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**SITTING DAYS—2020**

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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—Hon. David Littleproud MP
Chief Whip—Hon Damian Kevin Drum MP
Deputy Whip—Mr Kenneth Desmond O'Dowd MP

Australian Labor Party
Leader—Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Richard Marles MP
Chief Opposition Whip—Mr Christopher Patrick Hayes MP
Opposition Whips—Ms Joanne Catherine Ryan MP and Ms Anne Maree Stanley MP

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<td>Wilson, Mr Joshua Hamilton</td>
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<td>Goldstein, VIC</td>
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Members of the House of Representatives

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<td>Zimmerman, Mr Trent Moir</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 Stefanic
Parliamentary Budget Officer—J Wilkinson
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<tbody>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<td>The Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Ben Morton MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Michael McCormack MP</td>
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<td>The Hon David Littleproud MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts</td>
<td>The Hon Paul Fletcher MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Kevin Hogan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon David Coleman MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction</td>
<td>The Hon Angus Taylor MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Michelle Landry MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC</td>
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<td>The Hon Darren Chester MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Defence Minister</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Stuart Robert MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Government Services</td>
<td>The Hon Stuart Robert MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Children and Families</td>
<td>The Hon Michelle Landry MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Richard Marles MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator Jenny McAllister</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>The Hon. Shayne Neumann MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel</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>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
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<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>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Kristina Keneally</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations</td>
<td>The Hon. Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Arts</td>
<td>The Hon. Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<td>Manager of Opposition Business in the House of Representatives</td>
<td>Ms Emma McBride MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</td>
<td>The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Carers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Ageing and Seniors</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Ms Madeleine King MP</td>
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**MONDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2020**

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Monday, 10 February 2020

The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 11:33, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

The SPEAKER (11:34): On behalf of the House I welcome as guests the President of the Senate and honourable senators to this sitting of the House of Representatives to hear an address by His Excellency Mr Joko Widodo, President of the Republic of Indonesia.

His Excellency Mr Joko Widodo having been announced and escorted into the chamber—

The SPEAKER: Mr President, I welcome you to the House of Representatives chamber. Your address today is a significant occasion in the history of the House of Representatives.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (11:37): Mr Speaker, today we welcome the President of the Republic of Indonesia, His Excellency Joko Widodo. President Widodo, it is an honour and a privilege to have you here amongst us as a true friend. Selamat datang! And, President Widodo, we are welcoming not only you and your delegation at this time in this country, because at present we welcome 40 members of the Indonesian National Armed Forces, including military engineers and medical staff, who are currently assisting with bushfire relief and recovery in New South Wales, and today they're working on floods. We thank you, Mr President, we thank the people of Indonesia and we thank the Republic of Indonesia. Like a true friend, as you are, you have lent a great hand, and we are a grateful nation.

President Widodo, you join us here in the home of our democracy as the leader of our most important neighbour and as a dear, dear friend. Shortly after becoming Prime Minister—on my first overseas visit, in fact—I found myself at a school in Bogul, surrounded by young Indonesian students, brimming with promise—singing, in fact. So, I decided to tell them a story, as we often do when visit our schools. I told them the story of a man I was on my way to meet that day; a man who had come from modest and humble beginnings; a man who had worked hard to put himself through university, who'd studied forestry and then set up a business and did what others thought he couldn't or perhaps shouldn't; a man who, as we say here in Australia, had a go. And then I asked the students, 'Do you know who I'm talking about?' and they didn't know, so I pointed across the room to a photo that hung on the wall, and it was your portrait. It was your story I told, which they knew as Bapak Jokowi. It was a story that showed we can make our own futures, and that is as true in Indonesia as it is here in this country. 'He's like you,' I told the students.

President Widodo, you have many admirers here in this chamber and that fill the galleries here today. We have watched and seen your great leadership in your country and throughout the region, and we know it and we trust it. Thanks to your leadership, Indonesia today is an even more dynamic and more successful country, to the great benefit of your people. Your commitment to deepening our two nations' partnership and strengthening our shared region in the Indo-Pacific is honoured here today. And I like to think we are countries that can cheer each other on. We can cheer on our successes together and, as Australia has appreciated in recent months, stand together in the so-many difficult times, as Australia will always with Indonesia, as you face other difficult times.

Many years ago, it was another generation of Australian leaders who championed and supported Indonesian independence—so much so that President Sukarno asked Australia to represent Indonesia in the UN discussions—a generation that dreamed and hoped for what we could achieve together. Our countries are living out that hope today. Of course, as our modern relationship has matured, there have been many times when we haven't agreed. That's only normal in the relationships between friends, where you have to deal with a multitude of challenges. But respect underpins the trust that we have formed.

Our countries work hard to understand where there are differences, rather than focus on them. We listen to each other, we learn from each other and, importantly, we are honest with each other. In doing so, we have discovered, as Prime Minister Menzies said during his first visit to Indonesia in 1959, that we have 10 times as much in common as we have in difference. And that is ever so today. Today, Australia and Indonesia have built the trust that underpins only the truest of friendships. Trust allows us to work through the differences that neighbours sometimes face. For Australia, we see Indonesia's success as something to be celebrated. We count Indonesia amongst our most important partners and it has now become, indeed, a convention that the first visit of any Prime Minister is to Jakarta.

There are many challenges in the Indo-Pacific region: the strategic competition, maintaining international rules and norms and a resurgence of terrorism and violent extremism, all of which we must face together because these
are not challenges any of us can face alone. We need partners. We need our friends. As the Indonesian saying goes: berat sama dipikul, ringan sama dijinjing—heavy when shouldered alone, light if carried together.

Australia and Indonesia understand this well and we have worked together closely over many years on defence and counterterrorism issues; on maritime security, combatting smugglers and illegal fishing along our maritime border. Together, Australia and Indonesia are motivated by our shared concerns for our region and our shared vision for an open, prosperous Indo-Pacific underpinned by strong institutions, rules and norms. By continuing to work together, we can build the region's resilience and make our people safer and our economy stronger. Our ambitious comprehensive strategic partnership, which was finalised 18 months ago, gives us a framework for even closer ties. We now have a plan of action to take the next steps in our relationship. From trade and investment to defence, counterterrorism, maritime security, ocean sustainability and education, to name only some, and even today we add energy and the future of fuel sources for our nations to this long list. But that is only where our ambition begins. We know there is more to be done, especially on the economic front.

Indonesia is one of Australia's nearest northern neighbours, a growing trillion-dollar economy and the fourth most populous nation, but only our 13th-largest trading partner. Australia is Indonesia's 13th-largest too. There is enormous untapped potential for both nations, which we have recognised, and we are determined to unlock this through the IA-CEPA. And I want to acknowledge today the presence of former Prime Minister Mr Malcolm Turnbull, who did so much work to bring this to reality. Once in force, this modern, transformative agreement will do more than make trade easier; it will open the door to new economic opportunities and forge more partnerships between our businesses, farmers, investors, tech entrepreneurs, researchers and scientists.

One area where IA-CEPA can facilitate closer economic engagement is, of course, in education. Our educational connections already run deep, with 16,000 young Indonesian leaders studying in Australia every year, and I am delighted that the first university in the world to establish a branch campus in Indonesia will be Australia's Monash University. Monash Indonesia—what a combination, those two names!—will contribute powerfully to Indonesia's economic, social and technological development. It will deliver master's, PhD and professional training programs, and partner with Indonesia's leading national, private and Islamic universities to establish deep research links with Indonesian businesses. Our countries, economies and people are being drawn closer. That is something we have encouraged, with the New Colombo Plan, the BRIDGE program and interfaith exchanges also, something I know that President Widodo and I are both keen to promote.

Mr President, this 'black summer' the Australian and Indonesia people have suffered traumatic climatic events, with bushfires here in Australia and floods in Indonesia. Fire and flood—nature can be so indiscriminate. Sixty-one people died in new-year floods that hit Jakarta and the West Java and Banten provinces, with the most ferocious rain resulting in flash flooding and landslides. Despite their own struggles and amidst their own suffering, Indonesians remembered Australia and reached out to us also, kindness upon kindness. In Bali—a place that has become, for Australians, a home away from home—there were dozens of fundraisers to assist our fire efforts. For two days, 1,250 local taxi drivers from the Blue Bird Group made donations from every taxi trip booked in Bali. In Makassar, a group of Indonesians who had attended Australian universities raised funds for the Red Cross. In their words, 'We felt we had to do something to help.' And last week, in Surabaya, a six-year-old girl organised a school fundraiser; she wanted to help our koalas.

We're seeing the same generosity from the Indonesian community here in Australia too. In Darwin, a food bazaar event was organised by the local community group and supported by the Indonesian consulate. There was bakso, tahu isi and bakwan—and I apologise for my pronunciation—all on offer. One of the men behind the event, Dominic Witono, said that what he and his community had raised wasn't the biggest sum. But to that I would say: it was the bigness of his heart that mattered. These actions, and so many more, speak of the wonderful Indonesian character. These acts of kindness make me confident about Australia and Indonesia's future, President Widodo, as does your presence here today and your friendship. On behalf of this parliament and the Australian people, I welcome you again, and we look forward to your address. Terima kasih. Thank you, my friend.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (11:48): I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet and pay my respect to their elders, past and present. Selamat datang, teman-nya. Mr President, I would like to welcome you and Foreign Minister Marsudi to Canberra for this historic visit. I had the great pleasure of once again visiting Indonesia to meet with the foreign minister in August last year. For my first overseas visit as leader of the Australian Labor Party, Jakarta was the obvious choice. We think of the relationship between our nations—as neighbours, as partners and, importantly, as friends—as one of central importance. When I returned from Indonesia, I was filled with an even stronger personal commitment to the growth and the prospering of our relationship. Your visit comes as we are about to embark on a new stage in our relationship, as the comprehensive economic partnership agreement is brought into operation. I'm very pleased
that Labor was able to support this agreement and I strongly hope it will see a new phase of economic engagement between our two countries.

Indonesia is on course to take its place among the top economies in the world—the fourth largest—over coming decades, yet our economic relationship has struggled to keep pace with the reality of Indonesia's economic rise. We therefore need to build on this recently finalised agreement, not only to dramatically increase our trade relationships but to widen this to our investment links. Beyond these, we also see it as an opportunity to deepen our economic, business, trade union and civil society links. So important is this goal that I've launched an Indo-Pacific trade task force within the Australian Labor Party, led by Luke Gosling. This task force will identify new ways in which Australia and Indonesia can expand our economic relationship alongside our other relationships in the region. Labor welcomes your ongoing work to improve Indonesia's attractiveness as an investment destination and to lay the foundations for long-term development, and it was a pleasure to have the opportunity to discuss those issues with you one on one earlier this morning. Should Labor come to government, we intend to again look at Australia's level of development assistance to Indonesia.

Your Excellency, as neighbours, Australia and Indonesia have a common interest in working together to shape our region, based on the principles of openness, transparency, democratic principles and inclusion. Our partnership finds strength in our unique histories and perspectives, but we cannot allow ourselves to be complacent. We must dedicate ourselves to building a deeper understanding between our diverse communities, not just our elites. Labor remains firmly focused on our partnership in all of its dimensions. Indeed, I'm pleased to count no fewer than four Bahasa speakers in the senior ranks of the Australian Labor Party, my good friends and colleagues: our Senate leader, Penny Wong; Chris Bowen; Stephen Jones; and Luke Gosling. Our partnership finds expression in so many ways—for example, your decision to send over 40 military engineers and other personnel to help us in our time of need during our ongoing bushfire crisis. This was the action of a true friend.

Your Excellency, just last Friday, I received an unexpected reminder of our relationship when visiting the New South Wales South Coast with my shadow cabinet. Prior to the meeting in Batemans Bay, we visited Mogo. This is a very small hamlet on the South Coast. It had been under threat. As you drive into the main street of town, you see homes that have been reduced to ash. There, in Mogo's main street alongside coffee shops and other stores, was a store run by a local, Trent Harvey, who was working in Sydney and decided to move back to set up a small business in Mogo. It is called Indo Direct. It has arts, furniture and every product imaginable imported from your great nation. Here it is: a town with a population of just over 300 demonstrating in a really practical way why increased trade is good for both our economies and both our peoples—in this case, Indonesia's manufacturers and artisans and, on Australia's side, our retail and tourism sectors. On behalf of Labor, I purchased a ceramic artwork as a gift for you—a small gift to remind you of your support for our bushfire communities. It is from your country but purchased in Mogo, a small town doing it tough. It's not what you expect to run into when you're in a small hamlet on the South Coast. We will make sure that you receive that later today, Mr President.

Indonesia's blossoming democracy stands as another basis for greater cooperation in our region and the wider world. Indonesia's successful historic transition to a multiparty democracy sends a powerful message and one that resonates all the more now at a time when we are seeing, unfortunately, a global trend towards authoritarianism. The Bali Democracy Forum is a great expression of this, and, in the future, I would be keen to do more with Indonesia to promote democracy in our region, and I'm sure I speak in this case on behalf of the entire parliament.

Of course, this isn't the only area where there's a great opportunity to work together as partners. Indonesia and Australia have already been able to work together on protecting the global order, founded on international law, which we both believe is so central to our individual destinies. In areas like the law of the sea, Indonesia has played an absolutely critical role, and we would also look forward to working with you on the challenge of addressing climate change, which is a threat to both our nations. Indonesia and Australia's networks of links across the globe are different but highly complementary and enable us to deliver more together at the global level than we could do apart as individual nations. For this reason, you can be confident that any future government that I lead will be committed to expanding on the important cooperation on the rules based order we have achieved to date. Regionally, Indonesia has always proven highly adept at bringing together divergent views in the region and finding ways to negotiate the challenging geopolitical environment that we face together—more recently, with your leadership, ASEAN members coming together around a shared ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific. This work clearly evidenced your strategic wisdom, and Labor strongly supports the outlook.

Your Excellency, in closing, I hope you go away from your visit with a very clear understanding that, no matter which party forms government here in Canberra, you can expect a strong and bipartisan commitment to the importance of the relationship between not just our two nations but also our two peoples. And you can always count on an equally deep commitment to making our relationship an even better one. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: Mr President, it gives me great pleasure to invite you to address the House.
His Excellency Mr JOKO WIDODO (President of the Republic of Indonesia) (11:57): (Translation) The Hon. Prime Minister, Scott Morrison; the Hon. Senator Scott Ryan; the Hon. Mr Tony Smith; the Hon. Anthony Albanese; honourable members of the Senate and the House of Representatives; distinguished guests and ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. G'day, mate! I am deeply honoured to stand before the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives of Australia.

Distinguished members, on 2 February, one platoon of the Indonesian Army Corps of Engineers, along with personnel of the Indonesian National Agency for Disaster Management, 40 personnel, departed Indonesia to New South Wales. They have only one purpose: to work hand in hand with the Australian people to overcome the bushfire crisis in Australia. At the same time, teams from Indonesia and Australia are currently discussing possible cooperation for weather modification. On 23 December 2019, I reaffirmed to Prime Minister Morrison a clear message that Indonesia will always be with Australia during this difficult time. Following the untimely passing of Prime Minister Morrison's father, myself and the people of Indonesia are grieving with Mr Morrison and his family. True friends are people who stay with you during the good and the bad times. A friend in need is a friend indeed.

Australia never leaves Indonesia's side during times of disaster. The people of Indonesia will always remember when Indonesia was struck by a tsunami in 2004 in Aceh. Nine Australian soldiers, sadly, perished while assisting their grieving friends in Aceh. They are patriots. They are friends of Indonesia and they are heroes of humanity. Indonesia and Australia are destined to be close neighbours. We cannot choose our neighbours. We have to choose to be friends. Australia is Indonesia's closest friend.

Honourable members of parliament, 61 years ago, in 1959, Prime Minister Robert Menzies, during a visit to the University of Gadjah Mada, my alma mater, said, 'We have 10 times as much in common as we have in difference.' Despite the cultural differences between Indonesia and Australia, we share the same values: heroism; diverse ethnic groups and tolerance; democracy and respect for human rights as well as a commitment to protect the environment and beyond. The youth of Australia and Indonesia share similarities. Indonesia is currently entering a demographic dividend. There are 63 million youth aged 16 to 30 years, or 24 per cent of the total population. Most of them have a global outlook and are keen to collaborate and to innovate. Indonesia currently has one decacorn company and four unicorn companies, and the youth are the driving force. The young generation of Indonesia and Australia are brought up with similar values. They live in democratic settings. They are familiar with Netflix, Instagram and Facebook and actively exchange international perspectives. These form a strong foundation for shared values in building friendship at present and for the future.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the 70 years of friendship between Indonesia and Australia is by no means a short period. Seventy years is platinum age—a strong platinum friendship not only between the governments and the parliaments but also between the people of the two nations. We must continue to solidify our friendship. We both need to prepare ourselves for when Indonesia and Australia reach 100 years of partnership, three decades from now. The year 2050, one century of our partnership, will be a monumental year. In the year 2050, Indonesia and Australia will transform to become major players in the region and on the world stage. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers, for instance, in the year 2050 the economy of Indonesia will become the fourth largest economy, with GDP around US$10.5 trillion. Indonesia will also become an emerging market with the world's largest middle class, but on the other side of the coin in the year 2050 the world will see more uncertainties. If this trend continues then the world in the next three decades will be even more disrupted. Global geopolitics and the geoeconomy are facing greater challenges. Stagnation of economic growth and even recession of the economy are looming large, and it is feared that the values of democracy and diversity are becoming more marginalised.

In the midst of enormous challenges, Indonesia and Australia must focus on strengthening our partnership. I'd like to propose a number of priority agendas as we head to one century of partnership. First, we must continue to advocate the values of democracy, human rights, tolerance and diversity—stop intolerance, stop xenophobia, stop radicalism and stop terrorism. Identity politics must be discouraged in our countries and globally, regardless of its religious, ethnicity or other identity basis. Identity politics is a threat to democracy, a threat to diversity and a threat to tolerance. These threats will become even more actual when exploited for short-term political interests, resulting in hatred, fear and even social conflict. As democratic and diverse countries, we must work hard, side by side, standing together to defend the values of democracy, tolerance and diversity and to prevent the world having a clash of civilisations.

Second, Indonesia and Australia must reinforce open, free and fair economic principles. Whilst protectionism is rising we must continue to advocate economic openness and fairness. Amidst the growing popularity of the zero-sum-game approach, we need to bolster a win-win paradigm. I very much believe an open and fair economic system will be beneficial for all. That is the reason I greatly welcome the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, IA-CEPA. 'Collaboration' is the keyword. Collaboration will create
opportunities to develop new centres of economic growth and to find a solution for the global economic challenges. This is what Indonesia and ASEAN are projecting through the ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific. This outlook will turn rivalries into cooperation. Thus the outlook will transform trust deficit into strategic trust. When correctly implemented, the Indo-Pacific region will become the future centre for global economic growth. Indonesia and Australia must become the anchors for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

Third, Indonesia and Australia must become the anchors for development partners in the Pacific region. Indonesia understands the development challenges in the Pacific region. As a fellow island state, Indonesia faces similar challenges with countries in the Pacific region. Climate change and natural disasters, as well as social inequality, education, health and human resources development, are the real challenges facing countries in the Pacific region. Indonesia and Australia must become true friends for countries in the Pacific region, collaborating as development partners, addressing the impacts of climate change, alleviating poverty and social inequality, and creating new centres of economic growth in the Pacific region.

Fourth, we must work together to protect the environment, to achieve sustainable development and reforestation in forest and river upstream areas, to prevent forest and land fires, to commit to lowering carbon emissions and to develop renewable energy and other green technologies. Indonesia's plan to build a new capital city is part of the commitment—a smart city, a smart metropolis with green technology and friendly to the environment, whilst being part of the efforts to transform the economy, based on innovation, science and technology.

The collaboration in the Indonesia-Australia partnership in the midst of rising global uncertainties can be illustrated by the movie Avengers: Endgame. When the forces of good unite, the Avengers assemble and the common enemy can be defeated. When Indonesia and Australia continue to collaborate and come together against intolerance and protectionism, the fear of poverty and the threat of climate change can be overcome.

Honourable members of parliament, in addition to those four focus areas, the anchor for cooperation between Indonesia and Australia in 2050, three decades from now, rests in our youth. I would like to propose a notion of an 'Aus-Indo wave', an Australia-Indonesia wave for the youth of Indonesia and Australia. We need to promote the trend of close ties between Indonesia and Australia to our youth and we must encourage love for Indonesia amongst Australian youth and, vice versa, love for Australia amongst Indonesia's younger generation. Our youth today are the leaders of tomorrow. Investing in the young generation will further strengthen the Indonesia-Australia partnership. We already have great assets. Today there are 160,000 Australian students learning Bahasa Indonesia and 21,000 Indonesian youths studying in Australia. If this continues, the Indonesia-Australia partnership, which, in the year 2050 coincides with one century of our countries' partnership, will benefit not only our people, but also the world's.

To close, allow me to quote the famous Jimmy Little, an Aboriginal activist from Australia:

We're all gifted with the opportunity to succeed. But you get further if you extend the hand of friendship. Through friendship, the relationship between Indonesia and Australia will not only benefit the prosperity of the countries but also our region and the world as a whole. Thank you very much.

The SPEAKER: Mr President, on behalf of the House, I thank you for your address. We all wish you a successful and enjoyable stay here in Australia. Can I thank the President of the Senate and senators for their attendance. I now invite the Prime Minister to escort our guest from the chamber. As the Prime Minister introduces the President, I'll suspend the sitting, but of course members should remain here while the introductions take place. The chair will be resumed at the ringing of the bells.

Sitting suspended from 12:14 to 14:30

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:30): I present a revised ministry list, reflecting recent changes to the ministry and a change of representative arrangements in the other chamber.

The document read as follows—

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<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
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<td>Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>The Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Marise Payne</td>
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<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Indigenous Australians</td>
<td>The Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
<td>The Hon Ben Morton MP</td>
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<td>Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon Michael McCormack MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management</td>
<td>The Hon David Littleproud MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts</td>
<td>The Hon Paul Fletcher MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure</td>
<td>The Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government</td>
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<td>Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education</td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Gee MP</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport</td>
<td>The Hon Scott Buchholz MP</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</td>
<td>Kevin Hogan MP</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories</td>
<td>The Hon Nola Marino MP</td>
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<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure</td>
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<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Michael Sukkar MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Housing</td>
<td>The Hon Michael Sukkar MP</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jane Hume</td>
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<td>Minister for Finance</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities and Electoral Matters</td>
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<td>Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management</td>
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<td>Minister for the Environment</td>
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<td>Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management</td>
<td>The Hon Trevor Evans MP</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jonathon Duniam</td>
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<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Marise Payne</td>
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<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<td>Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</td>
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<td>Minister for International Development and the Pacific</td>
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<td>Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Regional Tourism</td>
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<td>The Hon Christian Porter MP</td>
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<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
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<td>Minister for Industrial Relations</td>
<td>The Hon Christian Porter MP</td>
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<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Youth and Sport</td>
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<td>Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government</td>
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<td>Minister for Home Affairs</td>
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<td>Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Jason Wood MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Education</td>
<td>The Hon Dan Tehan MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<td>Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education</td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Gee MP</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships</td>
<td>The Hon Steve Irons MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Industry, Science and Technology</td>
<td>The Hon Karen Andrews MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Northern Australia</td>
<td>The Hon Michelle Landry MP</td>
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Mr MORRISON: I also inform the House that the Minister for International Development and the Pacific will be absent from question time today, as he is representing the government at the funeral of the three children who were tragically killed in Oatlands in New South Wales. There will be a further funeral tomorrow. I'm sure that we extend the sympathies of the entire House to both families. It is absolutely unimaginable. The Minister for Home Affairs will answer questions on his behalf.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:31): I join with the Prime Minister, on behalf of the entire chamber, and say that the tragedy that happened in Sydney with the death of four children is just beyond comprehension. I'm sure all of Australia's thoughts are with the Abdallah family today.

SHADOW MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:31): For the information of members, I present a revised list of the shadow ministry. The list reflects changes that have had to be made to representative arrangements in the Senate due to changes from the other side.

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QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Morrison Government

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:31): My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. How can the Prime Minister claim to lead a stable government when, on the day set aside to pay respect to victims of the bushfires, the Nationals decided to have a leadership challenge and today a National Party member quit, threatening the government's control of the House? When Australia needs stable government, why do we have a coalition of chaos?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:32): The Leader of the Opposition does not represent the situation in the government at all—not at all. Here are all our members. The member for Wide Bay is up the top there. He's doing a great job, as all members are representing their constituents. I'll tell you what they're doing. They're doing what they promised the Australian people they would do. They said when they went to their electorates that they were part of a government that was going to keep the economy strong, keep Australians safe and, in the face of some of the biggest disasters we've seen, responding with the establishment of the National Bushfire Recovery Agency, the stand-up of the first compulsory call-out of the reserves in response to a bushfire crisis and the implementation of our packages to support drought affected farmers. With the stand-up arrangements in terms of counterterrorism and ensuring that we're doing the right thing in terms of foreign influence and the impact of foreign terrorist fighters our government is keeping Australians safe. We're respecting our veterans with the measures we announced last week in particular and we're getting on with the job that we promised the Australian people we'd do. There's $100 million in additional infrastructure investment, which is
building not only the roads but the rail connections that this country needs both now and in the future. We are delivering on what we told the Australian people we would do.

What do we have from those opposite? Each way—they're for tax cuts and they're against tax cuts; they're for the drought fund and they're against the drought fund; and they're for emissions reductions but they don't have a reductions target. Each way; they want it every way—

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

Mr Albanese: My question didn't invite him to use the rhetoric from Sky News After Dark. I asked him about his government's performance.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has concluded his answer.

Coronavirus

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (14:34): My question is to the Prime Minister, for his outstanding performance. Will the Prime Minister update the House on how the Morrison government is acting to keep Australians safe from and to build resistance to the threat of the coronavirus outbreak that we're currently experiencing?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:34): I thank the member for Leichhardt. He, amongst the many members of this House, would know, particularly up in North Queensland, of the devastating impact the coronavirus is having on the tourist industry. I want to thank the member for Leichhardt for the work he's been doing in raising issues with the government about how—not just now, but into the future—we'll be able to work with the local tourist industry that is there, and the local fishing industry as well. I want to thank him for raising those issues, because there are many implications as a result of the coronavirus outbreak that the government has been working diligently to contain, on the best advice of our medical advisers.

Fifteen people have had confirmed cases, and five of those people have recovered. The changing epidemiology of the coronavirus is something the government is reviewing very regularly as part of the activities of the National Security Committee, receiving regular updates not just from the World Health Organization but also from other medical advisers, working with partners. DFAT has upgraded its travel advice for all of mainland China to level 4, which is 'do not travel'. We are working closely in cooperation with our international partners. Indeed, the discussions we had with President Widodo and with the foreign minister last night and today went into the issue of how we're working together to ensure that we contain the impact of the coronavirus between our two countries.

There are enhanced screening arrangements at airports, with over 300,000 surgical masks deployed by the Australian Border Force and the Department of Agriculture staff at airports across Australia. They also have handheld thermometers available at impacted airports. This builds on the more than half a million masks already distributed to the community out of the National Medical Stockpile. The government and Qantas have worked together to assist Australians who wish to leave Wuhan, and the second successful flight arrived yesterday, landing in Darwin in the early afternoon; 266 passengers were onboard. Passengers are undergoing a 14-day quarantine at the Howard Springs accommodation centre near Darwin.

The government has now assisted over 530 Australians to safely return to Australia on two Qantas flights, and there has also been an Air New Zealand flight where Australians were also assisted. There can be no guarantee that the Australian government will be in a position to operate further flights into these affected areas. We said that we would prioritise isolated and vulnerable Australians, and that's what we've done, and we thank the Chinese government for their cooperation in assisting us to be able to assist the departure of those Australians from those areas. I commend the work of the Australian Border Force, the Department of Health and the Chief Medical Officer and the work that they've done, together with the Minister for Health and the Minister for Home Affairs, to stand up the quarantine arrangements and the successful management of those quarantine arrangements, not just at Christmas Island but now also in Darwin. I want to thank also the Northern Territory Chief Minister for his strong cooperation in putting those arrangements in place on the weekend.

Nuclear Energy

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (14:38): My question is to the Minister for Resources and Water. Does the minister support the development of a domestic nuclear power industry fuelled by Australian resources and cooled by our scarce water reserves?

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (14:38): I thank the honourable member for that question. As the honourable member knows, there is already a nuclear industry in Australia; it's at Lucas Heights. We already have a nuclear reactor in Australia producing very important medical technologies for all Australians. As the member knows—and those opposite should do their research—I was a supplementary member of a committee; I couldn't even vote on the report that was put forward—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order?
Mr Albanese: The question went to the domestic nuclear power industry.

The SPEAKER: I will just say to the minister that he's entitled to a preamble, and he's not yet 30 seconds in, but the time for that preamble's rapidly coming to an end.

Mr PITT: As I was saying——

The SPEAKER: No, that's a ruling. You can note it and act on it, I think is the most important thing.

Mr PITT: As I will. The opposition knows the government's position. There is a moratorium on nuclear energy in this country. I was a member of a backbench committee which made recommendations. Those recommendations have gone to the shareholding minister, Minister Taylor, and the government will respond to them in due course.

Coronavirus

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (14:39): My question is to the Minister for Health—noting his outstanding leadership. Will the minister update the House on the actions the Morrison government is taking to protect the health of Australians against the coronavirus?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:40): I thank the member for Goldstein, who has been an outstanding advocate for public health on many different fronts over the years. As we know, the coronavirus continues to grow in its spread, particularly within China. The latest figure that I have of confirmed cases, which I received just before coming into question time, is 40,546 cases. This is a significant update on where that figure was only a few days ago, last Thursday. Sadly, 910 people have now been confirmed as having lost their lives to coronavirus. This death rate is very significant. Each is a human life that has been tragically lost, and collectively it represents a very significant figure as compared with the rate with regard to SARS.

In terms of Australia, as the Prime Minister said, 15 patients have been confirmed here and five have now cleared the virus, which is very, very good news. We also know, from advice on the weekend—and I spoke with the director of AUSMAT on island only yesterday—that a young girl who was tested for coronavirus has been declared as being virus free and negative; so had not contracted the virus.

Similarly, we've had a second airlift, which, as the Prime Minister mentioned, arrived in Darwin yesterday. We've had tremendous support from the Northern Territory government. I want to thank the community, in particular, but also Minister Fyles and the Chief Minister. I have spoken to members of this House, including the member for Solomon and the member for Lingiari, over the weekend, as well as Senator Sam McMahon and Senator Malarndirri McCarthy—all of whom have been very, very strong in their support.

The message from the Chief Medical Officer regarding the 266 passengers who have arrived on this humanitarian airlift is that they have been tested, not just once or twice but on five occasions, and all have been found to be symptom free and virus free so far. They are in quarantine because, during the incubation period, it cannot be guaranteed that it won't develop. But, at this stage, the signs are exceptionally good, and the protections for the community outside are exceptionally good.

This facility was stood up within 24 hours. Along with the Chief Medical Officer, I had the privilege of meeting Border Force, Defence and AUSMAT personnel at the RAAF base where the passengers were being received and AUSMAT personnel on site at the national trauma centre and then to see the Howard Springs temporary quarantine facility itself. All of the passengers are travelling well. It's a testimony to the bipartisanship being shown and it's a testimony to the cooperation amongst all parts of the Australian system that we've been able to airlift, take care of and treat patients and to take care of people around the country.

Australian Bushfires

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:43): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the government agree to Labor's proposal to extend Medicare rural incentives to bushfire affected areas and work with states to provide counselling for kids in affected schools?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:43): The member would be aware of the mental health package and the other support measures that have been directed to support students in schools in bushfire affected areas. That has been part of the response of the government through the National Bushfire Recovery Agency. I've also had very good discussions with the New South Wales Premier, in particular, about the measures that they are also developing and delivering in the bushfire affected areas. And the same is true of the programs that have been put in place by the Victorian government and working with the Victorian Premier.
There are so many upsetting and devastating impacts of these recent fires. The impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children and the trauma caused to those who may not have lived in the bushfire affected areas but had travelled to those areas and had seen things that they had never seen before are very much foremost in the minds of the government and the actions of the National Bushfire Recovery Agency. We have already made commitments in that area, and we will be assessing carefully what else needs to be done. I will ask the Minister for Health if there is anything that he would like to add to that answer.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:44): Thanks very much to the Prime Minister and the member for McMahon. As the Prime Minister said, we've already made available $76 million to assist with the mental health and circumstances of people within the bushfire areas. I had the privilege, again, of visiting one of those particular areas with the member for Indi as well as with the local member at the state level, Bill Tilley. We met those that had been affected in the Corryong area as well as in the Wodonga area. In particular, we visited Corryong Health and worked through with them an example of that which was required. Funding has been provided, I believe, to 11 primary health networks to assist with needs. In particular, I think about $9.3 million has been paid so far to assist with those needs through the primary health networks. In addition to that, we have made available up to 10 free counselling services for individuals and, beyond counselling services, up to 10 free psychological services through Medicare. We are also working on any further requirements with the states as well as with the primary health networks, and they have a direct line to us. If more is required, more will be provided. I know a particular form was put forward by the opposition. There were some problems, I believe, with the way that form was put forward, but we are always looking for constructive initiatives.

Having been in Corryong with the member for Indi, I have to say that what struck me was that the mental health package was announced on the Sunday and we were meeting people who were delivering that on the Wednesday. It was one of the fastest deployments of medical and mental health services that one could hope to see, and those on the ground deserve our thanks.

