector. Whilst we welcome the work the government has done with us on this bill to ensure its passage, I do reiterate that if our substantive amendments are not adequately incorporated by the government then we obviously will continue to have the concerns that we have about this bill. I thank the government again for working with us on those amendments and I look forward to the minister's contribution in moving those amendments to the bill and moving the changes to the explanatory memorandum that actually reflect the concerns that Labor has around the sunset clause, around the wages and conditions and around the issue of cargo being excluded from the operation of these superyachts.

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

Ms Butler: I second the amendment and reserve my right to speak.

Mr FALINSKI (Mackellar) (17:11): I rise to speak on the Special Recreational Vessels Bill 2019. This bill has been put forward in this place by the government to ensure that Australia's tourism sector continues to thrive. Tourism is an important facet of the Australian economy, with over 300,000 businesses in this area directly contributing a total of $57.3 billion of GDP in the last financial year and employing over 650,000 people. This amounts to 5.2 per cent of the nation's workforce and additionally accounts for over 10 per cent of our total exports. The fact that this sector grew three times more than Australia's GDP in the last financial year is further evidence of tourism's importance in promoting a diverse and strong economy.
Our commitment to driving demand in this sector can be seen in the Tourism 2020 and Tourism 2030 strategies. This program was developed through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in conjunction with state and territory tourism ministers and over 160 industry leaders. These were developed to drive demand in the tourism sector by implementing an industry framework that will allow businesses to operate in a dynamic global environment. We on this side of the House want a strong tourism industry, not a weaker one, which provides world-class services to travellers as well as creating jobs for all Australians—high-paying jobs that Australians deserve.

This bill is only one example of the government's commitment to continuing to develop these ongoing strategies. In accordance with this vision, this is a bill that allows special recreational vessels, commonly referred to as superyachts, to obtain coastal trading licences to operate passenger and cargo charter services on the Australian coast. There are some 5,000 of these vessels around the world. Australian based vessels will see a huge increase in marketing exposure for chartering in Australia. The marketing budget for these large overseas vessels that are chartered for in excess of $1 million a week is more than our industry currently spends as a whole per year. Let me repeat that. A million dollars a week, which is what these boats or vessels often rent for, is more than we spend in an entire year. With a few of these vessels open for charter in Australia, the whole charter industry will benefit from this exposure.

If this bill is passed, we will also see huge infrastructure investment to refit maintenance yards, with hundreds of millions of dollars already being spent in recent years in preparation for this expected change. The domestic fleet will also benefit from these upgrades, while creating many jobs along the way. Another benefit of this bill is that we will see an increased demand for skilled tradespeople to maintain the increased workload, creating more jobs, not less, and opportunities for upskilling amongst the current workforce.

To examine why this is necessary, we need to look over the current framework for coastal commerce in Australia and judge whether it is sufficient in ensuring that the economic benefits of tourism are harnessed to their full potential. Over the next 18 months the Pacific region will experience both the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and the America's Cup in Auckland. These events will create a large increase in international sea traffic, which provides Australian businesses with a great opportunity to benefit from this boost in activity.

Through the government's ongoing monitoring of market conditions, along with the feedback that we are receiving from the industry, it has been shown that there is an immediate need to supplement existing legislative provisions. The maritime tourism industry has advised that ensuring that businesses have the ability to receive the benefits of increased international maritime activity is important to their ongoing success over the next couple of months. We in this place must ensure that maritime businesses have the best chance of taking advantage of this increase in buoyant maritime market conditions. An integral aspect of some feedback that the government has received from the industry is that the current legal framework for maritime commerce is insufficient to provide certainty to international operators of charter services, which would like to engage with the Australian market over an intermittent period of time. We must, therefore, ensure that we can give certainty to the industry in order to maximise the benefits that will be felt by all Australians.
The current framework is structured around the Coastal Trading (Revitalising Australian Shipping Act) 2012. This act has not been substantially amended to reflect the changing market dynamics since its creation. While the act is well suited to established commercial operators, it has not been adapted to suit the business operating model of smaller or short-term recreational vessels. The problem with this act is that it does not allow superyachts to obtain a temporary licence to operate charter or hire services in Australian waters. Let me make that clear: superyachts are not allowed to operate in Australian waters. The impact of that is that every week we are dropping at least $1 million that could be going into the Australian economy. Because these vessels are not able to obtain temporary licences they're not able to obtain the exceptions contained in the coastal trading act, meaning that the vessels are subject to the Customs Act's importation duties and taxes even though their stay may be less than four weeks. It is an absurdity that's costing ordinary Australians millions of dollars and businesses in my electorate tens of millions of dollars.

While the coastal trading act has provided an effective framework and process for obtaining general, temporary and emergency licences, it has explicitly excluded recreational vessels from obtaining these. You have to ask yourself why. As well, temporary licences to commercial vessels under the coastal trading act require a minimum of five voyages. It is absurd. Noting that here a voyage is defined as departure from an Australian port to another Australian port, this is inconsistent with the operating model of superyachts, which is often a single voyage to take advantage of an opportunity to offer the vessel for charter—likely to and from the same port—chasing weather, or to a specific destination. This rigidity of the existing act is incompatible to the business model of superyachts. There must be a degree of flexibility in our maritime trade law, which supports the business model of the vessels, in order for it to be attractive for them to operate in Australian waters and, thus, further enable related tourism businesses and other matters to receive the incidental economic benefits of these activities, not to mention the fact that it will employ Australians at high wages. It will create investment for businesses in Australia. Why the Labor Party is opposed to this can only come down to simple class warfare.

As a consequence of the deficiencies of the current act they introduced, inflexible in providing temporary licences, most of these vessels pass Australia and, instead, make port in Fiji, Vanuatu or New Zealand. We are literally exporting money, jobs and business investment to New Zealand. The maritime laws in these places are better suited, which is a complex way of saying they make sense. It would be remiss of us here if we continued to let Australian businesses lose out on an array of economic benefits and opportunities to New Zealand.

This bill is simple but effective in correcting the previously mentioned insufficiencies of the coastal trading act. It is not attempting to replace existing provisions of the coastal trading act but, rather, supplement and strengthen the operations of the existing act. It makes you wonder what is really behind the member for Ballarat's amendments to this bill. The bill will enable special recreational vessels to apply for a temporary licence to carry passengers or cargo in Australian waters. Alongside the current licensing process of the coastal trading act, the bill will also permit owners of superyachts to submit declarations that apply to international voyages. Under the current act, these cannot be made by this type of vessel.
The ability of general licence operators to challenge the granting of a temporary licence will still be available to them. The bill will ensure international operators are attracted to operating within our pristine waters, from up north at Cape York to down along the coast to places like Port Douglas, the Whitsundays and the Sunshine Coast, even to the Gold Coast and as far south as Pittwater. Nemo made it to Sydney Harbour, so I assume the superyachts can make it that far too. The greatest thing about this is thousands of dollars will be spent in our regional communities that are currently doing it tough due to the drought.

For the owners and operators of superyachts wishing to conduct a charter, they may apply for a special recreational vessel temporary licence. Flexibility is an integral part of the act, providing the minister or designated senior executive with the ability to grant a temporary licence for a single voyage, charter, that takes a round trip, between various Australian ports, of a number of voyages, over 12 months. Vessels may apply for a further temporary licence after the cessation of their existing licence. Further, these vessels will gain an exemption from the Customs Act's importation duties and taxes, which will alleviate a significant cost to the current operators of charter yachts in Australian waters. It also makes sense that you wouldn't charge duties and taxes of an import nature on something that you're not importing. This is something that I would have thought the member for Ballarat, before she moved her amendment, would have been able to see.

Opening Australia to the superyacht market will bring important trade and tourism benefits, particularly to rural and regional areas on the Queensland coast. This will contribute to the international image that we want to project to prospective tourists. We want those wanting to travel to this country for tourism to feel that they can have an experience they would be unable to have anywhere else in the world—a unique experience. This act is in line with doubling tourist expenditure by 2020 on 2015 levels.

Regional communities will be able to experience the benefits of the boost in economic activity. In fact, 43c of every tourism dollar spent goes towards benefiting regional communities across Australia. Additionally, many small businesses in Cairns, the Whitsundays, Port Douglas, Pittwater, Sydney Harbour, Melbourne, Hobart and even Perth, among others, are poised to benefit from superyacht tourism. The bill should make coming to Australia more attractive, not less, for these vessels, the people who want to sail on them and the associated economic benefits that create jobs, regional growth and economic and business investment. The economic benefits of this bill cannot be overestimated. It will unlock an additional 11,800 jobs and over $1½ billion by 2020-21. Chartered vessels make up more than half of the world's superyacht fleet, and under the current regulations we are not allowing them to operate commercially in Australia unless they are imported.

It is also important to note that those who defend the current laws and pretend that they have done good should keep in mind that the Australian fleet is now 10 per cent of what it was before those laws were introduced. They have decimated our charter industry, they have decimated Australian shipping and they have kept economic growth from both our regions and our cities. They have not allowed our businesses to enjoy, to promote and to utilise the expert skills they have in this country in the superyacht and boatbuilding sector. Looking ahead, it is important that we continue to consult stakeholders within the tourism industry and maritime operators in particular. A skill shortage is forecast, and I highly recommend this bill to the House.
Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Chief Government Whip) (17:26): It's a great pleasure to follow my good colleague the member for Mackellar. I also note that the member for Wide Bay is here. His little part of the world in Hervey Bay would be a very beautiful part of the world to park your superyacht for a week or two. It's with great pleasure that I rise in this chamber to speak on the Special Recreational Vessels Bill 2019. As has been well outlined, the purpose of this bill is to allow foreign registered special recreation vessels, or superyachts, to apply for and be granted a special temporary trading licence to operate commercially on the Australian coast and charter in Australian waters. This bill will allow the owner, charterer or agent of the superyacht to apply for a special trading licence under the coastal trading act of 2012 to charter their vessel in Australia for a single voyage for a period up to 12 months.

Some might ask why that's important. Maybe some figures will help inform why this sort of legislation is important. Depending on the chosen route, a superyacht will travel more than 15,000 kilometres from the Mediterranean or the Caribbean or some 6,000 kilometres from major Asian ports to visit our waters. These vast distances they're prepared to travel to come to Australia are why this legislation is so important. A temporary licence granted will be for the sole purpose of recreational or sporting activities and not for chartering commercial cargoes to profit on voyages authorised by licence. This bill is needed because the current structure of the coastal trading act is flawed and prevents our local and small businesses in the maritime industry from harnessing the opportunities and potential of the global economy and Australia's status as a global destination for superyachts. Charter vessels now represent approximately half of the world's superyacht fleet, with some 6,000 registered superyachts. That number is growing every year. In fact more superyachts are being built than ever before and they are getting bigger. Currently 193 superyacht builds are underway or planned around the world. That alone represents a 26 per cent increase on 2018 numbers. Additionally the average length of these new vessels has increased substantially, 30 per cent, from approximately 45 metres to nearly 60 metres over the past few years. It is for this reason that this bill is so important.

This bill makes coming to Australia, presently, under the coastal trading act, extremely unattractive with importation duties and taxes, including GST. Because operators cannot operate commercially in Australia, they bypass Australia and go to New Zealand, Fiji and other places where the incentives are better and the ability to do business is better. This proposed legislation will finally allow us to catch up on the booming neighbourhood of superyacht economies so that we can compete for our fair share of the charter market.

The other side of the problem is that temporary licences under the coastal trading act require a vessel to undertake a minimum of five voyages from one port to another. This does not support the operating model of superyachts, which undertake a single voyage to offer boats for hire and usually depart and arrive back at the same port.

Our maritime and tourism industries are on the cusp of a great opportunity, one which we cannot afford to let sail by. Over the next 18 months, major sporting events will be hosted in the Pacific, including the Tokyo Olympics in July 2020 and the America's Cup in Auckland in 2021. These events are expected to bring around 160 superyachts to our region. But our local maritime industry, from discussions I've had with them, are already looking to bank on the business and economic opportunities that these superyachts will bring with them. All they
need is the green light for these vessels to be able to sail into Australia legally and offer charters across this summer.

Why is this important for our local maritime industry? With already 6,000 vessels in service, global growth will require a similar expansion in superyacht support facilities. We already have one such facility on the Brisbane River at Murarrie, and there are also some smaller facilities around the country. But superyacht ownership is an expensive undertaking, and, to ensure that they meet the regulatory, insurance and safety standards, these superyachts typically undergo out-of-water routine maintenance annually and survey certification every five years, which can represent several months on a hard stand or in refit sheds. I recently had the opportunity to go and visit Rivergate Marina at Murarrie in Brisbane.

Further to this, when vessels are sold or the owner desires a refresh, a full refit is undertaken, which can typically occur every seven to 10 years. These refits can be significant, costing between $1 million and $1 ½ million per month and lasting, on average, six months. It is an economic opportunity that this bill creates for our superyacht fraternity and those visiting Australia for our businesses—already some of the best in the world in the maritime industry—to take advantage of.

This bill will allow those who own or charter a superyacht to apply for this temporary trading licence so they can offer single round-trip charter voyages or a number of voyages to different ports over 12 months and be exempt from the importation and duties. The temporary trading licence application will need to be submitted in writing, with specific provisions regarding the number of voyages, dates, loading and unloading port, the number of passengers and other information about the vessel. An application fee will apply, but, once a licence is granted, vehicles will be able to be offered for hire or charter.

As the member for Mackellar quite rightly outlined, this will unlock tourism opportunities all around the coast and particularly in regional Queensland, where destinations across northern Australia and down the east coast would welcome the business and opportunities these vessels bring with them. Superyachts can spend up to 12 per cent of their value each year on maintenance, service and repairs, as I’ve just outlined. We know that Australians want to see that money being spent here, creating local jobs and benefiting local business, as well.

Allowing superyachts to charter in Australia is expected to create approximately 12,000 new skilled jobs; to create more opportunities for our local small businesses that undertake yacht maintenance, refits and repairs; and to create more opportunities for our local superyacht charter market. Allowing superyachts to charter in Australia won’t just create jobs on board; it will also create more opportunities for apprentices and traineeships in the boating industry, which will benefit young Australians like Lauren, who I recently met at the Australian Industry Trade College on the Gold Coast. Lauren is currently doing a carpentry and cabinet-making apprenticeship with Riviera at Coomera. This bill will give her, and others like her, the confidence to pursue a career in a trade and get on-the-job skills.

One of the reasons the superyacht owners want to bring their superyachts to Australia for refit and maintenance is that Australia has a world-leading reputation in this space. If you have a look at the businesses that I saw at Rivergate or the businesses that I have seen at the Coomera marine precinct, you can understand why. As I said, regions across the east coast of Australia, but in particular in my area of the Gold Coast and around Brisbane, will profit from
this increased international marketing exposure, which then encourages further investment in locally based boatbuilding organisations, infrastructure and repair facilities.

As I've said, the reason for my recent visit to Rivergate marina was to see what their planned expansion to cope with these increasingly large superyachts is. The reason they are investing a very significant amount of money is directly related to the opportunity that this creates. Once approved and developed, the Rivergate Marina and Shipyard will be one of the largest facilities in the Asia-Pacific region. Most vessels can spend up to two years in our region, with permanent crews, which will yield long-term economic benefits to our local boating industry, so it is not just the passengers on board these superyachts but the crew of those yachts who stay in and around Brisbane or the Gold Coast, depending on where the superyacht is being refitted or serviced, who contribute to the local economy during their stay.

There is a clear case as to why we should pass this bill. The more vessels that visit Australia, and the longer they stay, the greater and broader the economic benefits. This means that our 150-plus small to medium businesses—The Boat Works in the Coomera marine precinct, for example—will invest in growing their capabilities, prosper and employ more people to meet demand. These businesses deserve the opportunity to take full advantage of the economic potential of the booming charter-boat industry, and they need the certainty that foreign registered superyachts can come to Australia legally and offer charters.

This government has again demonstrated, through this legislation, that we are focused on delivering opportunity for small to medium businesses across Australia. This legislation has the backing of business, with the incentive for them to create jobs and to invest in their businesses by breaking down the barriers to entry for superyachts to the Australian market, and it creates further economic opportunities in an area of high skill, high employment. We have seen—and I have seen across the marine industry in my area—the quality of work that is produced each and every day, whether it's at Riviera or whether it's at Maritimo on the Gold Coast. I note that Maritimo said recently in a media report that they require another 60 apprentices to keep up with their sales growth. They are not quite in the superyacht category, but the quality of work that is done at organisations like Maritimo, Riviera and many others is up there with the best in the world, and that is why this bill is so important to the House and to the country—because the skills and talents that are grown in our factories already on the Gold Coast and in our maritime precincts and our marine industry can service the biggest and best superyachts in the world for the economic benefit of our country, creating jobs and prosperity for the nation.

Mr CHRI$TENSEN (Dawson) (17:39): The Whitsundays are in an area that is the sailing capital of the nation. With this relaxation on bringing superyachts into this country and with superyachts not attracting a hefty tax in the process, the Whitsundays will ultimately become the jewel in the crown for superyachts heading into Australian waters. After the GST restriction on vessels is removed by this legislation, according to Superyacht Australia CEO David Good, the Whitsundays will be the jewel in the crown. That is what I want to talk about today. The Special Recreational Vessels Bill 2019 is about allowing superyachts to get a temporary coastal trading licence for a single voyage, and that licence exempts these vessels from importation duties and charges, including GST. This is commonsense legislation which allows Australia to compete with other tourism destinations that bring in superyachts, like
New Zealand and Fiji in our region, which are much more affordable for these luxury vessels to currently visit.

The superyacht market is a very, very lucrative market. It actually makes no sense to do what we're currently doing—which we have done for a long while—and that is hitting these visitors to our shores with a huge cost impost. These vessels are not being imported into the country; they're tourism visitors. They should be welcomed; they should be encouraged. I'd like to run through what this legislation will mean not really for the superyacht industry but for the Whitsundays and my entire electorate of Dawson, which is recognised as one of the great cruising destinations in the world.

I mentioned before David Good, the CEO of Superyacht Australia. He said he knows of two major players who are poised and ready to head to the Whitsundays as soon as this bill is passed, and this will be just a taste of what is to come. For vessels between 40 metres and 60 metres, the weekly spend for provisions and bunkers is $174,300. I'll say that again: the weekly spend—what they drop—is $174,300. That figure comes from the latest economic modelling done this year by the AEC Group, which undertakes economics, finance and market research in this area. Mr Good predicts that, with these changes to the charter rules, the big thing that will change is the length of stay. Fiji saw an increase to an average of 136 days once their laws came into effect. Based on that experience, we can assume that areas like the Whitsundays will see a similar sort of thing. This means that every vessel that comes in will be worth $3.38 million to the Whitsundays every year—that is, an extra $3.38 million will be pumped into the local economy and local businesses and it will create local jobs. Some of the places have 200 vessels a year coming to them. We probably couldn't keep up with that in the Whitsundays, but we could see a lot of money coming in.

Superyacht Australia conservatively estimated that there will be 30 additional vessels coming to the Whitsundays within the following year of the change to this legislation. That's going to be about $101 million in direct local spend. If we look at that picture nationally, superyachts will come to this country on a level playing field without the importation duties and charges, which include a GST. It could unlock about 12,000 jobs and about $1.64 billion in extra revenue for this country. Seventy per cent of that revenue is, thankfully, destined for North Queensland. It'll be divided up between Cairns and the Whitsundays. The member for Leichhardt should know that we are going to put in a very big pitch for a lot of it to go to the Whitsundays. The Whitsundays area is expected to be the bigger beneficiary because of its pristine cruising waters. If we look at North Queensland as a whole, it's an estimated benefit of about 8,200 jobs, close to about $1.15 billion. If we consider what the Whitsundays has faced over the past couple of years in terms of cyclones and reputational damage with some events that we've had up there, the benefits for the region are going to be immense.

Analysis in a report on tourism in Queensland shows that total tourism expenditure into the region for the first six months of this year is down by about $120 million. The flow-on effect estimated for the region amounts to an indirect economic loss of about $180 million, which is about 800 jobs impacted thus far. Superyacht Australia have advised me that there will be about 160 superyacht vessels in the Pacific region over the next 18 months. While our taxes and charges remain in place, only a very limited amount of them will come here. If we pass this Special Recreational Vessels Bill 2019, all of them will head to Australia.
People might wonder 'What's a superyacht?' I've never boarded one. I don't know if my good friend the member for Hinkler has ever been on one. Indeed, I don't know if those at the dispatch box have been on one. We could only dream and wish, but they're identified as vessels with a master and a crew carrying 12 or fewer guests and no cargo, and they're greater or equal to 24 metres in length. That's a pretty big boat. In fact, I'm told that even their tenders are pretty big boats for most people.

Currently they enter Australian waters under a controlled permit, but they're faced with a range of import duties and fees, regardless of the length of time in the waters. As already mentioned, this bill is going to allow for a temporary licence for a single voyage. This will make them exempt from importation duties and charges and GST.

I talked about currently not competing in our region or around the world in terms of superyacht based tourism, because of the cheaper options in places like Fiji and New Zealand. This measure, as I said, will level the playing field. It really will level the playing field. It'll open the gateway for significant economic events for our marine based tourism industry and all the businesses which support them. The passage of this bill will support tourism jobs and create new jobs, and the benefits for the Whitsundays will be immense.

The money that the superyacht owners and crew drop in the regions for their superyachts is significant purchasing and supply chain requirements that come with that. They are in the market for everything, from food, supplies, fuel, fresh-cut flowers, luxury items and stuff being delivered daily on board these vessels.