Climate Change

Mr BANDT (Melbourne—Leader of the Australian Greens) (14:46): My question is to the Prime Minister. Australia's in record drought. Catastrophic megafires have burnt our country. Our capital cities have ranked amongst the world's most polluted, and now we're facing a flood disaster. Do you now accept that we are facing a coal-fuelled climate emergency?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:47): As I advised the House last week, the royal commission that the government will be moving forward on—once I receive feedback from the states and the territories on the terms of reference for that royal commission, and, at that time, I will then forward a copy of that to the opposition before announcing what we intend to do with that royal commission—starts from the premise that we're dealing with longer, hotter, drier summers, and I have always acknowledged the link between the climate change and these broader weather climatic events. That has not been in dispute by our government, and it is not in dispute by our government. Those opposite huff and they giggle and they smirk, but that is because they are seeking to put forward a false conflict in this place. Our government is taking action to reduce emissions, and they've fallen by 12.8 per cent. Our government has put in place policies that have led to one of the highest levels of renewable investments that this country has ever seen. They can deny the facts if they like, but they are the facts.

What I have also said in response to this dreadful black summer that we have been experiencing is that taking action on climate change isn't just about taking action on emissions. It's about taking action on climate resilience. It's about taking action on climate adaptation. It's about taking action on hazard reduction, which is a form of climate resilience. It is about building dams, like the billions of dollars we're investing in those projects through the national water grid. Building dams is climate action now. Hazard reduction is climate action now.

I note the Leader of the Greens doesn't agree with that. He's entitled not to agree with that, but the science suggests that it is, and our government will act on that. You may want to select and choose those bits you want to listen to to make climate change about being anticapitalism, but that's not what we think. We think that capitalism and technology are the way you ensure a brighter future for this world and for this country. That's what our policies will be driven by.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will resume his seat. Has the Prime Minister concluded his answer?

Mr Morrison: No.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Greens, on a point of order?

Mr Bandt: It's on relevance. The short question was about whether the Prime Minister accepts it's a climate emergency.
The SPEAKER: I point out again to the Leader of the Greens, as I've pointed out many times, the question also had a long preamble, and, when there's a long preamble, it leaves it open to the responder to deal with that part of the question. The Prime Minister is in order.

Mr MORRISON: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Let me be very clear. Our government will meet and beat our Kyoto targets on emissions reductions, and we will meet and beat our Paris targets. We will go 411 million tonnes higher than our Kyoto targets. The Leader of the Opposition can't even formulate a policy on what the emissions target for 2030, which he seeks to lecture us about, should be. We will do that without putting a tax on people, we will do that without putting people's electricity prices up and we will do that without wiping out people's jobs, particularly the jobs of those in regional Australia who depend on them for their livelihood.

Economy

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (14:50): My question is again to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister outline to the House what steps this government is taking to secure Australia's economic future in the Indo-Pacific, in particular with our regional partners and, in particular, once again, with Indonesia?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:51): I thank the member for Fisher for his question and his interest—as all members around the chamber are interested. It was a historic occasion earlier today as we welcomed the President of Indonesia to give his historic address, and what a fantastic address it was. The synchronicity and the synergy of the thinking between Indonesian and Australian policy when it comes to engaging in the Indo-Pacific could not be tighter. We've celebrated 70 years of our diplomatic relations, and there is such a bright future ahead of us that we're able to share in today—no better demonstrated than by both the Leader of the Opposition and I being able to say, 'Thank you,' to the President of Indonesia for the support of their own defence forces in reaching out to Australia during our terrible black summer of bushfires. We thank them again.

The comprehensive economic partnership that we've been able to arrive at with Indonesia, which I was able to sign back in 2018 and which has now been ratified by both of our parliaments, is just one of many agreements that our government has been able to conclude, ensuring that there are more and more opportunities for Australian exporters at a time when they need those opportunities and when they need options to expand their business and to support the growth of the Australian economy. This agreement has a plan of action with shared commitments across a whole range of issues not just in the economic sphere but also in investment, defence, security, counterterrorism, people smuggling, maritime cooperation, education and a shared commitment to the peace and stability of our region. In that, Indonesia is an absolutely critical partner, as the author and the architect of the ASEAN adopted Indo-Pacific concept. Nations have now signed off, as I said. This is one of the agreements that means we've gone from around 26 per cent of our exports being covered by trade agreements when we came to office to 70 per cent being covered. That is a massive leap forward. We aren't finished there. We're taking that to 90 per cent in the years ahead with the program we have.

Australian farmers, businesses and investors are now well placed to access the opportunities of an influential and an increasingly affluent $1 trillion Indonesian economy, which will only grow and grow into the future. Ninety-nine per cent of our goods exports by value will enter Indonesia duty free. Monash University will be the first foreign campus to be established anywhere in Indonesia, and that has been ushered in as a result of this agreement. Working holiday visas available to Indonesians will increase from 1,000 to 4,100 immediately and will go up to 5,000 in the future. For our tourist industry at the moment, that will be particularly important. There's defence cooperation. There is a new understanding, from our most recent discussions, to engage with Indonesia on the future of energy and fuel sources to ensure that their economy and ours can grow together with sustainable fuel sources and energy sources into the future.

Australian Bushfires

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (14:54): My question is to the Prime Minister. It's also about business because, last Friday, while on the South Coast of New South Wales, I was told about businesses which did not burn down but had taken a huge hit to their income because of the bushfires. Why aren't these businesses eligible for grants—only loans that are going to push them even further into debt?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:54): I can update the House that in New South Wales 172 applications have been made for those small business grants. Forty-six have been paid out—worth over $600,000. As the member may recall, because I advised him of this last week through an answer to a question from another member, the grant applications are assessed by the New South Wales state government and managed by them. They make the payments and we reimburse those payments. That has been the arrangement under this government and under the previous government.
When it comes to the guidelines that are developed for assessing whether grants are provided in circumstances like this, we have not departed from the previous practice that we inherited, which was all about damage to those businesses. That damage could include things like power being cut off and things of that nature. Those businesses that may—and I don't mean just 'may', because it is significant—have only had a loss of income as a result of a loss of tourist trade, what we have provided to them, through this category D assistance, are zero-interest loans, nothing to pay for two years, and then at concessional rates beyond that out to 10, which is worth hundreds of thousands of dollars to those businesses, should they seek to take those up. They are the same arrangements that have been put in place for previous disasters. I was in Townsville on Friday, where we had floods a year ago, and we are still rebuilding from those floods. I think it's important that we provide the same assistance to those who were in North Queensland at that time as we are today. We're ensuring a consistency in our approach, and that was the consistency that had been established. I see you shake your head, but if you're saying it should be different then why didn't the Labor Party change it when they were in government? We're using your rules.

**Trade with Indonesia**

**Mr CHRISTENSEN** (Dawson) (14:56): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development. Will the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House how the Morrison-McCormack government is creating prosperity for farmers and regional communities in Australia through the latest free trade agreement with Indonesia?

**Mr McCORMACK** (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of the Nationals) (14:57): Trade means jobs and more trade equals more jobs, and no-one knows that better than the member for Dawson. He knows that in his electorate, in and around Mackay, they rely on trade. They rely on jobs. When you have good trade relations you've got more jobs—more local jobs, more jobs for Central and North Queensland, more jobs for regional Australia.

It's been an eventful month. Certainly we welcomed President Widodo today with his fine, historic speech talking about trade, talking about jobs and talking about collaboration and cooperation. This month in Jakarta the official opening will take place of a Ship Safety Inspection Centre of Excellence. That's going to provide training for Indonesian port state control and flag state control officers. As well, there will be the official launch of a Solid Bulk Cargoes Testing and Training Facility, which will help Indonesia with implementation of best practice carriage of solid bulk cargoes. I welcome the cooperation that's going on between the Indonesian Directorate-General of Sea Transportation and AMSA here in Australia, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. Importantly, I had a very good discussion over lunch with the Transportation Minister of Indonesia, Mr Sumadi, about what we can do even more to ensure that, yes, our trade relations are good, but let's increase the $18 billion of two-way trade that we do between our two nations.

The Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement is vital to our success and vital to the success of the member for Dawson's sugarcane industry. Indeed, everything that they grow and make in Dawson, in and around Mackay, is going to benefit from our relations with Indonesia. Paul Schembri, chair of Canegrowers, said:

The change in tariff from an effective 8% to 5% puts us on a par with our competitors in that market and provides the opportunity to increase our exports to Indonesia from their present level of 350,000 tonnes to more than 1 million tonnes.

That will be very beneficial for the canegrowers, those hard workers from North and Central Queensland and elsewhere in the fine Sunshine State. More than 99 per cent of Australian goods exports by value to Indonesia will enter duty free or under significantly improved preferential arrangements under the new deal, and that is significant. Take the Australian Food and Grocery Council's CEO Tanya Barden's comments in relation to this agreement. Late last year, she said:

Providing access to export markets with improved trading arrangements enables favourable conditions to expand the business, thereby giving confidence to invest domestically, leading to increased employment ...

And that's what we want to see. We're a government of lower taxation, more jobs, more trade and good economic conditions with our neighbours.

**Australian Bushfires**

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (15:00): My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. Last Thursday night, while visiting bushfire affected communities on the South Coast of New South Wales, I met a truck driver in Nellige who is losing income because of the fires but isn't eligible for any assistance under the government's recovery package. Can the Prime Minister tell the House why thousands of workers who have lost income because of the fires can't get a helping hand from this government?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (15:00): As the member would recall from when he was in a government managing disasters, there are many other payments—whether it's in the
welfare system or whether it is in the Newstart program—or many other measures that are available to provide income support for those who have found themselves in difficulty. That's the whole point of the safety net that has been built. And I'll tell you how you can keep a safety net in place. You keep it in place by ensuring that you manage money well, that you actually can bring a budget back into balance and do it without adding levies as those opposite had to do when they were struck by disasters. They had to go out and tax Australians more because they couldn't manage money.

We are delivering $2 billion of additional support in initial and additional support through the National Bushfire Recovery Agency. We are working through the disaster-recovery payment arrangements that we put in place with the states and territories. And we're doing that consistent with all the same guidelines and rules that were put in place by the previous government. Those rules and guidelines did serve their government well, and I believe they serve our government well.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

Mr MORRISON: I'll take the interjection, because he said I was just criticising those arrangements. I was not criticising those arrangements. His own member who asked the question previously of me was criticising the very arrangements that the government is putting in place now. We will continue to work with the state and territory governments. We'll continue to work with local councils, and we will continue to work with businesses right across the country through local economic recovery plans, which are now being put in place by the states with the Commonwealth—working with the former commissioner Colvin, who heads up the National Bushfire Recovery Agency.

But what we'll stay focused on is rebuilding this economy in those areas that have been so devastated by the bushfires. That will happen with the rebuilding work that we're putting in place. That will happen with the record levels of money we're putting in to support the grants to these communities as they rebuild. We will listen carefully to those communities—whether it's the orchardists out there in Batlow, whether it is those in the forestry industry, or, in particular, whether it is the defence forces that we sent in that rebuilt the roof on Mogo Zoo and cleared out the Eden mill that needed the support of the defence forces so they could get their operation back on track. That's what we'll continue to do each and every day. We won't play politics with bushfires in this place; we'll just get on with it.

Economy

Mr PASIN (Barker) (15:03): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline to the House the importance of the strong economic relationship that exists between Australia and Indonesia, and will the Treasurer outline how this relationship will continue to strengthen and grow to the mutual benefit of our two nations?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (15:03): I thank the member for Barker for his question. He is a very strong advocate on behalf of the businesses across his electorate—many of whom are engaged in the export sector—and he understands that more trade equals more jobs.

Today we had an historic address from the Indonesian President in this place. Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim nation. It's our second-nearest neighbour, and it's the world's third-largest democracy. And with a trillion-dollar economy, it will, by some estimates, become the fourth-largest economy in the world by 2045. Our relationship—Australia and Indonesia's—has gone from strength to strength over the years. I want to pay credit to John Howard and his government—with foreign minister Alexander Downer and Treasurer Peter Costello—because that government was there for Indonesia at their most difficult times: in 1997-98 with the Asian financial crisis and in 2004 with the tsunami. Australia was there for Indonesia. And Indonesia has been there for us: in 2009, with our Victorian bushfires and, more recently, with the provision of more than 40 personnel to help deal with the bushfires. Indonesia has been there for us.

Today, our two-way trading relationship is around $18 billion, and it's broad. It's across resources, agriculture, services, financial services, health and education and it will continue to grow with this comprehensive economic partnership, which will see 99 per cent of our exports into Indonesia get preferential access by this year. That's a very significant development. This is good news for not only the more than 2,500 Australians businesses that export to Indonesia but also the 350 Australian businesses that already have a presence in Australia. They are household names like Blackmores, Cochlear, Orica, Telstra, Woodside and other major Australian companies that employ thousands of Australians. As the Prime Minister has said, when we came to government we had free trade agreements covering 26 per cent of our two-way trading relationships. That is now up above 70 per cent and it will continue to grow. On this side of the House we understand that more trade equals more jobs, and nowhere is that clearer than in Australia's historic relationship with Indonesia.
Infrastructure

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (15:06): My question is to the Prime Minister. Communities on the South Coast have had to deal with water restrictions from the drought at the same time as the bushfire crisis. Local and state governments committed to funding the Eurobodalla dam in October last year, but the federal government still hasn't come to the table. Given that the building of dams has ground to a halt under this government, why hasn't the government gotten on with this one?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I ask members to cease interjecting. I am going to ask the member for Griffith to repeat the last sentence of her question. I couldn't hear it and neither could the Prime Minister.

Ms BUTLER: Given the building of dams has ground to a halt under this government, why hasn't the government gotten on with this one?

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of the Nationals) (15:07): Building of dams under this government has actually gone ahead at a great pace, more than those opposite could ever imagine. In north-east Tasmania, Scottsdale has been started and finished and is due for full commission. We will look at Eurobodalla, certainly. But the New South Wales government prioritises dam projects, as does Queensland. We would have already had Stanthorpe started, the Emu Swamp Dam, had the Queensland done all the necessary tick-offs when we put up the more than $40 million for that particular project. Thankfully, they have come on board with $18½ million. We have added to our $42 million with $8 million in enabling roads. We are the government that will build dams.

We established the National Water Grid in October last year to do just that. We want to make sure that we properly plumb this nation to help with the changing climate, to help with our agriculture, to help even indeed with what is a state responsibility, and that is urban water supply. It will do all of that and much more. It will create tens of thousands of jobs. We've got $3.5 billion on the table for grants and loans. The National Water Grid is going to get on with the job, with the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund, to build dams. If there is one thing that needs to be a legacy of this parliament, it is the fact that we need to build more dams, to build climate resilience and to help remote communities. We will get on with that job. It is unfortunate that most of the dams over recent years—the last 20 or so years—have been built in Tasmania. We need more dams for mainland Australia and we are getting on and we are doing it.

When those opposite were in power they just wanted to take water away from our irrigators. We want to give them more water. We do that by capturing water when it falls—and heavens knows we've had a lot of it just this weekend. We want to make sure that when water falls, whether it is in the north or wherever it is in the country, we can capture it, store it, harness it and harvest it when it is dry. Even, I'm sure, the Greens leader, the former ALP branch member, would understand that.

There's nobody more committed to building dams than our regional members on this side of the House, because we understand the great economic capacity it will be for our nation—the great economic boost it will be for our regional areas. We will get on with the job. We are getting on with the job. We've got dam projects and we've got water infrastructure projects right across this nation. We've got Myalup, Wellington, in Western Australia. We've got the Big Rocks Weir, the Hells Gate Dam and the Urannah Dam schemes in North Queensland. We've got the Hughenden and the McAllister schemes. There's Dungowan in the member for New England's electorate. (Time expired)

Trade with Indonesia

Mr SHARMA (Wentworth) (15:10): My question is to the Minister for Education. Will the minister please update the House on how the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement will benefit Australia's education sector?

Mr TEHAN (Wannon—Minister for Education) (15:10): I thank the member for Wentworth for his question. I know his diplomatic background means he understands that trade means jobs, and that's what the comprehensive economic partnership is all about, especially when it comes to international education. This is an export industry that delivers $37.6 billion worth of revenue to the Australian economy and creates 250,000 jobs. We want to see that continue to grow. Now, there's been a challenge with the coronavirus, so that's why today they would be so pleased with the announcement by the Prime Minister about the comprehensive economic partnership and, in particular, the fact that Monash University has been granted approval by the Indonesian government to establish the first foreign university campus in Indonesia.

This is an historical occasion. And why? Look at the opportunities in the Indonesia market for our universities. There are 44 million Indonesians aged between 15 and 24. We want to help. We want to assist Indonesia to
educate their students. Because of this comprehensive economic partnership, we will have the ability to do that. It's not only in the higher education sector but also in the vocational education sector that we will be able to do it. I know many people all across this parliament and on this side will be very pleased that we've also opened the vocational education market.

Australian providers will benefit from more transparent and predictable conditions in Indonesia, including clarity on qualifications they can offer and no restrictions on where they can operate. This benefits Indonesian students as it will increase their access to world-class skills training across Indonesia without the need to travel. When we came into office, our trade was covered by free-trade agreements to the extent of 26 per cent. It's now 70 per cent, and we want that to grow to 90 per cent, because that will deliver certainty for our export industries—certainty for them to be able to invest in international markets. That will help grow the value of our export industries and, most importantly, grow jobs in our economy.

Tourism

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (15:13): My question is to the Prime Minister. Last Friday on the south coast of New South Wales I was told about the collapse in tourism income over the peak earning period for small businesses. Has the Prime Minister received the same response that we heard, firsthand: that his government's marketing campaign is not cutting through?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (15:14): I find it amusing that a question about small business is coming from the shadow minister when 62,000 closed their doors in their last year in office, and, over the last year, 75,000. The reality is that small businesses will have access to half a million dollars in working capital, a billion dollars for tourism to help create jobs in the tourism sector and to deal with what has been a blow to that sector not only by the ongoing drought but of course by these devastating bushfires. We have announced a significant package of measures to support small businesses and, over the last reported year, we have seen 75,000 small businesses created. Our focus is on helping the tourism sector get back on its feet.

Trade with Indonesia

Dr WEBSTER (Mallee) (15:16): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management. Will the minister outline to the House the benefits to Australian farmers of the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement?

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management and Deputy Leader of the National Party) (15:16): I thank the member for Mallee for her question. In fact some months ago I sat in her electorate with the Milawa farmers and heard directly about some of the ideas they had around our $8 billion drought response. One of those we put into action, around the Regional Investment Corporation not only allowing farmers to refinance $2 million of their debt away from commercial banks but also allowing them to use that for restocking and replanting. It is important that this government is not just looking to support farmers in the here and now but is putting the environment around them for the future.

That comes with understanding the importance that trade plays in our agricultural sector. We are a nation of 25 million people. We produce enough food and fibre for 75 million people, so, unless we engage and trade with the world, our primary production sector isn't needed to the level it is now, and that tears away at regional and rural Australia. Today's announcement, with the President of Indonesia being here, and building on the IA-CEPA, builds on the Chinese, Korean and Japanese free trade agreements. Those opposite said about the TPP-11, 'Don't bother, it's all too hard.' That $13.1 trillion marketplace has opened up to Australian farmers, as has the Peru market and now also Hong Kong. But now there is the opportunity for Australian farmers to have access to a new
marketplace, with a free trade agreement that will remove up to 99 per cent of those tariffs as we move forward when it's ratified in the next 60 days.

This is important also to those farmers in the Mallee, particularly those in the citrus industry, who will now have access to a marketplace in Indonesia, as well as a 500,000 tonne grains quota that will increase five per cent every year, giving those farmers opportunity to have access to a new market, spreading their risk and giving them opportunity. This is a $2½ billion market that we can now build on for our Australian farmers, building diversity and spreading their market risk across a number of different international markets.

This is an opportunity to also build on the over-billion-dollar beef industry, whether it be through the live or the processed meat industry. This is an opportunity, particularly in the northern part of our country, where our production systems align with those in Indonesia, for them to trade with Indonesia even further than what they have done already. We have done that also with the two agricultural counsellors in the embassy in Indonesia, but in the 2019 budget we put on an additional six agricultural counsellors to take advantage of these free trade agreements, because what free trade will do is open up the opportunity for our primary producers to not only survive this drought but thrive after it. That is the responsibility of the federal government: to put the infrastructure and environment around its people to grow.

**Australian Bushfires**

_Mrs PHILLIPS (Gilmore) (15:19):_ My question is to the Prime Minister. A local business in my electorate, Robs Bait n Tackle, in Burrill Lake, has lost 80 per cent of its income for the year as a direct result of the fires. This small family business and many others are reluctant to pile on debt at a time when they have very little income. Will the government provide grants for businesses like this, instead of loans, which increase their debt?

_Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (15:19):_ That is a devastating loss of income for that business. I'd be very pleased if you could pass on their details and I'll make them available to the head of the National Bushfire Recovery Agency to see what additional measures they may not be aware of that may be able to assist them and go specifically to their circumstances.

There have been a range of questions that have been put forward by the opposition today that are seeking a change to the assessment of these grants. I note that that's what you're suggesting—that there should be a change. I would invite the Leader of the Opposition to write to me and set out the changes to the grant guidelines that he is proposing. I will happily have those assessed by the Department of Finance, and I'll be able to advise the House about the outcome and we can assess the feasibility of the proposal they seem to be making. I would simply invite them to put that proposal in writing to us.

**Global Security**

_Mr HASTIE (Canning) (15:20):_ My question is to the Minister for Home Affairs. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government is working with our regional partners, including our Indonesian friends, to combat the global threat of terrorism?

_Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Home Affairs) (15:21):_ I thank the honourable member for his question. Can I say to him and also to the member for Holt, on their leadership of the security and intelligence committee in this parliament: you should both be commended for the leadership you provide. I don't think there's much that the member for Holt, for instance, would say that anybody could argue against when it comes to these matters.

I want to say that we have no more important friend in our region than the Indonesians on the issue of countering returning foreign fighters, which is a scourge across not just Indonesia but our country and the region as well, and also on the ways in which we can gather intelligence to defeat those at the heart of terrorism and those who would seek to do harm here in Australia as well as in Indonesia.

I'd like to pay tribute to my counterpart in Indonesia, Minister Mahfud, for his interaction and his engagement, most recently in Melbourne. We've been able to work very closely together and with other counterparts in Indonesia to make sure that we can say to Australians, a million of whom holiday in Indonesia each year, that we are doing everything possible to keep them safe—young Australians, Australians of all age groups, who take for granted that they can go to Bali or Jakarta or elsewhere in Indonesia and do so in a safe way. So, it is incredibly important that we have a free exchange of intelligence.

We have very clear and definite friendships at a defence level, at a law enforcement level and at an intelligence level, which give us the greatest capacity to make sure that we can defeat the scourge of terrorism. We know that 202 people tragically lost their lives in 2002, including 88 Australians. It was the biggest loss of Australian life as a result of a terrorist attack in our history, and we want to make sure that the lessons from that dreadful event are learnt and remembered every day.
I also want to pay tribute to the officers in my department, including the Australian Federal Police. We have 17 officers stationed in Jakarta, working very closely with their counterparts there. We have also put a lot of funding into the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation. This year alone, 1,000 officers from not just Indonesia but across the region have undertaken training in that centre. It means that we're able to provide support with not just forensics collection but also intelligence sharing, investigations and, importantly, prosecutions.

I want to say thank you to the Indonesians for the disruptions that have taken place. The authorities there, working with their international partners, including Australia, have been able to disrupt a number of events that would otherwise have resulted in certain death. The partnership between Indonesia and Australia has only been reinforced by the visit of the President today. The relationship will continue to grow.

**Energy**

Mr BUTLER (Hindmarsh—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (15:24): My question is to the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister support providing $300 million of taxpayer funds to keep the Liddell power station open for just three more years even though a leaked task force report says that such an extension would not provide any guarantee of reliability and would defer private investment in new generation?

Mr TAYLOR (Hume—Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction) (15:24): I'm awaiting the final report of the Liddell Taskforce, and I won't pre-empt the outcome of that report. Once we've received that report, we'll consider its recommendations. But we've been clear all the way along that, as generators come to the end of their natural lives, we want to see life extension or like-for-like replacement. This is all about adding in more supply to the electricity market whilst we ensure that the existing supply is managed very carefully. And we are seeing results. We've now seen four consecutive quarters of reductions in electricity retail prices—for the first time in recorded history.

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

Mr Butler: On direct relevance. It was a very tight question about one particular power station.

The SPEAKER: Yes, but the minister addressed the very specific part of the question about 30 or 40 seconds ago and he is being relevant to the policy subject matter. With respect, I don't think he could have been more specific in terms of his approach to the report. I think the minister is perfectly in order on the policy topic. If he changes policy topic, I'll bring him back to order very quickly. But so far he is in order.

Mr TAYLOR: As I was saying, we have had four consecutive quarters of electricity price reductions in the CPI—a 3½ per cent reduction. In the last three months, we've also seen a 35 per cent reduction, compared to the same period last year, in wholesale electricity prices in the National Electricity Market, with Queensland, 30 per cent; South Australia, 50 per cent; Victoria, 38 per cent; Tasmania, 42 per cent; and Queensland, four per cent—to an average of 35 per cent. We will work with the energy companies to make sure this is passed through to electricity consumers, because the big stick legislation ensures that the substantial and sustained savings and reductions in costs must be passed through to consumers. And we are achieving all of this while we meet and beat our Kyoto and Paris targets.

**Environment**

Mr ZIMMERMAN (North Sydney) (15:27): My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Will the minister update the House on how the Morrison government is working with Indonesia to provide regional leadership in tackling waste and its impact on the environment and our oceans?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for the Environment) (15:27): I thank the member for North Sydney for his question. I congratulate President Widodo on his address to parliament today, his warm affirmation of friendship between Indonesia and Australia and his vision for Indonesia's fast-growing cities—in particular, for a green smart capital, which I understand will combine information and communications technology to manage public services, including waste management. I look forward to meeting with my Indonesian counterpart, Siti Nurbaya Bakar, to discuss her country's ambitious pledge to dramatically reduce the amount of plastic and other waste products entering their waters. Sadly, waste knows no borders when it comes to its impact on the environment and oceans.

Next month, Australia is hosting a national plastics summit to support our target of phasing out problematic and unnecessary plastics, as we continue to work locally and in the region to find solutions to recover, recycle and remanufacture. Last year we announced a ban on the export of plastics, paper, glass and tyres, to be phased in from July this year. As the Prime Minister said, it's our waste; it's our responsibility.

I want to acknowledge existing bilateral activities, such as the Australia Awards in Indonesia and its Tackling Marine Pollution Issues through Recycling Program, which is being run by Griffith University. This important program was developed with members of the government of Indonesia's Ministry of Environment and Forestry. Program participants travelled to Australia and, over a two-week period, visited waste facilities, met with
environment officials and shared best-practice knowledge. The practical, on-the-ground projects that were pitched will have a real impact on participants in local communities. Projects included the coastal community development project on plastic waste management in Jakarta and improving plastic waste collection through mini markets all over Indonesia.

Australia and Indonesia are already strong partners, whether it be on plastic in the ocean or our international partnership on blue carbon. The sustainable growth and stability that will flow from our comprehensive economic partnership announced today both tackles waste and cleans up the oceans.

Immigration

Mr GILES (Scullin) (15:30): My question is to the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister plan to proceed with the privatisation of Australia's visa system, in light of revelations that his mate Scott Briggs spent last year leading a group trying to buy the visa system while sending $165,000 to the Liberal Party?

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure) (15:30): I thank the member for Scullin for his question. Let me point out that we are not privatising the visa system—far from it. Rather, several years ago we decided that we needed to upgrade our visa-processing capabilities because the visa-processing capabilities are about 25 years old and do not have some of the modern functionality we would like. Furthermore, given that growth in visa applications is projected to grow by over 35 per cent over the next 10 years to 13 million visa applications each year, it is clearly timely to be examining whether or not to upgrade the visa-processing system.

We've been out to the market to see who would partner with the government to build the new capability. Under the model, these partners would build and operate the platform. This is the important piece: the government would always retain responsibility, as it does today, for all visa decision-making; it would determine the business rules and how decisions are made; it would remain responsible for national security and other risk assessments; and it would have overall responsibility on an ongoing basis for visa policy. In this regard this model is actually very similar to the model we already have in place, called the electronic travel authority, upon which about 30 per cent of all visas are processed. That model was in place all through the Labor years. It did not change; it was precisely that model, which has a partner that assists in the visa processing but the government remains at all times responsible for the business rules, the risk assessment, the policy and all of the major decisions.

The process for selecting the partners has not been completed yet. There is still a process underway. I repeat: we do need to upgrade our visa-processing systems at some stage soon, given the age of those systems and given how many visa applications we are getting every single year, and that's just increasing.

Australian Natural Disasters

Ms FLINT (Boothby—Government Whip) (15:32): My question is to the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services. Will the minister update the House on how the Morrison government is providing income and other support to those Australians affected by natural disasters?

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services) (15:33): I thank the Government Whip for her question and thank her for all her hard work during the very difficult times her state has experienced with fires recently. It's interesting to reflect that this time last year Services Australia in its previous guise, Human Services, received over 120,000 calls for assistance during the devastating North Queensland floods and the Morrison government paid out, quickly and efficiently, over $120 million to those affected. So far this bushfire season the response from this government has been that and more—from working seven days a week to keep the 1802266 line open, so people can seek assistance after hours and on weekends, to connecting 1,362 residents to counselling and mental health support, working to keep all walk-in service centres in affected areas operational when required and, of course, working alongside the ADF to reach isolated communities where support has been most needed.

In fact, up until last night, since 16 September, when the first fires began, Services Australia has received over 156,000 calls. To date, 86,989 disaster relief payments have been made, amounting to over $102 million. In addition, over 40,000 children have received the $400 extra, with $16 million paid. That's $118 million this government has paid out rapidly to Australians in need. Ninety-nine per cent of all claims are finalised over the phone in person with an average speed of answering in the seconds. The average Australian is on the phone for no more than about 15 minutes and they are paid those funds within 30 minutes for the most part, if, indeed, their bank is connected to the new payment platform. On this note, can I call out to our banks who have not yet implemented the new payment platform to get a wriggle on. For those whose bank is actually using the new payment platform, you're paid in minutes. For those whose banks aren't, the bank requires a payment overnight.
Services Australia's mobile service centres, Desert Rose and Golden Wattle, are operational and have been every day for the last few months. Today Desert Rose is in the New South Wales town of Michelago and tomorrow it will be in Bredbo. Golden Wattle is in Dinner Plain in Victoria and will be in Harrietville tomorrow. We've also built and deployed 20 mobile service teams who have worked with portable technology on the ground and have made over 400 visits to 140 distinct locations, working with the ADF and deploying by armoured vehicle, helicopter or on foot. Services Australia will continue to work to meet with the most vulnerable and the most needy. I thank the House and all its members for all their support over a difficult season.

**Immigration**

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (15:36): My question is addressed to the acting minister for immigration. It goes to his last answer, where he ignored the $165,000 donation from a private company which seeks to 'build and operate the visa system'. I ask the minister: if it looks like a privatisation and it smells like a privatisation, why won't the minister concede that this is privatisation of our visa system by a major donor and mate of the Prime Minister?

Mr Porter: Mr Speaker, the acting immigration minister answered at great length the part of the question which was in order, which was with respect to whether or not the visa system is or is planned to be privatised. Clearly, it's not. That part of the question that went to a donation is a party political matter not within the auspices of the minister's portfolio.

The SPEAKER: I say to the Leader of the House that, in reference to political donations, the minister's not responsible for those. Indeed the Prime Minister's not responsible for those; they're matters that parties are responsible for. So I agree with the Leader of the House. The part that is in order is the question relating to the visa system and the question of privatisation and that's in order for two reasons: in substance and because the Leader of the Opposition is referring to the minister's last answer. The minister can answer the question and confine himself to that part of the question.

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure) (15:38): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I can only reiterate that it is not a privatisation, because the government will remain responsible for all of the key national security decisions, the risk assessment, the visa policy, the business rules and all of the key functions of government. In that regard, this model, for which we have been going through an expression of interest process, is precisely the same as the electronic travel authority in relation to which Labor, when they were in government for those six long years, ran a process and they were quite happy with that process underway. Thirty per cent of all visas today go through the electronic visa authority, so, clearly, the Labor Party did not have a great problem with that model when they were in government but, today, they're seeking to politicise this decision. They didn't make the decision to upgrade the visa processing system because their budget, frankly, wasn't in a position for them to do so. We made this decision; we're going through a process. The Prime Minister and his office are fullyRussian from the decision-making process, and we will go through it in a methodical, professional way, doing the things that governments should be doing.

**Veterans**

Mr THOMPSON (Herbert) (15:39): My question is to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government is delivering better support for our veterans?

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel and Deputy Leader of the House) (15:39): I thank the member for Herbert for his question. As the House would be aware, every year between 5½ thousand and 6,000 Australian Defence Force personnel leave the military. For the majority of them, that service is a very positive experience, and they're quite rightly proud of that service to our nation. They learn the skills of leadership, teamwork, problem-solving and resilience, and they are taught trade skills and expertise in a wide range of areas. In just the last three months, for those members who are in the bushfire impacted areas, we've seen the capabilities of our Australian Defence Force up close with Operation Bushfire Assist. I want to take the opportunity to thank all those members of the Defence Force for their service during these very difficult times.

But, as a grateful nation, we have our own obligations to support our veterans and their families if they are unwell or physically injured during their service. Within the Department of Veterans' Affairs we have an absolute focus on the health and wellbeing of our veterans in their transition to civilian life, and I must say that this is an area of largely bipartisan agreement in this House. I'm pleased to say that the Morrison-McCormack government, in this year's budget, has provided in the order of $11.5 billion to support more than 280,000 veterans and their families. In mental health care alone there's $230 million, which is supporting veterans, with free mental health care and a range of other measures, to make sure their mental health is well cared for. Last week the Prime
Minister announced the National Commissioner for Defence and Veterans Suicide Prevention, a measure which was supported by those opposite and by the ex-service community.

Also last week, the Prime Minister visited the seat of Herbert, where he announced an investment of $4.8 million for additional case coordinators to improve the wellbeing outcomes for young and vulnerable veterans leaving the ADF in complex physical, emotional and social circumstances. This will allow for around 170 additional transitioning personnel in this high-risk cohort to receive the comprehensive early-intervention support they need to make sure they can go on to lead fulfilling lives in the civilian world. We're also boosting the Personalised Career Employment Program by $5.6 million. That will expand its eligibility to another 1,600 ADF members each year who are looking for career development and job placement support.

So there are a range of measures this government is delivering for our veterans as they transition to civilian life. We're boosting the delivery of our election commitment of $15 million in grants to Soldier On, Team Rubicon and the Returned and Services League to deliver programs to assist veterans find meaningful employment. I would leave the House with one simple message: hiring a veteran is good for your business. We are encouraging corporate Australia to recognise the strength of our veterans and to look at the opportunities to employ these outstanding Australians and give them an opportunity to transition well from defence life. Hiring a veteran is good for your business, and we encourage corporate Australia to support our veterans, just as the government is endeavouring to do so.

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

PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE HOLDERS

Deputy Speaker

The SPEAKER (15:42): Members will recall that on Thursday I informed them of the impending resignation of the Deputy Speaker due to his elevation to the ministry. I inform the House that, as foreshadowed, the honourable member for Page has tendered his resignation as Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives. We will now proceed to the election of a new Deputy Speaker. I will call for nominations. The member for Mallee.

Dr WEBSTER (Mallee) (15:43): I move:

That the honourable member for Nicholls, Mr Damian Drum, be elected Deputy Speaker.

I would be delighted to nominate my colleague for Nicholls, Mr Damian Drum, be elected Deputy Speaker. Damian has spent 18 years in politics and has been in federal politics since 2016. In state politics he was a minister. He held the role of whip twice here. Currently he's the Chair of the Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation. Damian is well respected across the parliament. He is fair and balanced, and I believe he would perform this role admirably.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded? The member for Page.

Mr HOGAN (Page—Deputy Speaker) (15:44): I second the motion, and I reiterate some of the things that the member for Mallee said. Not only that, but the member for Nicholls has also been the Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister in this place. He's been on many joint standing committees as well as House of Representatives select committees. He's been the Nationals chief whip in the House of Representatives. He has also, in the state parliament, had a number of different roles. He was the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development. He was the Minister for Sport and Recreation and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. He was a shadow minister for a number of different portfolios and the spokesman for numerous areas. He has vast parliamentary experience in leadership positions. I also note that the next thing I say may lose him votes, but I think we should at least acknowledge his leadership outside this place—that is, he was the AFL assistant coach for the Sydney Swans from 1994 to 1998, and he was the senior coach for the Fremantle Dockers. Do with that what you will.

More importantly, as a person who has been the Deputy Speaker quite recently, I do have some insight into the personal requirements and the other things that you need to do this role. There are colleagues in this place and there are friends. I admit and confess that I do regard this particular member as a friend of mine. He has the character and, I think, great history to do this role a great honour.

The SPEAKER: Are there any further nominations? The Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:44): I nominate Mr Llew O'Brien, the member for Wide Bay. Up until today it has been the case that the government has had 76 members of the coalition on the floor. As of today, that's 75. While this position would normally go to a member of the same party as forms the cabinet, given the change in numbers today, I think it's appropriate that this position go to somebody who has taken a higher position of independence.

CHAMBER
Mr Llew O’Brien is the member for Wide Bay and has been serving on the Standing Committee on Petitions. He's familiar with the procedures of the House and has taken a level of independence from the executive, which I think is appropriate for the role. I would draw your attention to standing order 14(a) in my nomination.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr BUTLER (Hindmarsh—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (15:46): I second the motion for the reasons outlined by the Manager of Opposition Business.

The SPEAKER: Are there any further nominations? I draw to the attention of the House the matter that the Manager of Opposition Business raised with respect to the election of Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker and my approach to it. The Manager of Opposition Business and I have been reading the same pages of the standing orders and practice since last Thursday, no doubt. In the case of the election of Speaker, members will recall after the nominations the person nominated is asked whether they accept the nomination. With respect to the election of the Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker, there is a difference, and it's standing order 14 on page 19 for anyone interested. It says:

A nominee does not have to be present at the election or inform the House whether he or she accepts nomination. Clearly the intention of that standing order is not to nominate and elect people against their will, because that would be a farcical situation where, if a member was elected Deputy Speaker and they didn't want to perform the role, they'd simply resign to me in writing, which is the only way to resign, and we'd have a series of never ending elections. The purpose of that is to enable someone who can't be here to be able to be nominated, and obviously the intention is they've communicated to the mover and seconder that they wish to be nominated. This is certainly the case where the member who's been nominated—the member for Wide Bay—was here, and is not here at this point. Under the standing orders, what we will do in proceeding to a ballot is ring the bells for five minutes. I'm going to say right now on the record, and I'll say it again just before the ballot, I will take the member for Wide Bay's absence and any subsequent appearance to vote as acceptance. But, if the member for Wide Bay informs me prior to the conduct of the ballot that he doesn't wish to be nominated, then I will declare the member for Nicholls elected. When the member for Wide Bay appears after the bells have rung, I will put it to him that I am taking it that his absence from the chamber and his return to vote is an acceptance of the nomination. I'm going to take that but I will still ask him whether he accepts the nomination. It says:

(a) A nominee does not have to be present at the election or inform the House whether he or she accepts nomination. So the requirement on a nominee is that they do not have to inform the House. I don't see anywhere where it prevents me from asking that; I really don't. What those standing orders say, and they shouldn't be read separately, is, if someone can't be here, they can still be nominated and they don't have to inform the House prior to that that they're going to accept the nomination. It says 'The nominee does not have to'. Nowhere does it say 'The Speaker can't inquire'. I will just check there are no further nominations? There's not. I had that contingency covered as well.

The time for nominations has expired. In accordance with standing order 14, the bells will be rung and a ballot will be taken.

The bells having been rung—

The SPEAKER: As I foreshadowed to the House, the member for Wide Bay was nominated whilst he was not present. The member for Nicholls was nominated first. The member for Nicholls has had an opportunity, if he doesn't wish to accept the nomination, to say so, and he has not done so. The member for Wide Bay, you were nominated whilst you weren't in the chamber. Reference was made to the difference in the election of the Deputy Speaker and Second Deputy Speaker compared with the election of the Speaker, where, in the case of the election of the Speaker, the candidate or candidates must be asked whether they accept the nomination. Standing order 14(a) states:

A nominee does not have to be present at the election or inform the House whether he or she accepts nomination. The intention of that is that people who can't be in the House can still be nominated without having to communicate in advance that they wish to accept any nomination that might be forthcoming. I keep a careful note. The member for Wide Bay was here for most of question time but not the end. He obviously had to leave the chamber for some reason. Now he's back, I need to say to him that, if he does not wish to accept the nomination, he needs to indicate that to the House.

Mr Llew O'Brien: Mr Speaker, I wish to accept the nomination for Deputy Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The member for Wide Bay has accepted the nomination. The member for Nicholls, as I said, has had an opportunity to not accept the nomination. We will now proceed to a ballot. There are a number of new
members. It's very straightforward. There are only two nominees. You just write the name of the nominee you prefer.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition raised a valid point of order. Could I just, in addressing the House, point out another aspect in this. You won't notice the attendants giving me a ballot paper. I don't have a ballot. I'm not entitled to a vote, so I'm not abstaining or anything like that. If there is a tie, I have a casting ballot.

A ballot having been taken—

The SPEAKER: I'll read the result, and then I'll have to make a very short statement to the House. The result of the ballot is: Mr Drum, 67; Mr O'Brien, 75. I hereby declare Mr O'Brien elected. Would the member for Wide Bay like to briefly address the House?

Mr Llew O'Brien (Wide Bay) (16:15): It is a tremendous privilege to be in this place. Every election we put ourselves forward to our constituents to serve them in the most honest and best way we can. I'm privileged to be here. As a country policeman, I find it incredible that I can walk into this place and take part in this. It's an honour to serve the people of Wide Bay, and it will be an honour to serve this House as Deputy Speaker.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Wide Bay. Obviously, I'm not going to reach a definitive position on this now. There's another part of the standing orders that's very important in this regard. It says: if a government Member is elected as Deputy Speaker, only a non-government Member may be elected as Second Deputy Speaker—

and that's been the case now. If a non-government member is elected Deputy Speaker, then a government member must be elected Second Deputy Speaker. The member for Wide Bay made some remarks about his position with respect to the government overnight. I haven't studied those in great detail, I have to say. But I do need to point out to the House that that requirement is there. I know the Leader of the House is ready to make a point of order. I'm always happy to hear from my friend, the Leader of the House, but I'll need to examine those statements. Was the member for Wide Bay seeking to—

Mr Llew O'Brien (Wide Bay) (16:17): I've clearly stated that I am still a member of the government. I do not sit in the Nationals' party room. I sit as a member of the LNP, which was what was on my ballot paper when I put myself before the people of Wide Bay. I still remain a loyal and faithful government member.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. That clarifies the matter. I did see some of your statements. Does the Leader of the House still want the call? For once, the member for McEwen was speechless for a second!

Mr Morrison (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (16:18): Can I congratulate the member for Wide Bay. With two government members to choose from, I'm pleased to see that government members received the full confidence of all members of the House. The member for Wide Bay brings his experience to this House as a policeman. I, more than most, have a deep understanding of what he brings to this House, as I do understand what the member for Nicholls brings to this House. There is no shortage of government members in this House to ensure that we continue to deliver on the promises we made to the Australian people. These government members will continue to ensure that a strong economy, a safe Australia and a government that will continue to meet the needs of the Australian people will be delivered on each and every day that this government majority serves in this House.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left! After being uncharacteristically quiet in question time, I don't want you to make up for it now. The Leader of the Opposition, on indulgence.

Mr Albanese (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (16:20): No amount of marketing or spin can hide the humiliation for the government from that ballot. I congratulate the member for Wide Bay on receiving such strong support from his colleagues in the House of Representatives. I asked a question earlier today; indeed, it was the first question of question time, which went to the stability of the government. I think we've just seen the stability of the coalition on full view for everyone to see: government members running against each other for a position of Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives. For the Prime Minister to stand up and to say that this was somehow a win—

The SPEAKER: I'll just say to the Leader of the Opposition that I'm pretty free flowing on this, but this is a time of congratulation to the member for Wide Bay.

Mr Albanese: I am! I am congratulating the Prime Minister on his capacity to make anything out as a marketing proposal.
The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House, on a point of order?

Mr Porter: The purpose of the indulgence is to congratulate the member for Wide Bay—no other person. Nor is it to make gratuitous statements.

The SPEAKER: I thank the Leader of the House, but an indulgence is just that. The Prime Minister made a number of comments, but it is primarily an indulgence. What I'm not going to allow is the indulgence to slip into the matter of public importance. That doesn't occur on Monday.

Mr ALBANESE: Thank you, Mr Speaker; it can wait until tomorrow.

The SPEAKER: It can; that's a good point.

Mr ALBANESE: I do congratulate the member for Wide Bay on his election. The position of the Speaker and the speaker's panel is a very important one. I'm someone who is quite proud to call myself a parliamentarian. I think that the way that this parliament flows and conducts itself is very important, and the role, I must say, that you play, Mr Speaker, is critical in that. The support that you receive from the speaker's panel, including, of course, the person who has just been elected as your deputy and the second deputy speaker, is critical as well.

It is important that we're able to debate ideas in this place. It's important that we're able to do it in a civil way, because this is the institution of our democracy. Many people stand in front of tanks for the right to vote and the right to participate in their democratic system. This institution matters. Procedures matter. The orderly conduct of business in this place matters, so that the government has an opportunity to present its arguments for the proposals that it's putting through its cabinet processes, and so that the opposition has the opportunity to hold the government to account by being able to actually have debates and not be shut down in this place and to be able to participate in that debate of ideas.

I congratulate the member for Wide Bay. I look forward to him conducting himself in a fair way, as you do, Mr Speaker, and as the former Deputy Speaker, the member for Page, did, with dignity. I congratulate him on his elevation to the position of assistant minister as well. I wish the member for Wide Bay all the best.

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of the Nationals) (16:23): I too congratulate the member for Wide Bay on his election. I know he'll do a good job. I also pay tribute to the member for Nicholls for putting his name forward. That's democracy. I know the member for Wide Bay will be supportive of you, Mr Speaker, and supportive of the member for McEwen as the second Deputy Speaker.

The SPEAKER: I also congratulate the member for Wide Bay on his election as Deputy Speaker. We'll be working very closely together, and that starts from now. Obviously, we'll have a chance to talk about things through the course of this afternoon. But, of course, you're a key member of the speaker's panel. You're in charge of the Federation Chamber, and, since time is short, can I inform you that you're on duty at 7.00 pm tonight.

**BILLS**

Financial Sector Reform (Hayne Royal Commission Response—Protecting Consumers (2019 Measures)) Bill 2019

Financial Sector Reform (Hayne Royal Commission Response—Stronger Regulators (2019 Measures)) Bill 2019

Treasury Laws Amendment (2019-20 Bushfire Tax Assistance) Bill 2020

Returned from Senate

**COMMITTEES**

Human Rights Committee

Report


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

Mr Perrett: by leave—I rise as deputy chair to speak to the tabling of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights scrutiny report 1 of 2020. This report was tabled in the Senate on Wednesday last week, and the chair incorrectly stated at the time that there was no dissenting report. I inform the House of Representatives that scrutiny report 1 of 2020 does contain a dissenting report.
This report contains a technical examination of legislation with Australia's obligations under human rights law, as required under the committee's statutory mandate. It sets out the committee's consideration of 79 bills introduced into the parliament between 14 October and 5 December 2019, one bill, previously deferred, and legislative instruments registered on the Federal Register of Legislation between 20 September and 3 December 2019. In this report, the committee seeks further information in relation to 11 bills and four instruments from the relevant ministers.

The process of requesting information from the legislation proponent reflects the committee's role in establishing and maintaining a dialogue regarding the human rights implications of legislative measures, which contributes to the broader respect for and recognition of human rights in Australia. The committee has made concluding remarks in relation to four bills and one instrument; however, half of the committee, comprising all members from the Australian Labor Party and the Greens, have issued a dissenting report in relation to the committee's conclusion with regard to three of these bills, as I will outline here.

The Australian Citizenship Amendment (Citizenship Cessation) Bill 2019 seeks to provide the Minister for Home Affairs with the discretionary power to determine that a person ceases to be an Australian citizen in certain broad circumstances. As set out in the international human rights law advice contained in the concluding comments of the report, this engages and limits the rights to freedom of movement, liberty and the rights of the child and the protection of the family. While these rights may be subject to permissible limitations under international human rights law, the dissenting members considered it has not been demonstrated that the proposed measures are sufficiently certain that people would understand the circumstances under which the minister may restrict the exercise of their rights. The dissenting members, in considering international human rights law implications of such legislation, concluded that there is a significant risk that the bill could result in a person being denied their right to freedom of movement, including their right to enter, remain in or return to their own country. There is also a risk that the cessation of a person's citizenship, making them a noncitizen, could result in their being placed in mandatory immigration detention, which could result in an impermissible limitation on their right to liberty.

Further, the bill would allow the minister to cease the citizenship of a child as young as 10 or 14, with the best interests of the child only to be considered alongside a list of other considerations, and without any specific requirement that the minister consider the importance of protecting the right to family. The dissenting members considered there is a significant risk that the rights of the child and the protection of the family will not be adequately protected. The dissenting members considered that the cessation of citizenship, which could result in the loss of a right to remain in Australia, noting that any ex-citizen visa is highly likely to be cancelled on character grounds, risks resulting in such persons being subject to removal to countries where they may face persecution. As such, the dissenting members considered the measures may not be consistent with Australia's non-refoulement obligations and the right to an effective remedy. The dissenting members considered this risk may be reduced if proposed section 36E included a specific requirement that the minister must consider whether the person, if removed from Australia following loss of citizenship, would be at risk of persecution or other forms of serious harm, and independent merits review of this decision were available.

Half of the committee has also issued dissenting comments with regard to the committee's conclusions as to the human rights compatibility of the Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management to Cashless Debit Card Transition) Bill 2019. This bill seeks to extend the date for existing cashless debit card trials and to establish the Northern Territory and Cape York areas as cashless debit card trial areas. The dissenting report states:

This bill engages and limits the rights to privacy, social security, and equality and non-discrimination. As set out in the international human rights law advice contained in the concluding comments of the report, the measures associated with this bill significantly intrude into the freedom and autonomy of individuals to organise their private and family lives by making their own decisions about the way in which they use their social security payments. They also appear to have a disproportionate impact on First Nations People.

The report also states:

… the dissenting members consider it is unclear whether the proposed cashless welfare scheme expansion is rationally connected with (that is, effective to achieve) those objectives, noting the mixed results outlined in the trial evaluations completed to date.13 Additionally, the dissenting members consider it does not appear that the proposed measures are proportionate to the objectives sought to be achieved. In particular, there appears to be extremely limited capacity for flexibility to treat different cases differently …

… … ...

A human rights compliant approach requires that any such measures must be effective, subject to monitoring and review and genuinely tailored to the needs and wishes of the local community. The dissenting members consider the current
approach, with its apparent lack of genuine consultation, amendments to the evaluation process and lack of legislative requirement to respect community wishes before amending the amount of restrictable income, falls short of this standard.

Finally, half of the committee has also made dissenting comments with regard to the committee's conclusions as to the human rights compatibility of the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Drug Testing Trial) Bill 2019, which seeks to establish a two-year trial of mandatory drug testing. Under this scheme, recipients who test positive would be subject to income management for two years and be subject to further random drug tests. Recipients who test positive to more than one test during the 24-month period may be required to complete certain treatment activities, and those who do not comply with their employment pathway plan, including drug treatment activities, would be subject to a participation payment compliance framework, which may involve suspending their welfare payments.

As set out in the International Human Rights Law Advice contained in the concluding comments of the report, these measures engage and limit a number of human rights, including the rights to privacy, social security, an adequate standard of living, and equality and nondiscrimination. The dissenting members considered that it has not been demonstrated that the measures are a proportionate means of achieving the stated objectives. The dissenting members note that the government has not explained how individuals who have their payments suspended will be able to meet their basic needs for food and housing, which raises questions as to whether this measure would comply with the obligation to provide an adequate standard of living.

It also appears that the process to remove income quarantining where it is not necessary or appropriate is limited, as is the availability of independent review. It is also not clear that other, less rights-restrictive methods have been trialled to improve a jobseeker's capacity to find employment, participate in education or training, and receive medical treatment. Consequently, the dissenting members consider that there is significant risk that the measures proposed by the bill would unjustifiably limit the rights to privacy, social security, an adequate standard of living, and equality and nondiscrimination.

We consider it regrettable that it has become necessary to prepare another dissenting report for this previously well-functioning committee. As members no doubt know, the mandate of this important committee is to examine all bills and legislative instruments that come before either house of the parliament for compatibility with Australia's human rights obligations under the seven international human rights treaties ratified by Australia and to report to both houses of the parliament on that issue.

As members of this committee we must never lose sight of the committee's important mandate. This committee does not exist to be partisan, and it does not exist to rubberstamp government policy, irrespective of the political party occupying the treasury bench. The legislation scrutinised in this report deserves to be properly considered by this committee through a human rights framework. The work of the Human Rights Committee is closely followed by similar committees internationally and by the judiciary. It would be a horrible reflection on the members of this committee if, in the 46th Parliament, the Human Rights Committee became politicised. I encourage my fellow members, the government and all those who care about human rights to examine the committee's full report, and I commend the committee's report No. 1 of 2020 to the House.

Ms HAMMOND (Curtin) (16:37): by leave—I note that the honourable member for Moreton, in presenting a previous committee report last week and in presenting the committee report today, has made some comments about the functioning of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights. Last week, and again today, the member for Moreton has said:

We consider it regrettable that it has become necessary to prepare another dissenting report for this previously well-functioning committee.

He further stated that this committee does not exist to be partisan or to rubberstamp government policy, irrespective of the political party occupying the treasury bench.

On the second point, I note my full agreement with the member for Moreton. This committee should not be a rubber stamp for government. However, and with due respect to the member for Moreton and the many years he has served on this committee, I would counter his suggestion that this committee has been historically well-functioning. To this end, I note publicly available comments made by my colleague the member for Berowra, who, in 2018, and after serving on this committee for two years, called for the committee's abolition. In so doing, he stated:

… the Human Rights Committee operates differently to every other committee in the Parliament.

In fact, I do not believe it is truly a committee of the Parliament.

I believe it is a bureaucracy that has appropriated the name of the Parliament.

The Committee is about bureaucrats judging Parliament, rather than the Parliament judging human rights.

He further stated:
… committee members just show up to rubber stamp a report prepared by unelected human rights lawyers. Just as the member for Berowra did, I offer these comments with no disrespect to those people who've served on or continue to serve on this committee, nor the hardworking professional officers or advisers who make up the secretariat. I offer these comments to make the point that issues with this committee are not new and to suggest that it may be timely for this parliament to consider the purpose, remit and functioning of this committee to ascertain whether it is in fact contributing in any meaningful way to the protection of the human rights of Australian citizens.

Petitions Committee Report

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (16:39): I present the eighth report of the Petitions Committee for the 46th Parliament.

PETITIONS

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (16:40): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, and in accordance with standing order 207, I present the following petitions:

Foreign Investment

Land

Investigate purchase of land from foreign ownership

We therefore ask the House to investigate land owned by foreign countries a people and ban any further ownership of land from none Australians they can rent or lease but not own

From 4 citizens (Petition No. EN1131)

Economy

Stop Foreign Aid

Until we have paid back the money our politicians have borrowed causing government debt we should not be paying Foreign Aid. We also need to make it law Australia can never borrow money in this way again.

We therefore ask the House to stop Foreign Aid until government debt is paid off.

From 12 citizens (Petition No. EN1132)

Hong Kong

Sanctions against China in response to Hong Kong

Levelling Sanctions against China in response to its human rights abuses in Hong Kong. The measures are meant to show that Australia does not support their current actions and impact them financially.

We therefore ask the House to impose sanctions against China, imposing tariffs and imported Chinese goods and restrict Chinese Communist Party influence in Australia.

From 12 citizens (Petition No. EN1133)

Uluru

Look into the ban on climbing Ayer's Rock

The loss of visitors and also the economy that is generated from the climbing of Ayer's Rock.

The loss of employment for the local aboriginal community and also other employment in the area.

The closure of the resort near Ayer's Rock as due to loss of visitors

Australia looking like a laughing stock to the world because of this reason

We therefore ask the House to please look into reversing this rule of climbing Ayer's Rock and if able to hire aboriginal elders to escort all visitors going up the rock, would help with employment for the aboriginal community and also be able to explain to the tourists about the culture of the Rock otherwise the economy for around the area will just disappear which will result actually hurting the aboriginal community.

From 6 citizens (Petition No. EN1135)

Australia Day

Ban the change of Australia Day/Anthem and Flag

For Australia's pride and identity that I ask that to bring into law that Australia Day can never be moved or challenged and also to never change our beautiful National Anthem or our beautiful Australian Flag.

These are our Australian identity and to keep wanting to change this is only creating more stress for the Australian community and makes us look like a laughing stock overseas, U don't see the USA doing this and look how proud there citizens are compared to the Australian pride.
Having been a one of the 56 000 volunteers for the Sydney 2000 Olympics and also a volunteer The Paralympics games as well, seeing the pride the country had then and now it seems if ur proud of your country they class you as racist, so this needs to stop.

I fly the Australian Flag proudly on my flagpole at my property everyday of the year because of the pride I feel for my country.

Australia is the best country in the world.

We therefore ask the House to look into making into law to Never change Australia Day and to leave our National Anthem alone and to never change our Australian Flag, let's All Australian's come under One Flag, One National Day and One National Anthem. Let's get the Australian Pride back like we had at the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

From 22 citizens (Petition No. EN1136)

Bill of Rights

Constitutional change to incorporate a Bill of Rights

Have you heard anyone say 'freedom of speech' in reference to Australia. Do you realize we do not have a right to freedom of speech in Australia – we have IMPLIED right to freedom of speech in this great country. Now you be asking me what the distinction is – why the use of the word IMPLIED in all caps.

Under our system of law, unless it prohibited by law you are allowed to do it. We only write down generally what you can not do – so you can not murder anyone – self evident. However we do not write down you are allowed to walk to the beach. Thus since no one specifically says 'you do not have the right to freedom of speech' – you have an IMPLIED right of freedom of speech.

That all seems well and good till you realize that nay judge, any legislator can chip away your right to freedom of speech. There are a number of laws that erode your freedom of speech and the media's right to this freedom. Such laws include defamation, contempt of court, suppression orders, children's court rules, national security and counter terrorism.

We therefore ask the House to vote on a Bill of rights to be introduced into the Constitution

From 5 citizens (Petition No. EN1140)

Australian Bushfires

Using Defence Force resources to help combat fires of significance.

The escalation and worsening of major fires throughout the nation, presenting extreme or catastrophic fires. And which cause loss of life, injuries, damage to infrastructure, etc. The fire risks and resources required to adequately combat the fires in an expedient manner need augmentation, at least on occasions of major and/or multiple fires.

We therefore ask the House to provide ongoing approval and mandate for the use of the Australian Defence Force to combat fires, including providing resources, machinery, personnel, etc. Especially the provision, operation, maintenance, and management of fire fighting aircraft.

From 35 citizens (Petition No. EN1141)

Environment

Ban SHRINKFLATION! Buy more product with less packaging

Shrinkflation - inflating revenue on products by selling you less.

Scott Morrison is commiting $20 million to Australia's recycling industry (August 2019). China stopped importing Australian waste in 2018; since then, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines are saying 'NO' to being the world's dump.

Australia has an opportunity to lead the world by updating packaging laws reversing the effects of SHRINKFLATION.

Your purchases are shrinking costing you and the environment more. This practice is not only environmentally irresponsible, but the taxpayers are about to take on the very large and on-going expense of processing more of this shrinking packaging.

We therefore ask the House to change packaging laws.

Small adjustments can make a big difference! When we recycle our plastic bottles, we are told not to include the tops, the simple act of setting a larger minimum volume size of our packaging for small consumable items would keep much more non-recyclable-plastic tops alone out of our landfills. By enforcing buying bulkier with larger packaging sizes we can start winning the war on waste.

Consider:

- Toothpaste tubes (non-recyclable) currently at 120mL —> min. 200mL
- Shampoo and body wash bottles from 500mL —> min. 2L
- Deodorant sticks (non-recyclable) currently selling at 42g —> min. 100g or more!
- Dish soap 700mL —> 1L
- Paper towel 2 per pack —> 4 per pack
- Strawberry boxes double in size
bigger salad dressing bottles
Fuller bags of chips
etc.
Let's reduce waste with better cooperate and consumer behaviour by up to 30% now by buying bulkier.

From 5 citizens (Petition No. EN1142)

**Adani Carmichael Mine**

Cancel and stop the Adani Coal Mine

Adani's Carmichael coal mine and railway, located around 300km from the Great Barrier Reef, in the Great Artesian Basin is an environmental disaster and climate crime. This open-cast mine, when in operation, will be the single largest coal mine in the world, and will release 4.7 Billion tons of CO2 (carbon) emissions. Adani also plans to drain over 12 billion litres of water every year, from the beautiful Artesian Basin, causing distress for the local environment, and leave farmers with little water.

The evidence proving the correlation between the exporting, mining, and burning of coal to climate change and global warming is overwhelming, and being in a climate emergency, (which we are), adding literal fuel to the fire is the single worst thing to do.

We therefore ask the House to listen upon the demands and needs of millions of Australians, and to cancel the approval of Adani's Carmichael coal mine, and to understand, and listen to modern-day climate science and ecological disaster prevention tactics.

From 68 citizens (Petition No. EN1143)

**Bill of Rights**

Pass the Australian Bill of Rights Bill 2019 in full

For too long, the Australian Government has neglected the safety, security, freedoms and rights of the Australian people and allowed unnecessary and dangerous amendments to such freedoms and rights to occur in legislation. These include freedoms to the privacy of Australian Citizens, press freedom, autonomy, the rights of children and our own dignity of person to name a few.

Once again, there is a Bill "Australian Bill of Rights Bill 2019" that has been presented by Andrew Wilkie to Parliament for debate. After decades of wasted debate, it is time for our politicians to fulfil their duties to the Australian people and pass this bill in both houses in full (without watered down ineffectual amendments). Australia is the only developed nation in the world without such a bill and it has ensured our freedoms have been eroded to completely unacceptable levels.

It is time for Australia to step up and become in legislation what it claims to be on the international stage - a democratic, free and advanced Nation that upholds Human Rights and dignity first and foremost for its' citizens.

We therefore ask the House to pass the Australian Bill of Rights Bill 2019 without amendments and without delay, and ensure that it does everything within its' power to compel the Senate to do the same.

From 1413 citizens (Petition No. EN1144)

**Prime Minister**

Mr Morrison has New Zealand citizenship

Mr Morrison's mother Marion was born in Australia to a New Zealand citizen. The British Nationality and New Zealand Citizenship Act section 16 says children born of fathers born in New Zealand are citizens of that country. The law specifies male children are citizens by descent, female children were not mentioned meaning they are citizens other than by descent and able to pass New Zealand citizenship to their children.

This Makes Mr Morrison a New Zealand citizen by descent.

The house can't determine if Mr Morrison has or hasn't breached the constitution, that is up to the High Court. Even the Commonwealth Solicitor has been proven wrong about S44 on so many occasions.

We therefore ask the House to refer Mr Morrison to the High Court to determine if he is a New Zealand citizen and in breach of our constitution.

From 136 citizens (Petition No. EN1145)

**Energy**

Light sensitivity catering vs arguments of phasing out incandescent bulbs

Since the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 has been enforced, there has been adjustments and catering done particularly for people with physical or sensory disabilities. As the Australian Government would acknowledge that there are disabilities that do not fit into physical or sensory category such as autism, schizophrenia or even epilepsy. Since 2009, standard incandescent lighting has been phased out because they are not efficient and/or because of climate change. The Australian Government does not phase out lifts from public spaces and replace with stairs on the grounds of not being efficient or because of climate change. The Australian Government would not consider phasing out lifts from public spaces and replacing them with stairs. Why use this logic to phase out of standard incandescent light bulbs? There are autism and light sensitivity
groups in Australia and overseas that are trying to get governments around the world to scrap the phasing out of standard incandescent lighting.

We therefore ask the House to scrap any import or sales restrictions of standard incandescent light bulbs and abolish any GEMS legislation that impact on availability of incandescent light bulbs in Australia.

From 10 citizens (Petition No. EN1146)

**Energy**

Light sensitivity disregarded despite giving further information to Government

When the Australian Government phased out the standard incandescent light bulbs from 2009 and onwards, there was consultations with people to note potential impacts of people with light sensitivity. People with light sensitivity can include people with autism, photosensitive epilepsy, Irlen Syndrome and others. The Australian Government is trying to reason that they had a consultation period and sourced Australia and worldwide expertise. Not always do problems get mentioned just within consultation periods like the European Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks, which has attempted to address people with autism and Irlen Syndrome. Consider in Australia, the consultation and consequences of the botched home insulation scheme – it had deadly consequences. The Australian Government claims that they will continue to monitor the effects of UV from CFLs. CFLs ,LEDs and halogen are not suitable for people like myself and I require standard incandescent lighting. My problem is described in this quote: "Autism friendly designs generally incorporate unsaturated, light earth tones with only small, contained areas of bright color" (Mostafa, 2014).

We therefore ask the House to scrap any import or sales restrictions of standard incandescent light bulbs and abolish any GEMS legislation that impact on availability of incandescent light bulbs.

From 5 citizens (Petition No. EN1147)

**Energy**

Cater for light sensitivity in public places like wheelchair catering

There are people who are affected by lights used in public places. This groups includes autism, photosensitive epilepsy and Irlen Syndrome. The lights in public places could include the brightness or flickering. This has resulted in social exclusion of people because of unsuitable lighting. Since incandescent light bulbs have been phased out and mostly it is CFLs or LEDs that are used there has been an increase of the flickering of bulbs and the brightness. When lights are flickering (usually fluorescent or LED) as a result of natural operations or faulty they are not addressed promptly. If someone has photosensitive epilepsy that was undiagnosed it can be serious. Covering lights do not stop flickering lights. I find that an exposed incandescent bulb is much better than a fully covered energy-efficient bulb of any kind and sunglasses do not work for me. The best lighting for people with Irlen Syndrome is indirect natural lighting or incandescent lighting.

We therefore ask the House to take a "universal" approach for light sensitivity in public buildings so that there is no flickering or harshness of light. This includes using standard incandescent lighting in all fixtures that incandescent lighting can be used.

From 5 citizens (Petition No. EN1148)

**Murray-Darling Basin Authority**

Call for Royal Commission into Murray Darling Basin Authority

To demand a Royal Commission to be called to investigate the operations and transactions of the Murray Darling Basin Authority, the execution of the Murray Darling Basin Plan, and the Federal Water Act 2007 in the allocations, monetary transactions of water licences/permits across States & Territories for which it operates under.

Terms of Reference need to include the viability of the Murray Darling Basin Authority, its structure, and de-regulation of water permits and water trading scheme.

We therefore ask the House to call for a Royal Commission to investigate the operations and transactions of the Murray Darling Basin Authority, the execution of the Murray Darling Basin Plan, and the Federal Water Act 2007 in the allocations, monetary transactions of water licences/permits across States & Territories for which it operates under.

From 1988 citizens (Petition No. EN1149)

**Assange, Mr Julian**

Save Julian Assange and bring him home

Julian Assange is a political prisoner who is being persecuted for exposing corruption and a life long fight against pedophilia on the internet. He is being unjustly detained, he has acted as a journalist and shone a light in the darkness upon those who wield power for their own personal gain and benefit. He has suffered enough, we the people of Australia demand our government fight for Julian's return home now to spend the rest of his life in freedom and dignity.

We therefore ask the House to take immediate action in order to bring Julian Assange home. Lobby against the unjust charges and detainment of Julian Assange in the UK, give him diplomatic status and protections that will allow him to fly back to Australia unhindered by all other foreign powers. Be visible in your fight for Julian, be vocal and be relentless. NOW.