It also goes to what the previous member, the member for Forde, talked about: repairs, maintenance and shore-side touring. I just wanted to touch on the repairs and maintenance. There's a little town called Bowen in my electorate that really wants to capitalise on this. There are businesspeople in the local council—namely Paul Darrouzet, who currently owns Abell Point Marina, and the mayor of the Whitsundays, Andrew Willcox—that really want to see established a major vessel servicing centre in Bowen. We've got a port with the opportunity. It could be for that. We've got a council that's got the will. We've got local businesspeople, and potentially the capital, behind them to actually make that a reality. If we can get these large vessels coming into the Whitsundays, we could potentially have more jobs created in North Queensland through a major vessel service centre in Bowen. It's for all of these reasons that I have been very, very pushy in getting this legislation to come forward. I have been battling the way for a long time. Unfortunately, this provision in this bill was contained within an omnibus bill in the previous parliament, and Labor opposed that. They're not opposing this on its own. I did note that there were some rumblings from the Labor Party against this idea of removing these imposts on superyachts, as if it was doing something favouring the rich when, really, it isn't. It's just about ensuring that local communities can get some of the coin that these people drop, rather than having it go to Fiji or New Zealand.

I've been very pushy. I've met with many different ministers over the years on this issue. I've gotten quite a bit toey with the current Deputy Prime Minister about it. Thankfully, he's put this bill to the parliament in relatively speedy time to get a fix for this and, hopefully, this will be passed by this House this week. It could potentially even be passed by the parliament if the Senate can do their job very quickly and this doesn't get shuffled off to some committee. We can only hope.
But the Whitsundays are ready and waiting to welcome superyachts with the passage of this legislation. Coral Sea Marina Resort—formerly Abell Point Marina—at Airlie Beach in the Whitsundays has emerged as a premier superyacht destination. It's located at the gateway to 74 Whitsunday Islands, near the iconic Great Barrier Reef. It was just named the Australian marina of the year for 2019-20. It was also given the title of superyacht business of the year service provider in 2017.

We in North Queensland, and particularly in the Whitsundays, are gearing up right now to host the fourth Australian Superyacht Rendezvous in October next year. That'll be a big thing—from 16 October to 18 October. I hope you can join us, Mr Deputy Speaker Andrews—and I open that invitation up to everyone in the chamber. The event's recognised internationally as the South Pacific's leading superyacht event. It's been staged at the Gold Coast since its inception but will make its move to the Whitsundays next year. It'll showcase the Australian superyacht industry, its capabilities and its economic potential. Events will be staged across three days for attending international superyacht heavyweights, superyacht owners and buyers, and tourism and industry professionals. It's a fantastic opportunity for the Whitsundays to showcase itself and also to showcase the potential the region has for superyacht cruising.

I've got to say that Paul Darrouzet, the owner of Abell Point Marina, does need to be noted here. He has been a lion on this—a ferocious one at that—and roaring at the gate for this to happen. Paul said:

Australia's prominence on the global superyacht stage continues to gain momentum and the 2020 Great Barrier Reef edition of Australian Superyacht Rendezvous is our opportunity to showcase to the world our unrivalled and pristine cruising charter grounds for superyachts …

Globally, more superyachts are looking to migrate to the southern hemisphere to capitalise on fresh charter destinations like the Great Barrier Reef and the … Rendezvous represents an exceptional opportunity to tell the international superyacht world we are ready to welcome them …

Superyachts are an exciting tourism avenue for Australia thanks to environmental cleanliness and standards of these vessels, they offer low impact but high yield tourism.

While international superyacht guests are intensely private, it is conservatively estimated that a single foreign guest on board a superyacht would spend in the order of $15,000 to $25,000 per day—and that is something from which the Whitsundays and the broader Great Barrier Reef could yield significant tourism impact.

Queensland is leading Australia's global superyacht charge and, in addition to having hosted the Superyacht Rendezvous since 2017—as I said, previously at the Gold Coast but next year in the Whitsundays—it was the first state in Australia to release a superyacht strategy. The vision is to increase our share of the global superyacht sector by 10 per cent by 2023 to see Queensland positioned as the hub for superyachts in the Asia-Pacific. The strategy recognises that Queensland boasts the largest concentration of marine trades within the Southern Hemisphere, with significant cruising grounds, such as the GBR, and some of the largest marina facilities equipped to cater for superyachts.

Statistics released by the Superyacht Group in March 2019 show that the superyacht fleet has increased from 3,906 crafts in 2009 to 5,646 this year, with around 150 new superyachts delivered annually across the globe. The 2018 Queensland superyacht strategy reports that about 200 are based in Australia, which is about four per cent of the global market. Hopefully,
we are going to see a big upswing in that number with this bill. According to the superyacht industry, Australia’s projected to grow its numbers to $3.34 billion by 2021. That compares to about $1.965 billion in 2016.

This legislation is very much welcomed by me because it will create local jobs in the Whitsundays. There will be flow-on impacts to places like Bowen if we can get a vessel-serving centre up and running there. There will be flow-on impacts to Mackay, which vessels may want to visit as well, and all the way up the North Queensland coast right up to Cairns. It is going to be a jobs bonanza, actually, when these vessels come here. We can only hope that, once we have the passage of this bill, it is shouted from the rooftops by our marketing agencies, including Tourism Australia. I’d encourage them to do that, because this is great opportunity. We’re going to get this through. We’ve already got settings changed from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, for them to go to some of the pristine areas and sail through the Whitsundays, checking out our beautiful area. It’s going to be such a bonanza — so many jobs.

Mr EVANS (Brisbane—Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management) (17:55): Thank you to all of those members who have contributed to the debate on the Special Recreational Vessels Bill 2019. The federal government is committed to growing the Australian economy, and this bill will contribute to that goal by opening up a new maritime market. The bill will allow special recreational vessels to offer charters on the Australian coast — something that the current system does not allow.

These vessels have been excluded in the past because of the way that the Coastal Trading (Revitalising Australian Shipping) Act 2012, the coastal trading act, works. Whilst special recreational vessels visit our Pacific neighbours, Australia is missing out because of red tape. Temporary licences under the coastal trading act require a minimum of five voyages, and a voyage is defined as ‘from a port to a different port’. This doesn’t support the special recreational vessel operating model — often a single voyage to take advantage of an opportunity to offer the vessel for charter, and likely to be to and from the same port.

This bill changes that. It will enable these vessels to apply for a special recreational vessel temporary licence under the coastal trading act. For those who own or charter a special recreational vessel and wish to apply for a special recreational vessel temporary licence, they can now offer a single-voyage charter that takes a round trip or a number of different voyages to different ports over 12 months. However, this does not change the need for licence holders to comply with all other requirements of the coastal trading act and other relevant legislation, including the requirement to pay part B wages.

In recognition that special recreational vessels are just that — recreational — the bill imposes the condition on all special recreational vessel temporary licences that the vessel must not carry cargo for profit on voyages authorised by the licence. Allowing special recreational vessels to charter in Australia will open up trade and tourism opportunities all around the coast, particularly, as the member for Dawson just noted, regional areas on the Far North Queensland coast, Cairns, the Whitsundays and Port Douglas, amongst others, are poised to benefit from increased tourism brought by these vessels. As the member for Forde just noted, a number of these vessels are expected to be in the Pacific over the next 18 months for the Tokyo Olympics and the America’s Cup in Auckland. This bill will pave the way for them to come to Australia.
The government is committed to changes more broadly in coastal trading. The department is out consulting with stakeholders now. This bill is one part of a broader approach to making coastal shipping and cruising a viable and important part of the domestic economy. I want to stress, however, that protections for Australian vessels will be maintained. Our government is pleased with the participation of shipping and cruise industry stakeholders in the first phase of consultation and, with the number of organisations and individuals who’ve taken the time to think about solutions to making coastal trade a more efficient transport choice, we thank them all for their submissions.

We’ll shortly be bringing everyone together to develop these ideas and find opportunities for the maritime industry more broadly, including the special recreational vessel industry. There is much opportunity for businesses—particularly those in the regions—for encouraging special recreational vessels to come to Australia. These vessels will attract passengers from all over the world to sail in our waters. This bill lets us take advantage of this exciting and growing industry, and I commend the bill to the House.

The SPEAKER: The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for Ballarat has moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted, with a view to substituting other words. So, the immediate question before the House is that the amendment moved by the member for Ballarat be agreed to.

The House divided. [18:03]
(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ......................63
Noes ......................71
Majority ..................8

AYES

Question negatived.
Original question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.
Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Mr EVANS (Brisbane—Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management) (18:09): I present a supplementary explanatory memorandum to the bill and ask leave of the House to move government amendments (1) and (2), as circulated, together.

Leave granted.

Mr EVANS: I move:

(1) Clause 13, page 9 (after table item 3), insert:

3A section 40 that section included a condition that when a special recreational vessel undertakes a voyage authorised by a special recreational vessel temporary licence, the vessel must not carry cargo for profit (other than if the carriage of the cargo is incidental to the use of the vessel for a recreational or sporting activity)

(2) Page 10 (after line 26), at the end of Part 4, add:

17 Sunset provision
This Act is repealed immediately after the end of 30 June 2021.

Question agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr EVANS (Brisbane—Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management) (18:10): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Interactive Gambling Amendment (National Self-exclusion Register) Bill 2019

Second Reading

Ms BURNEY (Barton) (18:11): I rise to speak on the Interactive Gambling Amendment (National Self-exclusion Register) Bill 2019 and the National Self-exclusion Register (Cost Recovery Levy) Bill 2019. Labor supports the Interactive Gambling Amendment (National Self-exclusion Register) Bill 2019 and the National Self-exclusion Register (Cost Recovery Levy) Bill 2019—I'd hate to say that 10 times quickly! These bills will amend the Interactive Gambling Act 2001 to establish a national self-exclusion register that will allow individuals who consider themselves to be at risk of or experiencing gambling related harm to exclude themselves from interactive wagering services licensed in Australia and limit their exposure to direct marketing activities. People will be able to choose the period of self-exclusion,
ranging from three months to permanent. Individuals will be prompted 14 days before the self-exclusion period ends and will be able to reregister for another period. Up to five support people can be registered, who will also be notified 14 days before the end of the self-exclusion period.

However, it has taken the government too long to act. This comes four years after the report of the Review of Illegal Offshore Wagering, which described self-exclusion as 'an important tool in reducing the harms to at-risk and problem gamblers'. It also comes one year after the commencement of the National Consumer Protection Framework for Online Wagering. The National Self-exclusion Register will allow people to self-exclude from all online wagering sites and apps in one go and is due to be implemented by the Australian Communications and Media Authority by May 2020. A year ago the government acknowledged that more than 240,000 Australians were already experiencing significant harm from online wagering and called the ability to self-exclude a critical gap in consumer protection in Australia. Financial Counselling Australia has expressed frustration at the delay, and warned that there was a desperate need for a national self-exclusion register and urged the government to make it an urgent priority. Action could have been taken to introduce legislation before now. The government has been in no hurry to protect Australians vulnerable to the harms of online gambling. To meet the original time frame set down by the government, the Australian Communications and Media Authority must now establish, trial and test the National Self-exclusion Register, which will contain highly sensitive personal information, in just six months.

Labor has concerns about the government's decision to outsource the establishment of the register. The government has a terrible track record on IT procurement. We have seen its disastrous Centrelink online compliance program, otherwise known as robodebt, which impacted on tens of thousands of innocent Australians. In 2017 it was revealed that Medicare card numbers had been sold to the dark web, a massive and incredibly disconcerting breach of security. Government must guarantee Australians that people's personal information will be protected and that the highest standards of privacy apply.

The National Consumer Protection Framework for Online Wagering has 10 measures which have been agreed to by state and territory governments. The first is prohibition of lines of credit. This addresses the conflict of interest in online wagering providers effectively acting like a bank to offer lines of credit.

The second is restricting payday lenders, stopping wagering services providers from advertising payday loans. Potential connections between online wagering customers and credit providers are also restricted, as customers cannot be referred to a payday lender, nor can customer information be given to payday lenders.

The third is customer verification. Online wagering providers have to verify their customers' identity within 14 days of registration, instead of 90 days. This is designed to reduce the risk that underage and self-excluded customers, and those operating under assumed names, access online wagering.

The fourth is restrictions on inducements. Online wagering providers will be prohibited from offering any credit, voucher, reward or other benefit as an incentive to open an account or to refer another person to open an account. This is designed to protect consumers from incentive based marketing and strengthen standards for direct marketing. It also includes
preventing turnover requirements to withdrawing winnings from complementary betting credits or tokens.

The fifth is account closure. Online wagering providers have to give their Australian customers a simple, easy-to-find and readily accessible way of closing or cancelling their online accounts. Providers will be required to prominently display account closure information and ensure customers can close an account in the same channel as they bet. The account closure process must start as soon as the request is received, and consumers cannot be enticed to keep an account open.

The sixth is voluntary opt-out precommitment schemes. Consumers will be able to easily monitor and manage their gambling by setting deposit limits before they start gambling. Customers will be given a tool to precommit to their own limits, which cannot be increased on the spot, as part of a voluntary opt-out precommitment scheme. Every online wagering provider will be required to offer deposit limits to their Australian customers.

The seventh is activity statements. Online wagering providers will be required to send consumers meaningful activity statements so that they can easily track and monitor their online wagering spending and behaviour. Activity statements will increase consumers’ awareness of their spending, wins and losses.

The eighth is consistent gambling messaging. Online wagering providers will have to use the same messaging about the risks and potential harm of gambling in their advertising, direct marketing, websites and other direct communications to their customers. This is designed to ensure evidence based, consistent messaging will be used.

The ninth is staff training. Staff involved in providing online wagering services, or with the capacity to influence the service, will have to undergo training in the responsible service of online wagering.

The last, and the subject of these bills, is a National Self-exclusion Register. Not all elements of the framework have been fully implemented, and it is important that all governments take the actions they have committed to as soon as possible. It is incredibly important that the government remains vigilant to online problem gambling and takes the necessary steps to make sure Australia is a leader in best-practice consumer protection.

Can I finish by adding that the challenge of online gambling, of course, is that it can happen anywhere across the world. It can happen so easily with the amount of technology that people have accessible to them now, and that is one of the real reasons that Labor is going to support this piece of legislation. Gambling, broadly, of course, is such a terrible problem—particularly the harm it causes to families and to individuals involved. We've all seen and heard, I am sure, some of the horror stories around gambling. With the advent and the increase in interactive gambling and the pervasive nature of interactive gambling, it is very important as one step—and it is only one step, I accept that—that a national self-exclusion register be established.

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (18:20): I rise to speak on the Interactive Gambling Amendment (National Self-exclusion Register) Bill and the National Self-exclusion Register (Cost Recovery Levy) Bill. Labor supports these bills, which enable the implementation of an important consumer protection measure for individuals who are at risk of, or are already experiencing, significant gambling related harm from online wagering. But Labor notes that
it's taken the government far too long to bring these bills before the parliament and that this delay means these vulnerable Australians may not have access to this key measure as soon as they should have.

The National Self-exclusion Register (Cost Recovery Levy) Bill amends the Interactive Gambling Act 2001 to establish a national self-exclusion register. The register will allow individuals to exclude themselves from being provided interactive wagering services by all licensed interactive wagering service providers in Australia and will limit the amount of direct marketing to the individual. The register will allow people to self-exclude from all online wagering sites and apps in one go, and will be implemented by the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

The register will reflect the principles set out in the national policy statement for the national consumer protection framework for online wagering as agreed by all Australian governments. The bill will expressly provide that interactive wagering service providers licensed in Australia must not provide interactive wagering services or directly market such services to individuals who are registered on this register. The ACMA will enter into an arrangement with the body corporate to keep and maintain the register, and the ACMA will be responsible for regulatory compliance and enforcement of the register scheme and oversight of the body corporate. The bill also provides for a levy for cost recovery by the ACMA for the cost of the register and regulatory oversight.

The cost recovery levy bill is to impose a levy on persons who provide licensed interactive wagering services and for related purposes. This bill allows for the ACMA to recover its register related costs from licensed interactive wagering service providers.

I want to turn to the national consumer protection framework. Labor recognises that a well-regulated gambling industry has a place in Australian society but must be underpinned by appropriate harm minimisation measures. Labor observes the growth in online betting is in an environment where digital technology, including smartphones, enables Australians to wager and gamble with relative ease. The borderless nature of the internet presents challenges in the provision of consistent and effective protections across jurisdictions.

While the majority of people who gamble do so in a responsible manner, Labor acknowledges that gambling in our community can, in some cases, have devastating social, financial and emotional consequences. That's why Labor has maintained a strong stance on supporting appropriate harm minimisation measures to protect and assist our community. Just as Labor supported the passage of the Interactive Gambling Amendment Bill 2016 as part of the progressive implementation of the recommendations of the review of illegal offshore wagering, referred to as the O'Farrell review, Labor supports the bills now before the House.

Labor believes it's necessary to do more to protect and assist individuals who are at risk of or already experiencing significant gambling related harm from online wagering and acknowledges the national self-exclusion register enabled by these bills will go some way to doing so. The review of illegal offshore wagering was undertaken and finalised in December 2015 to investigate illegal offshore wagering and how its impacts could be mitigated in order to protect all Australians. The review also examined the efficacy of approaches to protect the consumer, including consumer protection measures, to mitigate the risks of negative social impacts. The review noted that the rate of problem gambling amongst online gamblers is three times higher than all other gambling platforms. The review found that there was consensus
among stakeholders that the National Self-exclusion Register is necessary to allow individuals to restrict contact by and their access to online gambling services without having to contact each individual interactive wagering service provider licensed in Australia.

On 26 November 2018, as part of the Commonwealth government response to the review, the Commonwealth government and state and territory governments agreed to a national consumer protection framework which includes the National Self-exclusion Register as a core measure. The register will allow individuals to self-exclude from all licensed interactive wagering service providers through a single process. Under a set of agreed principles, the National Self-exclusion Register must operate as follows. It must allow a consumer to self-exclude from all interactive wagering services in a single process. It must be quick and simple for a consumer to apply to. It must take immediate effect upon registration or sign-up. It is to be effectively promoted so that consumers are educated about self-exclusion and aware of the scheme. It must be offered across all phone and web based digital platforms. It must allow a consumer to choose their exclusion period, ranging from three months to permanent exclusion. It must afford a consumer the option to enter a sponsor, such as a friend or a family member, who will be notified at the end of their exclusion period. Information on gambling support, financial and counselling services, and information about land based self-exclusion tools must be made available to a consumer at the time they nominate to self-exclude. Information on gambling consumer protections must be made publicly available and accessible. An interactive wagering service provider is prohibited from providing any marketing and/or promotional material to a consumer who is registered for self-exclusion during the period of self-exclusion. And, upon registration for self-exclusion, all funds held in a consumer's active account must be returned to that consumer. Once all bets are settled, the account must be closed.

We expect this to be a step-change improvement upon the current self-exclusion tools that are available. Currently, only paper based processes or single-operator systems are available, which means that those most vulnerable currently have to exclude themselves from each online wagering service provider separately to stop wagering online. This piecemeal approach undermines the effectiveness of self-exclusion as a consumer protection tool. The National Self-exclusion Register is one of 10 consumer protection measures that make up the National Consumer Protection Framework for Online Wagering. The framework commenced just over a year ago, on 26 November 2018, and the measures in the framework are being implemented progressively over an 18-month time frame through a mix of Commonwealth, state and territory legislation and regulation, as set out in the national policy statement. This statement sets out the agreed implementation arrangements that Australian governments will use to deliver the national framework. It specifies the date each measures is introduced and comes into effect by reference to the commencement date of the national framework, which was November last year. The implementation time frame it sets for the national exclusion register, as I mentioned, is 18 months from the commencement of the national framework. It is subject to the enactment of enabling Commonwealth legislation and establishing, trialling and testing the National Self-exclusion Register.

I note that 18 months from the commencement of the framework in November 2018 would make May next year the implementation time frame for the register. However, given the length of time the government has taken to introduce the bills, the register will not be up and
running by May 2020. It's concerning, as the shadow minister expressed, that the government took an entire year to introduce this legislation. A year ago, the government acknowledged that more than 240,000 Australians were already experiencing significant harm from online wagering and called the ability to self-exclude a critical gap in consumer protections in Australia. Financial Counselling Australia warned there was a desperate need for the register and urged the government to make it a priority. Yet six months later, under Labor questioning at Senate estimates in April 2019, the ACMA confirmed it was still waiting for the legislation to be passed and acknowledged that a May 2020 implementation time frame was challenging. Since then, there have been eight parliamentary sitting weeks when the legislation could have been introduced, but this government has only just managed to scrape it in during the final sitting days of this year.

This government, unfortunately, has been in no hurry to protect Australians vulnerable to the harms of online gambling. Yesterday, in response to questions on notice from October 2019 Senate estimates—question No. 100—the ACMA confirmed that the passage of these amendments is the key element to the delivery of the National Self-exclusion Register. The ACMA stated that it anticipates that from the commencement of these amendments, upon royal asset, it will take a minimum of 18 months to implement the National Self-exclusion Register. This means that this critical gap in consumer protections in Australia won't be delivered in 2020. At the earliest, according to the ACMA, the register will be implemented in mid-2021, which will be some 30 months after the commencement of the framework, on this analysis.

I note here that, according to the decision regulation impact statement of the National Consumer Protection Framework, the time frame for the implementation of a functional, centralised self-exclusion register ranges between 1½ and three years. The ACMA has approached the market with a request for expressions of interest and it's expected that a request for tender will be released once the legislation has been passed. The process of procuring, designing, developing, testing and trialling the register will then commence. The national policy statement provides that system functionality will be reviewed at the end of the first 12-month period from the date the register takes effect. Labor will of course be very interested in this review, and we are very hopeful—as I'm sure all the House is—that the measure takes effect as soon as practicable.

So, Labor supports these bills. We note that, despite the critical need for this consumer protection measure, this government has unfortunately not been in a hurry to introduce these bills into the parliament. But now that they are here, as I said, we support these bills. This will fill what has been a critical gap in the consumer protection measures for online wagering, and I believe it's the sincere hope of the entire House that these have the desired effect of harm minimisation and achieving the desired results.