From 76 citizens (Petition No. EN1151)
Cancer

Increasing clinical trial access for high risk neuroblastoma patients

Clinical trial support and access to novel therapies has been lacking in paediatric oncology units across Australia. Children with high risk neuroblastoma face many months of intensive treatment, but chances of relapse remain very high. Presently, Australia doesn't have capability in preventative trials to reduce the chances of relapse, or less toxic antibody trials for relapsed neuroblastoma. Families are forced to raise significant funds through crowdfunding to access these trials overseas to improve their children's chances of survival. Medical Treatment Overseas Program (MTOP) excludes clinical trials from coverage due to the "lack of evidence"; PBS only lists drugs proven to be efficient for a particular cancer, and only if the pharmaceutical company deems it "economically wise" to seek opportunities in the limited Australian market. We wish to challenge the notion that lack of evidence means the lack of efficacy. Presently Australia is lagging behind the US and Europe in terms of availability of breakthrough clinical trials and novel therapies for treatment of high risk neuroblastoma that could be applied in a clinical setting.

We therefore ask the House to:

- Open the MTOP to cover participation in overseas clinical trials when supported by the treating oncologist
- Invest in Australia's participation in international trials and assist oncology units across the nation to provide a wider range of therapeutic options to their patients
- Implement methods to effectively manage risk of accepting treatments with limited clinical evidence; adjust the system to be flexible to meet the needs of each individual patient.

From 5620 citizens (Petition No. EN1154)

Health Care

Stop paying to see

Seeing people see for free. Those with a visual impairment should have an equal opportunity to see as those who are blessed with sight. It is not fair that people who were born with the disability are forced to pay for their sight. The government funds other various other disabilities whilst those who are visually impaired receive no compensation. ***% of people have some form of visual impairment - and steps should be taken in order to provide these people with some sort of compensation for this. Glasses and contacts (visual aids) are an expensive relief from this disability which needs to be considered - especially considering the number of visually impaired people is on the rise.

We therefore ask the House to take this into consideration and hopefully reduce the burden (costs) of the visually impaired.

From 17 citizens (Petition No. EN1155)

Climate Change

Become more climate active to save our future

Climate Change is a direct threat to Australian job security because of the damage it causes to Australian farmers as well as the tourism industry due to the current drought and the destruction of the Great Barrier Reef and other natural landmarks.

This parliament has the opportunity to prevent climate change and to ensure that the next generation will be proud to live in Australia.

We therefore ask the House to:

- Put Australia on a path to reduce emissions to 90% of 2005 levels by 2025.
- Redouble their promise to protect and expand landmarks such as the Great Barrier Reef.
- Reduce the number of roads that are planned to be built and improves and develops transportation in Australia.

From 132 citizens (Petition No. EN1156)

Telecommunications

Further scientific studies needed for the 5G technology and EMR

As the rollout of 5G is currently underway and the telecommunications companies rush to get their infrastructure set up by mid 2020, many Australian citizens, and worldwide, are concerned about what effect it will have on their health, especially as there has been no recent specific studies proven to show that it will be safe. Australia needs an independent team of scientists to carry out these studies.

We therefore ask the House to compile a list of Australian scientists and biologists who are well known for their studies to be conclusive and accurate, to form an independent team in order to carry out the necessary studies on 5G technology and EMR.

From 1007 citizens (Petition No. EN1157)

Welfare and Benefits

A Royal Commission into the treatment of Unemployed and Single Parents.

The hoops and hurdles the unemployed have to jump through. Being kicked off welfare for not ticking a box, even though commitments have been met! Work for the dole that doesn't exist in the majority of regions, its study for the dole!
Employment agencies whose purpose is to find a way to kick you off welfare! The ignorance of the pressures on a single parent. Why Sarina Russo is one of Australia's richest, receiving money from the tax payer. Requests that put additional costs upon the unemployed, who will be kicked off for not meeting! Why the elderly on a pension get paid more than a single parent with 2 mouths to feed!

We therefore ask the House to start a Royal Commission into the treatment of the unemployed and single parents.

From 8 citizens (Petition No. EN1159)

**Freedom of Speech**

Repeal secondary boycott provisions.

Our Prime Minister's recent proposal to expand secondary boycott provisions exposes substantial risks to (at least) freedom of speech and personal liberties. Can we trust that no future government will seek further expansion - perhaps to all boycotts?

We therefore ask the House to repeal Sections 45D of the Competition and Consumer Act and of the Trade Practices Act, in entirety.

From 8 citizens (Petition No. EN1160)

**Cooper, Mr Andrew**

The Persecution of Andrew Cooper

We would like to bring to your attention and request your assistance in correcting a gross misuse of legislation against an innocent Australian, guilty of nothing more than promoting individual liberty, and dialogue in the free and open marketplace of ideas. Andrew Cooper has been served a 45(2) Notice, dated 21 October, 2019, by the Integrity and International Group of the Department of the Attorney-General, who as you know is Christian Porter. This has been done under the umbrella of the Foreign Influence Transparency Act, which came into effect in December 2018, to root out foreign interference in the political process in Australia. What is being done to Andrew Cooper is nothing short of communist-style persecution by the State. He is a libertarian who committed no crime, no charges have been levelled, his only action was holding a discussion at CPAC Australia on freedom of speech, liberty, civility and honesty. The event was not shut down by government, no speakers prevented from entering Australia. No National security was breached. Yet he faces six months in prison. We would strongly urge you to assist in correcting this violation of Mr Cooper's personal sovereignty. This goes against everything Australia stands for.

We therefore ask the House to either repeal the legislation under which Andrew Cooper is being unfairly persecuted. Or to amend said legislation to ensure that the un-elected bureaucrats in the I&IG cannot and do not go beyond their scope of operation i.e. rooting out foreign subversion in Australia's political process.

From 164 citizens (Petition No. EN1162)

**Schools**

First Aid To All School Kids Every Year

I believe school systems should teach children from the age of 5 in a school environment that gets more advanced as school does this could save a life

We therefore ask the House to make it mandated for school aged children to be teaching basic to advanced first aid

From 10 citizens (Petition No. EN1165)

**Banking and Financial Services**

Charging to pay bills

Business charging money on top of cost should be federal issue

We therefore ask the House to make illegal business charging citizen fees on top of bill or purchase price example ( cost $100 charge $5 or more in charges or late fees for paying bill of 1 amount then charged more this is double dipping ) why should citizens cover business expenses. Why should business and trades be allowed to charge late fees or credit card fees or fees just for paying bill or buying something? Citizens cant charge business late fees or fees for going out of citizen way to pay bill or wait time at counters or wait for service. So why do business and trades get to do it should be a 2 way system if they can do it then citizens should be allowed to do it so I believe it should be banned altogether to stop any trouble >>> no business or trades can charge > late fees surcharges. Wait times. Fees to pay bills thanks

From 6 citizens (Petition No. EN1166)

**Welfare and Benefits**

Improve parental leave for families of premature and sick newborns

Every year in Australia more than 48,000 newborn babies require the help of a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) or Special Care Nursery (SCN). For these families, the experience of having a baby come into the world not as expected or planned is life changing. Caring for these babies creates increased financial, emotional, and time investment for parents. These families, often, find themselves needing to take leave from work unexpectedly and much earlier than anticipated. In Australia, parental leave allows employees to take time away from work for the birth of their children. However, for the parents of premature and sick babies, parental leave starts as soon as the baby is born. Current legislation doesn't consider the needs of
parents with babies who spend their first weeks or months of life in a NICU or SCN. Miracle Babies Foundation recognises a gap in legislation to address the unique and specific needs of families of premature or sick newborns who require the support of a NICU or SCN.

We therefore ask the House to make priority a review of current legislation on parental leave, taking into consideration family needs for premature and sick babies and work towards improving parental leave for NICU/SCN parents. We want to see meaningful consultation about the issue in order to implement improved parental leave support for these families.

From 5917 citizens (Petition No. EN1167)

**Strip-searching**

Ban strip searching minors

Regarding the strip searching of minors by police, the lasting psychological damage caused by forcing a minor boy or girl to remove their clothes, squat etc infront of a stranger is unreasonable especially under current laws, with low thresholds actually practiced. As a parent I wouldn't be happy if policed violated my daughters, especially without material direct verifiable evidence.

If there are reasonable suspicions of carrying drugs then police work, like monitoring a suspect should be performed.

If terrorism is suspected, then they should be detained under anti terror laws.

If a minor had severe body issues or had been the subject of sexual assult, such treatment by police could result in extreme emotional damage.

We therefore ask the House to ban strip searching minors, especially at the discretion (whim) of police who have made mistakes on the majority of occasions where this practice had been performed.

From 51 citizens (Petition No. EN1168)

**Iraq**

Australia's Voice to Stop the Iraqi Government Killing Iraqi Demonstrators.

The government of Iraq is loyal to multiple outside influences. Since the 2003 war Iraq has been governed by the same corrupt, avaricious and money driven individuals. They have not accomplished anything in redeveloping the country despite the massive income from daily export of millions of barrels of oil.

There are no basic life requirements. There is no such a good health care, convenient schools, Electricity, and pure water. The independence for the magistracy does not exist. There is no job creation, no security, no individual freedom, pursuit of happiness is impossible, and there is no freedom of expression or any sense of viability for the country.

The people of Iraq need a strong stand from the countries of the free world to fundamentally change the government of Iraq from being ethnically divided parliamentary republic to one that directly represents the people of Iraq and their right to country and bright future.

Since first of October 2019, people across Iraq have been peacefully demonstrating against the corrupt government. They are asking for their basic human rights and dignity.

The Iraqi government's response so far has been to kill 400 people and injure at least 6000. More than 100 were burned alive at Al Basra, in the south of Iraq. The government is using weapons of war against its people in contravention of basic human rights.

We therefore ask the House to Speak up on behalf of the people of Iraq and take a stand to protect their basic human rights

From 370 citizens (Petition No. EN1169)

**Tobacco Industry**

Legalise Vaping in Australia

We as a collective request that you look at legalise vaping in Australia. Regulate it and make it easily accessible to all Australians wishing to use it as a safer alternative to smoking.

We therefore ask the House to please listen to the real stories of Australians who have used vaping to quit smoking, legalise it for us and give us the right to make educated choices for ourselves.

From 238 citizens (Petition No. EN1170)

**Climate Change**

Climate Change EMERGENCY

We need to realize how much we're impacting the Earth with our use of fossil fuels, we can help heal the Earth by closing ALL coal plants and supporting renewable energy (like solar/wind/hydro power farms). We have an estimated 12 months before we have reached an irreversible level of pollution and global warming.

We therefore ask the House to close fossil fuel plants and devote money to support renewable energy sources. Announcing a climate emergency will also urge all of us to do our part.

From 21 citizens (Petition No. EN1171)
**Department of Veterans' Affairs**

Justice Logan's reason in Shafran v Repatriation Commission, 8 November 2019, highlights a failing of natural justice and clarity in parliamentary intention within the "beneficial" veterans' legislation.

The legislation administered by DVA has not been applied in accordance with parliamentary intention. And given the narrow scope of Mr Shafrans legal matter we feel DVA should be more thoroughly investigated to ensure that has not been more widespread practice of legislation not being applied in accordance with parliamentary intention.

This is an opportunity for the people of Australia to demonstrate the Australian Defence Veterans' covenant is more than just words on paper.

We therefore ask the House to, on the grounds of public interest to cause to be undertaken a Judicial audit, Senate enquiry, or such lawful investigation as the Commonwealth deems appropriate into the Decision and Review practices at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

From 223 citizens (Petition No. EN1172)

**Visa Processing**

Requesting to reduce the processing time for 887 visa

The skilled migrants who had applied for 887 visa-Permanent Residency, now have to wait as long as 21-23 months to get their visa processed so they are forced to live and work in regional area with little opportunities

We therefore ask the House to ask the Federal government to reduce the processing time for 887 visa and expedite the process. Migrants come here with a dream of a better life don't turn it into nightmare

From 20 citizens (Petition No. EN1173)

**United Nations**

Australia to exit from the United Nations

The United Nations does not have the right to impose laws on the citizens of this country. The federal government should not be creating laws based on what non-citizens think is best for a global agenda. The federal government should not be giving citizens money to support foreign entities.

We therefore ask the House to petition the federal government to hold a referendum. The referendum will ask Australian citizens if they would like Australia to withdraw from the United Nations and all imposed laws related to the United Nations, including the Lima declaration, agenda 21, immigration ideals and climate change related laws.

From 273 citizens (Petition No. EN117)

**Environment**

A national ban on the release of helium balloons

This petition of concerned Australian citizens draws to the attention of the House: the impact that released helium balloons have on vertebrate wildlife of the coast and oceans of Australia, also marine debris and litter, and other wildlife.

Balloons can travel hundreds of kilometres, on atmospheric and/or ocean currents, across local and state borders, and come back to Earth as litter anywhere, posing a threat to many animals.

Seabirds, turtles, penguins and other animals, wild and domesticated, have been killed by balloons, mistaking them as food. Death occurs slowly through starvation caused by a blocked intestinal tract.

Attached plastic disks and streamers can cause death by choking and entanglement.

Balloons, if released into the environment, pose a threat to wildlife and domestic animals regardless of where they are. Latex balloons may eventually biodegrade, but in the years this can take, they are a continual threat to all animals.

Mylar/foil balloons can cause power outages and spark fires. They are not "biodegradable" and only break up into ever smaller micro-plastic pieces.

Helium, a finite resource, is needlessly wasted when used to inflate party, promotional or ceremonial balloons. Accidental releases occur far more easily when balloons are inflated with helium.

Just one accidentally released balloon can kill or harm livestock, marine or terrestrial wildlife and will inevitably result in litter.

We therefore ask the House to

1. Nationally prohibit the release of any number of balloons, and
2. Ban the sale of helium used to inflate balloons in Australia.

From 1270 citizens (Petition No. EN1175)
Climate Change

Help Australia respond to Climate Change and Natural Disaster risk

Climate change is contributing to increasingly catastrophic extreme weather events putting lives, properties and livelihoods at greater risk, and overwhelming our emergency services. These events not only devastate communities but also have serious economic impacts to many industries including agriculture and tourism and numerous flow on effects such as physical and mental health impacts, infrastructure rebuild costs and increased insurance premiums.

We therefore ask the House to do all it can to help Australia respond to climate change and natural disaster risk as a high priority and matter of National significance. This should include consulting with groups such as "Emergency Leaders for Climate Change" to help come up with solutions to address these risks.

From 19 citizens (Petition No. EN1177)

Economy

Increase salaries 5% to stimulate economy by halving superannuation levy

The actions of Government and the Reserve Bank have failed to stimulate the economy. People need a 4.5% pay increase now to protect jobs, reduce financial stress and increase economic confidence. It is urgent that we save the critical Christmas spending period to avoid a major economic shock early next year.

By providing a 4.5% salary increase through halving the 9% superannuation levy we will provide a $45bn stimulus to the economy at no cost to Government or business. The average worker will receive a $3,600 pay increase to offset years of salary stagnation.

For those who argue we should not touch pension savings. A global economic shock could wipe trillions from superannuation savings that would take decades to recover.

Additionally, the Government would increase tax receipts by $13bn to reduce Government debt critical in these conditions.

We therefore ask the House to urgently act to save jobs and save the critical Christmas period by immediately legislating that half of the forced superannuation savings are immediately paid to workers as salary until the economy is stabilised.

Businesses are required to pay this out in salary unless a work specifically asks for it to be put back into super.

From 7 citizens (Petition No. EN1179)

Climate Change

Joint Parliamentary Sitting to Discuss the Climate and Bushfire Emergency

Australia is facing an unprecedented bushfire emergency that is itself only a symptom of the wider global climate emergency. The warnings of scientists, First Nations knowledge holders and specialists such as the former chiefs of fires and emergency services have been ignored. There is an urgent need for our leaders to listen to these experts in a respectful, considered way so that they can craft a bipartisan national response to both the bushfire emergency and the wider climate emergency.

We therefore ask the House to convene an emergency joint 2-day siting of the House, the Senate and the State Premiers and Chief Ministers before the Christmas adjournment to both listen to the former chiefs of fire services, scientists and First Nations fire and land management knowledge holders and craft a national emergency response to both the bushfires and the wider climate emergency.

From 1078 citizens (Petition No. EN1180)

Environment

Ban bags for fresh produce

Around 400 million tonnes of plastic are produced per year. Production is expected to quadruple by 2050. By that date there is likely to be more plastic in the ocean than fish. Plastic is already in our drinking water, the air we breathe and the soil we grow our food in. On average, we are now eating five grams of plastic per week.

There are many ways to reduce plastic, but the easiest place to start is to stop bagging fresh produce.

Australian customers have been trained to think they should use a plastic bag when buying fresh produce. People have become scared of buying 'nude food.' Free plastic produce bags are an excessive and wasteful use of plastic.

Recycling plastic or switching to other materials like paper or biodegradable plastic creates other problems and is not the answer. We need to reduce plastic-use in the first place.

We therefore ask the House to legislate that it be illegal for businesses to supply, and for customers to use free plastic produce bags for things like bananas, pineapples, whole watermelon, whole rockmelon, whole honeydew and whole pumpkin. The ban could extend to avocados, sweet potato, oranges, tomatoes and other fruit with robust skin.

We request:
1. It be illegal to have free plastic bags near large thick-skinned produce.
2. Visible signs are used to ask customers to purchase the produce without plastic.
3. Fruit and vegetables with robust skins be made available with no packaging at all (not pre-packed in plastic).

From 14025 citizens (Petition No. EN1181)
**Foreign Investment**

Forbid the sales of Bellamy and assets to foreigners

Treasurer, Josh Frydenberg, gave the green light for the sale of Bellamy to go ahead is ignoring the interest of Australians. Australian assets include our dairy industry, farmland, freehold land, etc will be under the control of the CCP as Mengniu is a state owned enterprise. Their people would have the priority to access our assets over Australians. There are reports that Australian mums struggled to find baby formula. This sale creates further shortage of formula by the enormous demand from China. It is threatening the lives of babies, especially those who can only drink this formula. Also, there are reported incidents with the products of Mengniu since the Chinese milk scandal in 2008. One of them is the incident reported by Reuters on 27 Dec 2011 titled 'China Mengniu says destroys tainted milk'. It is obviously destroying the reputation of Australian dairy industry in the long run if the sale goes ahead.

We therefore ask the House to withdraw approval of sales. Look after Australians before the foreigners. Stop selling our assets including core industries, farmland, freehold land to foreigners.

From 174 citizens (Petition No. EN1182)

**Environment**

Subsidise Bulk food purchases to reduce plastic waste

Plastic packaging for food products is destroying our planet. There is strong evidence that the plastic ends up in our oceans. Many Australians would prefer to buy non packaged foods and bulk food stores are currently unaffordable. There appears to be limited government interest in eradicating plastic. The ban the plastic bag idea was laughable with thicker non single use bags being introduced which pollute our environment more than single use bags.

Australians should have access to affordable foods that are not packaged in plastic. Australians should not have to pay exorbitant prices for something that should be the right of all environmentally conscious citizens.

We therefore ask the House to manage plastic waste by introducing laws that remove plastic packaging from supermarket shelves and to subsidise the purchase of products from bulk food stores so that non plastic options are available to all Australians, not just the wealthy. One small change could significantly reduce our plastic footprint and eliminate harmful plastics that end up in our waterways.

From 37 citizens (Petition No. EN1183)

**Nuclear Energy**

Reserve Australia's ban on Nuclear Energy

Australia urgently needs an Energy and Climate policy to provide security for our economy and standard of living.

Nuclear Power is a reliable source of low emission power. Australia has the largest reserve of Uranium Ore. These factors mean Australia has energy independence, reduces our emissions, and provides security to our economy and standard of living.

We therefore ask the House to lift the ban on nuclear energy, establish a nuclear regulatory framework, and begin construction on nuclear power stations within the next 5 years.

From 55 citizens (Petition No. EN1184)

**Minister for Men**

Installation of a Minister For Men.(over due)

The Australia government have ministers who are representatives of individual groups like minister for women. but there is no minister for Men to installed to address the matters of Men and boys.

In recent events there has been voiced concerns of inequality between men and women and the serious concerns of suicide of men and boys.

In recent media events our fire fighters were accused of likely to commit domestic violence during times of stress while fighting fires.

These type attacks are happening far to often to men and boys in our society by the extremist.

Our boys need a voice also so they have programs for them in education and training that does not discriminate against any genders etc.

So it is time that a male minister for Men be appointed to bring about real equality and respect that should be between men and women and the extremist views are seen for what they are.

Men and Boys need a voice to protect them from inequality that has been pushed by extremist groups that have shown they have no regard for what they are doing to our families and our children.

First order will be equality in the legal system and programs to be put in place to end the carnage of the domestic violence and family courts which will save lives.

We therefore ask the House to Install a Minister for Men and Boys in the Federal Government.

Removal of extremist in the government.

From 99 citizens (Petition No. EN1185)
United Nations

UN control and foreign ownership of Australia
have a referendum on Australia withdrawing from the UN
Have a referendum on Australia withdrawing from the Paris agreement
Have a referendum on foreign ownership of Australian infrastructure, assets, and land
We therefore ask the House to implement a referendum for each of these at the same time on 1 form
requesting a simple yes or no vote, Which the Government must act on.
should Australia withdraw from the UN
Should Australia withdraw from the Paris agreement
Should limitations on foreign ownership be limited to under 100 acres and NO infrastructure or asset.

From 89 citizens (Petition No. EN1186)

Northern Territory

Give the Northern Territory Statehood

It is the belief of those signing this petition that the territory of the Northern Territory should be made into a state with all the rights and privileges of all others.

The Council of Australian Governments unanimously agreed with then Northern Territory Chief Minister Adam Giles that the territory should become its own state by 1 July 2018, this date has been passed.

It is an outright travesty that over 200,000 of our citizens are left without equal representation. We call that as a democratic and just nation that it is in our interest to enfranchise the citizens of our nation and raise them to the same democratic status as those living in other states.

We therefore ask the House to hold a vote on policy that would force the hand of the nation to move towards allowing the Northern Territory to become a state, and furthermore it is suggested that a cross government panel to be formed to assist and organise the long process towards statehood.

From 5 citizens (Petition No. EN1188)

Drought

Global city state and drought proof

the establishment of a global city state to be built in North west Victoria with a desalination pipe and high speed rail connecting from Melbourne, through Ballarat, Maryborough, bendigo to swan hill. Anyone anywhere in the world may enter and leave the city state at will but may not enter mainland Australia unless they are Australians. It would be administered by Australia and all future asylum seekers will go only to this city. This could be a global project as many countries need to solve migrant crisis. It would give Australia greater diplomatic standing and create jobs for generations as well as looking after the vulnerable.

It would also allow us to drought proof the state and eventually the country also securing food supply.

We therefore ask the House to debate the idea and ask the Australian public and the world would you like to take a different path, one of prosperity, good will and non protectionist ideals. If the public and world has the mood for it and asio and asis support it, I ask you start building

From 6 citizens (Petition No. EN1190)

Ralan Group

Victims of Ralan Group demand ASIC to investigate suspected fraud

On July 30, 2019, the Ralan Group, one of the largest apartment developers in Australia went into voluntary administration with Grant Thornton. They had debts around a half a billion dollars. $280 millions were missing from Ralan’s trust account.

This fraud is targeted at the Chinese community. over 90% of the victims are Chinese. More specifically, these victims speak limited English and many of them are near retirement. This has become a social issue, where many of these victims are suffering in silence.

We therefore ask the House to

We ask the government to intervene to ensure a thorough investigation so that thousands of Australian families will be protected from tragedies like the collapse of Ralan.

We urge the government to step in to support these victims and provide legal advice in Chinese.

We urge the government to investigate beyond the criminal offence of the individual, but also lending practices, governance and auditing bodies that allowed this Ponzi Scheme to operate in Australia from at least 2014. We want to know if the financial institutions like Westpac, Wingate, and others involved with Ralan, if they are aware of these illegal practice.

We require recognition of 100% of our deposits and the right to purchase our apartments once construction is completed (estimated for June 2020) as per the original contracts.
At the same time, we call on the government to improve the investment environment and related regulations to strengthen investment management.

Let Australia be a truly open, fair and just country.

From 621 citizens (Petition No. EN1196)

**Parliamentary Representation**

S44 referral to the High Court

Voters can only as the Court of Disputed returns to examine the eligibility of MPs in the electorate the voter voted in. To examine an MP's eligibility out of the voters electorate a petition to parliament is the only option. That option has been sullied recently. The Attorney General Mr Porter has refused several recent petitions mentioning S44 because of the Crown Solicitor's advice, even when that advice says the High Court might conclude that there is or may be a conflict.

The house can not determine if an MP has or hasn't breached the constitution, that can only be determined by the High Court. The Commonwealth Solicitor has been proven wrong about S44 on many occasions, most famously with the then Deputy Prime Minister Mr Joyce.

Recently the Crown Solicitor noted they are not given much factual information by the MP who obviously wants to ensure they stay in Parliament unhindered. The High Court can and does demand much more information and can and does provide a binding judicial decision.

We therefore ask the House to re-examine all petitions relating to breaches of S44 and put those cases to the High Court for determination.

From 7 citizens (Petition No. EN1198)

**Minister for Home Affairs**

refer Mr Dutton to the High Court and Federal Police

In February 2019 Mr Dutton declared he was a beneficiary of RHT family trust in his Register of Members Interests. At the same time the ABN data base lists two companies as being the responsibility of RHT family trust, CAMELIA AVENUE CHILDCARE CENTRE and BALD HILLS CHILDCARE CENTRE. The Department of Finance list both of these companies as recipients of Commonwealth funding for many years. After the election Mr Dutton declared he had renounced his family trust and was not a beneficiary. Mr Dutton's wife and children are beneficiaries of the trust and the Commonwealth money given to that trust and the two child care centres. Because his family still benefit that is an indirect pecuniary interest in that trust and a breach of S44 of our constitution.

The house can not determine if an MP has or hasn't breached the constitution, that can only be determined by the High Court. Recently the Crown Solicitor said of Mr Dutton "I consider there to be some risk ... that the High Court might conclude that there is a conflict between Mr Dutton's duty as a parliamentarian and his personal interests" The Crown Solicitor noted they are not given much factual information by the MP. The High Court can and does demand much more information and can and does provide a binding judicial decision.

Mr Porter refused s44 petitions based on that Crown Solicitor's advice.

We therefore ask the House to refer Mr Dutton to the High Court and AFP for determination.

From 28 citizens (Petition No. EN1199)

**Energy**

Legislate that Australian electricity generation is zero emissions by 2030

Currently in Australia, the cost of electricity production by renewables is lower than from coal and gas (Australian governments GenCost2018 report produced by the CSIRO and AEMO). Government actions that create financial certainty in the electricity energy market would improve investor confidence, resulting in decreased electricity costs for the public, particularly for households who cannot utilize solar for their homes (pensioners, renters, low socioeconomic households).

Three states and territories in Australia have proven that renewables can be cost-effectively used in the grid for electricity generation (ACT-100%, SA- 51%, TAS- 93%). The current scientific consensus on climate change (IPCC reports over the past 2 years, CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology reports) indicates that the current agreed emissions reduction targets of the Paris agreement will be inadequate to prevent a 1.5C temperature rise. Australia is forecasted to be one of the most severely impacted countries by climate change. Electricity generation is currently the largest source of Australian greenhouse gas emissions and the area where we can cost-effectively make the greatest difference in the next decade.

We therefore ask the House to legislate that carbon dioxide and methane emissions associated with electricity generation must decrease by a minimum of 10% per year from 2019 levels with the aim to reach net-zero by 2030. We also propose that carbon offset techniques are only used in the short term, with the aim that by 2030 a maximum of 10% of total electricity generation requires emissions offset.

From 504 citizens (Petition No. EN1201)
Asylum Seekers

We, certain citizens of Australia, draw the Parliament's attention to the following:

1. There are still 484 people held in PNG and Nauru in limbo for almost seven years unable to move on with their lives in an acceptable manner. (The Australian 26 Nov 2019).
2. As of 30 Jun 2019, 43,044 people were on some form of Bridging Visa Class E in the Australian community and over 2,478 in some form of detention -community or otherwise. This includes 288 children.

We therefore ask the House to amend the Migration Act 1958 to allow for the following:

1. An Amnesty for all asylum seekers still left in PNG and Nauru and to bring them to Australia. Part of this should be to accept the New Zealand deal and provide those who do not wish to stay here with every assistance to find a safe country. What we are asking is for permanent protection visas for all. We request this amnesty to be in place by 30 June 2020.
2. End mandatory detention by the 30 June 2020.
3. Enforce a time limit of twelve months on the processing of protection visa applications and clear the backlog by 30 June 2020.
4. Working rights, health care and social security for all asylum seekers and refugees on Bridging Visas Class E.

From 39 citizens (Petition No. EN1202)

Banking and Financial Services

Investigate banks

This is a federal matter that needs investigation. People who pay rent can afford to buy homes. The payments are same or close to it. The deposit they ask for puts buying a home out of reach of low income earners even with first home buyers help. Example > buy a farm of 130 acres cost 300,000 dollars bank wants 110,000 deposit that is way to much. Low income earners buy a home will not have that sort of money for deposit. Every aussie dream is to own a home but its getting out of reach. Charging $3 to use a atm to withdraw of your own money is out right wrong.

We therefore ask the House to investigate banks on there lending policies as it borders discrimination and borders unethical practices.

From 15 citizens (Petition No. EN1204)

Tourism

Funding for nature tourism experiences near Lithgow, NSW citizens

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES This petition of the undersigned Australian citizens calls on the House to assist with funding the transition of unproductive but scenic state forests beside Lithgow to a state conservation area reserve so as to strengthen Lithgow’s tourism economy.

We the undersigned therefore call on the House to provide funds for the proper management and development of nature tourism experiences near Lithgow.

From 181 citizens (Petition No. PN0453)

Banking and Financial Services

Stop bail-in of bank deposits citizens

This petition of the Citizens Electoral Council draws to the attention of the House that: Australia and the world are facing a new financial crisis, with panicked financial authorities slashing interest rates and trying to stimulate the housing market to save the banks, which are in grave danger from their excessive mortgage lending and reckless and fraudulent lending standards; Global financial authorities expect Australia to prop up failing banks through "bail-in"-converting bonds and deposits into shares or writing them off-which will enormously damage individual savers, businesses, charities, superannuation funds and all other enterprises which lose their funds; Legal analysis of the crisis resolution powers legislated secretly for APRA in February 2018 has confirmed they could be used to bail in bank deposits; The government denies deposits can be bailed in, but admits the law is from the Financial Stability Board (FSB), which applies bail-in to bank depositors; The FSB and International Monetary Fund are directing Australia to implement stronger bail-in laws like those in New Zealand, the EU and the USA, which all apply to deposits;

To stop this planned theft, we therefore ask the House to: 1. amend the 2018 law to explicitly exclude deposits; 2. block the stronger bail-in legislation the government is planning; 3. rescind APRA’s crisis resolution powers and pass instead the Separation of Banks Bill 2019 to protect deposits from speculation.

From 2173 citizens (Petition No. PN0456)

Banking and Financial Services

Australian Financial crisis and the need for a Glass-Steagall Act and a National Bank citizens

This petition of the Citizens Electoral Council draws to the attention of the House that the world is plunging into a new, more severe financial crisis than that of 2008. Continued speculation by Too-Big-To- Fail banks has driven corporate,
household and mortgage debt to record highs in many countries, including Australia. The global bubble in toxic derivatives is now an estimated US$1,200 trillion-$36 trillion in Australia. When interest rates rise, there will be mass corporate defaults, as the IMF has warned, and mortgage failures. The popping of Australia’s property bubble will devastate the Big Four banks; mortgages comprise more than 60% of their lending, the highest rate in the world. This risk has built up under the supervision of APRA (Australian Prudential Regulation Authority), which is funded by the banks and protects their predatory practices and even outright criminality, including drug- and terrorism-related money laundering.

We therefore ask the House to immediately legislate to disband APRA, and replace it with: 1) strict separation of commercial banking from investment banking and all other financial services, modelled on the USA’s successful Glass-Steagall Act 1933, to protect deposits and core banking services; 2) a publicly owned and controlled national bank to regulate the private banks, and extend credit for public investment in essential infrastructure and productive industries, as the original Commonwealth Bank did with great success under the wartime Curtin-Chifley governments.

From 13187 citizens (Petition No. PN0457)

**Newstart Allowance**

Request to raise Newstart by at least $75 per week citizens (Petition No.)

This petition draws to the attention of the House: The current rate of $40 per day for Newstart is too low to give people the support they need to survive and maintain a basic quality of life. Instead of supporting people, the current Newstart rate forces many people into a cycle of deprivation, social isolation and humiliation. Instead of allowing people to get on their feet and seek work, it entrenches poverty and puts up barriers to seeking work. The Port Phillip Community Group works with disadvantage community members, providing Information, Referral & Support, Emergency Relief, Education Programs, Financial Counselling, Social Inclusion Programs, Recreational Programs, Advocacy and Community Development Projects. Every day we provide food vouchers, food parcels, toiletries, phone cards, transport vouchers, education assistance, child and infant goods, pharmacy vouchers, utility vouchers, winter clothing and other crisis relief to people on Newstart Payments. A working welfare system would ensure that people in crisis are able to afford their most basic needs with dignity, and not have to rely on community organisations such as ours to survive.

We therefore ask the House of Representatives to raise the rate of Newstart and similar Centrelink payments by at least $75 per week as a matter of urgency.

From 74 citizens (Petition No. PN0458)

**Climate Change**

Action on Climate Crisis citizens

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House: We are in the grips of a massive climate crisis right now. Vast tracts of QLD and NSW are in the grips of tragic and deadly bushfires, of a severity we've never seen before. It is only the beginning of Spring and our Emergency Services are bracing us to prepare for worse to come. Droughts are pushing farmers to the brink. Animals are disappearing because water is running out. And if that was not scary enough, this is predicted to get a lot worse if we don't act now. The UN predicts that at just 1.5 degrees of warming 200 million people will be displaced by rising sea levels - that's four times the current volume of refugees, globally. At 2 degrees, 400 million people will face water shortages. Megacities in equatorial countries like India will become unlivable hot and many will die. The primary cause of all this is the mining and burning of coal, oil and gas.

We therefore ask the House to: Treat the climate crisis as the crisis it is and: 1. Say no to any new coal, oil and gas projects, 2. Ensure Australia is powered with 100% renewable energy by no later than 2030, 3. Do all of this whilst funding a just transition and jobs for fossil workers and their communities so that no one is left behind.

From 1015 citizens (Petition No. PN0459)

**Vaccination**

Vaccination - No jab no pay no jab no play legislation citizens

We, the citizens of Australia, will not accept government health policies which are coercive or discriminatory. • We believe in our right to bodily integrity. All medical decisions carry risk and so must be made freely, without fear of financial penalty, discrimination or institutional bullying. The Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC) states this clearly in their guidelines. • The Swedish Government recently legislated the position of parental choice on childhood vaccines. This was based on serious health risks of vaccines and the known influence that the pharmaceutical industry has on politicians. • The No Jab No Pay and Play policies are putting lives at risk. We will not allow politicians to decide how many vaccines are injected into our bodies or the bodies of our children - that is our right- not theirs! In Australia, the schedule has expanded from 7 vaccines for children in 1990 to 45+ injections in 2017.

We request the following immediate actions by the Federal Government House of Representatives: - The termination of all No Jab No Pay and No Jab No Play legislation and proposed legislations. - Establishment of legislation requiring an INDEPENDENT Vaccine Safety Commission be set up by the Federal Government. - Establishment of legislation requiring that ALL Australian media owners, and their Board members, declare their financial conflicts of interest, particularly pharmaceutical, on all their websites and in all their publications.

From 571 citizens (Petition No. PN0460)
Kashmir

Illegal & Unilateral Annexation of Indian Occupied Kashmir by Indian Government citizens

With respect to a peaceful protest at Kings George Square in Brisbane on 21st of September 2019 to show solidarity with Kashmiris after the recent illegal annexation of the Indian Occupied Kashmir by the current Indian Government, this petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House. The Australian and South East Asian community strongly condemns this unconstitutional step taken by the Indian Government against the UN resolution and would like to draw the attention of Australian Government towards this important matter. Please refer attached file for signatures of all petitioners.

We request the House to play its role by diplomatically addressing this issue at the right forums to ensure that the right of self determination is given to the people of Kashmir as per the UN resolutions and the human rights violations the current siege post illegal annexation of IOK are properly scanned and investigated.

From 1 citizen (Petition No. PN0461)

PETITIONS

Responses

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (16:40): I present the following ministerial responses to petitions previously presented to the House:

Mental Health

Dear Mr O’Brien

I refer to your letter concerning Petition EN0887 in relation to specialist mental health services in rural Australia and the development of a national rural mental health strategy. I regret the delay in responding.

I am sorry to hear of the difficulties the petitioner has experienced following the loss of their nephew through mental illness. I acknowledge the significant personal and psychological impact mental illness has on those affected and the challenges they and their families and carers face in accessing appropriate treatment and support. It is important people with mental illness receive the appropriate level of care when and where they need it.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting the mental health needs of people living in regional, rural and remote communities and addressing service access and delivery issues.

The Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry Report (Report) into Accessibility and quality of mental health services in rural and remote Australia, tabled on 4 December 2018, examined the impact of mental health disorders on people living in rural and remote areas. In April 2019, the Government tabled a response to the Report supporting 15 of the 18 recommendations made by the Committee. This included the development of a national rural and remote mental health strategy which seeks to address the low rates of access to mental health services and workforce shortage in rural and remote communities.

To ensure an integrated and coordinated approach to mental health and suicide prevention services, all governments have agreed through the Fifth National Mental Health Plan to work with Primary Health Networks and Local Hospital Networks to undertake regional planning to support a more effective person-centred service system. The Government is developing a National Mental Health Workforce Strategy to examine options to attract, train and retain mental health workers to support the provision of mental health services, especially in rural and remote areas. In addition, the Government has commissioned the National Mental Health Commission to develop a National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and a Vision 2030 strategy for mental health and suicide prevention.

On 8 July 2019, the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, appointed Ms Christine Morgan as his National Suicide Prevention Advisor. Ms Morgan will work across Government and the community to develop options to improve the way our frontline services, community-based organisations and programs support those at risk or in crisis. Ms Morgan's initial advice is due to me later this year.

Given the importance of ensuring a whole-of-government approach and the commitment of all governments, the needs of rural and remote communities will be considered as part of these strategies.

To support rural and remote communities, the Government is providing funding of $1.48 billion over three years from 2019-20 to the 31 Primary Health Networks (PHNs) to plan and commission mental health and suicide prevention services at a regional level. This enables flexibility to ensure services are targeted to meet local needs to improve outcomes for those with, or at risk of, mental illness and/or suicide, in partnership with local service providers. PHNs address gaps in primary mental health services within each of their boundaries and help identify opportunities for collaboration across PHN regions in commissioning services. In response to crises that impact on rural and regional communities, such as drought or bushfire, PHNs have the capacity to work with stakeholders to identify and commission regionally appropriate and innovative local responses.

The Government also funds a range of national initiatives to improve access to mental health and suicide prevention services for people living in regional, rural and remote areas through support for frontline service delivery and improving access to these services. This includes:

- $111 million in the 2019-20 Budget measure, Prioritising Mental Health – national headspace network, for 30 new headspace services to be established by 2021. Twenty of these new services will be located in regional, rural and remote...
areas of Australia. There are currently 111 headspace services operating nationally with 54 located across regional Australia and five new headspace services being established in regional Australia during 2019.

- $29.4 million (from 2018-19) for mental health support initiatives to help farmers and communities deal with the anxiety, stress and uncertainty of drought conditions through the Empowering Our Communities initiative; improving access to psychological services via telehealth and building awareness of young people living in rural and remote communities about the availability of services.

The Government is also providing funding of $4.7 million over two years from 2018-19 for Head to Health available at: www.headtohealth.gov.au, the Government's digital gateway which helps people more easily access information, advice, and free or low-cost phone and online mental health services and treatment options.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Health, Mr Hunt (Petition No. EN0887)

Video Games Industry

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your letter dated 9 September regarding petition EN0930 from Mr Thomas Wyndam raising concerns about chanced-based micro-transactions in computer games, commonly known as 'loot boxes'. I acknowledge Mr Wyndard's concern about the impact of loot boxes in games and his interest in the Morrison Government taking reasonable steps to prevent harm to children and vulnerable people.

Senate inquiry into the harms of loot boxes, consumer protections and regulation

On 28 June 2018, the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee commenced an inquiry into loot boxes in games. The inquiry examined the extent to which loot boxes may be harmful and the adequacy of existing consumer protections and regulatory frameworks. The Committee presented its final report on 27 November 2018 and the Government responded to the recommendations of the report on 6 March 2019. The Committee's report, submissions, and the Government's response to the inquiry is available on the Australian Parliament House website at: www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Gaming-micro-transactions

Games classification

It is important that the content of computer games is classified appropriately. This helps Australians to make informed choices about what games they or their children watch and play.

The National Classification Scheme requires that computer games are classified before they are sold or published in Australia. Computer games are classified by the Classification Board (the Board) or the International Age Rating Coalition (IARC) tool (for online and mobile games in participating storefronts including the Google Play, Microsoft and Nintendo stores). Content in computer games is classified according to standards in the National Classification Code and the Guidelines for the Classification of Computer Games (the Guidelines).

Computer games are assigned a classification rating (e.g. G, PG) and include consumer advice (e.g. violence, sexual references). Consumer advice can relate to the six classifiable elements (themes, violence, sex, language, drug use and nudity) and can also include information about content in a game such as online interactivity and/or in-game purchases. In addition, many online app and game storefronts (e.g. Apple App store, Google Play store) advise at the point of sale if a game includes in-game purchases. More information, including the Board's decisions, can be found on the Australian classification website, www.classification.gov.au.

On 28 June 2019, the Council of Attorneys-General agreed that the Australian Government will coordinate a public consultation process to review the Guidelines. It is important that the Guidelines are reviewed, and updated if needed, to reflect contemporary community values. The review will be coordinated by my Department in due course and I encourage Mr Wyndam to check the Department's website for information on the submission process and to consider making a submission.

Parents and carers

It is important that parents and carers are aware of parental control tools that are available on most devices including computers, tablets, smartphones and gaming consoles. These tools help parents monitor and limit what children do online including allowing parents to control financial purchases made by their children. Additionally, these tools allow parents to set limits on the length of time that children spend on particular sites including games and social media. Tool settings can be changed to reflect a child's age and skills.

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner offers information and advice to parents regarding online gaming and gambling risks for children. Further information, including information on parental controls, can be found at www.esafety.gov.au.

Interactive Gambling Act 2001

The Interactive Gambling Act 2001 (the IGA) makes it an offence to provide or advertise prohibited and unlicensed regulated interactive gambling services to customers in Australia. Prohibited services include online casino-style gaming services of chance or mixed skill and chance, such as online poker and slot machines, which are played for money or anything else of value.
Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your letter of 9 September 2019 about petition (EN0975) regarding access to Australian Standards for the general public and business owners.

Australian Standards are voluntary unless referenced in legislation. It is estimated that one-third of some 5400 Australian Standards are referenced in legislation, with the majority of these references found in state and territory regulation.

Like most developed economies, the provision of standards in Australia is based on a user pays model which supports the development, maintenance and distribution of current and future standards. Australian Standards are developed by Standards Australia, a non-government, not-for-profit body. There is a cost to the development of standards. Industry representatives, government officials and others volunteer their time to the standards development process, which is facilitated by Standards Australia.

The publication and pricing of these Standards has until recently, been governed by a Publishing and Licensing Agreement (PLA) that Standards Australia established with content aggregator SA1 Global.

While the Australian Government cannot direct Standards Australia to make changes to its commercial distribution arrangements, it has made known to the organisation that it expects standards delivery to be based on principles of non-exclusive distribution, flexible digital access and competitive pricing. As a result, Standards Australia committed to these principles in its Memorandum of Understanding with Government when it was updated in November 2018. Since then, Standards Australia been exploring a range of options to improve access to users.

On 7 February 2019, Standards Australia announced it was moving beyond the exclusive distribution arrangements it has had with SA1 Global since 2003. Techstreet has since been announced as a new service provider. The Australian Government expects that these changes will lead to improvements in customer service, new digital delivery channels and increased competition, which should lead to lower costs to access Australian Standards.

Through the Regulatory Impact Analysis process, Commonwealth regulators are also encouraged to consider making those standards referenced in legislation accessible to the public if reasonably possible to do so. Individual regulators can be contacted in this regard. The new distribution arrangements should provide greater opportunities to make these standards more accessible.

During June and July 2019, Standards Australia further engaged in a two month period of consultations with government and key stakeholders, seeking their input on the future of its distribution and licensing policy framework. My department participated in these consultations. Standards Australia's aim is to develop a new distribution model that will deliver improvements to the price, relevance and reach of its content, allowing more choice in how content is accessed while supporting its public benefit role in the economy. The framework is likely to be announced in early 2020 and until then my department continues to consult closely with Standards Australia on ways of improving access.

As you may be aware, access to standards free of charge through the national, state and territory libraries was previously available for non-commercial users. It has unfortunately been suspended due to unauthorised access and distribution of content. My department has received advice from Standards Australia that they are working towards restoring reading room access to standards in libraries for non-commercial use as soon as possible. In the meantime, Standards Australia will consider providing standards to users where there is a legitimate non-commercial need on an individual basis.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, Mr Fletcher (Petition No. EN0930)

Trade: Australian Standards

The IGA does not capture computer games as they are considered a game of skill, though there may be some chance element in the game. In general, loot boxes and similar services are not considered interactive gambling services under the IGA. The IGA, however, does capture third party websites that allow players to gamble on virtual items on casino-style games where the virtual items can be exchanged for money or anything else of value. Such operators would be subject to the increased enforcement measures that were introduced as part of the Interactive Gambling Amendment Act 2017 that came into effect on 13 September 2017.

Industry self-regulation

Many online app and game storefronts (e.g. Apple App store, Google Play store) advise at the point of sale if a game includes in-game purchases.

The Government has continued to monitor industry developments around loot boxes. Major industry players have recently announced changes to policies concerning games featuring loot boxes. In May 2019, the Google Play store announced changes to their policies where games apps are now required to disclose the odds of receiving items in loot boxes. The Apple App store has required apps to disclose the odds of receiving different types of items since December 2017. Both of these storefronts advise at the point of sale if a game includes in-game purchases.

In August 2019, the major game console makers, Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo, committed to policies that will require paid loot boxes in games developed for their platforms to disclose information on the relative probability of obtaining randomised virtual items.

Thank you again for bringing Mr Wyndham's petition to my attention. I hope the information in this letter is of some assistance.

Yours sincerely

Monday, 10 February 2020
Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Industry, Science and Technology, Mrs Andrews (Petition No. EN0975)

Organ and Tissue Donation

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 October 2019 to the Minister for Health, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, concerning petition number EN1021, which was presented in the House of Representatives on 14 October 2019 concerning Australia's opt-in system for organ and tissue donor registration. Your correspondence has been referred to me as the Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government with portfolio responsibility for this matter.

The Australian Government has a strong commitment to increasing the rates of organ donation for transplantation in Australia. In 2009, in collaboration with the state and territory governments, a national reform program was established. This program is coordinated by a national agency, the Organ and Tissue Authority (OTA). The OTA funds and works with the DonateLife Agencies in each state and territory and a network of clinical donation specialists across Australia.

The legal framework for consent to donation in Australia is based on an opt-in or informed consent model where individuals can register to be an organ and/or tissue donor on the Australian Organ Donor Register (AODR). This is an ethical and transparent approach, which balances the need for organ and tissue donors with the right of Australians to make an informed choice.

The current model has been informed by research, evidence and discussions with state and territory governments that have responsibility for the legislative framework for organ and tissue donation and transplantation through their respective Human Tissue Acts.

In Australia, the family is always asked to agree before donation for transplantation can proceed. Families almost always consent if they know their family member wanted to be a donor, which is the value of having a system that encourages donor registration and family discussion. In 2018, the family upheld a registered consent decision in 93 per cent of cases (249/268). The most common reason for families saying ‘no’ is them not knowing if their family member wanted to be a donor.

Opt-out or presumed consent is an alternative consent model where an adult is presumed by law to have consented to donation and the onus is on the adult to expressly object to donation in the event of their death. Some people believe the law in Australia should be changed to an opt-out system on the assumption this will increase the number of people becoming organ donors. In reality, there is little difference between models. In the majority of countries with opt-out systems, families are still consulted and donation will not proceed if the family objects.

Experience in other countries, such as Spain, suggests opt-out legislation is not necessarily the reason for increased donation rates. Research shows that the best results are achieved through a nationally coordinated system and best practice in hospitals.

This is the approach taken in Australia since 2009 based on international best practice adapted to the Australian environment. This approach has resulted in a significant increase in donation and transplantation outcomes in Australia. The number of deceased organ donors has more than doubled (554 donors in 2018) and the number of Australians receiving an organ transplant has almost doubled (1544 recipients in 2018).

It is also important to note that very few people die in the circumstances where organ donation is possible, which includes the need to die in a hospital. In Australia, only around 2 per cent of people who die in hospital are able to become organ donors. The potential donor pool was around 1200 people in 2018.

Worldwide, organ supply has not met demand. In Australia, there are currently around 1400 Australians on organ transplant waiting lists and a further 11,000 people receiving renal dialysis, many of whom could benefit from a kidney transplant. Kidneys are the most commonly transplanted organ and the length of time a patient has been on dialysis plays a significant part in determining allocation priority. At the end of 2017, the median waiting time for a kidney transplant was 2.2 years — this is down from 2.6 years in 2013.

The Government is continuing to monitor the trends internationally on both opt-in and opt-out countries to ensure the program we have in Australia is achieving our goal of improving access to transplantation.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to respond to the petition and put the Government's position on the issue of consent for donation. I trust this information will be of assistance to you and the Committee.

Thank you for raising this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government, Mr Coulton (Petition No. EN1021)

Parents

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your correspondence, dated 14 October 2019, referring Petition number EN1035, seeking a royal commission to investigate the plight of boys in the family law system.
The petition outlines concerns for the welfare of boys and men involved in family law matters and asks for further investigation of the family law system. The petition mentions the treatment of children, particularly sons, and fathers in the family law system, including in the context of claims of family violence arising during separation.

As you are aware, the Morrison Government is committed to ongoing improvements to the family law, courts and legal assistance systems to ensure that they help families separate in a safe, child-centred, accessible, and timely way.

That is why the Government announced the establishment of a Joint Select Committee to inquire into the family law system to be chaired by the Hon Kevin Andrews MP. As a member of the committee, you will be able to contribute your ideas about the issues facing the family law system to the important work of the Inquiry.

The Government has initiated this wide-ranging parliamentary Inquiry into the family law system because this is a serious issue. This Inquiry will provide an important opportunity for parliamentarians, including yourself, to hear from those Australians across the country who have been through the system and can share their story and experience.

For those going through the family law system it's important that it works as best as it can. Family and relationship breakdowns are often difficult experiences for all involved and they warrant a high level of attention.

The Terms of Reference for the Inquiry are broad, and will allow for the examination of a range of matters that have a real and practical impact on Australian families.

The Inquiry will provide for a careful examination of the financial costs to families involved in family law proceedings, and options to ensure that costs, including legal fees, are proportionate to the issues in dispute. The Inquiry will also allow an examination of the interaction of the family law system with the child support system, which is a complex area.

It is an opportunity to further consider how to ensure the family law system keeps children and families safe from violence and abuse. The Inquiry will look at how the family law system, state and territory child protection systems and family and domestic violence jurisdictions can communicate better, given the absolute importance of this issue for keeping children and families safe. The Inquiry will also provide an opportunity to look at the way domestic violence orders are considered in family law proceedings, which is an issue frequently raised, noting the importance of ensuring family members including children, are not placed at risk of further violence.

The Government is committed to ongoing improvements to the family law, courts and legal assistance systems to ensure that they help families separate, and will build on significant action the Government has already taken.

In the meantime, the Government will continue to progress structural reforms to the federal family law courts. The amalgamation of the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia will address the unnecessary costs and delay for thousands of Australian families that arise from a split federal family court system. They will allow the federal family courts to hear more cases and reduce the backlog of matters.

The Government is also carefully considering the recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission review of the family law system, which are largely focused on the legislation governing family law.

You may also be interested to know that the Family Law Act 1975 was amended in 2012 to confirm that decision-makers and courts may refer to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in interpreting Part VII of the Family Law Act, which relates to children. One of the main principles on which the Convention is based is the obligation to have regard to the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in decision-making. Part VII of the Family Law Act is based on this same principle and focuses on the rights of children and the responsibilities that each parent has towards their children, rather than on parental rights. When a court is making parenting orders, the best interests of the child is the most important consideration.

There are a range of additional considerations which the court may have regard to in determining what is in the child's best interests. The court may take account of the nature of the relationship of the child with each parent and the likely effect of any changes in the child's circumstances, including the likely effect on the child of any separation from a parent. The court may also consider any fact or circumstance that it thinks is relevant to its consideration of the best interests of the child when making or enforcing parenting orders.

In relation to the concerns raised about the emotional impact on parties of family law proceedings, the Government funds a variety of agencies and services to help separating or separated couples manage issues that may arise following family breakdown. Information and support to manage this impact may be accessed from a range of support services, including:

- Mensline Australia (1300 789 978 or www.mensline.org.au), a national telephone and online support, information and referral service available to men, partners and families who are interested in learning more about how to support the men in their life
- Lifeline on 13 11 14 or at their website www.lifeline.org.au
- Beyond Blue on 1300 22 46 36 or at their website www.beyondblue.org.au

Thank you again for forwarding this petition for my attention, from the Attorney-General, Mr Porter (Petition No. EN1035)

Indigenous Health

Dear Mr O'Brien
I refer to your letter of 21 October 2019 concerning Petition EN1047 to provide funding for the building of a South West Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS) Health Hub in Bunbury WA.

Ms Lesley Nelson, Chief Executive Officer, SWAMS wrote to my office regarding this matter on 15 August 2019. I have enclosed my response of 16 September 2019 for your information.

You may be interested to note SWAMS applied for funding for the Health Hub Project under the Indigenous Australians’ Health Programme (IAHP) - Major Capital Works program in 2018, for which total funding of $35 million was available. The application was unsuccessful. Providing $20 million for the Health Hub would have significantly limited funding available for other projects.

SWAMS may be eligible to apply for future funding opportunities for capital works under the IAHP which would usually be offered through competitive grant funding rounds. Grant opportunities are advertised on the Australian Government grants information portal "GrantConnect". SWAMS can register its interest at: www.grants.gov.au in order to access that information service and may wish to consider providing a revised funding proposal in future rounds.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet

Dear Lesley

Thank you for your email of 15 August 2019 concerning South West Aboriginal Medical Service's (SWAMS) proposed Health Hub 'A Place to Call Home'.

congratulate you on the growth of your organisation as outlined in your briefing paper, and acknowledge the contribution that the SWAMS has made to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Western Australia's South-West region.

My Department has advised me that the SWAMS applied for funding for the Health Hub Project under the Indigenous Australians' Health Programme (IAHP) - Major Capital Works program in 2018, for which total funding of $35 million was available. I understand the proposal submitted by the SWAMS was not successful due in large part to the significant quantum of funds requested. Providing $20 million for the Health Hub would have significantly limited funding available for other projects.

Funding for capital works under the IAHP is offered through competitive grant funding rounds, with opportunities advertised on the Australian Government grants information portal 'GrantConnect'. The portal provides a service letting applicants know about any new funding opportunities as and when they become available. The SWAMS can register its interest at: www.grants.gov.au in order to access that service and may wish to apply for funding for its revised proposal in future rounds.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Health, Mr Hunt (Petition No. EN1047)

Australia Post

Dear Chair

Thank you for your letter dated 9 September 2019 concerning Petition PN0415 requesting the reinstatement of a post office in Illawong/Alfords Point, NSW 2234. I am sorry it has taken me so long to respond.

Access to postal services are important for local communities and businesses. The Morrison Government is committed to seeing an Australia Post that is fit-for-purpose, fulfils its community service obligations, and provides high quality postal services that all Australians can rely on.

Since Australia Post is an independent Government Business Enterprise, both legally and financially separate from the Australian Government, it is responsible for its day to day operations, including decisions on its post office network. Australia Post has a responsibility to carefully balance the needs of local communities and its existing LPOs with sound commercial practices.

As the petition relates to an operational matter, I have sought advice from

Australia Post. I understand that the previous licensed post office (LPO) in Illawong closed in April 2017 due to insufficient earnings and high operating costs. At that time, the LPO and Australia Post could not find an alternative buyer for the business and Australia Post was also unsuccessful in identifying a suitable existing business which could offer postal services in the area.

Australia Post has reviewed the request, considering a number of factors such as the location and viability of other nearby post offices, changing population distributions, and the volume of business likely to be transacted at all nearby outlets if there were changes to the network.
Australia Post advises that it does not plan to establish a new post office in Illawong/Alfords Point at this time. It notes there are already two 1 POs within an approximate six kilometre radius of the area. Australia Post considers that another post office in the area could have the unintended consequence of negatively affecting the viability of these outlets.

In recognition of the request by Illawong/Alfords Point residents, some of whom are elderly, Australia Post is exploring the feasibility of installing a 24/7 parcel locker service and a postage vending machine to provide additional postal services to support less mobile individuals in the area.

Thank you for bringing the concerns of Illawong/Alfords Point communities to my attention. I hope the information in this letter is of some help.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, Mr Fletcher** (Petition No. PN0415)

**Marriage**

**Petitions EN0427 — Tax Paid by Religious Institutions**

Thank you for your letter of 5 August 2019, originally directed to the Treasurer, concerning tax paid by religious institutions - Petition number: EN0427. As the issue raised falls within my portfolio responsibilities as Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities and Electoral Matters, your letter was referred to me for reply.

The Australian Government provides a number of tax concessions to charities and not-for-profits (NFPs) with purposes ranging from advancing education and religion to operating a local sports club. The advancement of religion is accepted as a charitable purpose in the Charities Act 2013 and as such, religious organisations have access to tax concessions under the same process, and subject to similar conditions, requirements and safeguards, as all other charities. This is a longstanding feature of the Australian tax system and comparable international jurisdictions, including the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States and New Zealand.

The Australian-Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) advises that a charity can promote or oppose a change to any matter of law, policy or practice, as long as this advocacy furthers or aids a charitable purpose. However, a charity must not engage in, or promote, activities that are unlawful or contrary to public policy, and must not promote or oppose a political party or candidate for political office. The ACNC takes these matters seriously and has powers to investigate and disqualify an organisation from being a registered charity if it finds an organisation to be engaging in any of these disqualifying activities.

I trust this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

from the **Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities and Electoral Matters, Senator Seselja** (Petition No. EN0427)

**Economy**

Dear Mr O’Brien

Thank you for your letter of 5 August 2019, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, regarding foreign influence and asset ownership.

The Australian Government has taken decisive steps to counter interference in Australia's institutions. The Government established the office of the National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator to coordinate national efforts to respond to acts of foreign interference. The Coordinator, Mr Chris Teal, was appointed on 18 April 2018.

The Coordinator's role includes outreach to those sections of Australian society vulnerable to foreign interference. The Coordinator increases awareness of the threat and develops policies to mitigate vulnerabilities.

In 2018, the Government launched the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme. The scheme aims to increase visibility of the nature, level and extent of foreign influence on government and the political process. The Government also established the Critical Infrastructure Centre, within the Department of Home Affairs, to more effectively assess the risks to our most critical assets, including from foreign interference.

The Government is committed to protecting Australian innovation and sensitive technology. As Defence Minister, I announced the appointment of Dr Vivienne Thom AM to undertake a thorough review of the Defence Trade Controls Act, which regulates the supply of dual-use technology. The review recommended strengthening controls on technologies identified as necessary to Australia's national defence and security. The Government supported all nine recommendations made by the review and is now working with universities and industry to further strengthen the Act's controls. The petitioners identified security in the academic sector as a particular concern. The University Foreign Interference Taskforce, established in August 2019, is looking at this issue.

The petition proposes no foreign ownership of companies, land or assets and scrapping of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). The Government does not support these proposals. Australia's open trade and investment policy settings have supported 28 consecutive years of annual economic growth. This growth has underwritten the delivery of better health, education and job opportunities for Australians. With appropriate safeguards, foreign investment and FTAs both contribute strongly to Australia's national wealth.

The Government is committed to maintaining Australia as an attractive destination for foreign investment and, at the same time, ensuring that we protect our national interest. Firms with foreign direct investment support one in ten jobs in Australia.
and about 40 per cent of exports. The Government screens foreign investment applications above certain thresholds on a case-by-case basis to ensure they are not contrary to the national interest. If a proposal is found to be contrary to the national interest, it will not be approved or conditions will be applied to safeguard the national interest.

FTAs give our exporters a competitive edge in important overseas markets. Primary producers and farming organisations strongly support FTAs, given the vital role, reduced tariffs play in boosting the export income of rural Australia. Australia exports around two-thirds of its agricultural production, worth $47.1 billion in 2017-18. Since the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement entered into force in 2015, Australian mandarin exports to Japan, for example, have increased 141 per cent and frozen beef by 34 per cent.

The petition calls for state ownership of resource companies and sales of resources to fund the federal budget. The Government does need to maintain a tax base of sufficient breadth to fund government services expected by the community. Taxes and royalties from these sectors already represent a major source of income for the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments. However, the Government considers private companies are better placed than government entities to develop Australia’s natural resources.

While the Government will not increase taxes on large corporations, as suggested by the petitioners, I note that the reduction in tax rates for small and medium sized businesses on 1 July 2019 will see large corporations pay comparatively higher taxes. We have increased tax penalties for large entities, introduced a Multinational Anti-Avoidance Law and established a Tax Avoidance Taskforce in the ATO. We are actively engaged in international efforts to ensure digital firms pay their fair share of tax.

I assure the petitioners, who advocate for greater support for primary producers, that the Government is committed to Australian farmers. We recently introduced tough new penalties for farm invasion and harassment. We are working to improve agricultural research policy to ensure it delivers benefits to producers. The Future Drought Fund is assisting farmers and communities become more resilient to drought. We continue to defend our biosecurity, because Australia’s safe, food supply is a competitive advantage.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Payne (Petition No. EN0657)

Consumer Rights

Dear Mr O’Brien

Thank you for your correspondence of 5 August 2019 concerning petition EN0782. I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

The Australian Government considers that promoting competition is an important way to help ensure that the goods and services needed by the consumers are available at fair prices. The Competition and Consumer Act 2010 and the Australian Consumer Law prohibit a range of practices that can undermine competition and cause consumer harm, including cartels, anticompetitive mergers, and false advertising. Businesses are liable to penalties of $10 million per breach of these laws, and potentially more in certain circumstances.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is responsible for enforcing the law. In recent times, ACCC court action has resulted in substantial fines for breaches of the law. For example, in May 2018, Yazaki Corporation was fined a record $46 million for participating in a cartel relating to the supply of certain parts used to manufacture the Toyota Camry. In November 2018, We Buy Houses Pty Ltd and its sole director, Rick Otton, were fined $18 million for making false or misleading representations about how people could create wealth through buying and selling real estate. In 2014, Coles Supermarkets was fined $10 million for engaging in unconscionable conduct in its dealings with some of its suppliers.

The Government has been concerned to ensure that the ACCC continues to vigilantly enforce competition and consumer law. In the 2019-20 Budget, the ACCC received additional funding of $9.4 million over four years to continue and expand its investigations into competition concerns in the commercial construction sector. It also received $2.7 million in 2019-20 for its agriculture unit and $2.1 million over four years relating to the dairy code of conduct. In December 2018, the ACCC received additional funding of $35.6 million over four years to strengthen its enforcement capacity. It also received $28 million over seven years for work in relation to the electricity price monitoring and response regime.

I trust this information will be of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely

from the Assistant Treasurer, Mr Sukkar (Petition No. EN0782)

Family Reunion Visas

Dear Mr O’Brien

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 September 2019 concerning petition (EN0914) for a refugee family reunion.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of family reunion for refugees and humanitarian entrants. A key aim of Australia’s Humanitarian Program is to reunite refugees and people who are in refugee-like situations overseas with their family in Australia through ‘split family’ provisions and the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP). Immediate family of people who have been resettled under the Humanitarian Program are given highest priority in processing.
The split family provisions in the Humanitarian Program are designed to assist the reunion of immediate family members who have been separated while escaping from persecution or discrimination. The provisions allow protection and humanitarian visa holders in Australia to propose family members for resettlement, usually on the same visa subclass as the proposer.

The SHP allows people who face human rights abuses in their home country and have a connection to the Australian community to settle permanently in Australia. Permanent humanitarian visa holders (including Permanent Protection visa holders) may propose family members for resettlement in Australia through the SHP. Those who arrived in Australia without a visa as an Illegal Maritime Arrival on or after 13 August 2012, are not eligible to propose relatives through the Humanitarian Program. This is in line with the Government’s commitment to the Operation Sovereign Borders policies established in 2013 to safeguard vulnerable people from exploitation by people smugglers, prevent the loss of life at sea and restore the integrity of Australia’s borders.

In addition to the SHP, the Community Support Program (CSP) offers an additional pathway for refugees who are ready for employment and have the capacity to be financially self-sufficient within a year of arrival in Australia. The CSP is designed to provide a sustainable model of private sponsorship for refugees. It enables communities and businesses, as well as families and individuals, to propose humanitarian visa applicants with employment prospects and actively support new humanitarian arrivals.

The Government has increased the size of the Humanitarian Program from 13,750 places in 2016-17, up to 16,250 places in 2017-18, and 18,750 places in 2018-19 and over the next three years. Even with this increase every year, many more people apply to be resettled under the offshore Humanitarian Program than Australia can accept.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention. Yours sincerely from the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs, Mr Coleman (Petition No. EN0914)

Telecommunications: Scams

Dear Mr O’Brien

Thank you for your letter dated 9 September 2019, on behalf of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions, concerning Petition EN0917 (Mobile phone portability scams). The petition argues that the current system of mobile number portability does not adequately protect consumers and businesses against mobile number portability scams.

I am pleased to advise that the Morrison Government is working to keep Australians safe from mobile number porting fraud. I recently announced a specific measure targeting this type of scam.

On 14 October 2019, I issued a direction to the Australian Communications and Media Authority to make a new legally binding standard mandating stronger identity verification processes before mobile numbers can be transferred between providers. The direction is referred to as the Telecommunications (Industry Standard for Mobile Number Pre-Porting Additional Identity Verification) Direction 2019, and was issued under subsection 125AA(4) of the Telecommunications Act 1997.

The industry standard is to be determined by 28 February 2020 and commence by 30 April 2020. The standard will have the force of law. Telecommunications companies that do not comply face fines of up to $250,000, for each breach.

More broadly, the Committee may be interested in other measures that I have taken to crack down on telephone scam activity. On 27 November 2019, I announced the commencement of three trials targeting common phone scams and techniques.

The first trial involves telecommunications companies identifying and blocking calls which appear to come from a well-known Australian organisation but are actually made by scammers. In recent months there have been numerous reports of scammers using phone numbers of organisations such as the Australian Taxation Office.

The second will target scam calls that try to entice Australians to call expensive premium numbers (by leaving a missed call on their mobile phone). The third trial will crack down on networks that carry a high volume of scam traffic.

The Morrison Government is serious about stopping scam activities, and I look forward to announcing the results of the trials next year, and the other measures that the Government is taking to keep Australians safe.

Thank you for bringing the concerns in this petition to my attention. I hope the information in this letter is of some help.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, Mr Fletcher (Petition No. EN0917)

Isaac, Sarah

Dear Mr O’Brien

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 September 2019 concerning petition EN0920 relating to Ms Sarah Isaac’s application for evidence of Australian citizenship.