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (18:31): Put simply, there are millions of urgent reasons to support the Interactive Gambling Amendment (National Self-exclusion Register) Bill 2019. It's critically important that we pass it—and pass it as soon as possible. As many as 160,000 Australian adults suffer right now, today, with severe problems in their lives as a result of gambling. Up to a further 350,000 Australian adults currently display gambling behaviours, which may make them vulnerable to problem gambling in the future. According to the Productivity Commission, as many as 30 per cent of regular gamblers in this country are
problem gamblers, and as much as 40 per cent of all of the money lost in gambling in Australia is lost by this relatively small group.

Recent research commissioned by the Morrison government shows that the problem may be even more serious among those who are participants in interactive wagering online. This research, conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, surveyed 5,076 adults who have taken part in online gambling in the last year. No less than 52 per cent of respondents were classified as being at risk or already experiencing gambling related harm. The impact on their lives and on the lives of others, most particularly their families, can be very significant. On average, every one of these high-risk gamblers impacts six others' lives. They impact their spouses, children, family, friends and employers with their problem gambling. Each moderate-risk gambler affects three others, and even low-risk gamblers affect an average of one other person. The results can be deadly.

As Dr Charles Livingstone of Monash University, whom I've worked with a fair bit in this space in recent years, says: 'Gambling is a public health problem. In terms of disability-adjusted life-years, the impact of gambling is approximately the same as excessive alcohol consumption.' The evidence for this impact on gamblers themselves is overwhelming. It includes, among other studies, Black, Shaw, McCormick, and Allen's 'Marital status, childhood maltreatment, and family dysfunction: a controlled study of pathological gambling'. It also includes Hayatbakhsh et al's 'Young adults' gambling and its association with mental health and substance use problems' in Australia and New Zealand, from the *Journal of Public Health*, and Kerber et al's 'The impact of disordered gambling among older adults', in the *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services*.

These studies found that problem gambling is strongly linked to increased financial problems and bankruptcy and increased likelihood of divorce, substance abuse, anxiety and depression, and even suicide. For the significant others of problem gamblers the impacts can be just as significant. A 2013 Swedish study by Svensson, Romild and Shepherdson in *BMC Public Health* revealed that those who were closely associated with a problem gambler were significantly more likely to experience poor mental health, risky alcohol consumption, economic hardship and relationship problems. These terrible impacts are no surprise when you know the sheer scale of losses that regular gamblers in this country are experiencing.

According to the Australian gambling statistics, collated by the Queensland government, in 2017 alone Australians lost almost $24 billion to gambling. That equates to around about seven hospitals the size of the University of the Sunshine Coast. These are sums that even financially secure families can ill afford to be losing on a regular basis. For those on lower incomes such losses entrench economic disadvantage and divert money in our economy away from productive uses. There is strong evidence to suggest that gambling impacts even on those who are not close to a problem gambler—for example, through an increase in crime.

Studies—including 'The Influence of Gaming Expenditure on Crime Rates in South Australia' by Wheeler et al.—suggest that an alarmingly high percentage of problem gamblers have committed a gambling-related offence like theft, fraud or robbery. You can see this illustrated clearly in the different crime rates in areas of the country with poker machines and those without. Postcodes in Victoria with no electronic gaming machines are associated with 30 per cent fewer incidents of domestic violence and significantly lower rates of income-generating crime. In South Australia a 2008 study found the same connection. In short, the
greater the amount of money spent on gaming in a particular area the higher the area's income-generating crime becomes.

In conclusion, in this country we have more than 500,000 high-risk and moderate-risk gamblers. We have more than a million Australians gambling regularly. Many millions of lives are blighted by their association with it. We have $24 billion lost. We have increased levels of crime, divorce, bankruptcy, substance abuse, anxiety, depression and suicide. There are millions of reasons to support this bill.

Like people living with other addictions, many, perhaps most, problem gamblers go through times when they want to stop gambling. However, interactive wagering presents a number of unique challenges for anyone who wants to change their lives. Online gambling is constantly available, accessible at any moment from the smartphone in your pocket. If you have an account that phone will be bombarded with constant emails and messages promoting yet more and more wagers. Users can have multiple accounts and, indeed, on average, they have 2.3 of them. Though a user might shut down an account, often there will be others waiting to be activated and used when their resolve falters. Finally, online gambling can be hidden from those around you. Available silently and easily through a smartphone it is easy to conceal from people who are trying to help. These factors make online wagering a nightmare for any problem gambler who wants to make a difference for themselves and for those around them.

This bill will make these challenges significantly easier to overcome. By allowing users to opt-out of interactive wagering services for the periods of between three months and one's own lifetime, the bill furnishes users with the opportunity to give themselves a break. During that break their smartphone will no longer be an enemy in their struggle against problem gambling. Wagering will no longer be available to them at the touch of a button—right there in their pocket all hours of the day and the night. That break can be all a problem gambler needs to regain control and adopt a healthier approach to their wagering. For others, it will give them time to reflect on their habits or perhaps turn a corner and stop their gambling completely. By excluding the user from all of their accounts simultaneously and preventing them from signing up for any more, the register will ensure that their addiction cannot leave problem gamblers with an easy out. It will deny them that secret way back into their old habits, which can so often be the downfall of good intentions. By prohibiting interactive wagering providers from actively marketing to users during the time they are registered, the bill will end the constant barrage of promotion which makes temptation so much harder to resist.

Finally, the bill will allow users to nominate up to five individuals to be a support person and ensure that these individuals are informed about when the exclusion is beginning and when it is due to end. This will help problem gamblers to bring their struggle into the light and to draw on the support of their friends and family. By informing supporters when an exclusion is due to end, the register will encourage conversations about how well it has worked and whether the user should consider extending it.

If we are to reduce and hopefully even end the scourge of problem gambling in this country, we must support gamblers to transform their own lives. We must provide them with the means to limit their exposure and the tools they need to turn things around. That is what this bill delivers. It's an important step forward, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to
support it today. However, as I've said in this place, in the media and in my conversations with the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, I believe that alongside the legislation before us today there is more that we could also consider doing. In particular, I believe we should consider extending the government's restrictions on gambling advertising around live sport. It is very welcome that the government has acted to prohibit gambling advertising from traditional and online broadcasts of live sport between the hours of 5 am and 8.30 pm from five minutes before kick-off. However, any major sporting event broadcast on television or online often includes extensive pre-match coverage and entertainment which appeals to children.

I could not tell you the amount of feedback I got on social media from people watching the grand final—whether it was the NRL or the AFL—about the amount of absolute bombardment that people were getting on television for live sport betting. I believe we should consider extending the prohibition against gambling advertising to all such pre-match coverage. Equally, many of the biggest sporting contests are scheduled in prime-time evening slots to maximise their broadcast appeal. With sports matches lasting two to three hours, most of these major contests continue well past 8.30 pm. Many, if not most, children are allowed to watch these contests to the end. I therefore also believe that we should extend the ban to all coverage of live sporting contests whether it continues past 8.30 or not. Ultimately, in the longer-term, I hope that we will be able to act to prohibit gambling ads from broadcasting services altogether between 7 am and 10 pm.

We have a duty in this place to protect our most vulnerable Australians from the harm that is caused by gambling. The number of children who now seem to be able to disassociate sport from gambling is very, very concerning. When I was a kid, when you'd be swapping footy cards, you knew all the favourite players of your favourite teams, their positions and how many goals they kicked over the weekend. Today, what our young people know about sport is more and more about the odds that someone is offering them. It is a huge problem that we in this place have an obligation to address. Let kids be kids and sport be sport.

If people want to gamble when they're adults, that's a matter for them. But this bill will go a long way towards addressing problem gambling. We need to do everything we can to limit problem gamblers' exposure to wagering and help them avoid its most damaging effects. This bill is an important step forward in achieving that end for the hundreds of thousands of Australians who are already at risk of problem gambling, and I commend it to the House.

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (18:45): In the 1980s, economist Gary Becker developed the theory of rational addiction. Rational addiction, which applies to any sort of addictive substance, is the notion that, as an individual considers whether or not to take up an addictive substance, they think rationally about the probability that they will get addicted to it and the costs and benefits of all of that—so, when a teenager takes their first smoke, they're thinking rationally about the long-term impact it will have on their lives if they become addicted; when somebody takes their first drink, they're thinking about the risk of addiction and, mathematically, quickly doing all the costs and benefits as to the lifetime impact; or, when someone gambles, there are also computing the costs and benefits and considering rationally the probability of addiction.

If this theory sounds crazy to you, it's because fundamentally it is. Behavioural economics has taught us that people aren't rational when it comes to addictive products. The awarding of
the Nobel prize to Daniel Kahneman and Richard Thaler reflected the better understanding in economics of addictions being irrational—how we find ourselves eating more than we should, exercising less than we want to, smoking more than we want to, drinking more than we want to and gambling more than we want to.

Gambling has been recognised as a disorder by the American Psychiatric Association in their Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. It lays out nine indicators of a person with gambling disorder: (1) needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money to achieve the desired excitement; (2) restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling; (3) repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back on or stop gambling; (4) frequent thoughts about gambling, such as reliving past gambling experiences; (5) often gambles when feeling distressed; (6) after losing money gambling, often returns to get even, 'chasing losses'; (7) lies to conceal gambling activity; (8) has jeopardised or lost a significant relationship, job or educational opportunity because of gambling; (9) relies on others to help with money problems caused by gambling. A person is considered to have gambling disorder if they present with four or more of those nine indicators.

The economics profession has also pointed to the role that chips and credit can play in causing gamblers to go over the top. It's a bit like the way in which we sometimes overspend when we use credit cards rather than cash. Casino chips and cash-out tickets from electronic gambling machines, and their virtual equivalents, can lead gamblers to bet more than they intend to. Modern gambling machines are designed with the help of psychologists who understand addiction, but from the opposite side—helping those who are trying to profit from gambling. They use something called variable interval reinforcement schedule, giving you payouts at unexpected times. They adjust the noises, the environment, the lighting, everything, in order to encourage gamblers to bet big. For some, that can increase the pleasure of gambling; for others, that can increase the pain to themselves and to their families.

We know that this is a huge issue in Australia. Australians are the world's gold medallists when it comes to gambling losses.

As the previous speaker, the member for Fisher, has noted, Australians lose some $24 billion a year. Gambling losses in 2017 were estimated at $1,068 per adult, which is 40 per cent higher than the next highest country, Singapore. Australian gambling losses per adult are twice the gambling losses per adult in the United States. Australians lose three times as much per person as Brits. We lose four times as much per person as a typical German or French adult.

As James Boyce noted in a recent article in The Monthly, that wasn't true of Australia in the 1970s. We have increased our gambling losses just in the course of the past generation. Part of that is due to the rise of poker machines. As Tim Costello has pointed out, Australia, a country with 0.3 per cent of the world's population, has 18 per cent of the world's poker machines. The member for Fisher has talked about some of the social harms that can occur as a result of problem gambling, such as bankruptcy, divorce and suicide—and the impact on the children of gamblers, who might not enjoy sport for its own sake but who might be captivated by in-play betting and think that to enjoy sport is to place a bet on the next play rather than to simply enjoy the game for its own sake.

The government has acknowledged that more than 240,000 Australians are experiencing significant harm from online wagering. Sometimes that harm can be tragic. Tim Costello has
pointed to statistics from a Victorian coroner that indicate that, from 2000 to 2012, 128 suicides were tied to gambling. Financial Counselling Australia have warned that there is a desperate need for the National Self-Exclusion Register and they have urged the government to make it a priority.

The Labor Party has been concerned that the government has not acted quickly enough on the National Self-Exclusion Register. We support it. It is a sensible behavioural economics intervention which allows people to choose a period of self-exclusion which would range from three months to permanent exclusion. Individuals would be prompted 14 days before their self-exclusion period ends. They will be able to re-register for another period. Each person who registers themselves can register up to five support people, and those support people will also be notified 14 days before the end of the self-exclusion period. That ensures that those who are suffering from gambling addiction are able to draw on the support of family and friends at that time.

Essentially, self-exclusion allows people to tie themselves to the mast just as Odysseus did for the Sirens. Odysseus knew that the Sirens would be too tempting to resist, so he had his men plug their ears with wax and tie him to the mast, with instructions that, regardless of what he said, he was not to be untied from that mast. Odysseus knew that the temptation of the Sirens would be something he would be unable to overcome. And so, too, will people who will use the National Self-Exclusion Register be able to tie themselves to the mast to exclude themselves from all online gambling. They won't have to deal with it site by site; they'll be able to do it holus-bolus—across the board.

The behavioural economic studies that have been done on these sorts of interventions suggest that there is a positive impact. A study by Damien Brevers and co-authors looked at the impact of pre-commitment on risk-taking while gambling and found that, in a randomised study, giving participants the opportunity to make a binding choice that made high-risk options unavailable caused them to decrease risk-taking. A study of Norwegian gamblers by Michael Auer and co-authors found that those gamblers who received personalised feedback in relation to limit-setting showed significant reductions in the amount of money gambled. These kinds of interventions are worth exploring more deeply.

But I do agree with the member for Fisher that there are other approaches that we should explore in this space. If we had a national research funding body, it might be able to not only bring together the existing research but also generate more research as to how we can help people overcome their own addictions. We do this with other addictive products as a matter of course. We have a whole range of government programs that aim to assist smokers kick the habit, because three-quarters of smokers say they would like to quit. But there's much less application of behavioural economics and smart interventions grounded in evidence when it comes to dealing with problem gambling. So small-scale studies looking at the impact of voluntary pre-commitment, limits on advertising and in-play betting and measures to ensure that people aren't hurt through addiction to pokies would be welcome. Many Australians do, indeed, enjoy gambling, but we need to ensure that the harms that are done by gambling are wiped out.

I want to acknowledge the courage of Tasmanian Labor and Bec White in the last Tasmanian state election in their willingness to stand up to vested interests in order to reduce the harm done to vulnerable Tasmanians. The result of that election does illustrate the
importance of donation transparency. Labor has recently called for real-time disclosure of donations in order to ensure that these debates are carried out based on evidence rather than simply political donations.

There's a lot more to be done to reduce the harm that is being caused, by the government's own estimate, to almost a quarter of a million Australians. We shouldn't be leading the world in gambling losses. That's not a gold medal that I want Australia to have.

Mr MORTON (Tangney—Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet) (18:56): I thank my parliamentary colleagues for their contributions to the debate today regarding the National Self-Exclusion Register for online wagering. This package of bills—the Interactive Gambling Amendment (National Self-Exclusion Register) Bill 2019 and the National Self-Exclusion Register (Cost Recovery Levy) Bill 2019—will establish the legislative regime for the register and will enable costs associated with the register to be fully recovered from interactive wagering providers through a cost-recovery levy. The register will allow people to quickly and easily exclude themselves from all interactive wagering services licensed in Australia through a single registration process. This will meet a critical gap in consumer protection for Australians who gamble online and reduce the harm of online wagering to vulnerable consumers.

The register will be available to around one million online wagering consumers but will target approximately 240,000 Australians who are already experiencing harm from online wagering. This is crucial as we know that the usage of online wagering is rapidly growing and the rate of problem gambling is three times higher online than it is across all other forms of gambling. The register is a key Commonwealth led measure under the national framework, and it's critical to protect vulnerable Australians who gamble online. The register will allow any ordinary resident of Australia to exclude themselves from all interactive wagering services licensed in Australia. All licensed interactive wagering providers are in scope for the register, including on-course bookmakers and telephone-only services.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority will procure an independent third-party technology provider to supply, operate and maintain the register on their behalf. ACMA will regulate the register scheme, including the register provider and licensed Australian interactive wagering providers. The register bill will provide ACMA with the necessary powers to regulate and enforce compliance and fund the register.

Interactive wagering providers will be required to ensure that individuals on the register are not provided with any interactive wagering services. Additionally, interactive wagering providers must ensure that new interactive wagering accounts are not opened for registered individuals and that existing accounts are closed and funds returned to the individual after existing bets are settled. To meet these obligations, interactive wagering providers will be required to regularly check the register, with processes to be further outlined in the register rules.

In summary, this package of bills will establish a national self-exclusion register which will allow people to quickly and easily exclude themselves from all interactive wagering services licensed in Australia through a single registration process. This will ensure that this vital consumer protection tool is readily available for vulnerable individuals that are at risk of or are already experiencing harm from online wagering. The costs associated with the register will be recovered from interactive wagering providers through a cost-recovery levy. The
register is a first in Australia, and I consider it an important step in achieving best practice for social responsibility in online wagering. The government will continue to work with stakeholders as we implement the register and we will monitor the scheme to ensure it is meeting its consumer protection outcomes.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr MORTON (Tangney—Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet) (19:00):

by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

National Self-exclusion Register (Cost Recovery Levy) Bill 2019

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr MORTON (Tangney—Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet) (19:02):

by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

CONDOLENCES

Humphreys, Hon. Benjamin Charles, AM

Report from Federation Chamber

Order of the day returned from Federation Chamber for further consideration; certified copy presented.

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That the House record its deep regret at the death, on 17 November 2019, of the Honourable Benjamin Charles Humphreys AM, a Member of this House for the Division of Griffith from 1977 to 1996, place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Question agreed to.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bird) (19:03): The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for Hunter has moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (19:04): The Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment (Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority Board and Other Improvements) Bill 2019 may at first sight appeared to be of little significance, but to me it is a bill of really major import and one that really sums up for me the problems of the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government and their continual destructive behaviour towards Australian science and, in particular, some of our very well developed institutions. It was the much admired John Kerin, the Hawke government's long-serving primary industries minister, who first put together this country's first national framework for managing the use of pesticides and veterinary medicines. This process started back in 1991. John Kerin was at one stage the member for Macarthur, later the member for Werriwa, and gave great service to this country. He has not lost interest in rural affairs and in veterinary and agricultural practice; he has been a very keen observer of the damage that has been caused by the move of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority from Canberra to Armidale, the seat of the member for New England, in a manner that was very destructive of the ability of the APVMA to work and one that really gave an insight into this government's anti-science agenda. It has been a very tragic set of circumstances.

The APVMA tests pesticides used in agriculture and medicines used in veterinary practice in Australia to make sure they are safe and can be used effectively. Unfortunately the science around some of the developing technologies in pesticide use and medical science used in veterinary medicine is very complex these days. It took many years—indeed, decades—to build a group of scientific people with the abilities and expertise to deal with these very complex matters. With a stroke of a pen, the member for New England tore it down—a great shame—to move it to Armidale, a place disconnected from academic institutions such as the Australian National University, at enormous cost. We still don't know the literally hundreds of millions of dollars that this move has cost. This continual disruption has caused industry leaders to despair about the delays in getting veterinary medicines and pesticides approved for use in Australia and has led, I believe, to many major companies delaying or even withdrawing applications to use these things in Australia—a great shame that can be laid at
the feet of this very conservative, reactionary and anti-science government, and we will be paying the cost of this for decades.

It has now led to about half the scientific staff having to return to Canberra to make the APVMA function. They're still trying desperately to get the scientific expertise uploaded and working so that the delays and backlogs that have been created can be addressed—and very little comment from this government. We all should be talking about this bill. It is a very important one. It's important for all of us who have pets, and I believe something like 70 per cent of the Australian population have pets. We use some of these veterinary medicines, particularly the anti-parasitic medications, in our pets. All of us who live on the east coast who are worried about ticks for our dogs and cats will be using medications that have been approved by the APVMA. Many of these medications used initially in animal medicine will eventually be used in human medicine. The other issue is that some medications like antibiotics are used overseas in large animal populations, and many of them may not indeed be safe for use in humans. We need to protect ourselves from their being used in our agricultural practices, and the APVMA was our primary source of protection.

The bill we're talking about now is going to amend several acts mainly related to the administration of the APVMA. It will also repeal some of the previous legislation and establish a governance board for the APVMA. This will at the same time cease the existing APVMA advisory board, which has been pretty much redundant for the last five or six years. This will increase the governance costs. It will cost, I believe, between $400,000 and $600,000 a year to develop and maintain this governance board, again adding to the costs of the terrible destruction of what was previously a very well-functioning organisation.

The government, now six years on from when they initially wanted to move the APVMA, are trying to implement amendments by combining all the packages together. They seem to have delayed the entrance of this particular bill. The costs of relocation, as I said, we still don't know. The performance of the APVMA completely collapsed during the very prolonged relocation process. For complex applications, the performance figures of the APVMA are still very, very delayed. We have a situation where the government, out of the blue, with no evidence, no science, decided that they would move the APVMA. They have, as is typical for the government, not provided any transparency about the costs or the real reasons for the move. There certainly was no scientific evidence for the move. All the major stakeholders, including all the major chemical and pharmaceutical companies, were horrified at what happened. I've spoken to several of them who just found the move completely inexplicable. It was done, we believe, just as a way to harness a few votes for the member for New England, and the result has been catastrophic.

Grain Producers Australia said that, to ensure absolute public confidence in the independence of a skills based APVMA board, the costs for the appointment and operation of the board should be fully funded by the government rather than by industry, because we need independence. The costs of the board are estimated, as I've said, to be about $600,000 a year. CropLife and Medicines Australia, the peak bodies representing the industries regulated by the APVMA, have clearly indicated they do not support the implementation of the governance board, and they have concerns that the governance board will be a direct additional cost to the farming sector, when Australia is already one of the world's most expensive agricultural chemical regulators. It's important to note also that Australia is actually quite a small market,
so many of these large multinational companies are not presenting their products for assessment in Australia, because the costs are too large for such a small market. Again, this is very anti science.

There is a compelling case for more transparency not just about the move but also about the function of the APVMA. The real issue for me is that the government have been prepared to destroy a very well-functioning, world-respected scientific organisation to buy a few votes—an absolute tragedy. I think the government should relook at the governance board and how they're managing this. Whilst we will not be voting against this bill, we do think the government need to provide more transparency about the whole exercise. We really see the move as just a piece of tokenism to support the member for New England. Shunting the APVMA off to New England and then trying to retrofit a few hastily thought-up governance organisations has been a very bad thing. I believe this really needs to be rethought. We need to refund and redevelop a really world-class APVMA. I know attempts are being made to do that in Armidale, but the whole exercise should be rethought. The relocation clearly disrupted the efficiency and effectiveness of the APVMA and led to the loss of a number of highly qualified, highly trained staff who'd been with the organisation for many years. It also removes the organisation from the centrality of access by the big pharmaceutical and pesticide companies and by other scientific organisations.