Whilst I am able to disclose individual client information to a Member of Parliament, privacy considerations prevent me from disclosing any personal information about individual cases to a third party. Due to privacy considerations, it would be inappropriate to discuss the details of Ms Isaac’s application. However, I am able to provide the following general information.
Under the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* (the Act), evidence of Australian citizenship must not be given unless the Department of Home Affairs is satisfied of the identity of the person. In verifying a person's identity, the Department will take into consideration supporting documentation provided by the applicant. While I appreciate that fulfilling this requirement can be challenging, the identity requirement is a legal requirement and the Department must be satisfied of the identity of a person before evidence of Australian citizenship can be issued.

Thank you for raising this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs, Mr Coleman** (Petition No. EN0920)

**Human Rights: Children**

**Dear Mr O'Brien**

Thank you for your correspondence, dated 9 September 2019, referring Petition number EN0921, seeking a royal commission to investigate the family law system.

The petition outlines concerns for the welfare of men involved in family law matters who have been denied time with their children following separation and asks for further investigation of the family law system. The petition mentions the misuse of family violence protection orders as a strategy to prevent ongoing contact with the children by a parent and calls for harsher punishments to be applied in family law matters when this contact is denied.

The Morrison Government is committed to ongoing improvements to the family law, courts and legal assistance systems to ensure that they help families separate in a safe, child-centred, accessible, and timely way. That is why the Government announced it will establish a Joint Select Committee to inquire into the family law system to be chaired by the Hon Kevin Andrews MR.

The Government has initiated this wide-ranging parliamentary inquiry into the family law system because this is a serious issue. This inquiry will provide an important opportunity for parliamentarians to hear from those Australians across the country who have been through the system and can share their story and experience.

Family and relationship breakdown are often traumatic, and devastating experiences for all involved. For those going through the family law system during this incredibly harrowing time, it's important that the systems they have to go through work as best as they can. Family breakdown is a risk factor for suicide; it is a time when domestic violence can escalate, and it warrants this level of attention.

The Terms of Reference for the Inquiry are broad, and will allow for the examination of a range of matters that have a real and practical impact on Australian families.

It is an opportunity to further consider how to ensure the family law system keeps children and families safe from violence and abuse. The Inquiry will look at how the family law system, state and territory child protection systems and family and domestic violence jurisdictions can communicate better, given the absolute importance of this issue for keeping children and families safe. The Inquiry will also provide an opportunity to look at the way domestic violence orders are considered in family law proceedings, which is an issue frequently raised, noting the importance of ensuring family members including children, are not placed at risk of further violence.

The Government is committed to ongoing improvements to the family law, courts and legal assistance systems to ensure that they help families separate, and will build on significant action the Government has already taken.

In the meantime, the Government will continue to progress structural reforms to the federal family law courts. The amalgamation of the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia will address the unnecessary costs and delay for thousands of Australian families that arise from a split federal family court system, and which has been described as a failed experiment. They will allow the federal family courts to hear more cases and reduce the backlog of matters.

The Government is also carefully considering the 60 recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) review of the family law system, which are largely focused on the legislation governing family law, and the Government will respond to the recommendations in the review in the near future.

By way of background information, it is important to note that Part VII of the *Family Law Act 1975* focuses on the rights of children and the responsibilities that each parent has towards their children, rather than on parental rights. When a court is making parenting orders, the best interests of the child is the most important consideration.

There are a range of additional considerations which the court may have regard to in determining what is in the child's best interests. The court may take account of the nature of the relationship of the child with each parent and the likely effect of any changes in the child's circumstances, including the likely effect on the child of any separation from a parent. The court may also consider any fact or circumstance that it thinks is relevant to its consideration of the best interests of the child when making or enforcing parenting orders.

In relation to the concerns raised about the emotional impact on parties of family law proceedings, the Government funds a variety of agencies and services to help separating or separated couples manage issues that may arise following family breakdown. Information and support to manage this impact may be accessed from a range of support services, including:
• Mensline Australia (1300 789 978 or www.mensline.org.au), a national telephone and online support, information and referral service available to men, partners and families who are interested in learning more about how to support the men in their life
• Lifeline on 13 11 14 or at their website www.lifeline.org.au
• Beyond Blue on 1300 22 46 36 or at their website www.beyondblue.org.au
• The Blackdog Institute: www.blackdopinstitute.org.au/publicigettinghelp/supportgroups.cfm

Thank you again for forwarding these concerns for my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Attorney-General, Mr Porter (Petition No. EN0921)

Legal Aid

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your email of 9 September 2019 regarding petition number EN0922. The petition seeks for the Australian Government to introduce a new law to protect children and families with a genuine need for legal aid, by restricting eligibility for legal aid in family law matters where an individual has demonstrated violent or abusive behavior towards children, or has convictions relating to violent or sexual behavior.

The Australian Government is committed to protecting the most vulnerable members of our community, including by providing access to justice. Access to justice is about ensuring people receive appropriate advice and assistance, no matter how they enter our justice system.

Implementing legislation to limit the ability of legal aid commissions to assist individuals in family law matters, if they have demonstrated violent or abusive behavior towards children, or have convictions relating to violent or sexual behavior, would detract from this commitment by government.

I note- that the petition highlights that legal aid commissions are denying families help in family law matters due to a lack of funding. The Australian Government does what it can to adequately resource legal assistance services to provide help to vulnerable Australians.

Legal aid commissions are independent statutory bodies established under state and territory legislation. Commissions determine eligibility for their legal services and the extent of assistance they provide in individual cases. Applications for grants of legal aid are means and merits tested against guidelines determined by each legal aid commission.

Yours sincerely

from the Attorney-General, Mr Porter (Petition No. EN0922)

Telecommunications

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your email, dated 9 September 2019, on behalf of the Petitions Committee concerning Petition EN0942 which requests a moratorium on 5th Generation (5G) mobile network rollouts due to health concerns.

The Morrison Government acknowledges that there is significant community interest in being satisfied that rigorous safety standards are in place to guard against the risk of over exposure to electromagnetic energy (EME) from mobile phone base stations. The Government strictly regulates EME emissions, to protect the health and safety of the public while allowing the community to benefit from modern telecommunications.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) regulates EME from telecommunications facilities and other wireless devices used for communication, including mobile phones, mobile phone base stations and moderns. ACMA’s regulatory arrangements require facilities and wireless devices to comply with human exposure limits set by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) in its Standard, Radiation Protection Standard for Maximum Exposure Levels to Radiofrequency Fields - 3 kHz to 300 GHz (the ARPANSA Standard).

ARPANSA is the Australian Government's independent authority on radiation protection and nuclear safety. The ARPANSA Standard is based on rigorous, peer reviewed Australian and international research into EME. ARPANSA has applied the precautionary approach to its Standard by setting the maximum exposure limits well below the level at which adverse health effects occur. As such, the ARPANSA Standard minimises harm by applying a wide safety margin to further protect the public and covers the frequency ranges that 5G technology will use. The ARPANSA Standard also includes a detailed analysis of the precautionary approach to public health and requires the minimisation of unnecessary or incidental radiofrequency exposure.

ARPANSA maintains continual oversight of emerging research into the potential health effects of EME emissions.

The effects of EME exposure have been the subject of extensive and rigorous scientific study around the world for many decades. ARPANSA consults with the world's peak health bodies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), so that Australia can contribute to and benefit from the best international research and guidance on this matter. Based on the best available research, ARPANSA and other leading health authorities advise that there are no known health effects from EME at levels below the ARPANSA Standard.
The ICNIRP is currently conducting a review of its international guidance and is expected to publish their final updated guidelines by end of year. Following this, ARPANSA will finalise its own review and update of the ARPANSA Standard.

The Government funds a domestic research program that investigates the possible health effects of exposure to EME from mobile phones, mobile phone towers and broadcast towers. Under this program, the Government recently granted $2.5 million over five years to the Australian Centre for Electromagnetic Bioeffects Research (ACEBR) to undertake a range of EME research projects. ACEBR's programs include research into human neurophysiology, cellular response studies, dosimetry, and social sciences. This research covers the radiofrequencies used by 5G.

5G networks will initially use the same frequencies as 3G and 4G networks, and later will also use higher frequencies when made available by Government. Antennas installed closer together does not necessarily correlate to an increase in EME emitted by a 5G network. Mobile phone base stations installed closer together reduces the average power required by the facility and the handset to create a connection, which in fact lowers the average EME output of both.

There is misleading information about EME online. To assist the Australian public, the Government has resources available about EME and telecommunications. ARPANSA offers extensive information about EME via its website, www.arpansa.gov.au, including advice about ionising versus non-ionising radiation, information about different exposure sources, and information about the ARPANSA Standard. ARPANSA also operates a program where the public can talk with scientific experts about EME exposure. This program can be accessed online at www.arpansa.gov.au/contact-us/talk-to-a-scientist. Information is also available at www.acma.gov.au/our-rules-eme, which is a site managed by ACMA.

I hope the information in this letter is of some help.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, Mr Fletcher (Petition No. EN0942)

National Security

Dear Mr O'Brien

I refer to your letter of 9 September 2019 to the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, seeking a response to a petition about Government outsourcing (petition number EN0959). The Prime Minister has asked me to respond on his behalf.

The key priority of the Government is to ensure services are delivered seamlessly and efficiently, when and where they are needed. We have an excellent public service which is delivering for the Australian people. The Prime Minister in a recent address to the Institute of Public Administration Australia highlighted the important role of the public service but also acknowledged that there is significant value in utilising, collaborating and engaging with the expertise which is outside the public service.

In specific circumstances, the Government needs access to specialist skills and temporary resources for particular projects, which requires it to look outside the ranks of the public service. A contractor or consultant may efficiently address the need for specialist skills that could not be expected to be held in-house or additional temporary or project-specific support. When public servants and external specialists work together on projects, there is a two-way transfer of skills and experience, and a greater opportunity for diversity of views.

The Government takes security and privacy very seriously. Commonwealth entities, and entities engaged by Commonwealth entities, are required to uphold the highest standards to protect individuals' privacy and security, national security and commercial confidentiality.

You may be aware an independent review of the Australian Public Service, led by Mr David Thodey AO, was handed to Government in September 2019. The Government has asked the Secretaries Board to evaluate its recommendations, including those relating to mobility and security, and report to Cabinet. We look forward to receiving the Secretaries' advice.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet, Mr Hunt (Petition No. EN0959)

First Home Loan Deposit Scheme

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your personal representation of 9 September 2019 originally directed to the Treasurer, concerning Petition EN0967 addressing the First Home Loan Deposit Scheme. Your correspondence has been referred to me as I have responsibility for this matter.

The First Home Loan Deposit Scheme has been designed to assist individuals that have never owned a property in Australia. However, the Australian Government is committed to reducing pressure on housing affordability for all Australians. There is no silver bullet to solving housing affordability. The Government's plan for this issue is a careful, calibrated and comprehensive response that involves improving outcomes across the housing spectrum.

Since the 2017-18 Budget, tax, foreign investment, and superannuation changes have been implemented to help improve housing affordability. This includes stronger capital gains tax rules for property investors and the new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, which provides more than $7 billion in housing and homelessness funding over five years, with states and territories to match the Commonwealth's $620 million in homelessness funding.
The Morrison Government acknowledges that there is significant community interest in being satisfied that rigorous safety standards are in place to guard against the risk of over exposure to electromagnetic energy (EME) from mobile phone base stations. The Government strictly regulates EME from telecommunications infrastructure so that the community can safety enjoy and social and economic benefits that emerging technology will bring.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) regulates EME from telecommunications facilities and other wireless devices used for communication, including mobile phones, mobile phone base stations and modems. A number of legislative instruments require facilities and wireless devices to comply with human exposure limits set by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) in its Standard, Radiation Protection Standard for Maximum Exposure Levels to Radiofrequency Fields - 3 kHz to 300 GHz (the ARPANSA Standard).

ARPANSA is the Australian Government's independent authority on radiation protection and nuclear safety. The ARPANSA Standard is based on rigorous, peer reviewed Australian and international research into EME. It is set well below the level at which adverse health effects occur, includes a wide safety margin to further protect the public and covers the frequency ranges that 5G technology will use.

Telecommunications devices and facilities are subject to testing and compliance checks to ensure that they do not exceed the ARPANSA exposure limits. Whilst 5G technology promises to provide even better telecommunications services to the community, equipment deployed as part of a 5G network will nonetheless need to comply with the ARPANSA Standard and ACMA regulations.

ARPANSA maintains continual oversight of emerging research into the potential health effects of EME emissions.

The effects of EME exposure have been the subject of extensive and rigorous scientific study around the world for many decades. ARPANSA consults with the world's peak health bodies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), so that Australia can contribute to and benefit from the best international research and guidance on this matter. The petitioners have asked for assurance about the health effects of 5G. Based on the best available research, ARPANSA and other leading health authorities advise that there are no known health effects of EME at levels below the ARPANSA Standard.

The petitioners have noted that Brussels, Geneva and Glastonbury have halted their rollout of 50 networks. ARPANSA has advised that some regions in the world have decided to adopt more conservative limits, however those lower standards are not based on the accepted international guidance set by the ICNIRP. ARPANSA and the WHO do not support the adoption of arbitrary exposure limits that are not supported by credible scientific evidence.

I hope the information in this letter is of some help.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Housing, Mr Sukkar** (Petition No. EN0967)

**Telecommunications**

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your email, dated 9 September 2019, on behalf of the Petitions Committee concerning Petition EN0977, which calls on the House of Representatives to stop the 5G roll out until the health effects are known.

The Morrison Government acknowledges that there is significant community interest in being satisfied that rigorous safety standards are in place to guard against the risk of over exposure to electromagnetic energy (EME) from mobile phone base stations. The Government strictly regulates EME from telecommunications infrastructure so that the community can safety enjoy and social and economic benefits that emerging technology will bring.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) regulates EME from telecommunications facilities and other wireless devices used for communication, including mobile phones, mobile phone base stations and modems. A number of legislative instruments require facilities and wireless devices to comply with human exposure limits set by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) in its Standard, Radiation Protection Standard for Maximum Exposure Levels to Radiofrequency Fields - 3 kHz to 300 GHz (the ARPANSA Standard).

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ARPANSA maintains continual oversight of emerging research into the potential health effects of EME emissions.

The effects of EME exposure have been the subject of extensive and rigorous scientific study around the world for many decades. ARPANSA consults with the world's peak health bodies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), so that Australia can contribute to and benefit from the best international research and guidance on this matter. The petitioners have asked for assurance about the health effects of 5G. Based on the best available research, ARPANSA and other leading health authorities advise that there are no known health effects of EME at levels below the ARPANSA Standard.

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I hope the information in this letter is of some help.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, Mr Fletcher** (Petition No. EN0977)

**Telecommunications**

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your email, dated 9 September 2019, on behalf of the Petitions Committee, concerning Petition EN0978, which calls on the House of Representatives to stop the roll out of 5th Generation (5G) mobile technology amongst the Australian population.

The Morrison Government acknowledges that there is significant community interest in being satisfied that rigorous safety standards are in place to guard against the risk of over exposure to electromagnetic energy (EME) from mobile phone base
stations. The Government strictly regulates EME emissions from telecommunications infrastructure is regulated so that the community can safely enjoy and social and economic benefits that emerging technology will bring.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) regulates EME from telecommunications facilities and other wireless devices used for communication, including mobile phones, mobile phone base stations and modems. A number of legislative instruments require facilities and wireless devices to comply with human exposure limits set by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) in its Standard, Radiation Protection Standard for Maximum Exposure Levels to Radiofrequency Fields - 3 kHz to 300 GHz (the ARPANSA Standard).

ARPANSA is the Australian Government's independent authority on radiation protection and nuclear safety. The ARPANSA Standard is based on rigorous, peer reviewed Australian and international research into EME. It is set well below the level at which adverse health effects occur, includes a wide safety margin to further protect the public and covers the frequency ranges that 5G technology will use.

Telecommunications devices and facilities are subject to testing and compliance checks to ensure that they do not exceed the ARPANSA exposure limits. Whilst 5G technology promises to provide even better telecommunications services to the community, equipment deployed as part of a 5G network will nonetheless need to comply with the ARPANSA Standard and ACMA regulations.

ARPANSA maintains continual oversight of emerging research into the potential health effects of RF EME emissions. The effects of EME exposure have been the subject of extensive and rigorous scientific study around the world for many decades. ARPANSA consults with the world's peak health bodies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), so that Australia can contribute to and benefit from the best international research and guidance on this matter. Based on the best available research, ARPANSA and other leading health authorities advise that there are no known health effects of EME at levels below the ARPANSA Standard.

I hope the information in this letter is of some help.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, Mr Fletcher (Petition No. EN0978)

Nuclear Energy

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your letter of 9 September 2019 concerning petition EN0980 on nuclear energy production and baseload electricity. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

The Liberal National Government recognises that nuclear energy is a mature technology used to deliver reliable electricity in many countries, with minimal greenhouse gas emissions.

Although Australia does not generate electricity from nuclear fuel sources, we are the world's third-largest producer of uranium and have participated in the nuclear fuel cycle for over 70 years. The Government supports the sustainable development and responsible use of this important energy resource.

As you are aware, I recently asked the House of Representatives Select Committee on Environment and Energy to inquire into the prerequisites for a future Government to use nuclear energy in Australia. This is the first inquiry into the use of nuclear power in Australia in more than a decade. The terms of reference, public submissions and details of public hearings, including transcripts, can be found on the Committee's webpage at: aph.gov.au/nuclearpower.

I have asked the Committee to report on the matter by the end of 2019.

While I acknowledge the advantages of nuclear technologies, any decision to remove the current prohibition on nuclear power generation would require bipartisan agreement and widespread community support.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the matters raised in this petition.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction, Mr Taylor (Petition No. EN0980)

Boyle, Mr Richard

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for contacting me in relation to petition number EN0981, presented to the House on 9 September 2019.

The petition addresses the handling of Mr Richard Boyle's public interest disclosure and seeks my intervention to discontinue the prosecution of Mr Richard Boyle.

I am unable to comment on the operation of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013 (P1D Act) in Mr Boyle's case as it concerns allegations of conduct that are subject to criminal proceedings. These matters, as well as the applicability of any defences that might be applicable to Mr Boyle's conduct, are appropriately matter for the court.

As you are aware, the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP) is an independent office responsible for Commonwealth prosecutions. The Prosecution Policy of the Commonwealth underpins all of the decisions made by the CDPP throughout the prosecution process. The Prosecution Policy requires that before a prosecution is commenced there must be sufficient evidence to prosecute the case and it must be evident from the facts of the case, and all surrounding circumstances, that the prosecution would be in the public interest.
While I have the power to issue guidance or directions to the CDPP under the Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1983, this power has never been used to direct the CDPP in relation to a particular case.

For these reasons, I do not consider it appropriate for me to intervene in this matter.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Yours sincerely

from the Attorney-General, Mr Porter (Petition No. EN0981)

Telecommunications: Cyberbullying

Dear Mr O’Brien

Thank you for your letter dated 9 September 2019, on behalf of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions, concerning Petition EN0989 — the importance of regulating angry reviewers.

The Morrison Government is committed to promoting the rule of law and the rights and protections we enjoy as a democratic nation. Of these, our rights to free speech and free expression are highly valued. Of course, these freedoms are not absolute and are subject to some restrictions. These include prohibitions on advocating national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

Under the Criminal Code Act 1995, it is an offence to use the internet to menace, harass or cause offence. This provision is intended to cover online conduct, such as publishing material online, that a reasonable person would find to be menacing, harassing or causing offence. However, I am advised that the content referred to in the petition is unlikely to meet the criteria of this restriction.

Industry has a responsibility to take steps to make their products and services safe for Australian users. The eSafety Commissioner's Safety by Design Principles emphasise the importance of building these considerations into product design, including the ability for users to flag potentially offensive material for review.

YouTube maintains a set of Community Standards that are available online. These include rules on hateful content, harmful or dangerous content, and other categories. Users are able to report content that they suspect is in breach of these rules to YouTube for investigation. I encourage the petitioners to raise their concerns on these matters with YouTube directly.

Thank you for bringing the concerns in this petition to my attention. I hope the information in this letter is of some help.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, Mr Fletcher (Petition No. EN0989)

Advertising

Dear Mr O’Brien

Thank you for your letter dated 14 October 2019, concerning a petition requesting the increased awareness of foreign-language films being advertised truthfully.

The Morrison Government recognises the importance of advertisements being legal, honest, truthful and not offensive to their audience. There are a number of self-regulatory and co-regulatory arrangements in place to strike a balance between legitimate commercial interests and appropriate consumer safeguards, which are detailed below.

I note that the petitioner's complaint is in relation to the method of translation employed by distributors in translating foreign films for Australian audiences, and the representation of these translations as English-first productions. The petitioner gives particular reference to the advertising of Studio Ghibli films distributed by Madman Entertainment, and advocates for an alternative means of spoken translation called voiceover translation, to better represent the origins of foreign-language content.

The technical means of translation of foreign-language entertainment, as well as the content and method of its advertising are commercial decisions. Provided distributors of content, such as Madman Entertainment, meet their regulatory requirements the Government generally does not interfere in these commercial decisions.

Self-regulation of advertising

The content of advertisements in Australia are subject to predominantly self-regulatory arrangements. Complaints about the content of advertisements are handled by Ad Standards, which administers self-regulatory codes of practice developed by the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA), including the AANA Code of Ethics (the AANA Code). The AANA Code contains a range of provisions relating to taste and decency and is intended to reflect community values and expectations. The Government has no formal role in the development of the AANA self-regulatory codes or guidelines.

Complaints about the content of advertisements can be directed to Ad Standards via its website, at adstandards.com.au, for consideration by the Ad Standards Community Panel (the Panel).

The Panel comprises members of the general community who are independent of the advertising industry and from a range of age groups and backgrounds. Further information about the Panel, including information about the appointment of Panel members, is available at adstandards.com.au/about/community-panel.

In addition to making a complaint about current advertising campaigns, decisions of the Board may be independently reviewed. Petitioners may wish to visit the
Ad Standards website at adstandards.com.au/complaint-process/independent-review to obtain further information about the review process.

Thank you for bringing the petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, Mr Fletcher (Petition No. EN1000)

Child Support Scheme

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your email of 14 October 2019 regarding petition EN1026 to the House of Representatives requesting that paying parents in child support cases have their voice heard and concerns noted.

The petitioners may be interested to know the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs made 25 recommendations relating to child support in its report, From conflict to cooperation: Inquiry into the Child Support Program. The report is available on the Committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/aulchildsupport.


Progress is being made in implementing the agreed recommendations, with actions against 12 recommendations completed to date. The three recommendations with significant impact for parents and children in the child support system were prioritised and included in the Family Assistance and Child Support Legislation Amendment (Protecting Children) Act 2018. These three recommendations:

- strengthen incentives to comply with court orders or participate in dispute resolution processes about care
- enable changes in circumstances to be more easily reflected in child support assessments without parents having to go to court, and
- treat payees with overpaid child support consistently with payers with debts.

Less complex recommendations which do not require legislative change have also been completed and any further changes to the child support scheme as a result of the inquiry will be considered in the context of the Government’s other budget priorities and the social service system as a whole. This systematic approach will ensure that the complex needs of separated families are met in a holistic way.

Given the petitioners experiences, they may wish to make a submission to the Joint Select Committee (the Committee) on Australia's Family Law System, which will conduct a wide-ranging inquiry to ensure that the system operates as fairly and efficiently as possible. It will also look at how the family law system interacts with child support.

Announced by the Government in September 2019, this inquiry will provide an important opportunity for parliamentarians to hear from people who have been through the system.

The Committee will report by 7 October 2020. The petitioners can visit:


The Government is committed to helping families manage their responsibilities for their children following separation and will continue to monitor the effect of child support legislation.

Thank you for raising this matter with me. I trust the information provided will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Families and Social Services, Senator Ruston (Petition No. EN1026)

Hong Kong

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your letter of 14 October 2019 regarding petition EN1032, which raises concerns with recent events in Hong Kong and proposes the inclusion of human rights clauses in the Australia-Hong Kong Free Trade Agreement (A-HKFTA).

The Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and I have publicly expressed the Australian Government's deep concern at developments in Hong Kong. We have underscored the substantial stake Australia has in the success of Hong Kong. The city is home to one of our biggest expatriate communities globally and our largest commercial presence in Asia.

The Australian Government has also conveyed its concerns about the situation in Hong Kong directly to the Chinese Government at senior levels in Beijing and Canberra, and to Hong Kong authorities in Hong Kong. The Australian Government reiterates our view that it is crucial for all sides — police and protesters — to exercise restraint and take genuine steps to de-escalate tensions. It is essential that the police respond proportionately to protests.

We have consistently called for a peaceful resolution that restores confidence in the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework and Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy. We have welcomed the Hong Kong government's withdrawal of the extradition legislation as a positive step and encouraged further steps to de-escalate tensions. Australia continues to urge genuine efforts by all parties to find an effective political solution that supports and upholds Hong Kong's freedoms and advantages, open and accountable law enforcement system and the professional and unbiased application of justice.

CHAMBER
Australia has longstanding economic and trade ties with Hong Kong. It is our 12th largest trading partner overall and our 8th largest export market for goods and services. Australia's exports to Hong Kong were worth $13.5 billion in 2018.

Having Free Trade Agreements in place with both Hong Kong and China allows Australia to advance economic and trade interests in both jurisdictions and supports the One Country. Two Systems' framework, which underpins business confidence. The A-HKFTA and Investment Agreement reaffirm confidence in the strong economic relationship and will provide valuable legal certainty for Hong Kong and Australian exporters, service suppliers and investors once implemented.

These agreements will further strengthen the economic relationship between Australia and Hong Kong. They will provide business certainty through guaranteeing zero tariffs on all Australian goods exported to Hong Kong as well as open market settings for services, updated investment commitments, and transparent policy settings. It delivers a competitive edge for Australian business through high quality e-commerce and data transfer commitments which, for the first time, also apply to financial services.

Australia is making a strong contribution to global advocacy of human rights, including as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council. On 6 November 2018, at China's appearance before the 31st Session of the Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review, Australia delivered a statement recommending that Beijing and the Hong Kong Government continue to uphold the rights, freedoms and rule of law embodied in the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework. Australia will continue to use multilateral human rights mechanisms as well as engagement at the regional and bilateral levels to advocate robustly for the promotion and protection of human rights, in parallel with ratifying the A-HKFTA.

The Government welcomes the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties' bipartisan recommendation that binding treaty action be taken as soon as possible. I am pleased that the Parliament has now passed the enabling legislation, which will bring mutual benefits to Australians and the people of Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Senator Birmingham (Petition No. EN1032)

Religion

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for contacting me in relation to petitions number EN1033 and EN1034, presented to the House on 14 October 2019.

I apologise for the delayed response.

I note the petitions call for protection for the religious rights of Pastafarians.

The Australian Government is a strong defender of traditional rights and liberties, and is committed to protecting freedom of all religions equally. Australia is home to a diversity of faiths, united by tolerance, mutual respect and a commitment to democratic traditions. All Australians are free to choose their religion, and are entitled to express and practise their religion and their beliefs, without intimidation or interference within the framework of Australian law.

That is why on 10 December 2019 the Prime Minister and I released exposure drafts of three draft bills for a second round of public consultation. Together, these draft Bills form a legislative package on religious freedom. The three bills are:

- The Religious Discrimination Bill 2019, which prohibits discrimination on the ground of religious belief or activity in key areas of public life.
- The Religious Discrimination (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2019, which makes consequential amendments necessary to support the implementation of the Religious Discrimination Bill.
- The Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Freedom of Religion) Bill 2019, which amends existing Commonwealth legislation to better protect the right to freedom of religion.

This package gives effect to certain recommendations of the Report of the Expert Panel on Religious Freedom (the Religious Freedom Review), which recognised that there is an opportunity to enhance the statutory protection of the right to freedom of religion in Australia.

A number of amendments were made to the first exposure draft of the Religious Discrimination Bill in particular following feedback from a range of stakeholders. Details of those amendments are available on the Attorney-General's Department's website at https://www.ag.gov.au/Consultations/Pages/religious-freedom-bills-second-exposure-drafts.aspx.

The Religious Discrimination Bill will protect Australians from discrimination on the basis of religious belief or activity, in specified areas of public life (employment, education, access to premises, goods, services and facilities, accommodation, land, sport, clubs and Commonwealth law and programs). The term 'religious belief or activity' is defined broadly in the Bill as either holding or not holding a religious belief, or engaging, not engaging or refusing to engage in lawful religious activity. This broad definition implements recommendation 15 of the Religious Freedom Review and will ensure the religious beliefs and activities of all religions are captured by the Bill. The approach the Government has taken is consistent with the definition of religious belief or activity (or analogous terms) in state and territory anti-discrimination legislation.

The Government is currently inviting submissions on the content of the draft Bills until 31 January 2020. Relevant submissions will be considered during further development of the legislative package ahead of introduction to Parliament.

I expect that once introduced, the Bills will be considered by a parliamentary committee. This will provide a further opportunity for consultation and for people to provide their views on the legislation.

Thank you for raising this with me.
Yours sincerely
from the **Attorney-General, Mr Porter** (Petition Nos EN1033 and EN1034)

**Asylum Seekers**

Dear Mr O’Brien

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 October 2019 concerning petition EN1039.

The Australian Government views immigration detention as an essential component of strong border control. Immigration detention supports Australia's well managed migration system and helps manage potential risks to the Australian community including national security, health and character risks.

People transferred to and accommodated in immigration detention facilities are treated in accordance with human rights standards. The Government has contracted appropriately trained and experienced service providers to ensure detainees’ needs are adequately met, including provision of health and welfare services. Health services provided in immigration detention are comparable to services available to the Australian community under the public health system.

Families in immigration detention are provided with regular nutritious meals, including age appropriate food for minors and fresh fruit and other healthy snacks. Children accommodated in immigration detention facilities or Alternative Places of Detention are not restricted to a limited time outside.

Scrutiny from a number of external bodies helps to ensure detainees held in immigration detention are treated humanely and fairly. These parties include parliamentary committees, the Commonwealth Ombudsman, the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Australian Red Cross.

The Department of Home Affairs has a commitment to limiting the detention of children to circumstances of last resort and for the shortest possible period. This commitment is legislated in the *Migration Act 1958* and further reinforced in departmental policies. The Department's executive takes these principles and its commitment to child safeguarding extremely seriously.

The Government is also committed to protecting Australia's borders, combating people smuggling in our region and preventing people from risking their lives at sea.

Operation Sovereign Borders (OSB) is a border security operation that was established in 2013 to protect Australia's borders, combat people smuggling in our region and prevent people from risking their lives at sea.

Australian Border Force (ABF) Officers engaged under OSB have intercepted a number of people smuggling vessels since its establishment and ensured the safe return of all passengers to the country of origin for the vessel.

Further information on recent OSB activities is available on the ABF's newsroom at: https://newsroom.abf.gov.au/releases.

Thank you for raising this matter.

Yours sincerely
from the **Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs, Mr Coleman** (Petition No. EN1039)

**Food Allergies**

Dear Mr O’Brien

I refer to your letter of 24 October 2019 concerning a petition to establish an Australian trial of food immunotherapy for food allergies (EN1040).

The Australian Government continues its strong commitment to support health and medical research and acknowledges the critical role research plays in contributing to a world-class health system. Health and medical research funding in Australia is provided through two distinct but complementary sources: the investigator-initiated National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), and the priority policy driven Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF). An outline of each for your consideration is provided below.

The NHMRC funds research in all human health areas. While the majority of NHMRC's funding schemes are investigator-initiated where the researcher drives the research through their areas of expertise, there is an avenue for consumers or community members to suggest research topics through NHMRC's Targeted Calls for Research (TCR) funding opportunity. Information about NHMRC schemes, including TCRs is available at: [www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants-funding/apply-funding](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants-funding/apply-funding).

MRFF investments are guided by the 'Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy 2016-2021' and related set of 'Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities 2018-2020' developed by the independent and expert Australian Medical Research Advisory Board following extensive national public consultation.

Under the MRFF 10 Year Plan announced in the 2019-20 Budget, $614 million is committed to the Clinical Trials Activity, which includes a focus on rare cancers, rare diseases and unmet medical need. Australian researchers have the opportunity to apply for funding to address an unmet medical need for Australians living with serious health conditions for which treatment is not adequately addressed by existing options, including food allergies. A grant opportunity that could support this type of research is currently open and I would encourage researchers to apply. More information regarding this grant opportunity is available at: [www.health.gov.au/mrff](http://www.health.gov.au/mrff).
I encourage you to review information on NHMRC and MRFF funding opportunities and engage with Australian researchers with expertise in food allergies and/or immunotherapy to support their applications for future research funding.

The Government subsidises a comprehensive range of medicines and therapeutics products through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), including medicinal foods, as well as adrenaline products for the treatment of acute allergic reaction with anaphylaxis, a range of corticosteroids for the treatment of symptoms associated with allergy, and the antihistamine promethazine, which is PBS listed on an unrestricted basis.

By law, the Government cannot list a new medicine on the PBS unless the Pharmaceutical Benefit Advisory Committee (PBAC) — an independent group of experts that advises the Government about PBS listings — makes a recommendation in favour of the listing. When considering an application to list a medicine on the PBS, the PBAC is required to have regard to the safety, clinical effectiveness and cost effectiveness of the treatment.

The PBAC's considerations are generally initiated by the sponsor of the medicine (usually a pharmaceutical company responsible for the supply of the medicine in Australia), as it holds the scientific information and clinical trial data that are necessary to inform the PBAC. Critically, for a listing to be achieved, the pharmaceutical sponsor of the medicine must be interested and willing to list the medicine on the PBS for that purpose.

The PBAC usually meets three times a year — in March, July and November, and welcomes a submission at any time.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Health, Mr Hunt (Petition No. EN1040)

Death Penalty

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your correspondence of 20 October 2019 relating to Petition Ministerial Referral (EN1045), which raises concerns about the adequacy of penalties for child sexual abuse, and is seeking repeal of all legislation that prevents State governments from re-introducing capital punishment.

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that serious crimes are met with the appropriate penalties, but also has a long-standing policy of opposition to capital punishment. As a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Second Optional Protocol, Australia has an obligation not only to abolish the death penalty in its jurisdiction, but also to ensure that our laws and policies are consistent with those requirements.

The Commonwealth Parliament passed laws in March 2010 to extend the application of the current prohibition on the death penalty to state and territory laws. This ensures that the death penalty cannot be reintroduced anywhere in Australia in the future.

The Australian Government is committed to protecting the community from the risks posed by child sex offenders and to ensuring sentencing practices reflect the harm suffered by victims of child sexual abuse. That is why the Government introduced the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Sexual Crimes Against Children and Community Protection Measures) Bill in September 2019. The Bill, which passed the House of Representatives on 15 October 2019 and is currently before the Senate, will strengthen existing laws to ensure that offenders are sufficiently punished and deterred, including through the introduction of mandatory minimum sentences for the most serious Commonwealth child sex offences and repeat child sex offenders.

Whilst the Bill also increases the maximum penalties for certain Commonwealth child sex offences, the mandatory minimum sentences will ensure that courts are more likely to sentence child sex offenders to an appropriate period in prison for serious and subsequent offences, in line with community expectations. The Bill also contains complementary measures designed to address current inadequacies in the criminal justice process and improve community protection in relation to Commonwealth child sex offences, including through:

- a presumption against bail for offenders who commit serious child sex offences and those previously convicted of child sexual abuse
- a presumption in favour of actual imprisonment to reduce the imposition of wholly suspended sentences for Commonwealth child sex offenders
- a presumption in favour of cumulative sentences for multiple child sex offences
- an overhaul of the sentencing factors for all Commonwealth offenders, including preventing the courts from discounting sentences on the basis of good character where this is used to facilitate Commonwealth offences, and
- requirements to ensure all Commonwealth child sex offenders are adequately supervised and subject to appropriate rehabilitative conditions upon release from custody.

The Bill is a sensible solution that reflects community expectations and is consistent with a number of recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Indeed, the Bill represents the most significant reform to the legal framework concerning Commonwealth child sex offenders since the establishment of the Commonwealth Criminal Code in 1995. The Bill also complements a broader package of Government reforms which criminalise emerging forms of child sexual abuse and strengthen protections for the community, including:

- the Combating Child Sexual Exploitation Legislation Amendment Act 2019, which introduced new offences for failure to protect a child at risk of a child sexual abuse; failure to report child sexual abuse; possessing, importing or exporting a
child-like sex doll; and possessing or controlling 'child abuse material' in the form of data held in a computer or on a data storage device

- the Passports Legislation Amendment (Overseas Travel by Child Sex Offenders) Act 2017, to stop child sex offenders from travelling overseas to commit criminal acts against children, and
- Carly's Law in the Criminal Code Amendment (Protecting Minors Online) Act 2017, which targets online predators preparing or planning to cause harm to, procure, or engage in sexual activity with, a child.

All of these reforms demonstrate the Australian Government's commitment to protecting the community and send a strong message that these abhorrent crimes against children will not be tolerated.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Yours sincerely

from the Attorney-General, Mr Porter (Petition No. EN1045)

Broadband

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your letter dated 21 October 2019 regarding the petition of the same date (EN1051) asking the House of Representatives to stop NBN Co from implementing a video streaming tax.

I understand that petitioners may have written in response to media reporting about consultation NBN Co undertook with retailers in June 2019 which included wholesale pricing options to support retailers provide video streaming services in the future. This was undertaken as part of NBN Co's broader wholesale pricing consultation process which concluded in November 2019 and resulted in the introduction of a range of new and improved products with lower prices and greater data inclusions.

Around the time of the consultation, NL3N Co clarified that it was not aiming to introduce a *Netflix tax’ or any other tax on customers, but rather was seeking feedback on ways to support retailers to meet future needs and preferences of their customers.

Feedback from retailers indicated that streaming video, and specifically streaming, gaining, were important applications driving the need for higher download speeds and more data inclusions. In response, NBN Co announced in November 2019, a range of new high speed products at lower prices and increased data inclusions. These product changes will support retailers to meet the growing data needs of consumers across all internet applications, including video streaming.

The Morrison Government strongly supports the open and unrestricted use of the internet for lawful purposes, which is a key principle of net neutrality. Australia's competition laws are the primary mechanism for dealing with net neutrality issues involving competition.

These are set out in the Competition and Consumer Act 2010. Under the Act, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), the competition regulator, investigates and enforces telecommunications-specific, general competition and consumer laws that go to anti-competitive conduct.

Thank you for bringing the petitioners' concerns to my attention. I hope the information in this letter is of some help.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, Mr Fletcher (Petition No. EN1051)

Asylum Seekers

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your correspondence of 25 November 2019 enclosing Petition EN1055 concerning the Australian Government's regional processing and resettlement arrangements. Your correspondence has been referred to me as the Minister for Home Affairs as the matter falls within my portfolio responsibilities.

The success of Australia's border protection policies has also enabled the Government to make a generous contribution to addressing the global humanitarian crisis and increase our Humanitarian Program annual quota to 18,750 places. This represents the largest ongoing program in over 30 years.

Australia is committed to providing protection to refugees consistent with the obligations set out in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Regional processing arrangements provide illegal maritime arrivals an opportunity to have their protection claims assessed and for those found to be refugees, resettlement in a third country, without compromising Australia's strong border protection policies.

Regional processing arrangements in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the individuals under those arrangements are the responsibility of the Government of PNG.

The Government continues to support the Government of PNG to reduce the residual regional processing caseload through resettlement, returns and removals. Under current regional processing arrangements, refugees have permanent resettlement options and are being resettled.

People found to be refugees by the Government of PNG can settle in PNG, seek assisted voluntary return, or move to a country they have the right to reside in. In addition to this, a one-off arrangement with the United States (US) to support the resettlement of refugees from PNG is in place and is progressing.
The Government of PNG has advised it will manage the failed asylum seekers until they depart PNG. Voluntary assistance remains available to the failed asylum seekers to return home or to a country to which they have a right of entry.

A total of 4,183 illegal maritime arrivals were transferred to offshore processing under the previous government. Today, there are no refugees in detention under offshore processing and as at 31 October 2019, 632 refugees have been resettled under the Government's resettlement arrangement with the US.

Australia appreciates the offer from the New Zealand Government to resettle refugees, however, the Government is focused on completing the larger arrangement with the US. Australia's border protection policies have removed the incentive for people to join dangerous and illegal people smuggling ventures to Australia. The Government remains mindful of not undoing efforts to combat people smuggling.

The Government's policy that persons who arrive in Australia illegally by boat will not be settled in Australia, remains steadfast.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Dutton (Petition No. EN1055)

Asylum Seekers

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your correspondence of 25 November 2019 enclosing Petition EN1057 concerning the Australian Government's regional processing and resettlement arrangements. Your correspondence has been referred to me as the Minister for Home Affairs as the matter falls within my portfolio responsibilities.

Regional processing is a key pillar of Operation Sovereign Borders and supports the Government's strong border protection policies. These policies have successfully stemmed the flow of illegal maritime ventures to Australia, disrupted people smuggling activities in the region and prevented loss of life at sea.

The success of Australia's border protection policies has also enabled the Government to make a generous contribution to addressing the global humanitarian crisis and increase our Humanitarian Program annual quota to 18,750 places. This represents the largest ongoing program in over 30 years.

Australia is committed to providing protection to refugees consistent with the obligations set out in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Regional processing arrangements provide illegal maritime arrivals an opportunity to have their protection claims assessed and for those found to be refugees, resettlement in a third country, without compromising Australia's strong border protection policies.

Regional processing arrangements in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the individuals under those arrangements are the responsibility of the Government of PNG.

The Government continues to support the Government of PNG to reduce the residual regional processing caseload through resettlement, returns and removals. Under current regional processing arrangements, refugees have permanent resettlement options and are being resettled. Australia continues to explore alternative resettlement options for refugees in PNG.

People found to be refugees by the Government of PNG can settle in PNG, seek assisted voluntary return, or move to a country they have the right to reside in. In addition to this, a one-off arrangement with the United States (US) to support the resettlement of refugees from PNG is in place and is progressing.

The Government of PNG has advised it will manage the failed asylum seekers until they depart PNG. Voluntary assistance remains available to the failed asylum seekers to return home or to a country to which they have a right of entry.

A total of 4,183 illegal maritime arrivals were transferred to offshore processing under the previous government. Today, there are no refugees in detention under offshore processing and as at 31 October 2019, 632 refugees have been resettled under the Governments resettlement arrangement with the US.

Australia appreciates the offer from the New Zealand Government to resettle refugees, however, we are focused on completing the larger arrangement with the US. Australia's border protection policies have removed the incentive for people to join dangerous and illegal people smuggling ventures to Australia. The Government remains mindful of not undoing efforts to combat people smuggling.

The Government's policy that persons who arrive in Australia illegally by boat will not be settled in Australia, remains steadfast.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Dutton (Petition No. EN1057)

PETITIONS

Statements

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (16:40): I would like to take this opportunity to make a statement. Although only seven of the 58 petitions presented today are paper, you can see they're responsible for a large number of signatures, with one over 500 signatures, one over 1,000 signatures and one over 2,000 signatures and the largest
with over 13,000 signatures, all hand-gathered, which continues to show the motivation and dedication of petitioners to their causes.

Although the chair of the Petitions Committee presents the majority of petitions to the House, individual members may also present petitions if they wish to do so. Petitioners sometimes approach their local member to present a petition on their behalf and, on occasion, they are approached by people from outside their electorate as well. This may be because the member has been known to have an interest in a particular policy area and wishes to be associated with and support the subject matter of the petition. This way, the member may speak on the subject matter of that particular petition, thereby creating a greater focus on the issue.

Standing order 207 states that members wishing to present petitions may do so at certain times of the sitting day. They are during 90-second statements in the House or Federation Chamber, the three-minute Constituency Statements debate in the Federation Chamber or adjournment debates in the House or Federation Chamber and grievance debates in the Federation Chamber. The Petitions Committee secretariat liaise with the member to arrange the delivery of the petition for presentation to the House. On occasion, the petitioner will arrange to be in the gallery when their petition is being presented by a member, as this does represent a significant moment in their life or the life of the petition and that of the principal petitioner, and it marks the culmination of all their hard work gathering signatures. I look forward to further updating the House on the work of the Petitions Committee in the future.

COMMITTEES
Economics Committee
Report

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (16:42): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Economics, I present the committee's report entitled Review of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission annual report 2018 together with the minutes of proceedings.

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

Mr TIM WILSON: by leave—On 16 October 2019, the committee scrutinised the Australian Securities and Investments Commission on its performance and regulatory responsibilities. This was the committee's first hearing with ASIC since the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry released its final report.

The royal commission found that Australia's financial sector suffered from a lack of moral leadership and a corporate culture motivated by greed. Evidence provided to the royal commission exposed shocking and widespread examples of misconduct and highlighted systemic failures throughout the banking and financial services sector. Revelations of further misconduct have continued to come to light following the conclusion of the Hayne royal commission.

The community expects the big banks and other financial institutions to be held to account and to fear their regulator. However, the royal commission found that ASIC had a deeply entrenched culture of negotiating outcomes rather than insisting upon public denunciation of and punishment for wrongdoing. Commissioner Hayne emphasised that compliance with the law is not a matter of choice and that negotiation and persuasion without enforcement all too readily lead to the perception that compliance is voluntary.

The government has been working to implement the royal commission's recommendations and strengthen financial regulators to ensure a fair, strong and efficient financial system for all Australians. In April 2019 the government introduced a design and distribution obligations regime for financial firms as well as product intervention powers. This will assist consumers to obtain appropriate financial products by requiring issuers and distributors to have a consumer-centric approach by designing, marketing and distributing financial products. It will also allow ASIC to regulate or, if necessary, ban potentially harmful financial and credit products where there is a risk of significant consumer detriment.

In this report the committee scrutinised ASIC's progress in implementing these reforms recommended by the royal commission. It considers ASIC's program of change, including its new enforcement strategy, which focused on increased and accelerated court based outcomes and the use of new and tougher penalties. ASIC's more intensive supervisory approach aims to improve the culture and behaviour of financial firms. The committee also scrutinised the advice that ASIC is providing to the public for accuracy.

It is essential we restore trust, eliminate conflicts of interest and raise standards of professionalism in Australia's financial services industry. This will require not only the efforts of government and regulators but also the efforts and actions of leaders and individuals within the sector.
The committee also scrutinised the activities of ASIC outside the focus on the Hayne royal commission, in particular focusing on a number of issues, such as advice that ASIC is providing in the public square around the costs and structures of self-managed super funds. As chair, I raised a specific question about their fact sheet, which made the case that the cost of administering a self-managed super fund is $13,900 a year. In that inquiry I outlined that I disagree with that assessment, and I have requested the Australian Taxation Office to provide the evidence base that ASIC claims is the justification for producing such a number in the interests of the public. The Australian Taxation Office has agreed to do so, and I look forward to them reporting publicly about the factual, accurate cost of running a self-managed super fund into the future. I would suggest to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission that they look at and review their documentation in light of that new data and consider whether it properly informs the Australian people, enabling them to fulfil their proper, accurate function to inform the Australian community.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the chair of ASIC, Mr James Shipton, and other ASIC representatives for appearing at the hearing. I also thank the committee secretariat, who always do a very diligent job, particularly given a challenging chair such as myself. I commend the report to the House.

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (16:47): by leave—The royal commission's final report observed, of ASIC, its 'deeply entrenched culture of negotiating outcomes rather than insisting upon public denunciation of, and punishment for, wrongdoing'. Commissioner Hayne raised a number of concerns about the policies and culture of ASIC, and these were issues that the committee's deliberations went directly to. We spoke to ASIC about their optimal litigation success rate. They advise that in the five years to 2018-19 their enforcement litigation success rate has been above 90 per cent. That does suggest that, while they're having a good record in court, they may not be sufficiently aggressive in taking cases to court. The conversation over the optimal litigation success rate will be an ongoing one between our committee and ASIC.

ASIC has also been doing some important work around disclosure. The old approach to financial advice used to be that, if you educated and disclosed, that would take care of matters. This somehow assumes that people have all the time in the world to acquire appropriate financial education and read long-form documents. In the real world people are time poor. They don't necessarily have the time to invest in getting their heads around the details of financial instruments and don't have the time to work their way through long-form disclosure. ASIC's new work has confirmed that long-form disclosure is often not an effective consumer protection. That work is informed by behavioural economics research over the last few decades. When a product has more than two or three features, it becomes extremely hard for even a well-informed consumer to choose between the different products. As ASIC's report explained, sludge is where there are 'unnecessary frictions in the market' that make it very difficult for a consumer. It is easy for them to get into a product but difficult to get out of a product. But, also, it is very difficult for a consumer to lodge a complaint. Sludge gets in the way, ultimately, if the accountable person within that firm, let alone the directors, knows that complaints are being lodged. The committee will continue to monitor ASIC's work in this area, but I do commend ASIC on their work on looking at the limitations of disclosure and the importance of simple disclosure.

The committee also quizzed ASIC about their work on the rate of return of self-managed superannuation funds. ASIC's work finds that funds with balances under $50,000 delivered, in the most recent available year, a return of minus 15 per cent; for funds from $50,000 to $100,000, a return of minus five per cent; and, for funds from $100,000 to $200,000, a return of minus half a per cent. It's pretty extraordinary that these funds are, on average, losing their members' money and that even self-managed superannuation funds with balances under $500,000 have lower returns, after expenses and tax, compared to industry and retail super funds. ASIC's work to ensure that people aren't adversely steered into self-managed superannuation funds is important, and the committee will continue a conversation with them over that issue.

I also raised with ASIC the issue of tracker mortgages. ASIC wrote what I thought was a good note in 2016, encouraging lenders to offer tracker mortgages. They seem to have backed off from that view and say that they're now agnostic regarding tracker-rate mortgages. In my view that's a mistake, and I'm yet to see evidence that overturns ASIC's well-thought-out statement in 2016.

ASIC also talked to us about their views on a beneficial ownership register. Australia's share register is unusually opaque, making it very difficult to find out who really owns Australian shares. It's too easy for shell companies to hide the true owners of firms, and this can lead to difficulties in combatting financial crime if regulators are unable to find out who the true owners of firms are. ASIC spoke about the benefits of beneficial ownership registers. I would like it if the government moved more speedily on this. It was a commitment made by the former minister, Kelly O'Dwyer, which the government has subsequently abandoned. A beneficial ownership register would be of great benefit to anyone who wants to understand who truly owns Australian firms.
Finally, I commend ASIC on their important work on the commissions paid by fund managers to advisers and stockbrokers selling listed investment companies and listed investment trusts. As I understand, ASIC advice to Treasury in August of last year said:

It is hard, on the historical data available, to justify maintaining the stamping fee exemption from conflicted remuneration for these products.

That advice also went on to say:

Higher stamping (selling) fees for LICs and LITs are correlated with worse investment returns and bigger discounts to NTA [net tangible assets].

I commend the work that the shadow minister for financial services has been doing on this—he'll be speaking on that matter later today or tomorrow—and the work of journalist Christopher Joye, from The Australian Financial Review, who has been a strong critic of the decision by the coalition to open a loophole which allowed these highly risky investments to be sold at a disadvantage to consumers.

DELEGATION REPORTS

Australian Parliamentary Delegation to the 38th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Australia and Pacific Regional Conference

Mr GORMAN (Perth) (16:53): I present the report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to the 38th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Australia and Pacific Regional Conference held in South Australia from 18 to 21 November 2019, and I ask leave of the House to make a short statement in connection with the report.

Leave granted.

Mr GORMAN: This conference was on urbanisation and the role of parliamentarians in that huge change that we are seeing happen across the world. It's important for all of us in this chamber, whether we are from a regional or a city electorate, and of course it's important for my electorate of Perth, including the Perth CBD. The chair of the CPA noted in her statement that half of our world live in cities and some 2.5 billion more people will live in cities come 2050. That is a huge challenge and one that parliaments can't just leave to the executive and that was the theme of many of the contributions to this conference.

It was a conference that welcomed many first time visitors to Australia, including many Australian friends from across the Pacific. It was a conference full of ideas. I love ideas and I love conferences where you're able to share things, thinking a little bit more long term. We were able to hear from the Queensland delegates about their implementation of regional parliamentary sittings, something some in this chamber know that I would love us to do on a national level. We heard from delegates of the Northern Territory talking about the risk of losing the unique character of our beloved regional towns as urbanisation continues at pace. We heard New Zealand parliamentarians talk about the benefits of having bilingual and bilingual sign language interpreters in the chamber of their parliament. We heard from delegates of Bougainville about the hope of independence and how that can be important in preserving culture and managing urbanisation.

I also note that the South Australian parliament were very kind to take us and the South Australian government on a number of tours, including to Bowden where we saw the old Clipsal factory that has turned into a urban renewal project; to Tonsley where the old Mitsubishi car factory is where they have prevented carbon emissions by building within the existing infrastructure on that site, including a TAFE South Australia. It's a fabulous site where they are teaching electrical work and plumbing. And if you want to see a very excited member for Perth at that TAFE you can see it in the report.

Finally, we did have a lovely dinner at the Mortlock wing of the State Library of South Australia, which I learnt claims to be the most beautiful library in Australia. I think definitely when it comes to books and libraries beauty is on the inside not the outside. But it is definitely a beautiful library.

I would like to thank all of the delegates who attended the conference, especially those for whom it was their first time visiting Australia. I would like to say a special thank you to Sarah Fielder, who is in the chamber now, to Jerome Brown and to the South Australian parliament for hosting us all.

COMMITTEES

Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme

Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Andrews) (16:57): I have received advice from the chief government whip nominating members to be members of the Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme.
Mr COULTON (Parkes—Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government) (16:57): By leave—I move:

That Dr Allen, Dr Webster, Ms Hammond and Mr Sharma be appointed members of the Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme.

Question agreed to.

**BILLS**

**National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment Bill 2019**

**Consideration of Senate Message**

Message received from the Senate returning the bill and acquainting the House that:

The Senate has passed a bill for an act to amend the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 and for related purposes and transmits it to the House of Representatives for its concurrence.

**First Reading**

Bill received from Senate and read a first time.

Ordered that the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting day.

**Treasury Laws Amendment (Research and Development Tax Incentive) Bill 2019**

**Second Reading**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Andrews): The question is this bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

**Third Reading**

Mr COULTON (Parkes—Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government) (16:59): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

**Trade Support Loans Amendment (Improving Administration) Bill 2019**

**Second Reading**

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms KEARNEY (Cooper) (17:00): I rise this afternoon to speak on the Trade Support Loans Amendment (Improving Administration) Bill 2019. I will say upfront that Labor will not seek to oppose this legislation. We welcome the practical effects which will simplify the way overpayments are treated so that trade support loan debts can be repaid through the Australian tax system, establishing an effective offsetting arrangement.

Let's take two examples of overpayment: an apprentice receives a payment larger than their correct payment while undertaking their apprenticeship, and an apprentice has finished her training but has yet to receive her qualification—in the interim she's no longer eligible to receive the payment but mistakenly still receives instalments. Under the current arrangements both overpayments would be recovered through debt arrangements, normally where a payment plan would be agreed between parties and even sometimes through the court system. Under the proposed arrangements, in the two cases, the overpayment in one instalment would be offset by a reduced payment in the next or a subsequent instalment so that debt recovery arrangements do not have to be used. The registrar would have the power to deem the ineligible payment a valid TSL payment, and the amount would be added to the apprentice's total TSL debt to be repaid over time. The other amendments provide the secretary with the discretion to extend the time period for notifying of a change of address and increase the time period, from seven to 14 days, that an apprentice has to inform the department of a change of circumstances. More broadly, this is just another tweak to a sector that requires genuine reform.

The Liberals have trashed the vocational education system. They've torn out funding from under TAFE and training. They've led an apprenticeship numbers freefall and presided over a national shortage of tradies, trainees and apprentices. Apart from the $3 billion they've cut from the sector, Senate estimates reveal there is an additional $1 billion underspend for TAFE, training and apprenticeship programs. It's no wonder the number of Australians doing an apprenticeship or traineeship is lower today than it was a decade ago, even though the
Australian population has surged in that time. Under the Liberal government there are 150,000 fewer apprentices and trainees, and there is a shortage of workers in critical services, including plumbing, carpentry, hairdressing and motor mechanics. More people are dropping out of apprenticeships and traineeships than are actually finishing them. There are a myriad of reasons why that's happening, and the government are not addressing any of them. There has been nearly a 10 per cent increase in the number of occupations facing skills shortages. As I said before, they've slashed $3 billion from TAFE funding. Do they really think anyone believes that the underspend is because of a lack of demand? They're kidding themselves if they do.

Youth unemployment is at an all-time high. Employers who are desperate for skilled workers can't get them. Seventy-five per cent of employers are telling us that they can't get skilled workers for their businesses. Kids who would love an apprenticeship or a traineeship could fill those skills gaps in a minute. I know young people who would jump at the offer of a decent future, with a qualification for life, and employers would employ them. Is it any wonder that, under this government, our TAFEs are in disrepair and that apprentice and trainee numbers have fallen off a cliff? The Liberal government in New South Wales have sacked 5,700 staff since coming to power, and, if that wasn't bad enough, they've announced that another 196 jobs are to go out of TAFE before Christmas.

It's in the Liberals' DNA to attack TAFE. With a skills shortage and high youth unemployment, we need a government that believes in the value of TAFE, not one that takes to it with an axe at every opportunity. The government have said that they want to see the VET and university sectors on equal footing. This is a common goal shared across this political divide. But the Liberals have failed to commit to the funding and reform required to achieve this important outcome. In fact, a recent report from the independent National Centre for Vocational Education Research shows that Scott Morrison and the Liberals cut federal funding for TAFE and training by a staggering $326 million last year, an almost 11 per cent drop; $326 million could pay for an extra 32,000 trainees or apprentices.

Nothing illustrates the divide between the university sector and the VET sector like comparing the experiences of students in each system. Professor Nick Klomp, Vice-Chancellor and President of CQUniversity Australia, wrote about this so wonderfully:

Pete and Rebecca both graduate from North Rockhampton High School with good grades. Pete chooses university, Rebecca prefers an apprenticeship. Pete enrolls in a Bachelor of Engineering degree, is accepted and can start studying in a guaranteed spot within weeks. Should Pete need it, fully funded programs exist to give him confidence and academic preparedness from even before his first class right through to graduation. As an Australian citizen, Pete is entitled to what is known as "the best loan you'll ever receive"—a low-interest HELP loan with generous income-threshold repayments. This loan covers 100 per cent of the student contribution component of the tuition fees for his four years of study, with the Commonwealth government funding 100 per cent of the remainder of his tuition fees. And Pete's first employer, a local civil engineering firm, gets a fully qualified, job-ready, mature graduate delivered on a silver platter, courtesy of the system. Pete's employer bore no direct expense and bore none of the risk in the administration of Pete's education.

What about Rebecca, the aspiring apprentice? The system expects Rebecca, as a 17-year-old, to scour her chosen industry for a potential employer, then negotiate the terms of her employment and training package with senior management. She has zero room for error here. If Rebecca doesn't nail this step, someone else will get her spot. There's no student loan available to Rebecca unless her apprenticeship is geared at the diploma level or higher. And even if she is eligible, Rebecca faces an upfront loan administrative fee that is taxed, from which Pete is exempt. Let's assume Rebecca begins her apprenticeship, which will take 3½ years to complete. There are zero guarantees that she will be allowed to complete her training, even if she performs at the very highest level. This is because she trains at the discretion of her employer, who hires at the discretion of the economy. Should the Australian dollar rise or the price of coal drop, Rebecca may lose her apprenticeship partway through her studies and is effectively cast out on the street to start over—and this happens regularly. Should Rebecca's employer manage to keep her on during volatile periods, they have to endure at least two costly years of high-supervision, low-skill output from Rebecca while her skills develop. Meanwhile, the government contribution received by my university to manage the vital classroom aspects of Rebecca's training is, on average, less than one-third of the funding received for an equivalent higher education qualification. This is despite the provision of qualified educators, practical workshops, learning materials, facilities and consumables being comparable to that of students such as Pete.

Luck is arguably the major factor in determining whether Rebecca's journey through the system is successful, whereas Pete has to worry only about his own merit. Does this reflect on how differently Australia respects the career choices made by Rebecca and Pete?
This is one of the key challenges, and I'm afraid this government is failing to put VET and universities on equal footing.

In my electorate of Cooper, I have manufacturers in textile, clothing, footwear, food production, beverage production and the automotive industry. I have businesses that are desperate for skilled workers, and they see me every other week and tell me they just can't get them and that they would in a minute snap up people on traineeships and apprenticeships. I have parents, young ones and—we mustn't forget—older people needing to reskill, telling me every day that they would jump at a training opportunity. So don't tell me and don't tell the
people of Australia that the demand isn't there. That is complete rubbish! And, by saying so, the Prime Minister is misleading the Australian people.

The government are underspending on vocational education and training the same way that they are on the National Disability Insurance Scheme—and it is totally on purpose. The effect of overzealous application of competition policy and privatisation in the VET sector, coupled with chronic underfunding, has had devastating effects. In too many towns and regional centres across Australia, TAFE campuses have closed, courses have been scaled back and fees have increased. Young people in regional areas keen to stay near home and family or unable to afford to move away to study benefit greatly from regional TAFEs, enabling them to gain skills and give them a start. Regional TAFEs are often the hub of a regional town's community. They offer employment; they offer business to local enterprises; and they bring communities together for events and provide an oft-needed boost to morale. This abject failing of the government to protect TAFE has had a real effect on people's lives.

The Australian Industry Group, as I said before, has a survey that found that 75 per cent of businesses are struggling to find the qualified workers they need. This isn't about young people not wanting to work, as the government and some media outlets would have us believe; this is about training and skilling opportunities simply not being available where they are needed. This government is not supporting industry and workers to get the skills they need. While businesses are crying out for more trained staff, there are about 1.9 million Australians who are unemployed or underemployed. Why isn't the Prime Minister taking more responsibility for getting those people into jobs in industries where there's a shortage of workers? It can't be rocket science. I think it's because the Liberal government see this simply as a cost—a threat to their precious surplus, just like the billions of dollars they have underspent on the NDIS and just like they cut funding to TAFE and vocational training.

The minister makes noises—and lots of them—about how important the sector is, how we need to encourage enrolments and how we need to get people to take up courses. The government has announced 10 industry training hubs, but we still have no real information on what they are. Is it a person? Is it a building? Is it an institution? Is it a contract? Labor will support any measure that gets young people into training and jobs, but we need a lot more than 10 hubs. How will it get the kids into TAFE courses if there aren't any TAFEs or vocational education and training providers around the hub? And how do they plan to get them into decent, secure work? We're a little bit scant on the detail of this 'brilliant idea.' We don't even really know where they are going to be chosen to be put. How do the areas get chosen? Who decided who gets one of these hubs and who will get to go there?

The Liberals keep referring to what happened in Labor's time. Well, we were actually trying to stop a well-used rort by employers who were putting trainees through certificates, sometimes without the employee's knowledge, using dodgy providers. We stopped that, quite rightly. But, you see, Labor had a plan—a plan to revitalise the public provider, restart the VET system and rebuild the sector. This government has learnt nothing. It has no plan to rebuild and revitalise. Numbers have fallen to a lower point than a decade ago. The government can't keep blaming everyone else. They can't keep blaming anyone other than themselves.

'Oh,' said the Prime Minister, 'there's nothing to see here,' when he was asked about this underspend, 'because it's a demand-driven system. We pay on demand,' he said, 'We pay everything that's asked of us.' Well, people and businesses need a skills training sector that is properly funded, that is properly resourced and that has educators who are properly trained and properly paid—I might add, through decent jobs—with the ability to skill these kids and unemployed adults as a pathway to meaningful employment. The government hasn't delivered on a single element of those.

Day after day I hear of young people who do their best—they're trying to skill up; they're trying to get a job—but they are up against a system that is actively pushing them away. They are up against funding cuts and a government that is actually hostile towards VET and, by extension, a government that is dismantling the already limited pathways for young people to gain employment. The latest statistics from the ABS show we have a youth unemployment rate of 11.8 per cent, and we know that it's so much higher in our regional areas. That's around 295,000 young people who are actively searching for work but coming up short. Interestingly, I have been meeting with employers in my electorate and around Victoria who are crying out for skilled workers. Manufacturers, people in food production, disability equipment manufacturers and many more are worried about how they will attract a productive and skilled workforce. This is not simply because nobody wants these jobs. It's symptomatic of a skills shortage crisis gripping Australia. Maybe young people aren't gaining the skills needed to take up these jobs, because of the $3 billion cut from vocational education. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that their $525 million dollar Skills Package includes only $54.5 million of new funding. Maybe it has something to do with the continued funding cuts, the closure of TAFE campuses around Australia or the government's refusal to listen to the sector, to young people or to educators screaming out for real investment. The government's answer to all this is a few hubs, and we're not sure what or where they are.
Let's not forget that the government hired Scott Cam. Scott Cam has been snapped up by the government to promote Australia's trades to young people. Don't get me wrong; I'm sure he is a good bloke and I take no offence at the promotion of trades. But young people should be taking up trades and we should be promoting secure, decent jobs. I do, however, find it shocking that the government is paying the National Careers Ambassador—I don't know how much—while they cut $3 billion from the sector and underspend by nearly another $1 billion. They see fit to cut all of that money from VET, to cut funds from group training organisations, to cut TAFE funding and to put educators out of work. Their policies have caused the number of apprentices and trainees to fall by 150,000, and they are more likely to drop out than to finish, and we have a skills crisis. Even when all of that is true, when all of this is happening right around them, when there is a perfect storm coming their way with regard to skills shortages and youth unemployment, what do they? They hire a celebrity. Great—just great!

At least this announcement provided some comic relief from the reality of the government's plan for employment and skills training in Australia. The situation we currently face is an indictment of this government. We are simultaneously experiencing a crisis in youth unemployment and a crisis in skills shortages. It is bad enough dealing with one of these, but both of them at the same time is hard. If we continue down this path we will jeopardise our future economic growth, we will undermine the opportunity for Australians to meet their full potential and, very importantly, we will compromise our ability as a nation to use the skills, knowledge, discoveries and inventions of our people to compete with the rest of the world. We know that nine out of 10 jobs created in the future will need a post-secondary-school education, either TAFE or university, so we need to increase participation in both universities and our VET sector in order to make sure that we as a nation are prepared for the world of work. Every young school leaver should have a choice about their future, based on their ability and not their postcode or their parents' credit card. It is just not fair that a student on the North Shore of Sydney is five times more likely to go to university than a student in the Moreton Bay region of Queensland.

Funding education is an investment in our nation's future prosperity, not a cost burden. A government without a plan for education and training has no plan for Australia's future, and if it's not planning for the future why is this government here at all? This third-term government simply refuses to deliver a genuine reform package that overhauls and properly funds vocational training providers to deliver the services their students need. Consequently, 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 notes that the Government has failed students, workers, business and the economy by:

(1) presiding over a national shortage in skilled tradespeople, noting that the number of Australians doing an apprenticeship or traineeship is lower today than it was a decade ago;

(2) failing to tackle falling completion rates, as there are more people dropping out of apprenticeships and trainee ships than finishing them; and

(3) cutting TAFE and training by over $3 billion and short-changing vocational education by nearly $1 billion".

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

Dr Leigh: I second the amendment and reserve my right to speak.

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (17:20): I rise in the House today to speak in support of the Trade Support Loans Amendment (Improving Administration) Bill 2019. The coalition government is committed to ensuring Australians have the right skills for the workforce of today and tomorrow. The changes in this bill play an important role in reducing the administrative burden on Australian apprentices and the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network providers.

In my electorate of Bonner there are more than 17,000 small and medium businesses, many who support and rely on the work of young apprentices who are starting their careers. Thanks to the coalition government's commitment to job creation we are helping many of these small businesses, with $1.1 billion to fund employer incentives and support apprentices—a very worthwhile program. We want to see Australia's apprentices successfully complete their apprenticeships and go on and build fulfilling and exciting careers. Starting an apprenticeship can be tough. The financial cost of buying tools, equipment and vehicles, on top of living costs, can put a financial strain on young people and can seem like a lot to take on.