This bill, whilst it doesn't have a major impact on the Australian government, will have major impacts on the supplies of these chemicals, and those costs will be put directly onto the Australian veterinary and agricultural industries, and really I think we need to rethink the whole process. I'm not going to talk any longer on the bill itself. We don't oppose the bill, but we really think it demonstrates, once again, the anti-science agenda of a reactionary government who are unwilling to look at the evidence, unwilling to do the right thing by Australian industry and particularly by Australian agriculture, in spite of all the hyped-up language they use in the press. They've done a very bad thing, and they should be made to pay the costs of what they've done.

Mr EVANS (Brisbane—Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management) (19:16): The Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment (Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority Board and Other Improvements) Bill 2019 improves agvet chemical legislation. It streamlines legislated processes to reduce regulatory burden. It also strengthens the vital protections for the health and safety of humans, animals, plants and the environment.

Given its vital role, the APVMA requires robust governance arrangements that reflect modern practices. The bill supports this by establishing the APVMA board and ceasing the advisory board. The bill includes measures that will support the administrative efficiency of the APVMA and help improve the handling time for applications. These measures will enable the use of new, simpler processes for assessments based on risk and will increase the APVMA's flexibility to deal with errors in applications. These measures promote quicker access to safe and effective chemical products.

The bill will also enable the APVMA to choose, where appropriate, to use computerised decision-making as part of its processes. This can increase efficiency while maintaining the appropriate checks and balances. The bill provides for incentives for registration holders to include, on product labels, certain uses of chemical products that they would not ordinarily
register. This will significantly benefit Australian farmers. The bill also streamlines industry reporting, reducing costs for industry without compromising the availability of information. Importantly, the bill also strengthens the integrity of the regulatory framework. The APVMA must rely on information provided to it by applicants. The bill provides the APVMA with a broader suite of sanctions that will allow it to proportionately respond to any faults or misleading information it receives. This includes both administrative sanctions and civil pecuniary penalties.

The bill further bolsters the integrity of the agvet chemical regulatory system by ensuring that all holders and applicants must inform the APVMA if they become aware of new information about their chemical. This includes information that suggests that the substance may no longer meet the statutory safety requirements for humans, plants, animals or the environment. The bill also includes measures to improve the integrity and transparency of voluntary recalls of agvet chemicals. This will ensure that reporting obligations are clear for persons recalling these chemicals.

Notably, the bill also introduces a five-person skills based governance board for the APVMA. Currently all responsibility for the APVMA’s strategic leadership, governance and day-to-day operations rests with the chief executive officer. This places an unreasonable management burden on the position of CEO. The board will be the accountable authority under the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013. It will ensure the proper, efficient and effective performance of the APVMA’s functions and determine the policies, objectives and strategies that the APVMA follows.

The APVMA will continue to deliver independent and evidence based decisions. The board will oversee how the APVMA does its job by establishing and monitoring the framework under which it operates. Day-to-day administration and decision-making, such as registering individual chemical products and undertaking compliance and enforcement activities, will remain the responsibility of the CEO.

The bill also requires that, when determining the objectives, strategies and policies to be followed by the APVMA, the board must have regard to how the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code is implemented. This includes recognising that the health and safety of humans, animals and the environment is the first priority; the APVMA should take a science based approach to risk assessment and management; and regulatory effort should be balanced against risk.

The board model chosen by the government is comparable with other corporate Commonwealth entities and with private sector companies. Its proposed size, composition, role, functions, duties and powers conform to Commonwealth policy, as well as modern best practice guidance, on corporate governance. The bill additionally requires a review of the operation of the board after four years to assess its effectiveness and efficiency.

Separately, the bill ceases the APVMA advisory board, which had no legislative powers to direct any action and has not operated since 2015. The APVMA already has the ability to consult with stakeholders without the advisory board, including through committees established under the new board. Collectively, the measures in the bill will make agvet chemical legislation more flexible and efficient, incentivise the registration of new product uses and strengthen the integrity of Australia’s agvet chemicals regulation framework. In addition, replacing the advisory board with a governance board will position the APVMA to...
become a more modern and sustainable regulator. The board will bring an expanded range of governance skills to the APVMA and deliver a more effective and efficient organisation. I commend the bill to the House.

Question negatived.
Original question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.
Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr EVANS (Brisbane—Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management) (19:22): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority Amendment (Enhancing Australia's Anti-Doping Capability) Bill 2019

Second Reading

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

Mr CONROY (Shortland) (19:23): I rise to speak on the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority Amendment (Enhancing Australia's Anti-Doping Capability) Bill 2019. I move:

Whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes that the Government's revolving door of sports ministers—no less than five (plus a briefly acting minister) in just six years—have made ad hoc, one-off and non-ongoing funding announcements that have made it extremely difficult for national sports organisations, such as the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority, to make detailed plans beyond the constraints of a single budget cycle, including for the enhancement of their own integrity capabilities”.

This bill seeks to strengthen Australia's capability to prevent, detect and deal with the issue of doping in sport. Australians value fair play and expect a level playing field in sport. We're inspired by the efforts of our sportspeople in local and international competitions and on the international sporting stage. Their stories and achievements enhance the reputation of Australian sport and our love for it.

The opposite is true when revelations of doping are reported. Doping undermines our ability and our confidence in the integrity of sport and leads us to question whether the sporting events we love to watch are really being contested on a level playing field. In government, Labor recognised the need to upgrade and update Australia's antidoping regime to keep up with new and evolving risks. In 2012, the federal Labor government established the National Integrity of Sport Unit, and in 2013 we passed legislation to strengthen the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority's powers. Sport doping threats have continued to evolve, so it's appropriate that Australia's protective measures are regularly reviewed and, if required, updated. In August 2017, in response to those ever-evolving risks, the government
announced the review of Australia's sports integrity arrangements. Justice James Wood chaired the review panel and the review came to be known as the Wood review. The government received the Wood review report in March 2018 and released its response to the review in February this year. It is a detailed and extensive review of nearly 300 pages containing 52 recommendations. Recommendation No. 18 says:

That ASADA's regulatory role and engagement with sports in relation to the audit and enforcement of sport's compliance with anti-doping rules and approved policies be enhanced by establishing regulatory compliance powers exercisable by the proposed NSIC in collaboration with (and at the request of) the ASADA CEO.

This bill, to some extent, seeks to implement that recommendation. However, I note the review also recommends retaining ASADA as Australia's national antidoping organisation, whereas the government has decided to bring antidoping operations under the umbrella of a new agency, Sports Integrity Australia. That agency will be established by the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority Amendment (Sport Integrity Australia) Bill 2019 in response to another recommendation of the Wood review, which called for the establishment of a national sports integrity commission.

ASADA has said it supports the inclusion of antidoping activities in the remit of Sports Integrity Australia, and that move is supported by the majority of Australia's major sporting organisations. Labor supports, in principle, measures designed to protect the integrity of Australian sport and we will support the passage of this bill through the House of Representatives. However, I note that this bill and the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority Amendment (Sport Integrity Australia) Bill 2019 have been referred by the Senate to the Community Affairs Committee for short inquiries, both reporting on 3 February next year. While Labor supports the intent of the bill, we hope the committee inquiry process will provide further opportunity for stakeholders to outline concerns relating to specific aspects of the bill. Stakeholders have raised concerns around some aspects of this bill with the shadow minister for sport, Senator Don Farrell. These concerns relate largely to the potential for some aspects of the bill to unfairly impact on individual rights. I know Senator Farrell has been in negotiations with the minister for sport, Senator Richard Colbeck, about the stakeholder concerns, which include: the lowering of the threshold for a disclosure notice from 'reasonable belief' to 'reasonable suspicion'; the removal of the right to not self-incriminate; and the protection granted to national sports organisations against civil action. The intended purpose of each change in isolation is clear. However, concerned stakeholders have suggested that potential unintended and cumulative impacts may erode the fundamental rights of individual athletes beyond what is necessary to achieve the intent of the enhanced antidoping capabilities set out in this bill.

As is also the case with the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority Amendment (Sport Integrity Australia) Bill 2019, the stakeholder concerns raised with the opposition are largely mirrored in issues raised by the scrutiny committee. For example, the lowering of the threshold for a disclosure notice from 'reasonable belief' to 'reasonable suspicion'—a concern of associations for athletes—has also been flagged by the scrutiny committee. Athletes groups have suggested that lowering the threshold would effectively deny athletes the protections that are offered to criminal suspects. They point out that complying with disclosure notices, including accessing legal advice, can be costly and time-consuming. Representative bodies argue that putting athletes in a position where such costs are incurred merely on the basis of
reasonable suspicion is unfair. The scrutiny committee has queried the need for the change and asked why a reasonable belief could not be formed on the basis of intelligence gathered while investigating a potential antidoping breach. Stakeholders have sought the chance to provide more detail of their concerns around fair processes and opportunities for appeal or to seek damages in the case of error.

Labor believes a parallel inquiry through the community affairs committee will provide the chance for stakeholders who wish to raise issues. We may move amendments to this bill in the Senate if we believe the matters highlighted through the committee process require the bill to be altered. Labor supports strong anti-doping measures, but if the balance in this bill between necessary new and enhanced powers and the rights of individuals can be improved then it should be. We will support this bill in this place, noting its likely referral in the other place.

The SPEAKER: Is the amendment seconded?
Mr Josh Wilson: I second the amendment and reserve my right to speak.

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER (19:30): It being 7.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Parliamentary Representation

Mr GORMAN (Perth) (19:30): I completely reject the idea that Australians are or should be quiet. For us to do our work in this place, we need noisy, passionate and purposeful Australians. One of the joys of our work as parliamentarians is the powerful advocates we meet. They're powerful advocates like Micah at Voices for Justice, who has been in this building this week providing a voice to some of the poorest people in the world and helping faith leaders have their voices heard both here and across the Pacific. They're powerful voices like Tamara Lindsay, a constituent of mine who is suffering from lung cancer. Lung cancer is one of the most deadly cancers. She is advocating for lung care nurses, just as we have provided for breast cancer and prostate cancer patients. They're powerful voices like Girl Guides WA, who sent a 20-person strong delegation to my office calling for meaningful action on climate change. They're young leaders like Ronan, who was the 2019 Head Boy at Mount Lawley Senior High School. He rocked up at my mobile office just last Saturday to outline his plans to improve mental health services for young people in Western Australia. When I think of powerful voices, I think of the kindergarten students at Perth College campaigning in their own tiny way to save our oceans from plastic pollution.

To those advocates I say thank you. Campaigning for change can often feel thankless. You have meetings and you share ideas, but change is always slow to come. To everyone who wants to change the world, especially our young Australians, remember that our country is stronger because people like you chose to share their voices. We have workplace safety laws only because people campaigned for them. We have free public schooling only because people campaigned for it. It took decades of election campaigns for Medicare to become untouchable.
My advice to Australians who want to help shape the future is, first, never be afraid to raise a concern with your local member of parliament. Find a method that is best for you—a letter, an email, a phone call or a meeting. Second, be confident. Your opinions matter. Your personal story and what matters most in your life is what people want to hear. If it helps, test your ideas with friends. Ask for feedback. Do a bit more research.

Third, talk about the type of world that you want to build. Don't talk about the cost to a business or some small-target approach. Talk about community, national and international interests. Think of big structural reforms. It's just as hard to campaign for something small as it is to campaign for something big. Today is the International Day of People with Disability. It was big-picture thinking that drove the campaign and the delivery of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Fourth, put your idea in writing. If you aren't confident in writing down your ideas, ask someone to help you. You don't need to leave behind a Christmas cake or a toy plane or any of the other silly things that lobbyists hand out in this place. Leaving behind a great idea is the best thing you can do for your local member of parliament. On that, I note that one great idea I recently received was from Shelter WA, campaigning to reduce or eliminate Western Australia's housing debt.

Fifth, ask for connections, contacts and help. You never know who out there might have the same ideas as you and you might also get some good feedback on your campaign. Sixth, always follow up. If someone makes a promise to you, hold them to it. The only reason I and many people in this place are members of an avalanche, a never-ending stream, of parliamentary friends groups, is that we couldn't say no to advocates like Tamara Lindsay. Remember that you won't always be successful. My campaign in the early 2000s to get 50c bus fares for TAFE and uni students, just like high school students had, was a complete failure, but it's important to learn from setbacks, debrief and regroup, and the feedback I got made me even more passionate about a publicly owned, publicly run public transport system.

Finally, and most importantly, remember that the people you are lobbying are human too. They make mistakes. They have different priorities. But, most importantly, they change their mind, and you are an important part of that. The marriage equality debate showed that people across Australia, and across this parliament, can and do change their mind. So, to all the Australians who are out there campaigning for change, knowing that the best country in the world could be even more amazing, I say thank you very much and I wish you the absolute best for your campaigns for 2020 and into the future.

Griffiths, Laylah
Surf Life Saving Tasmania

Mr PEARCE (Braddon) (19:35): We are privileged in this place to be able to tell stories of remarkable people and organisations who are making our local communities better places to live through their selfless actions. Tonight it's my pleasure to update the House on a couple of those examples in my electorate of Braddon. Laylah Griffiths is a young lady from Somerset. Five years ago Laylah started Laylah's Gifts, a charitable campaign that delivers Christmas gift boxes to organisations such as the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, women's shelters and youth, family and community connections. When I met with Laylah recently it was obvious right away that she is a remarkable person. Laylah has an enormous
capacity to care and she has converted her concern into action. This Christmas, Laylah's Gifts will deliver more than 200 gift boxes to those in need. But what makes this an extraordinary story is that Laylah is just nine years old. Well done, Laylah, for reminding us what is really important at Christmas time. I know that we are united in saying how profoundly proud we are of you, of your nan and of your message that it is not about what's in those Christmas boxes but it's about the thought and the love that goes into each and every one of them.

Christmas means summer. With summer just around the corner I'd also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our incredible surf lifesaving movement—in particular, to highlight the enormous contribution that this organisations makes in my electorate of Braddon. Surf Life Saving Tasmania comprises 14 surf lifesaving clubs, seven marine rescue units and three support services. These organisations have more than 2,300 members pretty evenly spread across both male and female genders. Of the 14 clubs in Tasmania, half are on the north-west coast. They are the great surf lifesaving clubs of Burnie, Boat Harbour, Devonport, Penguin, Port Sorell, Somerset and Ulverstone. Surf lifesaving has a long and proud history on the coast, with the first club in Tasmania being Burnie, which was founded nearly 100 years ago in 1921. In 1927 the Devonport Surf Life Saving Club was founded, followed by Ulverstone. The Penguin Surf Life Saving Club was founded in 1930. To demonstrate the north-west coast's leadership in the area of surf lifesaving and education, it would be a further 30 years before any club outside the electorate of Braddon was founded in Tasmania. Surf lifesaving is a volunteer driven organisation. Those patrolling our local beaches or taking on roles within our surf clubs give up their time and receive no pay.

Last Sunday the Burnie Surf Life Saving Club on West Beach was a hive of activity. Nippers were running around everywhere having great fun in the sand and the surf, being active, learning great skills, building confidence and developing into leaders of tomorrow. I have no doubt that this level of activity and enjoyment was being replicated on beaches right across the north-west coast. I thank every giving person who heads down to the beach on Sunday mornings and makes this all possible. This summer, if you've been thinking about volunteering, why not contact your local surf club? If that's not for you, you can help out just by taking care in the surf this summer. Know your capabilities. Swim between the flags. Read the safety signs. If you're a surfer or a paddler, make sure you let somebody know where you're going. Make sure you take a mate with you. If you're considering a summer holiday, why not travel to the north-west coast of Tasmania and enjoy the most magnificent and best patrolled beaches in the world at Burnie, Boat Harbour, Devonport, Penguin, Somerset and Ulverstone?

Timor-Leste

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (19:39): I want to speak tonight about mates, about standing up and speaking out and about doing the right thing. I want to talk about East Timor and the merciless pursuit of two men. Before I do that, under the protection of parliamentary privilege, I'll start at the beginning of a dark chapter in Australia's history. Gough Whitlam is a legend. He's left a tremendous legacy. But on one occasion, regarding East Timor, I don't think Gough made the right call. Straight after East Timor declared independence from Portugal in 1975, it was invaded by Indonesia. East Timor was also our neighbour and friend, especially from World War II, but we turned our backs and supported Indonesia's annexation of East Timor. Five Australian based journalists were murdered at Balibo, East Timor, on 16
October 1975, killed during an Indonesian led attack just before the invasion. By standing by, the Australian government sanctioned Indonesia's legal right to East Timor and the two-decade-long occupation that followed. The Timor Sea is worth billions of dollars to Australia because of its oil and gas. The truth is we sold out our friend for cold, hard cash.

In 1999, the Timorese again voted for independence. Sadly, a campaign of terror followed. Australia evacuated foreigners in East Timor, but that was the extent of our initial intervention. A group of foreign journalists refused to leave, despite their colleagues being murdered under similar circumstances to 1975, but they wouldn't abandon the brave East Timorese. Those courageous journalists made sure that Australians and the rest of the world knew what was going on in East Timor, and it was genocide. It's reported that nearly 31 per cent of the Timor-Leste population perished. Australians wondered why our government was doing nothing. Eventually, the United States acted, telling Indonesia to leave East Timor. It was an Australian led peacekeeping team that liberated East Timor in September 1999. They were hailed as heroes. But we weren't the trusted friends or good neighbours we should have been in the aftermath.

After Timor's independence, negotiations continued to secure Australia's share in Timor-Leste's oil and gas. So began an episode that none of us would have known about were it not for one ASIS officer whose good conscience would not permit him to stay quiet. In 2004, when John Howard was Prime Minister and Alexander Downer was the foreign minister, ASIS bugged government offices of the newly independent Timor-Leste to gain an advantage in the negotiations regarding Australia's share of the oil and gas reserves. It was a dog act to a friend, a friend struggling to recover from decades of oppression, a poor country where people were dying from tuberculosis at a rate 122 times higher than in Australia and whose infant mortality rate was 20 times greater than Australia's.

At the time of this dog act in 2004, Prime Minister Howard was actually fighting a war on terror in the region. In October 2002, terrorists bombed a nightclub in Bali, killing 202 people, including, tragically, 88 Australians. In September 2004, terrorists bombed the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, killing eight innocent people. Yet precious intelligence resources were expended to bug our friend during crucial negotiations for commercial gain—one of the richest countries in the world doing over one ranked 169th. And, to make matters worse, the bugging was done under the cover of an aid project, putting our Australian aid workers all around the world in peril. Who benefited most from this dog act? Australia ended up with a disproportionate share of the resources in the area known as Greater Sunrise, but resources companies like Woodside benefited commercially from the rigged deal.

We would never have known about this dog act if not for the valiant ASIS officer now known as Witness K. The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security—a bipartisan committee with a majority of government members—is specifically not allowed to review particular operations that have been, are being or are proposed to be undertaken by agencies, including ASIS, whereas, in the United States, intelligence and judiciary committees are regularly briefed about intelligence collection programs. But, in Australia, the intelligence and security committee could not have been briefed on the bugging, rendering it secret, known only to those in the coalition executive who made the decision and those involved in the actual operation. But for Witness K, we would have never know about this dog act. Witness K tried to do the right thing. Witness K obtained permission to talk to an
approved lawyer. Witness K and that lawyer, Bernard Collaery, are now both on trial. These are trials the Morrison government wants to hold in secret. What message does this trumped-up harassment send to whistleblowers? Shut up or else. I asked the Attorney-General, 'What possible purpose is there in pursuing these prosecutions if not to send a message to future whistleblowers?' Sometimes standing up and speaking out is just the right thing to do, but this coalition government doesn't like it. (Time expired)

**Association of Southeast Asian Nations**

**Mr GOODENOUGH** (Moore) (19:44): Australia's international trading and investment relationship with the 10 member nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations continues to grow. A 19.8 per cent annual growth in trade was recorded with Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. In 2018, total merchandise trade, including imports and exports, amounted to $90.5 billion, representing 13.7 per cent of Australia's trade. Major Australian exports to ASEAN countries included crude petroleum, coal, natural gas and gold. In turn, major Australian imports included refined petroleum, heavy goods vehicles and passenger motor cars.

The ASEAN bloc is ranked as Australia's eighth-largest trading partner. In the area of services, there was an annual growth of 9.2 per cent recorded in 2018, with education related travel, personal travel and transport accounting for the major categories. Collectively, ASEAN nations recorded real GDP growth of 4.8 per cent in the 2019 year, with inflation running at 2.6 per cent. Australia's foreign investment in ASEAN countries is a healthy $106 billion, while ASEAN investment in Australia amounts to $118 billion.

It is important to continue building Australia's relationship with ASEAN member nations, for a number of strategic reasons. Firstly, there is Australia's geographic proximity to South-East Asia, with similar time zones. Secondly, diversification of our trading relationships makes our economy less susceptible to international economic cycles. Thirdly, the member nations of ASEAN are emerging democracies with similar shared values and relatively low sovereign risk, allowing cooperation on regional defence and national security issues. Lastly, in our multicultural society we have close ties with many of the countries of the ASEAN region through immigration and international education schemes such as the New Colombo Plan.

Last year I participated in the ASEAN parliamentary delegation to three countries—Vietnam, Thailand and Brunei—to foster diplomatic and trade relations. Australia has recently invested in new embassies in Jakarta, Indonesia, and Bangkok, Thailand, to strengthen our strategic diplomatic presence and foster greater cooperation in the region. Through diplomatic assistance and Australian aid, we can assist developing nations in our region along the path to economic development, making them future trading partners. We were pleased to host a visiting ASEAN delegation to Canberra last week.

Organisations such as WA Singapore Business Connect assist businesses to navigate the boundaries and challenges of international trade by connecting participants from the public and private sectors, facilitating trade and business related knowledge exchanges and identifying and exploring cross-border inbound and outbound opportunities.

Greater cooperation with ASEAN countries on issues such as visas and work permits, and mutual recognition of qualifications of technical standards, will serve to break down the
barriers and streamline business dealings between countries. Synergies exist when nations are permitted to specialise in areas of competitive advantage, to trade globally in those goods and services. Our vision must be towards open markets with free trade.

Australian businesses must be incentivised to develop export markets in the ASEAN region, tapping into increasing consumer demand in these emerging economies. Market development opportunities exist in the mining and minerals sector, energy, agriculture and fisheries. The scope for increasing the exchange in financial, legal, medical and professional services must also be explored. Greater diversification of Australia's export markets and international trading relationships spreads the risk and shields our domestic economy from fluctuations in global economic cycles.

The federal government has prioritised international trade and investment by finalising free trade agreements and strategic economic partnership agreements with a number of nations in our region in order to promote economic development. The Australian domestic market is relatively small, with a population of 25 million. Our industry will benefit by accessing demand from larger consumer markets overseas.

Veterans

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (19:50): When Australians enlist in the Australian Defence Force, they swear that they will well and truly serve Her Majesty the Queen. They swear that they will resist her enemies and that they will faithfully discharge their duty according to law. And they swear that they will uphold the values of trust, loyalty and respect for Australia and for each other.

In October in the last sitting block, this parliament rightly supported, in a bipartisan way, the nation's response to this oath by recognising, in legislation, the unique nature of military service. This covenant represented our solemn promise to improve the reintegration and mental health outcomes of former soldiers, sailors, air men and women, and their families. This was an important moment in my parliamentary career, and it was important to many thousands of veterans around the country. It was about so much more than veterans' cards or lapel pins. It was about acknowledgement. It was about nation building, and this is exactly what Labor has stood up for today. As both a Labor MP and a veteran, I am incredibly proud of the position that Labor took today in supporting families' and veterans' calls for a royal commission into the unacceptably high—disproportionately high—rate of veteran suicides.

The statistics that recently came out of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report are truly shocking. Last week, we learnt that at least 419 ADF members and veterans who swore their loyalty and their very lives to protect us have committed suicide since 2001. This should shock all of our consciences into an urgent national and bipartisan response. We've lost at least 419 ADF members to suicide—almost 10 times the number of ADF members killed in all overseas operations since Afghanistan. It's also about six times the number of ADF members killed in all overseas operations since the end of the Cold War 30 years ago. In 2017 alone, we lost as many serving and ex-ADF members to suicide as we did in 18 years in Afghanistan. In 2018, I believe, we lost even more than that. These are outrageous figures and a national shame.

We should be ashamed to hear the most spurious and heartless arguments being rehashed about why a royal commission into veteran suicide would be a waste of money. I can
understand the legitimate concerns about important royal commission recommendations not being implemented or funded. But, in such cases, the royal commission is not to blame. What is to blame is an abdication of political will and leadership. This is about values and what should matter more to us. What has a higher price for us, the cost of a royal commission or the cost of more lives destroyed?

They are sons and daughters who swore loyalty to the national flag—the one that's in this very chamber—and it was the greatest honour for those veterans to wear it on their shoulders. They are the sons and daughters who suffered so terribly much in a silent agony that they could bear no longer, the sons and daughters who saw no hope in holding on for another day, the sons and daughters who—on this very day, this very month—are struggling and contemplating the unthinkable. And they need us. They desperately need national leadership. Hope and faith are something this House can give them and something we can give them before returning from our break. For some of our sons and daughters, we hope this is not too late.

People with Disability

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (19:55): Today is International Day of People with Disability, a United Nations sanctioned day which aims to increase awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability, while also celebrating their achievements and contributions. It's also a significant day for the National Disability Insurance Agency as it continues to deliver the world-leading NDIS, a scheme providing Australians with significant and permanent disability, and their families, with the support that they need to reach their full potential.

This year's International Day of People with Disability is focused on how we can celebrate diversity and strive for inclusion through the removal of barriers for people with disability within the community. We are proud of the dedication and commitment of the agency delivering the NDIS, which is now supporting more than 200,000 Australians with a disability in providing them with supports and services they need to achieve their goals. One in three people are receiving support for the first time.

If we step back to July 2013, in my electorate of Grey, we were part of a very early rollout of the scheme for children under the age of 14. It was new to not only the participants themselves but also their carers, support workers and service providers. In 2017, the scheme became available for 15- to 17-year-olds and, in 2018, to those over 18 years old. In the early days, many people still don't know what the NDIS was all about. There weren't many service providers signed up, particularly in rural and regional areas, and there weren't many people in our local communities who could advocate for or assist those who needed help through the process. Planning meetings, support coordinators, service providers, requesting a review of a reviewable decision—what did it all mean? It can be highly confusing for someone who hasn't experienced the NDIS or a plan for someone with a disability. There were always going to be teething problems in rolling out a $20 billion a year program. It's a complete game changer and by far the biggest program of this type ever rolled out in our history.

Encouragingly, as time has progressed, my constituents are becoming more confident with their understanding of the NDIS and happier with the supports and services made available through the scheme. If I take Port Pirie as an example, where I have one of my offices, the
The federal government has supported a service provider called Thrive, which houses occupational therapists and physios. It has a heated swimming pool and is literally allowing those with a disability to thrive. The Morrison government invested $500,000 through the Regional Jobs and Investment program to support the construction of Thrive, and I must say it's been a very good investment. Thrive has provided a lot of support to many NDIS participants in Port Pirie and the surrounding areas. Today, International Day of People with Disability, I'd like to congratulate Nigel Young and his team on everything they're doing to support people in that area. In fact, I'd like to congratulate and say thank you to everyone in Grey who supports people with disability. There are almost 350 service providers across the electorate and a lot of special organisations in our communities doing wonderful things—organisations like Orana, Bedford, Uniting Country; there are too many to name.

There are also so many great individual stories. There are stories about people with an NDIS plan, like my constituent Jason, who has two young boys with disability and NDIS plans. For the first time since having children 15 years ago, Jason and his wife have been able to take a night off together, thanks to the regular respite care. And what about Georgia, who can now communicate with her teachers and classmates through eye-gaze technology? This is because the NDIS has funded and made available assistive technologies for her. The funny thing is that the first thing Georgia did with her eye-gaze technology was tell someone she didn't like them—but what freedom it has given her to finally be able to express herself. These positive stories, where we can clearly see the benefit of the NDIS, can be found right across the electorate. Tex has got a specially fitted wheelchair now, which is much more comfortable for the seven-year-old. Up until last year, his mum had been pushing him in a pram type chair. She'd made a few home modifications but needed more. He has a wonderful new wheelchair now because of the NDIS.

Our government wants to make sure that Australians with a disability are respected, and welcomed as equal and positive contributors to our community. The theme of this year's International Day of People with Disability is 'promoting the participation of all persons with disabilities and their leadership', and it's also a key focus of the Morrison government.

House adjourned at 20:00

NOTICES

Mr Porter: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009, and for related purposes. (Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Ensuring Integrity No. 2) Bill 2019)

Mr Tehan: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the Student Identifiers Act 2014, and for related purposes. (Student Identifiers Amendment (Higher Education) Bill 2019)

Mr Tehan: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011, and for related purposes. (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment (Prohibiting Academic Cheating Services) Bill 2019)

Mr Littleproud: To present a Bill for an Act to provide for the control of the export of certain goods, and for related purposes. (Export Control Bill 2019)

Mr Littleproud: To present a Bill for an Act to deal with consequential amendments and transitional matters arising from the enactment of the Export Control Act 2019, and for other purposes. (Export Control (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2019)
Mr Sukkar: To present a Bill for an Act relating to a government registry regime, and for related purposes. *(Commonwealth Registers Bill 2019)*

Mr Sukkar: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the law relating to corporations, business names registration and consumer credit and to deal with consequential matters relating to the enactment of the *Commonwealth Registers Act 2019*, and for related purposes. *(Treasury Laws Amendment (Registries Modernisation and Other Measures) Bill 2019)*


Mr Zappia: To move—That this House:

1. notes that:
   a. Australian postage rates for standard letters have near doubled over the past decade;
   b. Australia Post parcel delivery rates increased in October 2019;
   c. increased postal rates directly impact on business viability and competitiveness with overseas suppliers;
   d. higher postal charges are inevitably passed on to Australian households by providers of goods and services; and
   e. high postal rates have a disproportionate impact on older Australians and migrants because they have a greater reliance on postal services; and
2. calls on the Government to consider the whole of society impact when considering future postage rate increases.

Mr Gorman: To move—That this House:

1. notes that:
   a. the captioned telephone handset, CapTel, is a popular service amongst the Australian deaf and hard of hearing community;
   b. according to the Department of Communications there are approximately 4,000 CapTel handset users in Australia;
   c. the average age of people using the service is 80; and
   d. with an increasing aging population, it can be expected more and more Australians will need to rely on this service to communicate;
2. acknowledges the distress and loss that CapTel users and their families are experiencing due to the planned discontinuation of the CapTel service in February 2020;
3. condemns the Government for its decision to:
   a. remove the CapTel service without any consultation with its users; and
   b. purchase an inferior, outdated, and less user-friendly product, forcing often elderly users to learn a new piece of technology or lose the ability to communicate; and
4. encourages CapTel users and their families to contact their federal member of parliament to explain to them the importance of the CapTel service for the deaf and hard of hearing community of Australia.
Tuesday, 3 December 2019

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Wicks) took the chair at 16:00.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

M12 Motorway

Ms STANLEY (Werriwa—Opposition Whip) (16:00): I speak today about the planned M12 motorway, a joint project between the federal government and the New South Wales state government. While I welcome the government's intention of providing more links to Western Sydney Airport, I do take exception to a number of details laid out in the environmental impact statement.

First is the government's assertion that the M12 will be toll free. For westbound commuters, the only planned entrance for the M12 is through the existing M7, a tolled motorway. This is in fact tolling by stealth. It is also another betrayal by the New South Wales Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, who now has a long list of saying one thing before an election and another after.

Second is the RMS's questionable traffic modelling. The modelling is based on the assumption that, by 2036, the M7 will have three lanes between Camden Valley Way and Old Wallgrove Road and four lanes between Old Wallgrove Road and the M4 interchange. This is despite no commitment to construct these additional lanes, meaning this project is based on false and flawed assumptions, which will no doubt ensure there is gridlock at the M7 and M12 interchange.

Lastly, and of most concern, is the proposed location of the southbound off-ramp on the M7. The proposed location would take the road above and across the ridge line at Cecil Hills, exposing an entire suburb to light and noise pollution. This will have a devastating effect on the amenity of residents, not to mention being a huge blow to their property prices. Sadly, I strongly suspect the RMS may well be aware of this. The four supposed community consultation sessions were held well away from the suburb of Cecil Hills, the most densely populated area affected by this project and in the electorate of Werriwa. Furthermore, all of the glossy brochures and promotional videos obscure from view that part of the project that encroaches on the suburb of Cecil Hills.

As with most things that come from these state- and federal-level Liberal governments, this is a short-sighted proposal that only concerns itself with the next electoral cycle. The Western Sydney Airport is a once-in-a-century project that has the potential to transform the region through employment, education and economic opportunity. The airport and its associated projects—the M12 Motorway, the M9, North South Rail Line, South West Rail Link Extension, a rail extension to Macarthur and the Fifteenth Avenue rapid-transit corridor—are vital and much-needed pieces of infrastructure. They are critical to the success of the airport and of the aerotropolis and, most of all, to south-west Sydney. These projects must not be hamstrung by short-termism and penny-pinching to the detriment of current and future generations. There is no point in committing millions of taxpayer dollars to a motorway that will cause further gridlock and ruin the amenity of the entire suburb.
Murray Basin Rail Project

Dr WEBSTER (Mallee) (16:03): I'd like to speak on a project which, if implemented in its entirety, could deliver major economic benefits to my electorate of Mallee, the rest of Victoria and, indeed, the whole of Australia. This is the Murray Basin Rail Project. Commenced in 2016 and with an expected completion date at the end of 2018, this project intended to convert a substantial portion of the Victorian freight rail network from the historical broad gauge to standard gauge. The project is in paralysis, with cost blow-outs, poor quality project management, and substandard and incomplete works. The Murray Basin rail is a state-owned asset and the federal government has in good faith contributed $240 million to a $440 million project. The investment and subsequent current outcomes are unacceptable in anybody's terms.

What we have is an appalling mismanagement from the Victorian state Labor government. With approximately two million tonnes of grain and 1.5 million tonnes of mineral sands transported out of the Murray Basin each year, it was hoped that this project would meet the growing demand for efficient freight services in the region and remove an estimated 20,000 trucks from our roads each year. A section of one of the most important arteries in the system, the line from Maryborough to Geelong, is yet to be updated to the proposed dual gauge, which can support both broad and standard gauge. This corridor is vital, as it connects the Mildura, Manangatang and Sea Lake lines to the Geelong ports.

An efficient rail system in Mallee is something producers continue to speak to me about regularly. While we support our road transport industry, Mallee roads are experiencing accelerated degradation and, therefore, increased safety concerns. We can reduce these outcomes by getting more freight onto rail, and we will get more freight onto rail if the Murray Basin Rail Project is completed. I call on the Victorian Labor government to complete this project in good faith and to work with the federal government to achieve this end. Growers in my electorate need these upgrades. Victorians need these upgrades. Indeed, the Australian economy needs these upgrades.

Kingsford Smith Electorate: Yarra Bay Cruise Ship Terminal

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (16:05): One of Sydney's most beautiful and idyllic beaches is under threat. Yarra Bay, on the north side of Botany Bay, is proposed to be developed by the New South Wales Liberal government and the cruise industry to build a massive cruise ship terminal. If this proposal goes ahead, the last remaining beach on the northern side of Botany Bay will be destroyed. But it's not just the beach that will be destroyed; tens of thousands of years of Aboriginal heritage and culture will be destroyed with it, much of the rare marine environment of Botany Bay will be under threat, and the peace and harmony of this beachside community will also be destroyed.

On 17 November I was pleased to join over a thousand locals who attended a rally at the Yarra Bay Sailing Club to protest this decision of the New South Wales Liberal government. They heard from locals, scientists, fishers, sporting clubs, local registered clubs and political representatives in opposition to this proposal, but the most powerful contribution on the day was from Noeleen Timbery, the Chair of the La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council. Ms Timbery spoke of the significance of Yarra Bay to Aboriginal people. The name 'Yarra' is an Aboriginal word for 'flowing', so the Aboriginal people of that area lend that name to the bay. The bay's been central to the lives of Aboriginal community in the area for thousands of
years. It's a source of food with fishing, in the area right where a proposed cruise terminal is to be built. The shores there have been a meeting place, and the community have lived there for thousands of years. And all of this heritage will potentially be destroyed if this proposal goes ahead.

Noeleen spoke of the fact that, when the airport was built, the La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council weren't consulted. When the port was built, they weren't consulted. When the bulk liquid goods facility was built, they weren't consulted. When the port extension was built, they weren't consulted. This is the only bit of natural heritage that the Aboriginal community have left on the northern side of Botany Bay, and the government and business now want to take it away. It's an utter disgrace. Once again it represents government and industry disrespecting the Aboriginal community—ignoring and trampling over the rights of First Australians, who have given so much to that local community.

I call on the companies and businesses that are involved in the destruction of Aboriginal heritage and the natural environment through this proposal to withdraw their support for a cruise ship terminal at Yarra Bay. I'm speaking of Royal Caribbean. I'm speaking of NSW Ports and the Port Authority of New South Wales. Don't be involved in the destruction of natural heritage and Aboriginal heritage. I call on the Prime Minister to intervene. His electorate is on the other side of the bay. This beach is much beloved by thousands from our community in Sydney. I call on the people of Sydney to get behind the campaign to save Yarra Bay.

**Fairfax Electorate: Awards**

**Mr TED O'BRIEN** (Fairfax) (16:09): Ruth Fairfax was the person who founded the Queensland Country Women's Association, the QCWA. What an impact that organisation has had for not just women on the land but also families on the land! Of course, it's Ruth Fairfax after whom the seat I represent on Queensland's Sunshine Coast is named—the seat of Fairfax.

In honour of Ruth Fairfax, two years ago I began a perpetual shield with schools in my electorate that recognised that next generation of leaders, the next generation of men and women who will be the Ruth Fairfaxes of the world in the future. These are children growing into adulthood who will make a contribution academically or on the sporting field or through civil society—people who are just givers and doers, demonstrating that same capacity for leadership that Ruth Fairfax had.

I was delighted to be able to attend over recent weeks a series of speech nights. One of the real downers about coming down to Canberra at this time of the year is you miss other speech nights. It is often at these speech nights that you learn so much about what schools are achieving and what those students are achieving. I want to take the opportunity here to acknowledge those people who were awarded the Fairfax award at their schools. In particular, I want to acknowledge, from Suncoast Christian College, Jesse Price; from St Andrew's, Daniel Boulton; from St John's at Nambour, Matthew Haley, Aryana Krpan, Halimah Reynolds and Jessica Seeleither; from Coolum Christian College, Jessica Young; from Mapleton State School, Ellen Reif; from Burnside State High School, Tane Powell; and from Maroochydore High School, Jessie Kent, Karina Buczynski and Maddison Denning.
It's so easy when life gets busy to not realise the effort that teachers and principals put in to make sure that our young people are achieving their best. While we believe in the importance of ensuring the basics are right at schools, we also need to ensure that we've got an environment where young people can achieve their best—and, indeed, we do. When you see some of the young people in my electorate of Fairfax, I tell you what: it is a humbling honour to be representing them and their families here in this place.

Economy

Mr HILL (Bruce) (16:12): I rise to urge the Chamber and the government to spare a thought for local people who will be doing it tough over the holidays. Christmas and New Year is a wonderful time for so many, but it is a difficult time financially and emotionally for so many families. Every week my office is contacted by people who are struggling.

I am proud to represent the great City of Greater Dandenong in the parliament, but that city is also the most socioeconomically disadvantaged in the whole of metropolitan Melbourne—a city of five million people. In my office we see single parents seeking help. I was raised by a single parent myself and know just how difficult it is to make ends meet. We see people who have lost their jobs and are facing Christmas with no work; some of the 1.2 million Australians who, under this government, are in casual and insecure work, who just don't have enough work to make ends meet; age pensioners trying to work out how to pay their bills, struggling with the miserly cuts to the age pension that have accumulated from this government over recent years; asylum seekers with their lives stuck in limbo, with Peter Dutton's cruel cut, taking $247 a week away from them, which was all they had to live on while the government refuses to process their paperwork; and ordinary working families who are struggling with medical bills and school costs.

We do our best to connect these people to local services, and we hear every week of the demand for food banks increasing and the demand for financial counselling not being met. There are too many to name them all locally, but I want to call out and praise South East Community Links in Dandenong, Springvale Park and Noble Park for the work they do; the Casey North Community Information & Support Service in Narre Warren; and the Endeavour Ministries at the Andrews Centre in Endeavour Hills, who do outstanding work and never ask for anything from government. I wrote to the minister asking for some help, and we got nothing. I also want to particularly mention the Doveton Neighbourhood Learning Centre—I was down there a few weeks and saw how the demand for their food bank is outstripping what they can now provide; the local legal centres; and, of course, the good staff at Centrelink—those who are left, who have not been sacked or privatised. But the truth is that services cannot keep up with the demand that we are seeing in the community for support due to the accumulation of funding cuts, funding frozen in real terms and the lack of care by the Liberal Party.

I believe that government should be trying harder to help those in the community who need help most. But, instead, this Prime Minister and the Liberals are actively making things harder. We see the cuts to penalty rates, which will impact casual workers over the summer and holiday period. They are being paid less under this government, because of the government's refusal to restore penalty rates. We saw cuts to the National Disability Insurance Scheme of $1.6 billion, chocked in to prop up the flimsy surplus, while they gave themselves a tax cut. We saw the bill being debated yesterday, which passed this House, shamefully, to
cut the age pension and to cut Newstart, which affects 13,600 people in the City of Greater Dandenong and Casey.

So I say to the government: if you've got time to reflect over summer, think about your priorities. You should be focusing on the most vulnerable people, not helping yourselves.

**Infrastructure**

**Mr WALLACE** (Fisher) (16:15): On Wednesday 20 November, the Prime Minister announced the bringing forward of $3.8 billion worth of infrastructure projects nationally, including around $1.9 billion in Queensland. These are projects that will create jobs and drive greater productivity for South-East Queensland and for my electorate of Fisher on the Sunshine Coast. The package included accelerated funds of $113.6 million to begin more upgrades to the Bruce Highway between Pine River and Caloundra and $39 million more to secure delivery of the Linkfield Road Overpass project. Both projects will increase safety, reduce travel times and bust congestion for those travelling to and from Brisbane on the Bruce Highway.

Critically, the package also included the fast-tracking of the coalition government's $390 million to fund the duplication of the north coast rail line between Beerburrum and Landsborough. It's still using the same single track that was built in the 1890s. My community constantly sees passenger trains and freight trains in constant conflict, resulting in a loss of time and productivity in the movement of both people and goods. The member for Fairfax and I have pushed the state government harder to—

* A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

**Sitting suspended from 16:17 to 16:25**

**Mr WALLACE:** The member for Fairfax and I have pushed the state government hard to meet our funding halfway. That's not something you'd think would be too contentious given that it is a state owned asset. But so far Queensland Labor minister Mark Bailey has refused to fund the rail beyond the state's token gesture of 20 per cent, despite our assiduous work to break the impasse.

I was therefore very pleased to announce that, as part of the Prime Minister's package of projects, the Morrison government will make $90 million available immediately to enable the Queensland government to start duplication work right now and will provide the remaining $300 million as key construction milestones are reached. This will mean jobs for locals on the Sunshine Coast—jobs when our building, construction and engineering sectors are facing difficult times, jobs that will see the construction of duplicated track and fewer people travelling to Brisbane on the Bruce Highway, jobs that will see more freight being shipped by rail and less on our congested road networks. Premier Palaszczuk and Minister Bailey, it's time to get cracking on this project. There can be no excuses, no delays and no ifs, buts or maybe. The Commonwealth's money is on the table. Let's start work now and argue later.

The federal government's commitment to driving our national economy should be seen in stark contrast to federal Labor, who, when last in government, racked up hundreds of millions of dollars in debt with their ill-considered disasters—pink batts and cash for clunkers. In contrast, this government is getting on with the job of providing infrastructure. *(Time expired)*
Ms SWANSON (Paterson) (16:27): Ampcontrol is a fabulous business in my electorate. They started out as a family owned business—which they still are—that specialised in underground-mining electrical work. They have grown this business and now, like many true innovators, they have reached out to provide a public good. The public good that I talk about is known as the Gilghi water solution. It was recognised for excellence in innovation at the Lake Macquarie Business Excellence Awards earlier this year. Wayne Diemar and Brendan Ttimmarsh from Ampcontrol came to tell me a little bit more about it this week. I've been to Ampcontrol at Tomago to have a look at this incredible water solution, and I'm hoping to get to the Northern Territory next year to see it in action.

The company is currently running a trial in a remote community called Gillen Bore, near Alice Springs. One of the problems with Gillen Bore is just that: the community has been living on bore water. I don't know if you've ever drunk bore water, but it's not pleasant. That's why this is so important. In a very dry country like Australia, where we're under constant pressure for water and where we're seeing communities, particularly remote and regional communities, training and trucking water in, this is an incredible solution. The key features are that it's able to produce potable water to Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and it's completely off the grid. The system is a remote water unit using advanced filtering technology that uses power sources including solar and battery storage. Another major feature is that it can be run and maintained by the community, or, if more technical issues arise, it can even be set up and fixed remotely. Many of the communities that might benefit from a system like this are currently shipping water in at an enormous cost. This is a standalone unit. At any stage it can be relocated to another area in need of more permanent water solutions. It's really just a great example of innovation and enterprise in our region.

Speaking of innovation and enterprise, I want to say that I have my fingers crossed for the people at SafetyLink, another incredible company in my electorate. They have designed the FrogLink and other wonderful safety measures for people who do high work—for example, roofers—and people working in dangerous situations. SafetyLink's designs are finalists for the 57th Australian Export Awards tonight. I really hope they take home the award. Even if they don't, they are winners. They're saving lives; they're keeping Australians safe. They are another magnificent example of innovation and enterprise in our regions.

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie—Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services) (16:30): I'm really passionate about the electorate of Petrie, which I represent. It's a great community with wonderful people, wonderful places and wonderful organisations that support our community. One such organisation is Aspleycare, which is at Aspley, of course. It operates at the edge of my electorate and in my electorate. It has been operating since 1979. This year I was really pleased to join them for their 40th anniversary. Forty years is a great achievement. Established in 1979 by Father Gerry McSweeney and Colleen Egan, Aspleycare has grown to become an institution in our region that cares for the most vulnerable. Aspleycare is a parish based group of volunteers who service our local community by responding to the needs of people in a neighbourly, practical way whilst providing assistance to those who need it most.
The breadth of what Aspleycare does in our community is immeasurable, but I'll try to sum it up in these few minutes. With the help of their valuable volunteers, Aspleycare supports locals in need by offering food parcels; vouchers; assistance with bills, if families need it; medical prescriptions; and referrals to other agencies. Volunteers also conduct what most locals look forward to the most—Aspleycare's Thursday outing. These outings assist people with socialisation, keeping them in touch with the community and making friends. As we know, life is about relationships, so making friends and building relationships is really important. In modern Australia this is especially important, as loneliness and exclusion are on the rise, especially amongst senior Australians. They also assist with providing respite for carers and families of people with disabilities. This is especially important today, given that it is the International Day of People with Disability. On the third Thursday of every month, volunteers offer morning tea and entertainment during the outing. As well as taking part in the outings and providing the fun, volunteers provide one of the most important parts of the outing, and that is the transport to enable locals to get to and from the outing.

Aspleycare have also made it their mission to assist mothers. The volunteers offer expectant mothers immediate and practical help and provide support and love for women and their new babies. Aspleycare are an integral part of our community. I want to thank President Tom Borger, as well as Mr Clive Smith and Mrs Kay Smith, who are just two of the many volunteers at Aspleycare. I would also like to thank the Rotary Club of Aspley, Ray White Aspley and Boondall State School for the 110 hampers and 400 gifts that will assist 500 people this Christmas. Thank you, Aspleycare.

Ms MURPHY (Dunkley) (16:33): I would like to offer my congratulations to a very talented young woman—the recording artist and Frankston Blues basketballer Toni Watson, known more famously as Tones and I. While more recently she has been calling Byron Bay home, Tones and I is a proud product of the people's Byron Bay, Frankston. As she told Triple J Hack last year, the first time anyone told her she could sing was when she was at the park in Frankston with her cousins and her aunt and she was seven years old. It has been a remarkable journey from that Frankston park for Toni. She went north in 2018 and tried her luck busking in Byron Bay. Of course, it wasn't long before her talent was noticed.

Fast-forward and her hit Dance Monkey—don't worry, I'm not going to try to sing it—is a fixture on the radio and a must addition to playlists across the world. She performed to an audience of millions on the US late show starring Jimmy Fallon. She's reached No. 1 for most streamed song around the world. Dance Monkey has reached the top of the charts in more than 18 countries and is currently making its way up the US charts, sitting at No. 19. Last week, Tones and I cleaned up at the ARIA Awards, taking home Best Female Artist, Best Pop Release, Breakthrough Artist and Best Independent Release, and we couldn't be more proud of a girl from Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula region.

But, for all of her success, it is important that we acknowledge that, along with the awards and adulation, Tones and I has been very open and brave about the dark side of her new-found fame, and she's been battling what she has described as relentless bullying. She used the spotlight of her ARIA win to speak out about this because, as she puts it, she wants to help the next generation of artists by telling her fans she has decided to push past the dark times and the judgements to show any artist you can get through it and maintain your sense of self. Here
we have a great example of a strong person prepared to talk about hard times, which isn't easy—a young woman on the face of it having her dreams come true yet coming up against some pretty nasty and negative comments. While not everyone in my electorate of Dunkley shares the same vocal talents, resilience is something that we are known for, and I want to commend Toni for having the guts to stand down the haters. Your resilience and what you have done, Toni, with your speech sends a powerful message to young men and women not just in Frankston or the Mornington Peninsula but across the country and across the world: if you have a talent and you have a dream, you can achieve. Congratulations on behalf of everyone in Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula and around the country. We're oh so proud.

**Capricornia Electorate**

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia—Assistant Minister for Children and Families) (16:36): I wish to take this opportunity to give the chamber an update on my electorate of Capricornia. It has been very busy since the federal election, and there are many positive announcements to report on. This year, I announced $5 million in funding for the Signature Onfarm beef-processing facility, along with $25 million in additional NAIF funding; over $140,000 in funding for local community groups under the Volunteer Grants 2018 program; nearly half a million dollars in domestic and international scholarships in Capricornia as part of the federal government's Destination Australia Program; $21.6 million for the construction of Stanage Bay Road; $20 million for the construction of the 1,000-seat convention centre in Yeppoon; over $175 million in additional funding for blackspots, rest areas and safety upgrades; $20 million for improved road train access in the Rockhampton road network; and $10 million to be brought forward for the construction of the Rockhampton Ring Road, which is a $1 billion project with $800 million of contributions from the federal government.

A couple of months ago we organised a rally on the banks of the Fitzroy River to protest against state Labor's mismanagement of Rookwood Weir. Farmers, business owners and concerned citizens joined us. With our nation being crippled by drought, water is our most important priority, and the state Labor government, sitting in George Street, Brisbane, does not seem to understand this.

There have been challenging moments for people in the electorate. The bushfires have devastated the community, where we lost 15 homes, 56 structures and 8,500 hectares of grazing land. But, when the community in Yeppoon experiences times of hardship, we often see the best in people. It was a monumental effort on the part of the volunteer firefighters to combat the flames, and I thank them for their tireless service.

As my fellow federal members of parliament would know, elections aren't won by the efforts of only one person, and I wish to thank all of the committed volunteers, friends, family, parliamentary colleagues and staff for their hard work, determination and support during the May federal election. I also wish to express my gratitude and appreciation to the quiet Australians who voted for me: the retirees, mum-and-dad business owners and miners—people who were genuinely worried about a future under Labor. They put their faith in me, and I promise to continue to deliver for Capricornia in 2020 and beyond.

I'd also like to thank the staff in Parliament House: the clerks, the transport, security, cleaners and hospitality. Thank you for the amazing job you do and the support you give us all. Merry Christmas to you all.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Wicks): In accordance with standing order 193, the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.

MOTIONS

National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That the House commemorate the anniversary of the national apology to the survivors and victims of institutional child sexual abuse.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney) (16:39): It's been seven years since former Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced the creation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. That happened on 12 November 2012. It was one of the last acts of the Gillard government. It's been two years since the findings of the royal commission were handed down, and it's been a year since our Prime Minister gave the national apology. For many victims of child sexual abuse in institutional care, of course, the sentence is a never-ending one.

The most important job we have as human beings is to protect the next generation. There really is no more important an obligation for any of us in this building or for any Australian. The royal commission was a stunning insight into just how poorly we had done. None of us can ever right the wrongs inflicted on too many of our nation's children, but the commission's 409 recommendations propose significant reforms to ensure that children in the care of any Australian institution can be safe.

We saw some phenomenal humans, some incredibly brave Australians, give evidence to the royal commission, and I want to thank them for that bravery. Without their bravery, the royal commission could not have done its work. One man who contacted me was Robbie Gambley. He was not much older than a child when he was groomed by his science teacher and eventually forced to live with him. He was humiliated on a daily basis and assaulted every day at school. Robbie waited for more than 40 years to hear those all-important words: 'We believe you.' He sent me this photograph of himself as just a child, with his horse. He loved the horse and he told me that, for him, this photo represented the last innocent photo of his childhood. I kept this photo by my desk while we were doing the work relating to the royal commission, because I wanted to be reminded that every one of those thousands of people who gave evidence had been a child, just like this child, who'd had their innocence stolen. Robbie went on to write a book about his childhood. He made me this horse. This is a beautiful sculpture, one of many that he has made, to remind me of the horse that was such a companion for him in his childhood. He was so phenomenally brave to share his story, not just with the royal commission but with the media as well.

Many of us in this place, I know, would be familiar with the Care Leavers Australasia Network, CLAN, and the phenomenal work of Leonie Sheedy and all of those who've worked with Leonie over very many years. We know the support that CLAN has given survivors of childhood sex abuse, helping them come forward, helping them tell their stories, and helping them by picking up the pieces once they've done so. The retraumatisation of giving evidence to the royal commission or coming forward after years of keeping a secret has really taken its toll on so many, and CLAN has been there through all of it. Leonie has given so much personally.
I'm very pleased to have been asked to be one of CLAN's parliamentary patrons, because their resolve and their strength are continually inspiring. I visited their Australian Orphanage Museum, which provides an incredible permanent monument.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 16:44 to 16:56

Ms PLIBERSEK: In continuation, I want to mention the Australian Orphanage Museum, which the Clannies have set up with all the incredibly touching artefacts that care leavers had given to the museum. I also wanted to mention my dear friend Pamella Vernon, who, with the Alliance for Forgotten Australians—the survivors of institutional care in Australia—has also been a fierce advocate for those who were abused in institutional care.

Of course, not everyone who was in an institution was sexually abused, but too many were. There are so many other individuals, like Carl Beauchamp, who wrote the phenomenal book Come Home, You Little Bastards, which is about growing up in the inner-Sydney area—Erskineville, Newtown, Glebe—and ending up in the Charlton Boys Home. Carl tells the story of the shocking abuse that he and his brother Neville suffered in different homes. The amazing thing about this book is not only that it details this shocking abuse but also that Carl comes through it intact and loving. He is the most generous, beautiful man, and that shows through the book. I urge people to read it.

I say again to the commissioners of the royal commission, led by the chair of the royal commission, the Hon. Justice Peter McClellan, the 680 members of the royal commission staff who worked with such dedication over five years, Prime Minister Gillard, who I already mentioned, Minister Jenny Macklin, all of those involved in the royal commission and, most particularly, to those who gave evidence: we are absolutely indebted to you.

I would say that redress is a vital recommendation from the royal commission. The Redress Scheme was enacted too slowly and it is operating too slowly now. Only 600 payments out of more than 5,000 applications have been processed as of last month—just over 10 per cent. That's just too slow. Institutions that have not yet signed up should be absolutely ashamed of themselves.

When we look at the abuse that occurred in those institutions to thousands of children over many, many years, surely one of the lessons that we must learn from this is that we need to do better at protecting children. When a child says, 'I don't feel safe,' or, 'I am not safe,' or reports abuse, we should believe that child. We must investigate and take the complaint seriously.

But it is not just Australian children that we have a responsibility to protect. I was shocked last week to hear of Westpac's 23 million violations of the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006, including allegations of 3,057 money transfers following through bank systems to pay for suspected child sexual exploitation, including in the Philippines. Of course, no Australian business should be facilitating child abuse and child exploitation overseas. The scale of this problem is shocking. In 2014, 250 Australian child-sex offenders who went to the Philippines alone were charged by the Australian Federal Police. They were all types of people. There was a 51-year-old Australian businessman from Sydney who was sentenced to three life sentences in prison for operating a child cybersex den and exploiting children in the Philippines; a medical supplies salesman who sexually exploited 47 boys in South-East Asia and Australia; a 61-year-old man from Perth—a father
of five and former train driver—who groomed, molested and attempted to rape a girl over the course of 2½ years, from when she was about five years old; a 63-year-old grandfather; and a 39-year-old woman from Sydney who was involved with live-streaming a 12-year-old's abuse on social media. How many weren't caught? Australians are deliberately flying to where poverty and corruption make people desperate and vulnerable. Frankly, it is beyond me what sort of person does this.

It's not just the physical, real-world abuse of children that we need to stop; it's also online child exploitation and child pornography. Every time someone looks at child pornography, they incentivise and monetise the abuse and even the murder of children. Reports of child sexual abuse material online have increased 10,000 per cent since 2004—10,000 per cent since 2004! Last year, tech companies reported over 45 million online photos and videos of children being sexually abused—more than double what they found in the previous year. The authorities tell us that offences are increasingly becoming more sophisticated, through the use of networks to distribute material, encryption and online access. The fact that this abuse happens overseas should not protect paedophiles. The fact that you are clever at covering your tracks on computers and with bank transfers shouldn't protect you.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the police and the child protection workers that save children from abuse in Australia and around the world. For too long we turned a blind eye to the abuse that was happening in Australia. Let it not be said that we did the same to child abuse happening overseas perpetrated by Australians and facilitated by Australian businesses. We must do better than we've done in the past to protect children—our most important responsibility.

Mr Gosling (Solomon) (17:02): I thank the member for Sydney for her beautiful and important speech. It's been a year since we all joined together to express our most profound sorrow for the suffering and trauma experienced by all victims and survivors of the institutionalised sexual abuse of children. We said sorry for the loss of self-esteem and self-worth. We said sorry to those who were ignored, were disbelieved or were abandoned when they sought help. We said sorry for the pain, sorry for the suffering and sorry for the innocence that was stolen. We said sorry for the loss—a loss that we, not the victims, bear the shame of.

We said sorry to those amongst us who were forcibly removed from country, from their spiritual home, and then subjected to physical and psychological violence. We said sorry for the burden of grief that victims had to carry for so many years. We said sorry to the parents and family members who suffered the distress and trauma of learning that their precious children had been abused by those they trusted to take care of them. We said sorry to those who joined youth groups, the cadet corps and the military apprenticeship schools and then suffered abuse at the hands of those who should have been carers and mentors. We said sorry to those who were fleeing the horrors of postwar Europe and were transported to secular and religious institutions where criminal predators exploited their separation and vulnerability.

We said sorry for the lives irretrievably damaged, sorry for those lives spent in misery or in jail and sorry for the so many lives that have ended in tragedy, often in death by suicide. We said sorry to all those who experienced abuse at the hands of those whose duty it was to care for them, to nurture them and to look after them. And we said sorry that, even though some institutions knew about the crimes committed, some did little or nothing to care for sufferers

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and that some of those same institutions and their leaders did nothing to bring the perpetrators to justice but instead turned a blind eye or covered up their crimes.

The people I represent in Darwin and Palmerston were not shielded from the atrocities committed. One of the case studies in the commissioners' report was that of the infamous Retta Dixon Home, in Darwin. The Retta Dixon Home was established by the Aborigines Inland Mission, at the Bagot Aboriginal Reserve, in 1946 as a home for 'half-caste children and mothers and a hostel for young half-caste women'. The Aborigines Inland Mission was a non-governmental, interdenominational faith ministry established in 1905. It still operates today, but has changed its name to Australian Indigenous Ministries—or AIM.

Sometime in December 1947, the home was granted a licence by the Australian government to be conducted as an institution for 'the maintenance, custody and care of Aboriginal and half-caste children'. Children stayed at the Retta Dixon Home until they were 18. The home closed in 1980. From 1946 to 1978 various laws permitted the Australian government to take Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children into institutional care. Many of the children who lived at the home now identify themselves as members of the stolen generations. The Australian government was the guardian of many children at the Retta Dixon Home. The Australian government also had a general responsibility to all children in the home, including for their care, welfare, education and advancement, until the time of self-government in 1978. The Australian government was actively involved in activities at the Retta Dixon Home. The home generally housed between 70 and 100 children at any one time. Children were housed in dormitory style accommodation and most children stayed at the home until they were 18 years of age. They attended local schools.

Ten former residents of the Retta Dixon Home gave evidence or provided statements to the royal commission about their experiences of sexual and physical abuse when they were children living at the home. Some of the survivors were there with us last year during the apology. The commission heard of the impacts of the abuse on their lives, including serious effects on their mental health, employment and relationships. They heard of their pain and suffering over a long period and the personal costs associated with dealing with the long-lasting impacts. Most former residents of the home who gave evidence said that they did not report the abuse at the time because they did not understand it to be criminal and later felt too ashamed and frightened to report the abuse. Other witnesses said there was nobody they could report the abuse to.

Children were forcibly taken from their parents and promised a better future, but were instead subjected to repeated abuse over the course of their childhood in what the member for Lingiari has referred to as the cruellest double whammy. They were taken from their actual families and then abused by state-sponsored carers, in some cases. Many of the survivors of child sexual abuse and their families retain deep anger towards those who committed crimes and the institutions that harboured them. They cannot be expected to extend reconciliation and restore trust to those who continue to deny them rights.

We should also acknowledge the work done in the lead-up to the apology. Obviously the apology was a recommendation of the final report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The final report was a culmination of five painstaking years for the commissioners and support staff. The findings of the report were horrific. We
failed those who suffered, and it is the responsibility of all governments and institutions to do everything they can to ensure that institutional child abuse never happens again.

I said this in my speech last year and I'll say it again: we must do all that is possible to ensure that what the victims and survivors of institutional child sexual abuse have suffered never happens again. But, of course, it is happening. Somewhere right now in this country, a child is hurting. If you suspect a child is hurting, please act. If you are a perpetrator, get help now, confess now and apologise now. Do not hurt our young people or anyone. There have been too many young lives irreparably scarred. So no more! We must never see the national apology as a mission accomplished. It was a call to action; it was a call to act. But as the Leader of the Opposition said:

… an apology can bring to an end one era and, with hope, begin a better one.

I acknowledge the initiatives being put forward by the government that are steps along that road. The National Office for Child Safety is working on the implementation of the priorities recommended by the royal commission. Since last year, the National Redress Scheme has begun its work to hold institutions to account and to help survivors but not quickly enough, as we just heard from the member for Sydney. Labor joins with the government in urging anyone who thinks they should be a part of that scheme to get on board today. There is a way to go.

In closing, I just want to say to all those who have suffered: a year has passed, but we will never forget everything you went through. We believe you; we continue to believe you, and what happened to you is a shame that our nation will bear for eternity. We must remain vigilant and we must shine a light where that light is required.

Debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 17:11 to 17:12

CONDOLENCES

Humphreys, Hon. Benjamin Charles, AM

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That the House record its deep regret at the death, on 17 November 2019, of the Honourable Benjamin Charles Humphreys AM, a Member of this House for the Division of Griffith from 1977 to 1996, place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (17:12): It's a great privilege to rise to honour the memory of Ben Humphreys, the former member for Griffith and a man whose integrity this House has recalled since his passing last month. In recent weeks, we have heard touching bipartisan tributes to Ben's character. Ben's successor in the seat of Griffith, Kevin Rudd, released a statement in which he expressed gratitude for his mentor's support. Kevin wrote that without Ben he would never have become the 26th Prime Minister of Australia. Kevin praised him as a kind, gentle and good man, and said:

There was a decency and authenticity to Benny that was rare in political life.

I personally didn't know Ben, but it's clear that many of us, on both sides of the aisle, recognise in him something of the greater sense of purpose and love of country that inspired...
many of us to come to this place, whatever our values, to try to make our country even better.

I'd like to focus my remarks today on the substance of Ben's work.

A native son of Queensland, Ben was close to the Northern Territory. While travelling across rural Queensland and the Northern Territory in his role as Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Northern Australia, Ben earned the moniker of Bushman's Friend. Ben's most long-lasting achievements were in his role as Minister for Veterans' Affairs—his first portfolio in the Bob Hawke government. Ben was far ahead of his time in terms of understanding the role of Australian soldiers on the western front in the First World War. In 1992 he unveiled a 2.3-metre bronze statue of an Australian soldier by a Melbourne sculptor, which was shipped to Bullecourt in France to be displayed at the Australian memorial there. As minister, he also organised a return to the western front commemorative mission of World War I veterans to France. Ben was also responsible for implementing the Labor policy of carving out a separate Department of Veterans' Affairs, which endures to this day.

Ben lived and breathed veterans' issues. He was a son of a World War I veteran who was totally incapacitated after being run over by a horse-drawn cannon. Ben had himself been conscripted into the Navy for national service in 1953, which he welcomed as a chance to serve his country. When Ben started out as a mechanic in Brisbane he was helped out by World War II veterans, including a former POW—prisoner of war—captured by the Japanese Army and one who had served in Bougainville. His father-in-law, who had served in the RAAF, had a 100 per cent disability pension. These experiences shaped Ben's understanding of veterans' issues and the importance of adequate and ongoing government support.

In one of his important reforms in 1990 Ben axed a controversial lifestyle report, which older veterans would remember. This was basically a complicated questionnaire which screened veterans from accessing government support services. When he announced that Labor would axe this unnecessary bureaucratic hurdle, the Queensland RSL conference erupted into rapturous applause. Those were the days! That same year Ben oversaw another reform which saw all hospitalised veterans gain the status of private patients, giving them access to a greater number of hospitals, greater choice of doctors and specialists, and access to more services, without prior DVA approval.

In 1991 Benny delivered on Labor's election promise to enhance the entitlements of veterans, dependants and members of the ADF. In another landmark reform, in 1992 Ben introduced legislative amendments which empowered veterans to choose how they wanted to be assessed for veterans purposes. This dismantled a notoriously inflexible and intrusive system, which subjected veterans to a patronising, top-down approach that took away the agency of some of the most heroic Australians, who endured terrible suffering so that we might walk free in this land.

One of Benny's proudest achievements was to get legislation through that allowed veterans who were totally or permanently incapacitated, like his father, to receive payments for life. This victory vindicated his faith in our parliamentary democracy. Benny said:

We live in the best country in the world and for that we owe much to the veteran[s] who fought to give us peace and a true democracy.

Ben was immensely proud of the veterans system he oversaw, which he also saw as one of the most progressive in the world. Ben had this to say about his Labor government's veterans policy:
I am not saying that we can't improve. And while we might not please everyone, we endeavour to do our best to provide the fairest and most equitable care programs for a very deserving group of citizens.

In one press release, Ben asked a wonderfully important and enduring question about emergency personnel responding to Queensland floods, which also revealed his attitude to veterans:

Who's helping the helpers while the helpers help us?

Ben is not only notable for how closely connected he was to the veterans community and for how much he earned the admiration of the diggers with whom he interacted closely for many years, both in his local RSL sub-branch and as Minister for Veterans' Affairs; he's also a significant political figure for just how much he achieved. In my own electorate of Solomon, the North Darwin RSL club benefited on his watch from a DVA grant of $7,640 to provide it with new kitchen facilities for meal service. This helped entice older members of our Top End community back into the community and the clubhouse, to socialise and to exercise a couple of times a week.

Under this same joint venture scheme begun in 1985, more than $2.7 million was allocated to ESOs to set up 389 programs in Australia. He also oversaw the establishment of multiple new facilities for Vietnam and other veterans and their families in Darwin, including in Casuarina, where my office is today. This was part of the Labor government's plan of having shopfront counselling centres for veterans around the country. The Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service provided a relaxed, informal setting in which veterans and their families could talk about their problems, socialise, support one another and access a medical officer, a psychologist, training workshops and other activities.

As Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Ben Humphreys did enormous amounts of important and often behind-the-scenes work for veterans. In this, and in his Northern Australia portfolio, Ben did a lot for Darwin and for the Northern Territory. Today at a time of focused public discussion on how to provide the best and fairest social support and services to our veterans, we can do worse than look to Ben Humphreys for inspiring leadership. The then Labor government's concept of veterans hubs spotted around the country in areas of greatest need—as in Darwin, where Ben launched its centre—remains topical almost 20 years on. In Ben's understanding of and love for veterans and their families, we are reminded of the great heights of Australian statesmanship. I acknowledge and thank the government for their bipartisan tributes to Ben last month in recognition of this shared tradition. We can have no better model than Ben as we do our best to seek the fairest deal for veterans and their physical and mental health as well as for their families. Vale the Hon. Benjamin Charles Humphreys.

Mr DICK (Oxley) (17:22): It's an honour to follow on from the member for Solomon to pay tribute to the late Hon. Benjamin Charles Humphreys AM. I think it's probably fitting that the member for Solomon contributed to this debate today, because I think that, if there's one place where Ben Humphreys was known outside of his beloved inner south electorate of Griffith, it'd be the north of Australia. I follow on from the member for Solomon and his fitting words on a great Australian, Ben Humphreys.

I was privileged to attend the memorial service for Ben alongside many of my colleagues, including the current member for Griffith, Terri Butler. At that service, we heard about Ben Humphreys's life as a businessman, a member of parliament and a cabinet minister. But, most
importantly, we heard about his achievements of being a husband, a father and a much-loved grandfather. We also heard about a wonderful Australian who was also a cracking storyteller.

Ben Humphreys was born in Brisbane in 1934 and grew up in the community in and around where he lived for his entire life. He worked as a local mechanic before joining the Labor Party, and we heard at his service and his funeral the wonderful story about how he met his beloved wife, Beryl, by attending church. I heard at the service that Ben was a regular attender of church once he'd met Beryl and caught her eye. That was a beautiful marriage that lasted many decades and provided much support through Beryl for his career as a businessman and also, of course, as a member of parliament. As we all know, we can't do these jobs in this place without the love and support of our family, and Ben had that in spades.

He grew up and set off into a business career. Locals still call the garage he owned at Galloways Hill 'Ben's garage'. Following on from this he had an entrepreneurial streak and set up an outfitters. He sold many items across Northern Queensland and northern Australia. As we heard from the member for Solomon, he was a successful entrepreneur.

He entered parliament in 1977. It was a difficult time for the Labor Party. I was interested to hear about the preselection that Ben contested before the 1977 election. It would be fair to say that the Queensland Labor Party was difficult to operate in, following on from the defeat when the famous cricket team was elected under the Bjelke-Petersen government. I understand that Ben contested preselection against the late Denis Murphy and the late Clem Jones, a former great Lord Mayor of Brisbane. Ben prevailed. I know he had strong support from the industrial and union base, which Ben was particularly proud of. All of the old unions—the ETU and the Federated Storemen and Packers Union—backed Ben to the hilt. Ben never lost support from those unions during his time in this place and, of course, in the former house as well.

I joined the Labor Party 28 years ago. The 1990 campaign was one of the first I worked on. I remember being in awe of Ben Humphreys even before joining the Labor Party. He was a larger-than-life figure. He had enormous respect amongst branch members. I watched the election where he triumphed. Since 1977 he served in this parliament for almost two decades. He served alongside prime ministers Bob Hawke and Paul Keating. We heard in the contributions from the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister about his distinguished service as the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. He also served as Deputy Opposition Whip, and as Government Whip after Labor's victory in 1983.

He served in the ministry from 1987 to 1993. Ben Humphreys remains Australia's second-longest-serving veterans' affairs minister. I've heard from many people about his dedication and devotion, it would be fair to say, to veterans. He was a tireless and devoted advocate over many years. His career pinnacle was when he travelled with our frailest diggers to Gallipoli for the 75th anniversary of Anzac Day. He described it 'not as a journey but a pilgrimage'. He was, indeed, deeply affected by that visit.

He wasn't someone who looked for a lot of accolades, fame or glory. I would say he was old-school Labor—someone who wanted to do the job and got in and did the job. Support for him amongst branch members was legendary. A great friend of mine, a former Brisbane City Council colleague of mine and Leader of the Opposition, former councillor Shayne Sutton told me today that branch meetings were always well attended whenever Ben was the special

FEDERATION CHAMBER
guest. People loved hearing the stories from the Hawke and Keating years. He was simply a great storyteller.

He always took time to nurture, support and show interest in newly elected representatives, not just at the federal level but also at local and state levels. I understand that Ben instilled in his family that how-to-vote cards would always be at the Humphreys family booth at the Morningside Uniting Church and would be always staffed by the Humphreys family. He always made sure that he was available on election day, until he was physically unable to do so. My family also has a connection with Morningside. My father and my grandmother ran a greengrocer store along Wynnum Road in Morningside, so I know how important it is to have locals on your side, and the Humphreys family booth is still staffed to this day.

The other issue that we heard at the service, from John Brown AO, was Ben's connection with a lot of his colleagues. John Brown gave a beautiful tribute at the funeral about Ben's commitment to his colleagues here and how he reached across the aisle when he was veterans' affairs minister to make sure that he was respectful of all different views but also remained dedicated to those veterans.

The legacy of Ben Humphreys is enormous. On the south side of Brisbane, people still regard him as one of the best federal members that the south side of Brisbane has had. We've heard from the member for Solomon that the members for Griffith have included former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and, today, shadow minister Terri Butler. I would like to extend my sincere condolences to the Humphreys family, who are wonderful stalwarts of the Labor Party, to his five children—Sharon, Jude, Brenda, Ben Jr and Jason, who all are remarkable people who have gone on to support the Labor Party over many, many years—and of course to his grandchildren: Beth Edwards, Hannah Nolan, Amy Nolan, Claire Atkinson, Hunter Hanson and Lola Humphreys. I know he was a much-loved pa to all of you. You could see that beautiful love and connection at his funeral, with his grandchildren paying tribute to their wonderful role model and pa. I know it's a sad time for the Humphreys family, but I wanted to give my support and strength to them. I know they will continue to serve. I send my deepest condolences to Ben's beautiful widow, Beryl, who was a mainstay of Ben's career, particularly his political career. She was always there by his side, enabling him to do his job in this place and in the former house as well. With those few words, I say: Australia has lost a wonderful son. His legacy will remain with us for many, many years. Ben Humphreys, rest in peace.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rick Wilson): I understand it's the wish of honourable members to signify at this stage their respect and sympathy by rising in their places, and I ask all present to do so.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the Federation Chamber.

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (17:32): by leave—I move:

That further proceedings be conducted in the House.

Question agreed to.
Consideration resumed of the motion:
That the House take note of the report.

**Dr LEIGH** (Fenner) (17:33): Recently the House Standing Committee on Economics had the pleasure of hearing from Rod Sims, the head of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, and his staff on a range of important issues surrounding competition and market dynamics within the Australian economy. At the outset, as our report notes, there have been a number of worrying trends in the Australian economy, suggesting that it is becoming less dynamic. Sasan Bakhtiari has tracked the number of new start-up firms in Australia, going back to the beginning of the century. He found that at the beginning of the century the Australian economy was creating new firms at a rate of about 15 per cent a year; now that's down to just nine per cent a year.

We have similar trends with business more broadly. If you strip out the non-employing firms, again the rate of new business formation seems to be declining. There are considerable concerns over the productivity growth rate in the Australian economy. We've just had the worst productivity numbers in 25 years handed down, and that follows a significant period in which Australian productivity has been of concern. Typically the Productivity Commission reports how the amount of capital per worker has increased. It is a concept known as capital deepening. Recently they have had to use a different term; they refer to capital shallowing, as the amount of capital per worker has declined. Given that capital deepening has been about three-quarters of labour productivity growth, that is a frightening concern indeed.

We have businesses cutting back on research and development and investing less in good management. The share of firms that are innovative is no longer growing, and a survey of management practices in manufacturing firms found that Australia's managers rate below those in Canada, Sweden, Japan, Germany and the United States. The Harvard Atlas of Economic Complexity ranks Australia 93rd, well below other advanced economies. Treasury research has found that there is less job switching in Australia and that Australian workers find it more difficult to change firms than they did in the past. And research highlighted by Megan Quinn at a conference earlier this year showed that, since 2002, Australia's most productive firms—the top five per cent—have fallen off the global frontier by about a third. The bottom 95 per cent of firms have barely increased their productivity since Sydney hosted the Olympics at the start of the century.

That is a frightening scenario for the Australian economy, so we began by exploring the concerns that I had and that other Labor members share about the rise in market concentration having contributed to the problems in the Australian economy. It was acknowledged by the ACCC that a more dynamic economy could well be a function of high market concentration. We went into particular sectors. When we discussed the issue of banking, the ACCC said that they did not think 'there is strong competition in retail banking' and then went on to say:

We're also observing that, even though you've got some quite big players outside the big four, it's not clear that any of them are really displacing any of the big four or making serious inroads.
They flagged a lack of price competition and the fact that the big four seem to be maintaining their market share and earning very high profits.

I took to them the issue of the so-called loyalty tax, in which existing mortgage customers end up paying higher interest rates than new borrowers coming in the door. They acknowledge that such a loyalty tax does exist in the mortgage market, as indeed it exists in other markets, such as electricity. I have raised the issue of a loyalty tax with the heads of Australia's big four banks as they have come before us and, indeed, with some of the smaller banks as they have come before the House Standing Committee on Economics. I do not think it is reasonable for Australian firms to be charging two customers different rates.

The mortgage tax is reminiscent of the fees-for-no-service scandal which arose in the banking royal commission, which showed that some banks were charging customers for a product that they were not supplying. I am not sure it is that different to be overcharging your customers for a product that you are supplying at a lower price to other customers. I worry in particular that the loyalty tax falls disproportionately on vulnerable consumers who do not have the social networks, who do not perhaps have the time or confidence to phone up their mortgage provider and get a better deal.

We went to the question of the ACCC's inquiry powers. I put to them that the UK's Competition and Markets Authority has a market studies power and the ability to initiate studies of its own volition and to use information-gathering powers in those inquiries. The ACCC confirmed that they would indeed like to have a similar power to what their British counterpart has. Such a power, in my view, would help address the challenge of market concentration in Australia.

When we were last in government, Labor criminalised cartels. We spoke with the ACCC about the decision in the cartel case involving the Japanese shipping company Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha and why criminal charges were not pursued in that case. The ACCC noted the challenge of achieving a prosecution in that case but certainly acknowledged that the criminalisation of cartels provides them with an additional tool in their arsenal that they can use in these instances.

We spoke about the digital platforms inquiry, and I note that the government has now made clear that it will not be responding to the digital platforms inquiry this year. In my view, that's a disappointing outcome. This is an important report, handed down at a time when journalism is under considerable threat, and it's important that the government tackles these challenging issues. In particular, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has recommended stable and adequate funding for the ABC and SBS, and it's perhaps not so surprising that a government which has cut funding to the ABC is unwilling to respond to the digital platforms inquiry. They might just have to admit that, when they broke that promise never to cut funding to the ABC and SBS, they damaged good journalism in Australia.

We also explored the distinction between the ACCC's digital platforms inquiry and the Furman inquiry in the UK. I was interested in why the ACCC hadn't pursued the Furman inquiry's balance-of-harms approach. The ACCC justified their argument, but I do believe that it would be worth considering in Australia the measures that were raised in the Furman inquiry.
We discussed the problem of mechanics getting access to the data they need to fix modern cars. Modern cars are computers on wheels, with hundreds of onboard computers, and yet independent mechanics don't have access to the same data that authorised dealers have. The government have been dragging their heels on this important reform. They say they're committed to it, but the mechanics are yet to see the data.

And we talked about the cost. I asked the ACCC about their view that numbers from the United States could be extrapolated to Australia, and they agreed that the cost to Australian consumers could well be over a billion dollars a year. A billion dollars a year—the cost of this coalition government dragging its heels on a reform which ought to be enjoying bipartisan support.

Finally, we explored the issue of price parity clauses which prevent Australian accommodation providers telling their customers that they can book direct and save. Price parity clauses which are put in place by Booking.com continue to see a large share of the revenue from our accommodation sector going offshore. Expedia has undertaken not to enforce parity clauses; Booking.com has not. That means that, when you book through Booking.com, between 10 and 30 per cent of the bill goes offshore. I call on Booking.com to do the right thing, and I hope the government will step up and deal with this issue systematically, for the sake of Australia's accommodation sector.

Debate adjourned.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That grievances be noted.

South Australia

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (17:43): As we come to the end of another year, and after more than six years of the coalition government in office, the two issues that have dominated political debate in South Australia for the last decade or so remain unresolved and still high on the list of priorities for all South Australians. I refer to the River Murray water uncertainty and the future submarine contract. Both of these matters are vital to South Australia's future. Yet, with both the submarines and the Murray-Darling Basin, the uncertainty has never been greater. Of equal concern, the South Australian Marshall Liberal government has shown itself to be totally incompetent in looking after the interests of South Australians in both of these matters.

After many promises, election posters and politics by the previous member for Sturt about the local submarine construction contract and the jobs that were going to be created, and after six years of coalition government, we are still no better informed about when construction will commence, how much work will be created in South Australia, how many submarines will actually be built, what the real cost of that build will be and, indeed, when we will get the first submarine and the last submarine. These are matters that have been consistently in the media and the subject of questions here in this parliament and, as each week and each month passes, it seems that there is more and more uncertainty about a matter that we were promised had been resolved several years ago.

The whole process has been a chaotic shambles that has left South Australian ship workers and shipbuilding reliant industries in South Australia in limbo for far too long. Companies and businesses cannot continue to operate on promises alone; they actually need commitments.
and work to start so that they can get on with their commitment to South Australia, having remained in South Australia in the hope that these works were just down the track.

For many South Australians, the submarine contract and other naval shipbuilding work were seen as a lifeline for South Australian engineering and manufacturing industries after the coalition government shut down South Australia's car-making. As expected, and as studies showed at the time, shutting down GMH would hit South Australia hard—and it has. The South Australian economy is now struggling, which makes certainty about the future construction and maintenance of submarines even more important for South Australians. Yet we hear nothing and we see nothing in respect of that from South Australian Liberals at either the state or the federal level in this place.

To compound matters, and after we all thought that in 2012 we finally had a sensible agreement on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, we now have New South Wales threatening to withdraw from the plan, whilst the National Farmers Federation says that the plan needs to be fixed. Fixing the plan, in my view, is code for saying that the plan needs to be changed. Of course, being at the end of the system, South Australian inflows will always be reliant on what happens upstream—therefore, leaving South Australia at the mercy of upstream states. Changing the plan will of course have implications for South Australia. South Australia also has an extensive agricultural sector which is reliant on the Murray and which contributes significantly to South Australia's struggling economy. Any impact on that agricultural sector will simply add to South Australia's economic difficulties.

The South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission comprehensively outlined the matters that need to be addressed by government if the Murray-Darling Basin is to be sustainable. Yet the recommendations of that commission have been completely ignored, including by the South Australian Marshall Liberal government.

In addition to the royal commission recommendations, the Australian Academy of Science also produced a report on the Darling fish deaths, and that report has also been sidelined. I went to a briefing when that report was presented here in parliament just over a year ago. The people who carried out the research for that report analysed the problems very carefully and provided a very detailed report about what needed to be done. It wasn't a political report; it was done by the Australian Academy of Science. But, again, I hear no reference to it and I see no action being taken as to the findings of that report. In my view, that report summarised very clearly what the issues were and what needs to be done.

Sadly, those who have the most to lose from the mismanagement of the basin are the farming families throughout the basin who have, in good faith over the year, and with approval from local authorities, invested everything into their farms. Their anger is understandable. They have the most to lose and, for many of them, they have little choice. It is not simply a case of saying to them, 'You can walk off the land if you can't make ends meet,' because they have invested their life savings and their blood, sweat and tears over many years into their properties.

Lastly I turn to climate change and the Morrison government's dismal failure to accept the gravity of the risks associated with global warming and to accept that man-made contributing factors to the world's changing climate can, in fact, be managed if we choose to act. No amount of Morrison government spin about how well Australia is doing in meeting the Paris
climate accord targets will whitewash the Morrison government's denial of climate change and its betrayal of future generations.

All of the protests that we have seen around Australia and around the world are from people who genuinely care about the future of the world we live in. They also believe in the science and can see the changes happening throughout the world, in terms of both climate change and the destruction of the environment around us. They have every right, given that they will be in many cases the people that will be inheriting this world, to take a stand with respect to climate change.

Atmospheric greenhouse gas levels now consistently exceed 400 parts per million. That wasn't the case even a decade ago, when I came into this parliament. I remember talking about what the levels were then, and they were around 320 to 350 parts per million. Yet they are now regularly above 400 parts per million. With an increase in global population, which is expected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050—that is, another two billion people in this world—the climate change consequences of global warming are profound.

Our reliance on burning fossil fuels because they are a cheaper energy source is seriously misguided when we factor in the costs of extreme weather events, sea level rises, environmental degradation and human health impacts. They are false savings. Energy companies and fossil fuel companies make exorbitant profits whilst the rest of society pays the climate change costs. Again, there are many examples here, in Australia alone, of what climate change can do to destroy farming communities and the costs that flow from that.

The science is clear. The trends are clear. The last decade has provided considerable opportunity for detailed research, both here in Australia and around the world. The scientific predictions of a decade ago have been proven correct. Indeed, I can recall standing in this place and talking about the predictions of longer and more severe droughts, more severe floods, hurricanes, tornadoes and the like. All of those things have come to pass.

We cannot continue to procrastinate or delay action. Yes, a global solution is required, and Australia cannot do it alone. But Australia can show leadership, as it did in Copenhagen in 2009. We could be doing a lot more. We must do a lot more, and I believe the community expects it of us. Even since the election, the issue that has been raised with me, as much as any other, is concern about climate change. It may not have won us the election, but that doesn't mean that people are not concerned about it, and it is time that this government understood those concerns and acted accordingly.

Dr MARTIN (Reid) (17:53): Over the last few months, I have had the opportunity to conduct local community surveys and mobile offices across the electorate of Reid to hear from residents about the issues that matter to them most. On a local level, residents living in my electorate frequently raise concerns about the traffic that flows through Reid. Calls for congestion-busting infrastructure have been the No. 1 response in our Reid community survey. Over 50 per cent of our constituents in Reid get to work by car or by bus, so congestion busting has been greatly needed. Not only is there local traffic, but, because we are the gateway from the eastern and western CBD, we get a lot of traffic coming through from the Sydney CBD, heading towards Parramatta. We have worked alongside the New South Wales government to deliver new road infrastructure through WestConnex. Earlier this year
the first stage of WestConnex opened in Reid and it's made a big difference to the people of Reid because we can get home quickly and safely. The WestConnex M4 tunnels allow motorists to bypass up to 22 sets of traffic lights and divert trucks and large vehicles off busy Parramatta Road. This new infrastructure has reduced traffic at the notorious pinch point at the end of the M4 at North Strathfield, which was previously one of Sydney's worst traffic congestion spots. This is stage 1 of a larger project which will better connect Western Sydney to the eastern CBD and the airport.

In addition to WestConnex, the Morrison government has committed to delivering new congestion-busting infrastructure across other traffic hotspots in our electorate. $50 million has been dedicated to upgrade Homebush Bay Drive, including investigating options to improve traffic flow at the intersection of Australia Avenue and Underwood Road. These upgrades will improve road safety, reduce travel times and improve accessibility to Sydney Olympic Park and Wentworth Point. I'm looking forward to keeping the community up to date on this project.

We're also working with our local councils to eliminate high-risk accident areas on our roads through the Black Spot Program. As a result, new roundabouts, traffic signals and traffic-calming devices like speed bumps, have been implemented across Reid. Traffic hazard hotspots across Strathfield, Homebush, Burwood, Concord, Croydon, Lidcombe and Sydney Olympic Park have received upgrades to make our streets safer. I always welcome more suggestions from the community about road black spots near their homes which could be improved. So I encourage constituents to keep speaking to me about these issues.

Many residents of Reid are interested in seeing practical and responsible solutions to climate change. While tackling climate change requires a coordinated global solution, we are taking steps as a nation to play our role in reducing emissions. We're taking real and meaningful action to reduce global emissions with our $3.5 billion Climate Solutions Package that will allow us to meet our 2030 Paris target. On a national scale, we recognise the need to invest in renewable energy. Under our government, we've seen an unprecedented wave of investment in the renewable energy sector, in projects such as solar, wind and hydro. We have invested $1.38 billion in Snowy 2.0, which will be the world's second-largest renewable hydropower station. We are supporting Tasmania's Battery of the Nation project with a $56 million investment.

Most recently the Morrison government are taking the next steps to become global pioneers for a sustainable and commercial hydrogen industry through our National Hydrogen Strategy. This is an incredible opportunity for Australia. We are meeting consumer and system needs through reliable and innovative energy generation. Hydrogen can play a role in Australia's future energy mix, to decrease energy prices, improve energy security and reduce emissions. Importantly, it will create jobs, strengthen our economy and position Australia as a leader in a global hydrogen industry. This is only the beginning of our government's responsible and innovative initiative to protect our environment while strengthening Australia's energy supply and economy.

In Reid, I have been working with grassroots organisations in order to make sure our local environment is being well managed and well cared for. We are funding renewable energy generation at a local level. Most recently, the 2nd Abbotsford Sea Scouts received $9,400 through a Stronger Communities grant for the implementation of solar panels on their scout
hall, which is used by the sea scouts as well as other local organisations. Mike Zeederberg, chairperson of the 2nd Abbotsford Sea Scouts support committee, has expressed the positive impact of the project. It has reduced emissions and also reduced the running costs of the hall.

A number of local community groups will also receive funding through the Morrison government's Communities Environment Program to see better waste management, flora and fauna rejuvenation and the preservation of endangered species in our electorate. Groups such as Conservation Volunteers Australia has received—

*A division having been called in the House of Representatives—*

**Proceedings suspended from 17:59 to 18:11**

**Dr MARTIN:** A number of local community groups will also receive funding through the Morrison government's Communities Environment Program to see better waste management, flora and fauna rejuvenation and the preservation of endangered species in our electorate. Groups such as Conservation Volunteers Australia have received $18,900 of federal funding to work with Sydney Olympic Park to restore local ecosystems and participate in community education events to promote frog habitat conservation and rehabilitation. I often jog through this beautiful part of Reid and I'm so pleased that we can support the local ecosystem in the area. Other groups, such as Bushcare, are working alongside Canada Bay Council in Concord to rejuvenate Queen Elizabeth Park's native flora and fauna, with a $20,000 federal grant. This program supports many other small-scale on-the-ground projects that aim to conserve, protect and manage our local environment. Climate change needs a global, national and local response. There is still much to be done to address the challenge of climate change but I am confident that sensible and practical solutions will have a real impact at every level.

The majority of constituents who have completed the Reid community survey have highlighted stronger investment into hospital and health outcomes as a key priority for Reid. As a psychologist, this is an area I'm particularly passionate about. Only through a strong economy can we provide a sustainable, effective health system. We've put affordable medicines on the PBS and we are investing in medical research and technology through the government's Medical Research Future Fund. The Morrison government has spent more on mental health than any other government before it. We are committed to creating an accessible, equitable and integrated mental health system that has the capacity to provide targeted assistance to priority population groups facing significant challenges in mental health and for those at risk of suicide. The government has provided $736 million for mental health funding to facilitate the development of an evidence based mental health system. We want to collaborate with workplaces, community groups, health professionals and organisations. As the government, we want to continue practical steps to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians by working with employers, health professionals, carers, families and individuals. It is an area I want to continue to work in and strongly advocate for.

Residents of Reid have also expressed concerns about the impact of the drought on rural and regional communities across Australia. The impact of the drought on our farmers and regional communities has been devastating. We know that this Christmas many of our farmers will be struggling during a particularly dry summer season ahead. When our regional communities suffer, the whole country suffers with them and, for this reason, the drought is the Morrison government's top priority. We will continue to deliver additional drought support. Most recently with two-year interest-free loans for farmers and small businesses that
are reliant on agriculture, and $709 million has been allocated to focus on financial support for farmers, additional investments into regional infrastructure projects and providing a boost to our drought-affected rural communities with new funds for local roads, schools, early learning centres and community projects.

We are looking ahead with projects to ensure future water security so that, when it rains, we will be ready. Our government is providing $3.3 billion to build dams, weirs and pipelines. At this stage we are funding 21 water infrastructure projects, many of which are already underway. We are taking action to respond to the drought while also planning ahead to strengthen our nation's resilience and water security. I look forward to hearing more from constituents about their concerns on matters that they raise through community surveys and mobile offices, and I look forward to representing them ongoing in the future.

**Australian Bushfires**

**Climate Change**

**Mr WILKIE** (Clark) (18:15): Oh, dear! What a horrid bushfire season this country is experiencing already, and it's only 3 December. The figures are pretty well known now. Six people have died. More than 600 homes have been destroyed. Well over a million hectares of land in New South Wales have been burnt, a lot of very precious bush and farming land. In New South Wales alone, about as much land has burnt already this fire season as during the last three fire seasons in New South Wales. As we go about our work this afternoon, there are 100 fires or more still burning in New South Wales alone. Almost half of them are uncontained. Even the rainforests along the Great Dividing Range are now dry enough to burn for the first time in a very long time. No wonder New South Wales has declared a state of emergency.

Queensland has also declared a state of emergency. Severe fire danger warnings are in place for a number of districts, and the Bureau of Meteorology has predicted extreme heatwaves across the state of Queensland for the remainder of this week. In my home state of Tasmania the situation is also very alarming. I live in South Hobart, in the shadow of beautiful Mount Wellington. When you walk or bicycle up there, you can see that the fuel load is heavy and the bush is tinder-dry. Right across this country—Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria—we all face a very serious and worrying summer.

Of course, climate change is central to this. As the weather in this country is changing, in some parts of the country it's becoming markedly warmer and much drier. With this changing weather we are seeing hotter and drier summers, longer fire seasons and more intense fire episodes. When we look at what's happening to the bush and how it's burning, we're probably unsurprised to learn that nine of Australia's top 10 warmest years on record have occurred since 2005. Undoubtedly heatwaves are lasting longer and reaching higher maximum temperatures.

Despite all this, I regret to say we're not doing what we can to deal with climate change. We are not doing what we can to prepare for the likelihood of more and more intense bushfires. In fact, we're one of the only developed countries in the world relying on carryover credits and, frankly, accounting tricks to meet our Paris Agreement targets. You don't rely on carryover credits and accounting tricks. In reality, based on the government's own figures, real carbon emissions are going up in Australia. We won't meet the Paris Agreement. As modest
as the Paris target is—a target of 26 to 28 per cent—even if we achieve that, even if we achieve what the previous speaker spoke about, that's still not enough. It's just not enough across the globe, particularly here within Australia.

I am one of an increasing number of people in this country arguing for this country to be put on a speedy pathway to zero net carbon emissions, which will ultimately only be achieved by 100 per cent reliance on renewable energy. I'm one of an increasingly large group of people in this country who think that meeting Paris is nothing to crow about. It will be too little, too late. Can we achieve 100 per cent renewable? Of course we can. We are rich in renewable energy—not just solar and wind but also hot rocks for geothermal energy. We're rich in potential wave power, potential tidal power. And who knows what other amazing technologies our scientists can develop given the opportunity?

It's not like no-one else in this country is speaking up. It's increasingly remarkable that some politicians are holding out here, like it's the last fortress, saying, 'We'll be okay,' and, 'We're doing enough.' The Defence Force chief, the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank, the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority—they've all raised serious concerns recently about the impacts of climate change in Australia. Just this afternoon I met with representatives of Emergency Leaders for Climate Action, which is a group of 23 former fire and emergency services leaders in this country. They're saying we have to do something about climate change and we have to be much better prepared for the threat of bushfires like those we're already experiencing. I was pleased that they gave in-principle support to a suggestion I raised in the House of Representatives in question time today, which was that the government direct the Department of Defence to work up options for a heavy firefighting aircraft capability.

When I look at the fact that the Northern Hemisphere and Southern Hemisphere fire seasons now overlap and the fact that our domestic resources are increasingly stretched because we're increasingly seeing fire simultaneously, from west to east and from north to south, in this country, it would seem to make sense to me that the defence forces—the RAAF, in particular—work up a capability to help with firefighting. That wouldn't just be engineers clearing firebreaks and wouldn't just be aircraft ferrying supplies around the country. We've got an abundance of C-17 Globemaster, C-130 Hercules and C-27 Spartan aircraft. I believe that as long ago as the 1980s the Air Force did trials and research into roll on, roll off tanker systems that could be literally rolled onto the back of, say, a C-130 Hercules. Yes, some small aircraft modification would be required and, yes, extensive crew training—in particular, pilot training—would be required, but it would be a capability that could be worked up, probably in a matter of several years, if the government were to direct Defence to develop such a capability.

It was unfortunate that the Prime Minister and the Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management, in response to that question from me today, politely dismissed it. They said that they're acting on the advice of experts and that experts say we have enough firefighting resources in this country to get through the summer and to get through the expected needs in the foreseeable future. I'm the first to say, 'Let's listen to the experts,' but I struggle to understand how we can have enough resources when we're seeing the fire danger trending so steeply in a worrying direction. When you've got 23 former leaders in fire and emergency services from all the states and territories saying,
'We need more heavy firefighting aircraft capability,' you've really got to pay attention. It is worth noting here that the amount of money the federal government is investing in aerial firefighting currently is not much different to what was budgeted for way back during former Prime Minister John Howard's time.

I've already spoken a little bit about Tasmania. I'm particularly alarmed that we're a long way away, with a limited number of aircraft. They've had to return to Melbourne to be refuelled on some occasions. We need enough heavy firefighting aircraft—and other resources too—to fight serious bushfires simultaneously right around the country. Increasingly, we're going to find that it's just not an option to have a very small number of heavy aircraft deployed. We're going to find they're somewhere and just not able to get somewhere else.

It is of course a matter of a lot more than just heavy aircraft. If we are really to prepare for the bushfire threat, which is going to get so much worse in the future, we need to have better planning codes and building codes. We need to have a better approach to fuel reduction. It's not good enough to turn it into a political slanging match and blame the Greens and whatnot. It is not that simple. It is about the shortage of resources in the parks services. It is about the difficulty of hazard-reduction burning in some parts of the country, where it is either too wet or too dry. These are tough things to do. Undoubtedly, though, if this country worked harder at a holistic response to the bushfire threat then we not only can do even better than we do currently but we would be even better prepared for the future.

I will leave it there. Our thoughts are, of course, with the people who are affected by the fires and the brave people who are fighting the fires. I do have a strong sense that, in this place, we could do more to support them not just this summer but into the future.

**Groom Electorate**

**Dr McVEIGH (Groom) (18:25):** As the 2019 year draws to a close, it is opportune to reflect on the historic achievements, the great successes and, of course, some of the unprecedented challenges we have faced this calendar year in the Groom electorate. Crippling drought conditions provide a backdrop to some of those challenges, alongside recent bushfire experiences that we have had in the region. But I remain enthused, impressed and most respectful of the ongoing resilience and achievements of residents of the Groom electorate across the Toowoomba, Oakey, Pittsworth and Highfields regions.

In 2019 we saw the delivery of some historic and long-awaited infrastructure projects. Most notably, in September, we had the opening of the $1.6 billion Toowoomba second range crossing, known as the Toowoomba Bypass. This has been talked about for 50 years. It is Australia's biggest inland road project and it has brought about tremendous benefits. Firstly, it has benefits for the residents of Toowoomba, given that traffic volumes along James Street have decreased significantly. Most noticeably, since that opening date, it has removed traffic jams and improved the safety for everyday commuters—mums, dads and their kids getting to and from work and school. But also, for heavy vehicles traversing our regions, it eliminates some 18 sets of traffic lights and provides a somewhat seamless journey through to the Brisbane port, saving in the order of up to 40 minutes in travel time. It is a win-win for our region and for transport that operates across the eastern seaboard.
The Toowoomba Wellcamp Airport continues to provide exciting opportunities for our region. We are currently celebrating four years of the Cathay Pacific weekly freighter flight to Hong Kong that is taking our produce to the world. Right now, the final stages of the new Qantas pilot training academy is being completed. From 2020 onwards, Toowoomba will be a powerhouse of aviation training and expertise, with up to 250 future pilots training at the facility each year. This provides tremendous employment opportunities for locals as well.

Just last Friday the Inland Rail intergovernmental agreement between the Queensland government and the federal government was signed in Toowoomba. Finally we have the state government locked in alongside the New South Wales and Victorian governments. As you yourself have noted, Deputy Speaker Wallace, this too will provide tremendous efficiencies for transport of both freight and passengers across the eastern seaboard. It is a magnificent project, a nation-building project.

Our University of Southern Queensland continues to excel, working with industry—for example, Wagners, in terms of composite fibre technology. They have received funding to the tune of $1.2 million for early-career researchers under the ARC rounds of funding that we have just seen. Local researchers at USQ are looking at opportunities to generate electricity from waste heat; are exploring new and exciting developments in hypersonics and learning what we can from our space research at the same time; and are further investigating how we understand the solar system through our world-leading space research in terms of new exoplanets and what we might learn from them. This cutting-edge research, alongside what is happening in industry in terms of our traditional agricultural industry, has worldwide implications.

Our support for industry continues—commercialisation and business support activities, for example. The $500 million investment that's promised for a new major medicinal cannabis development in our region will bring to fruition 1,200 jobs as that project heads towards final approval. The federal government has supported that through major project status and, of course, the licences from the federal health minister. There's also the Southern Queensland Export Innovation Hub. Some $800,000 from the federal government is assisting local firms to export to the world—of course, again, providing new job opportunities for generations to come.

Our region has a very proud military history. Our two defence bases receive support from the federal government and from locals as well. These are enduring bases. We also celebrate our history. I am working very closely with the Milne Bay Military Museum to preserve their important collection for years to come. We secured funding for the renovation of Soldiers Memorial Hall together with the Toowoomba Regional Council. Borneo Barracks will see New England Highway upgrades in front of the barracks there at Cabarlah to assist in the entrance and exit of PMVs at the site and to improve their safety and their integration with local general traffic. Other roadworks have been committed to by the federal government, particularly the Brimblecombe Road and the Warrego Highway intersection near Oakey. The federal government has announced the money, and it has it on the table. We need the state government to get on board and use their resources to get these projects implemented.

As I mentioned, drought continues to be a challenge for us. I am so impressed by and admire the various agencies that support our families dealing with drought. It was recently announced that the iconic Weis manufacturing business—nowadays owned by Unilever—will
unfortunately relocate interstate. That will mean the loss of about 90 jobs by this time next year. But people need to understand that, whilst we grieve for those individuals—and I will be working with them over the next 12 months to make sure that they are in receipt of appropriate consideration from Unilever—new job opportunities abound. Just as old businesses move or, in some cases, close, so too do new businesses arrive or start up in our region.

The business case for inland rail, having secured the intergovernmental agreement with the state government just last Friday for inland rail, will allow us to proceed with consideration of passenger rail between Toowoomba and Brisbane. I say most respectfully to the Deputy Prime Minister and to the state minister for transport that, with the signature on the paper now for that intergovernmental agreement, there are two things that our region wants to focus on. First of all, any major infrastructure project does have an impact on landholders no matter where it is—in the city, on the coast and, in our case, regional Queensland. Those landholders must be dealt with appropriately. They cannot be expected to incur the cost of a large project that promises benefits for so many locals, so many Queenslanders and, in fact, so many Australians. So I will be working closely, as I am, with individual landholders as they negotiate with ARTC.

Secondly, having secured consideration of futureproofing for passenger rail through the tunnel that will make the traversing of the Toowoomba Range far more simple for freight rail, we want to ensure that proper consideration of passenger rail to Brisbane in the years to come. If the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and regions around Sydney and Melbourne can have that consideration, so too should Toowoomba—the leading regional area of the nation. That will be a very big focus for me going forward.

I remind those opposite that the coalition won the election. In Groom, we won the election. In fact, I'm proud of the fact that my team and supporters across the electorate secured the highest Liberal Party vote in the country. I don't gloat about that; I just say very clearly to those opposite and to detractors through the community that the people of Australia have spoken—in particular, the people of Groom have spoken. We have much work to do to implement the commitments that we took to the election. There is so much potential in our region. We need to continue to grapple with the challenges that I have mentioned, but that's exactly what we will do. We will be getting on with the job, as promised to the people of Groom in the May election, and that is my focus. I will not shy away from that responsibility.

**Coalition Government**

**Dr ALY (Cowan) (18:35):** As we approach the end of the year, parents and students around Australia will be receiving that all-important report card. Some will be presented with pride and celebrated; others will be presented with trepidation and met with a harsh word and a stern warning. When I was at school, my report card routinely read that I was excellent at English, good at maths and hopeless at sport. Of course, I learnt from a very young age that I would always be picked last for sport but first if there was an argument to be won! So my report card also mentioned something about my penchant for talking too much in class, which I recall caused a lot of angst for my economics teacher, Mr Leigo, who once said to me, 'Blimey, Aly, you could talk underwater with a meat pie in your mouth!'

Considering the time of year and considering that we are in the last couple of days of parliament sitting, I thought I might deliver my own report card for the year as it was. Let's
start with the prefects. The member for Kooyong has participated in several class projects over the course of the year. While vocal, he struggles with basic economic concepts such as the difference between debt and deficit. I recommend a tutor and perhaps less reliance on Siri for his answers. It would also be helpful if, when he makes presentations, he could speak a little quieter.

The member for Dickson should be commended for putting up his hand to be head prefect; however, in doing so, he appears to have overestimated his support from other prefects, which has poor implications for his numeracy skills—namely his ability to count correctly! He would make more friends if he smiled more often and learned to play nice with others.

The member for Riverina doesn't seem to be handling his new prefect role very well and is prone to temper tantrums when under stress. Unfortunately, this is often in a very public forum, including at whole-school assemblies. The member for Pearce this year took on a lot more responsibility amongst the prefects and, unfortunately, this seems to be taking a toll on the quality of his work. In particular, he has failed to hand in his end-of-year assignment on religious discrimination. When questioned why he couldn't submit his assignment on time, he made an excuse about the dog eating his homework.

The member for Hume has had a particularly bad run this year. He's been a very, very naughty boy. He showed such promise and has previously attended some very, very good schools. Unfortunately, he has failed to apply his initiative and instead has proven to be quite the distraction for his classmates. He is prone to exaggeration at times and once told his classmates that he lived down the road from a very famous author. He has spent a lot of time in the naughty corner but has refused to go to the principal's office for disciplinary action.

The member for Fadden has had less than satisfactory results in English this year. In particular, he has a tenancy to use complex words in the wrong context—for example, 'ontology of capabilities' and 'scaling up platforms'. I recommend that he stick to single syllables and that he would greatly benefit from the use of a dictionary. The head prefect has spent much of his time shouting at people and guzzling beer behind the shed, pretending to be one of the cool kids. Overall, the prefects this year have been caught on several occasions without correct uniform, failing to wear the little prefect pins that were issued to them by the head prefect.

The remainder of the coalition class of 2019 have also had stand-out performers. The member for Stirling leads the class in drama with his theatrical performance of Dorothy Dixers during question time. He receives the endeavour award for his commitment but, sadly, no Oscar. The member for McPherson's attempt to portray the Prime Minister of New Zealand was a particular lowlight in the drama program this year. She gets a participation certificate. The member for Goldstein has exhibited an unwillingness to play nicely with others, is frequently caught yelling across the hall and throws terrible tantrums when he doesn't have the final say. He would greatly benefit from more outside play and extracurricular activities, such as long-distance running. The member for North Sydney has demonstrated creative aptitude and would excel at a career in costume design in the cinema. The member for Mackellar has told too many dad jokes this year, and nobody laughed. The member for Dawson has had too many absentee days for overseas travel this year and seems unlikely to graduate.
Well, that's my report card for the year. I wish all the students in Cowan and across Australia the best of luck as they enter their final weeks of school. I hope that next year's report card is an improvement. Happy Christmas and a very happy new year to all.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Gillespie): The time for the grievance debate has expired. The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 192B. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next setting.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 18:41