In July 2014 the Australian government introduced trade support loans to help ease the financial burden on young apprentices starting out and help them succeed. The loans provide up to $21,078 over four years to eligible apprentices to assist them with the cost of living and learning while undertaking their training. During the 2018-19 financial year, the Trade Support Loans program provided financial support to 55,998 Australian apprentices. These loans are normally repaid through the Australian taxation system once a former apprentice's income reaches the minimum repayment income threshold.
Payments are managed by the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network, AASN, providers. While in receipt of a trade support loan, an apprentice must notify their provider of any change in their circumstances that may impact on their eligibility. This could include an apprentice changing employers or suspending their apprenticeship. Where a payment is made and the apprentice has not notified their provider of the change, the apprentice may incur an overpayment debt to the Commonwealth, which needs to be repaid immediately. This trade support loan amendment bill will allow offsetting arrangements to be implemented where the apprentice is eligible to receive trade support loan instalments in the future. Future instalments are reduced by the instalment amounts already received in error until the debt is fully remedied.

While in receipt of a trade support loan, Australian apprentices are also required to inform the secretary if their address or circumstances change. Currently, apprentices must notify of a change of address within 14 days. This bill allows notification to occur after 14 days. Currently, apprentices must notify of a change of circumstances within seven days, but this bill allows notification to occur within 14 days. These changes will, importantly, reduce the administrative burden on Australian apprentices and Australian Apprenticeship Support Network providers.

Time and time again, our government has committed to reducing the red tape and making conditions easier for Australians to undergo skills training, apprenticeships or study. The coalition government wants to equip Australians with the skills that they need for good, secure jobs and to reduce the red tape burden. This bill supports both these goals and it has my full support. I commend this bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Andrews): I thank the honourable member for Bonner. Could I just point out to the member for Bonner that apparently his microphone was not on at the beginning of his remarks, because his allotted seat is the one to his right.

Mr Vasta interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I'll just say to the member for Bonner, we'll sort it out, but I'm just explaining why his microphone, according to the advice I have, was not on.

Mr Vasta: I think they might think I'm still back over there.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (17:25): Labor will be supporting this bill, but I'm also speaking in support of the second reading amendment that's been moved by the shadow assistant minister, which rightly points out what this government has done to the trade and vocational training system in this country with the withdrawal of funding—with the large fall in the number of people commencing and finishing apprenticeships in this country and the fact that the public vocational education and training system is in the worst state that it's ever been in this country.

This bill, the Trade Support Loans Amendment (Improving Administration) Bill 2019, makes some tweaks to the program of loans available to apprentices undertaking a qualifying apprenticeship in an occupation where there's a national skills shortage. But our vocational system doesn't just need tweaks; it needs genuine reform. It's crying out for genuine reform, and fiddling at the edges of the current system won't address the problems that undermine vocational training and education in Australia that are having a severe impact on productivity and the international competitiveness of our economy. Australians want someone who's a leader, a government that will show leadership, on this issue of promoting vocational education and training in Australia.

Often when we think of our education system, the concentration and the focus is on school education. We've seen what's been occurring in that sector over recent years with the dramatic fall in Australia's international rankings, according to the PISA outcomes. But just as important to school education is ongoing education. In fact, that's the key to lifting productivity and providing people with the means to get good, full-time, genuine employment in the workforce. And a strong vocational system, government-backed, that ensures that vocational education and training and apprenticeships are available to all—regardless of your background, regardless of your parents' income, regardless of where you live—is very important. We know that those opposite have been involved in fundamentally undermining the public education system when it comes to trades and apprenticeships, particularly the TAFE system, by withdrawing funding, by restructuring, by increasing competitive pressures within the industry and, basically, by ensuring that the system, through a combination of a federal and state Liberal government, doesn't prosper into the future.

It's no wonder that our vocational system has been trashed by the Abbot-Turnbull-Morrison government. Funding cuts to TAFE and training, apprenticeship numbers falling and shortages of tradies, apprentices and trainees—this third-term government simply refuses to deliver a genuine reform package that overhauls the vocational training sector. More than six years of this Liberal government has left Australia facing a crisis in our vocational education and training sector and a severe skills shortage in certain industries throughout the country.

That's why Labor took to the last election a policy of promoting scholarships for people who were willing to take on apprenticeships and further training in areas where there are skills shortages throughout this country. In a
number of key occupations, particularly engineering related occupations—and I include both computer engineering and more physical engineering occupations throughout the country—there has been a massive shortage of skills, with employers unable to get the necessary qualified people to fill positions within their organisations. That's necessitated one of the largest increases in visas for foreign workers to come into Australia to take on those roles for which employers have been unable to find local, domestic, qualified, skilled labour to take on here in Australia. If this government doesn't do something serious to fix the skills crisis that they've created, we could be looking at this continuing for decades and being a serious handbrake on growth and productivity in this country, particularly with a growing population.

We've all seen in recent years what population growth has done, particularly in cities like Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, in terms of the liveability of those cities and the provision of public transport and transport infrastructure and the lack of that transport infrastructure to keep up with the pace of population growth. A lot of that is due to the fact that there are serious skills shortages in those engineering and building trades that have put a handbrake on the development of many of those projects. It's not uncommon to hear stories of welders, specialist plumbers and specialist carpenters being imported from overseas to fill positions on infrastructure projects because there are simply not enough tradies here in Australia to do that work. That's what happens when you decimate the public vocational training and education system in this country. The results speak for themselves. This isn't rhetoric from the Labor Party. This isn't the Labor Party being partisan. The facts and the numbers speak for themselves. That fact is that under this Liberal government there were 150,000 fewer apprentices and trainees in Australia than when they took government. That says everything about their commitment to vocational education and training in this country. That's causing a shortage of workers in critical services, including plumbing, carpentry, welding, hairdressing and motor mechanics. The number of Australians doing an apprenticeship or traineeship today is lower than it was a decade ago. These are areas where government can make a difference, and that's why Labor was proposing such scholarships to boost the number of people and to wipe out those TAFE fees for people in areas where there were skills shortages, in order to encourage particularly younger Australians, when they finish school, to look at the trade route as a serious career option.

There are more people dropping out of apprenticeships and traineeships at the moment than there are finishing them. That is a shocking statistic for any government to have under their watch: more people dropping out of apprenticeships than there are finishing. There's nearly a 10 per cent increase in the number of occupations facing skills shortages. We all know that this government has slashed $3 billion from TAFE and training. That's the result of slashing that funding from TAFE and vocational training: you get those falls in the number of people starting and finishing apprenticeships and traineeships.

Not only have they cut funding, not only have we got fewer people starting apprenticeships, but they have also, in combination with Liberal governments, particularly in the state that I represent of New South Wales, had massive hikes in the cost of fees to take on apprenticeships and traineeships in New South Wales. I'm talking cost hikes in the vicinity of 300 per cent increase in fees over one year. That is a deterrent to people, particularly from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and people who aren't well off, from starting apprenticeships and traineeships. That's not the sort of system that we want to be encouraging when we have a shortage of skilled workers and a shortage of people taking on training in the vocational sector.

But the Liberal government just doesn't care enough or have the capacity to do the hard work and what needs to be done to rebuild the TAFE system, not only in New South Wales but in other areas as well. Unlike Labor, the government doesn't understand the critical role of TAFE as the public provider, the value in skills and apprenticeships or the value of hardworking and passionate public TAFE teachers. I want to pay tribute to the TAFE teachers, not only in the electorate that I represent but across Australia, for their passion and their commitment to public vocational training. It is admirable that people who take on trades and build businesses give back to their particular trade by taking on the role of being TAFE teachers. It's something that we need to encourage more. It's, again, something that Labor was looking at at the last election—to encourage more people to look at the trades as a vocational area for teaching into the future.

The effect of the overzealous application of some competition policy and privatisation in the VET sector, coupled with a chronic underfunding, has had devastating effects on the sector. Too often we've seen dodgy providers overload students for a quick profit and then go belly up, leaving students out of pocket and without the qualifications that they need. I will say, it did take this government a very, very long time to act on that, when the writing was on the wall for many years. We all saw the stories of dodgy providers encouraging people to sign up to courses with the promise of a laptop and other inducements when they knew very, very well that they weren't getting value for money. Ultimately they went bust and left many, many students in the lurch, having paid big fees to access those courses, with no qualifications and nowhere to go and, in some cases, no recognition of the prior learning that they'd undertaken.
The TAFE system in Australia is in serious decline under this government, and Labor will hold the government to account for those cuts to funding, for those reductions in the number of people starting apprenticeships and, indeed, for the massive increases in fees. All of this, collectively, is discouraging Australians from taking up apprenticeships and trades. It's reflected in the numbers, and it's a handbrake on growth and productivity improvements in this country.

This bill amends the Trade Support Loans Act to introduce offsetting arrangements as an alternative way of recovering overpayment trade-support loan debts. It also increases the time period that a TSL recipient has to inform the department of changes to circumstances. The amendments are designed to reduce the administrative burden on the department and the recipients and reduce the reliance on traditional debt-recovery practices.

The TSL program makes loans available to apprentices who've undertaken a qualifying apprenticeship in an occupation where there's a national skills shortage. The loans are concessional income contingent and subject to a lifetime limit of $20,000, indexed from 2017. The loans are repaid through a similar mechanism to the HECS-HELP loans scheme system and recovered through the taxation system once the recipient meets the minimum income threshold. The key amendment in this bill will change the way overpayments are treated to reduce the circumstances in which current debt-recovery processes have to be used. Under the current arrangements, when a recipient receives an incorrect payment it becomes an overpayment debt to the Commonwealth and is recovered as a judgement debt through the courts or under a repayment arrangement. There are proposed amendments introducing an alternative offsetting arrangement, where the underpayment can be recovered by reducing a future payment instalment or be determined as a legitimate TSL payment and added to the recipient's total TSL debt to be repaid once the recipient meets the minimum income threshold. For instance, if an apprentice receives a payment larger than his correct payment rate whilst undertaking his apprenticeship, the overlap could be offset by a reduced payment in the next or subsequent instalment so that debt-recovery arrangements do not have to be used.

The other amendments provide the secretary with a discretion to extend the time period for notifying of a change of address and increase, from seven to 14 days, the time period that an apprentice has to inform the department of a change to circumstances.

These changes represent sensible minor amendments to this particular scheme, and that's why Labor will support them. But as I mentioned at the outset, what is needed—instead of tinkering around the edges and minor changes—is wholesale support for a stronger TAFE and vocational training system in this country. We need a system that is built on the premise of an increase in funding and an increase in a commitment from a government to support vocational training in this country and hopefully arrest the woeful decline that we've seen in apprenticeship starts and finishes in this country and the underlying effect that has had on productivity and on growth in Australia.

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Minister for International Development and the Pacific and Assistant Defence Minister) (17:40): I present an addendum to the explanatory memorandum. In commencing my contribution, I want to thank all members for their contributions to this important debate. The Trade Support Loans Amendment (Improving Administration) Bill 2019 will improve the administration of the Trade Support Loans program. The bill will provide another avenue for Australian apprentices to repay an overpayment debt and will also align the notification periods to allow for more flexibility when administering the program.

I would also like to thank the Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills for their consideration. As requested by the committee, an addendum to the explanatory memorandum has been tabled to explain why it is necessary and appropriate to leave significant matters, such as the circumstances in which the amounts of later trade support loan instalments may be reduced, to delegated legislation. Once again, I thank all members for their contributions and I commend the bill to the House.

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

The House divided. [17:46]

Ayes ................. 68
Noes ................. 76
Majority .............. 8

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP

Aly, A
Bird, SL

CHAMBER
AYES
Bowen, CE
Burney, L
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Murphy, PJ
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakoumi, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH
Burke, AS
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
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
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O'Brien, LS
O'Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharkie, RCC
Simmonds, J
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Haines, H
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O'Brien, T
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Sharma, DN
Steggall, Z
Sukkar, MS
Tchan, DT
Tudge, AE
Question negatived.
Original question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Minister for International Development and the Pacific and Assistant Defence Minister) (17:52): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Student Identifiers Amendment (Enhanced Student Permissions) Bill 2019

Second Reading

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

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney) (17:53): I'm very pleased to rise this evening to speak on the Student Identifiers Amendment (Enhanced Student Permissions) Bill 2019. I will 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 notes that, under the Coalition Government, Australia's vocational education and training system is failing kids, workers, businesses and the economy, as demonstrated by presiding over a skills crisis where:
(1) 150,000 apprentices and trainees have been lost;
(2) more than $3 billion has been cut from TAFE and training;
(3) the Government has short-changed TAFE and training by nearly $1 billion; and
(4) our regions have been left behind while unemployment increases".

Labor won't oppose this bill in the House of Representatives, but of course we would like to draw attention to the government's ongoing failure in the area of vocational education and training. This bill allows employers, employment agencies and licensing bodies to access an individual's vocational education and training transcripts upon request and where an individual allows that access. The bill also introduces civil penalties for anyone who alters or fraudulently produces a vocational education and training transcript or who attempts to apply for a second unique student identifier. With some important caveats, these are useful changes.

We recognise that these amendments have been designed in response to interest from employers, employment agencies and Commonwealth and state and territory licensing bodies, based on the need of those bodies to access authenticated VET transcripts whilst also streamlining recruitment and application processes. Labor voted in favour of unique student identifiers for VET students when they were established in 2014, and we understand their value to the education and training system. There's the benefit I mentioned with streamlining application processes and so on, but we will also potentially have a rich source of de-identified data from these figures.

Another bill that is currently before the parliament would extend the unique student identifier from vocational education and training to higher education. Of course, if implemented properly, with proper sensitivity to privacy, this could enhance our understanding of Australia's education system. If we have the data from vocational education and training and data from higher education, we could better look at the way those two systems interact as well as results for individual students, and we'll be able to show, through the life course of a person, the benefit that an education provides.

We do, however, have some concerns about how this bill is currently designed and how it might affect people across their working life. It's important, for example, that this bill doesn't impede someone's ability to make a fresh start in life. If someone dropped out of a training course because they were young or because there was some chaos in their lives—perhaps they were facing homelessness, violence at home, mental illness or ill health of some other type or they might have been caring for a family member—it is not right that that person should be
forced to share the whole of their vocational education transcript years later when they have got their life back on track; they should only need to share the part of their qualifications that are relevant to the position that they're applying for, for example. Labor wants to make sure that students aren't placed at an unreasonable disadvantage when they're applying for jobs in such circumstances. We need to make sure that, wherever possible, privacy is protected and that individuals can properly control their own data and control the information that they share.

Under the proposed legislation, if a person wants to provide their employer with an extract of their transcript, the extract will be accompanied by a statement that the document represents only a partial qualification history. There's no equivalent requirement on university students.

We've referred this bill to an inquiry by the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee to make sure that potential unintended consequences, such as the one I've just described, that would make it harder for someone to get a fresh start in life don't appear because of this legislation. The committee is scheduled to report on 19 February. That's obviously not too far away; so we will wait to see what they report and determine our approach based on those findings. We need to make sure that, with this sort of legislation, we get the controls and the protections right.

Making it easier for employers to check people's qualifications doesn't change the fact that this government has presided over a national skills crisis where fewer people are getting those very qualifications that they need. The skills crisis is of course making it much harder for employers to find the skilled staff they need. Employers are finding it difficult to fill local job vacancies. At the same time as Australia is experiencing very widespread unemployment and underemployment, we've got almost two million Australians who either would like more hours or want a job. Yet we've got skills shortages and we've got underemployed and unemployed young people, people throughout their working lives—we're not combining those two issues to make sure that we're training those people who want the work for the jobs that are going begging.

The small tweak that this legislation represents doesn't really change the fact that in the third term of this coalition government we've seen continued underinvestment and cuts in the area of vocational education and training that are not just bad for the individuals who are missing out on a job and a career, but they're very bad for Australian employers as well, who are really struggling to find the skilled staff they need.

Just last week we saw new figures released in the Report on Government Services, the RoGS report, which showed that under this government the number of people completing training courses has almost halved since it came to power. According to that RoGS report, the number of government funded vocational education and training completions was 144,100 in 2018—the year that the report refers to—compared with 254,800 in 2014. So in 2014 there were over a quarter of a million; in 2018 there were just over 144,000. That is a 43 per cent decline in just five years. It really is shocking when you consider the skills shortages that we see around the nation.

This comes about a month after we learnt that the coalition government has short-changed vocational education and training by nearly $1 billion. This isn't cuts I'm talking about; this is an additional underspend of close to a billion dollars. That's almost a billion dollars budgeted for TAFE and training, earmarked for skills and VET, that was never spent. That billion dollars included incentives for businesses to take on apprentices, support to help people finish their apprenticeships and a fund designed to train Australians in areas of need.

That close-to-billion-dollar underspend comes on top of more than $3 billion cut from TAFE and training since Labor was last in government. The Prime Minister claims that his government wants to 'really lift the status of vocational education in Australia'. But you can't lift the status of vocational education while you're cutting billions of dollars from vocational education. You can't lift the status of TAFE and training while you're cutting billions of dollars from TAFE and training.

The government likes to say, 'The reason for the underspend is that these are demand driven programs and there's just not demand.' I don't know how any government can say there is no demand when three-quarters of employers tell you they can't find the skilled staff they need and we've got almost two million Australians who are unemployed or underemployed. In fact, every time this government cuts funding to TAFE and training we see fewer qualified graduates, falling performance across the sector and disastrous consequences for industry. There's a pattern where we see, from the Prime Minister, the spin on the surface, the fine words about lifting the status of vocational education, but the reality is declining funding and sliding standards.

After years of mismanagement and underfunding, more and more Australians have either lost confidence in our vocational education system or they've been, literally, locked out of it by higher fees, course closures or closures of TAFE campuses across Australia. Look where that's left us. We've got a genuine skills crisis in this country, a skills crisis that has become gangrenous. Under the Liberals there are 150,000 fewer apprentices and trainees than there were when Labor left office. The number of Australians doing an apprenticeship or traineeship is lower today than it was a decade ago. We've got fewer people doing an apprenticeship or a traineeship than 10 years
ago. How can that be possible, when we know the demand for those skills? That number has fallen in every state and territory. In fact, there are now more people dropping out of apprenticeships and traineeships than finishing them. That's what three billion dollars of cuts looks like in practice. That's what happens when a government underspends by a further billion dollars in a sector—which already has a shrinking budget—under enormous pressure.

As I say, businesses are desperate for more trained staff. We've got shortages of workers in so many trades that it's depressing to list them—plumbing, carpentry, hairdressing, motor mechanics, pastry chefs. It's right across the board. These are good jobs that we're not training people for, because of the underinvestment in vocational education. The Australian Industry Group says that 75 per cent of businesses surveyed are struggling to find the qualified workers they need. I see this everywhere when I'm travelling, in big cities, country towns, inner suburbs and outer suburbs. Talk to people who are looking to put on a butcher's apprentice or an apprentice electrician or a plumber, or to get a plumber to come to their house, and they'll tell you how hard it is to find a pastry chef or a cook or a hairdresser. Three-quarters of businesses want to be employing Australians but can't find enough workers with relevant skills. It's at the same time as too many of our people are looking for work or for more hours of work.

These trends should never coexist. A government with any kind of substance or imagination would be finding ways to fill these skills shortages, using our TAFE and training system to make sure that our training system is fit for purpose, fit for our economy and fit for people looking for work. But we don't have that kind of government. We've got a Prime Minister that would rather hire celebrity ambassadors than confront this country's most pressing issues. As always, we've got a Prime Minister that's looking for a marketing solution to a policy problem. We won't solve our skills crisis with a stunt. We won't rebuild TAFE and training with a gimmick. We need real leadership and we need real funding. Sadly, this Prime Minister is unlikely to provide either. 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 notes that, under the Coalition Government, Australia's vocational education and training system is failing kids, workers, businesses and the economy, as demonstrated by a skills crisis where:

(1) 150,000 apprentices and trainees have been lost;
(2) more than $3 billion has been cut from TAFE and training;
(3) the Government has short-changed TAFE and training by nearly $1 billion; and
(4) our regions have been left behind while unemployment increases".

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr McVeigh): Is the amendment seconded?

Ms McBride: I second the motion.

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (18:08): I would like to speak in support of this bill, the Student Identifiers Amendment (Enhanced Student Permissions) Bill 2019. TAFE debates have been almost always disappointing in this chamber. There's not a great deal of light on the other side, from their period in government. This government now finds itself refunding nearly a billion dollars in recrediting due to 66½ thousand Australians who were led up the garden path by VET FEE-HELP. It's probably a scar on Australia's social policy that's going to exist for a very long time. I can just continue that constant back and forth, but, ultimately, vocational education is one of Australia's political structures.

The reality is that states and territories run the system and the federal government supports where it can. We've got an agreement, called the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development, and we provide almost half of that $3 billion every year into the hands of states to deal with the very questions that, conveniently, when in opposition the opposition, the Labor Party can roll out and say the whole system's a disaster. The other $1.1 million supports employers, something that was slashed quite viciously in the final year of the Gillard administration, which is why we find ourselves in this position now, having to find ways to make the system work more harmoniously. These very modest amendments are commonsense ones. They just put the student, effectively, at the centre of their own transcripts, training records and attainments. It's universally supported in this building, as far as I can see, so really this is just another chance for those in opposition to have a swing.

The reality is that employers, VET organisations and RTOs all want to access students' records and see what they've attained. If you're delivering further education, you want to be able to see that those enrolling have got the basic prerequisites. They're all reasons why you need broader access. These changes give the students the power to identify and select who can see their transcripts, their reports, their records of achievement and their attainments. The students can choose for how long and what part of their record they see. That gives them an enormous amount of control.
It has been since 2015 that we've had a student identifier. It started in the vocational sector first. They've got nearly 10 million of these unique USIs set up. Around 1½ million people have already accessed their online records. Clearly this is a heavily used part of the system. We're just removing a huge amount of grit in the wheels by letting the students determine this and allowing stakeholders to directly be able to see students' records without having to constantly turn to a government body to arbitrate that or set up penalties for when these things are breached. There will still be those protections, of course, which I think are important.

We have a system which gets an enormous amount of Commonwealth support but that fundamentally rests in the hands of states and territories. It won't benefit anyone down in this parliament for me to list the range of concerns I have about how Queensland runs the VET system. The obvious point is, when you see the Labor Party referring to lower numbers here and smaller numbers there, that we've actually made demand driven tertiary education something that almost every Australian with certain scores can aspire to, so we have seen an absolute expansion of tertiary education and, self-evidently, we have vocational providers saying, 'That has made it harder for us to compete on a level playing field.' Both sides supported those reforms, but, ultimately, more work needs to be done with how tertiary and vocational education come together.

The additional challenges that have been falling on the shoulders of vocational providers have basically been for the benefit of tertiary providers, so you can't complain about a slight reduction in vocational training when you've seen almost a doubling in some universities of tertiary training. They're still the same people out there, and they're still meeting the same employment demands; they're just gaining a different kind of qualification.

To finish on that point, it's important to keep up with what our economy needs and, more importantly, where the global economy is looking for skills. We're part of a global context of ideas and skills meeting demands. Increasingly, liberalised medium-size trade economies like Australia need to have the people who can go out and take advantage of what we're delivering through trade agreements.

Australia is incredibly well placed. These amendments will make it easier for students to show their attainments and records to those who they chose—that includes what part of their records and for how long. It's a very important addition to this. I support the bill.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (18:13): I rise today to support the Student Identifiers Amendment (Enhanced Student Permissions) Bill 2019, because I absolutely support a unique identifier for students across our education system. I do so with direct experience of how valuable that data can be to inform practice across the education sector and also how valuable the aggregated and de-identified data can be in informing this place and those who make policies about what is happening on the ground in the sector.

This bill goes to using that unique identifier and allowing VET student transcripts to be released to potential employers. In essence, I support that that is an efficiency and that it probably would work, and I note, as did the member for Sydney, the importance of ensuring that students and former students have control of that. I want to couch those concerns in a particular way, as someone who worked in secondary education and then primary education for a period of 27 years. There is a mythology amongst our Australian children that things go on the permanent record. They pick this up from American television, of course. Some children believe that every detention they've ever been given in a school is somehow going to be on their permanent record. I think this goes to the heart of the member for Sydney's comments. We don't want to go down that American path, because we are the country of the second chance. We're the country of the third chance. We're the country of the fourth chance. We're the country that says to every young person: 'You can always come back from that. You can have a bad experience. You can drop out of school.'

I stand here in this parliament as someone who dropped out of school—someone who left in year 11 to join my friends on the train to the city and paid employment, much to the chagrin of my family and with many tears from my mother. It was two years before I came back and walked into a family barbecue and said, 'I think I want to go back to school.' I got that second chance. The fact that I had dropped out of school—became a 'dropout', to use the American term—is not on my permanent record. My employers don't know that that's part of my history. Thank the Lord, or the people of Lalor might not vote for me. Hi, guys. Yes, I dropped out of school. We're the country that gives every young person the opportunity to change direction, to re-engage in education, and we don't want anything to get in the way of that. For me, the safety net that needs to go around this legislation is really, really important.

We always need to remember the value of the disaggregated, de-identified data to us and what it would mean in terms of our planning. It would inform us that more children or young people from a particular area—if I can give you this example—might have one qualification and then change tack. It might inform us about what was wrong with their first experience. We might know that there are this many thousands of kids in Victoria who have a particular certification in this and that they haven't been able to find employment or find permanent employment
and that now they want to return and do a different certification. The unique identifier can give us very rich data to inform the decisions that we make in this place. I absolutely support that. I support its extension into higher education. I note, too, the member for Sydney's words that this system would be coming into the VET and skills area but not the higher education one, and I wonder about the reasons for that. I wonder why we keep segregating our education system in this way, even though those opposite tell us that going to university shouldn't be everybody's aim and that this is a sector that should serve the public well. For me, the treatment of the two sectors should be the same.

I support this piece of legislation and I support the efficiencies around employers being able to access people's training. But I am wary of the capacity for people to freely access that data, and I want to ensure that people, 20 years down the track, still have control about who sees this data, the level of data they see and, in fact, which transcripts they can download and see in that process. I welcome the measures in the legislation that will ensure that people aren't creating problems in the system by seeking to have a second 'unique' identifier and for any misuse of this program. People's privacy in this matter is, of course, a priority. Whenever we move to a technologically driven system and we say it's going to be about efficiency, we have to be absolutely sure that we have public confidence in these processes, because, as we learned with the e-health record, without public confidence we lose the opportunity to have the data and a good idea won't be fully implemented. I welcome the government's assurances here, but I'd like to see them firmly fixed and absolutely locked in to ensure that we're going to get the best out of this program. Of course, I appreciate being here today speaking in support of a government bill. It happens so rarely for someone who represents the seat of Lalor.

I cannot finish without saying that I welcome this government's attention to the detail in this space but I would like to see much more attention to detail across the TAFE sector. I would like to see this government commit to a public TAFE sector and to restore the public TAFE sector to the one that people trusted. In my electorate, I have many young people talking to me about their TAFE experiences—rather, let's call it their VET experiences that may not have occurred in a public TAFE—and there is definitely a lack of confidence in our VET sector at the moment, in terms of the value of the certification that young people are receiving and the value of certification that older people are receiving. It is an area of concern. This government's cuts in the TAFE and training budget since we were last in government go to the core of undermining the public's confidence in public TAFE and undermining the public's confidence that this government is across the detail, is across this skills portfolio, understands what is needed on the ground and is prepared to back our young people and to back people who are going to be retraining in this sector. The public will believe this government cares about this sector when this government puts its money where its mouth is, to put it bluntly, and supports the re-formation of public TAFE.

We know that that cuts across both state and federal governments. We know that it varies from state to state. As a proud Victorian, I can say that a state Labor government has done much work to reinstate public TAFE and to rebuild public confidence in TAFE. We're seeing that on the ground in Victoria with the large number of people taking up the free TAFE offers in Victoria. There's a lot of energy from young students that I talk to about a future that includes certification through the TAFE sector. So, with the government paying this much attention to this end of it, I want to see more attention to the front end of these questions around the funding for TAFE and around the fine-grained thinking in terms of which skills areas we want to encourage young people to go into. I want to see much clearer, disaggregated data in this space, particularly around gender and the availability.

If I give you this example, I think you'll understand what I mean about attention to detail. I asked the library to do some research for me on the trade training centres—whatever iteration they were in and whatever other names they went under. They began under Howard and they continued and went through renaming. I asked the library to pull together for me some information about where those trade training centres were built, whether they were still operating and what courses they were offering. Let's face it: it is some time since that investment was made, and I know that in my area there is no college. That money went into schools, and those areas will be desperately needing an upgrade to keep up with modern technology and modern training methods. So there's going to be a big demand for those facilities to be upgraded; yet, as a parliamentarian, I can ask our library to do that research and all they can do is go to Senate estimates questions to try and answer my questions. So we need a lot more attention to this sector from government. Employers say it's really difficult to chase down transcripts. They're not quite sure what they're looking at. They say, 'Let's have an efficient, clean system.' Fine, but what about the front end of skills and training which is just so important?

I'd have to say that the rebuilt TAFE sector in Victoria is a sector that requires highly skilled teachers. It is imperative that these teachers are up to the minute in their training. Technology moves at a great rate. I don't think I have to bore you with the number of trade classrooms I've been in where I'm walking in to have a look at a lathe and it's a lathe that you won't find in industry and it won't teach a young person much about their next job. And in my conversations with potential employers or people who are looking to take on apprentices, when they make
assumptions about what skills kids are going to come out of school with, they all go back to their time in tech schools in the fifties where they had the latest and best equipment. That is not the case in our schools. It varies from school to school, depending on when the equipment was last purchased. A lot of it is now dating, severely. I use the lathe because it's what people talk to me about most, about kids coming out of school. They assume they're ready to do this apprenticeship, but they've been trained on a lathe that they won't find anywhere in industry. So I think it's a good example.

I take the opportunity to say this to the government: there are almost two million Australians who are unemployed or underemployed, and the TAFE skills sector is the key to them getting the skills they need to find permanent employment. I speak to young people in my electorate all of the time. As everyone in this place knows, I'm the mother of three sons and I've been on that journey with my three sons. There is a lack of understanding from our young people about what their certifications are valued at. You have a lot of young people who go out with one—they've got a certificate III in something—and they're looking for work. They can't find work. They think, therefore, that a certificate III is not of value.

I've worked with a few people coming into their 30s now who say to me, 'I did a cert III way back,' and they're dropping it off their resume because they think it doesn't have any value. So we've got a lot of work to do in this space. We might need to do an educational campaign for the people who are going to use the system, both the potential employers and the people who are giving them access to their qualifications. We might need to do a bit more education in this space. Dare I say it—perhaps it's the job of jobactive to do some of this education, to look at an unemployed person's history and their qualifications, rather than saying, 'There is a skills shortage in this; you should do this,' without knowing that the young person sitting in front of them already has two cert III qualifications and they're just looking for an opportunity to put their skills to work.

We've got a lot of work to do in this space. The government knows we've got a lot of work to do in this space. I am pleased to be supporting the government in this small area. The broader picture around the unique identifiers is something I fully support, as long as we have all of the checks and balances in place to ensure people's privacy and to build confidence among the public and those who are going to be students in our system. They need to have confidence that we're going to use that data to improve their experience. We're not going to use that data to undermine skills and training; we're going to use it to improve student experience, improve the information and improve our decision-making about what courses are offered where and what's required on our job sites around the country and to ensure that we've got young people trained and ready to go, ready to join the workforce.

Ms HAMMOND (Curtin) (18:28): I'm pleased to speak after the member for Lalor. We share a number of things in common: three sons, a strong support for this bill and, in fact, a strong passion for education at all levels, both VET and higher ed. I'm very pleased to speak in support of this bill too. The Student Identifiers Act 2014 introduced a system whereby individuals undertaking nationally recognised VET qualifications would be given a student identifier. This student identifier is given once and it is given for life, and it created an online record of an individual's training and qualifications undertaken after 1 January 2015.

It was a great introduction and ensured that the sometimes time-consuming and difficult task faced by individuals who'd undertaken a VET qualification got hold of their formal and authenticated records of that qualification, their VET statement of attainment, which they need when applying for jobs, for further studies or to prove they've got a particular qualification. Creating this system alleviated stresses and troubles because, quite often, students would have to apply to numerous different providers across different states and territories. Now it is all in the one place and it's online. Over 1.3 million participants have accessed the system since it began.

While the system was great from the perspective of the individual, it did not address the needs of employers, government agencies or licensing bodies to ensure that a VET transcript given to them by an individual for the purposes of seeking a job or certification or for further qualifications was authentic. It didn't ensure that those bodies could ensure that it was a true and accurate statement and hadn't been tampered with. At the present time, such bodies have to take additional steps to actually verify qualifications provided to them. They have to contact the relevant registered training organisation. While that sounds like it might be straightforward, in fact it's not always straightforward. There are issues such as where to direct your inquiries in another registered training organisation. Does that person have the authority to verify the particular document that you've been given? Sometimes there's a huge time lag. Sometimes there's a wait for the answer to come through. This administrative issue creates costs on both parties—those who want the statement verified and those bodies that want to verify it. Meanwhile, it's the student who is suffering by waiting for this to be verified.

Given this, it's not surprising that since the system went live in 2017 employment agencies and state, territory and Commonwealth licensing bodies have shown an interest in being able to access and verify the VET transcripts through the system, circumventing the need to contact the other RTOs directly. And the proposed legislative amendments in this bill are a direct result of widespread consultation by the minister. Under provisions introduced
in this bill, the individual will have the ability to permit third parties to view the qualifications that they feel are relevant to them, such as when they're applying for a job, seeking a credit transfer or demonstrating prerequisites when undertaking further studies. This will provide a more efficient, convenient and quick way for third parties to verify someone's training history.

I note the member for Lalor's concerns about privacy. As with any system we create, the privacy issue is of course a big one. So, it is important to note here that it is the individual who grants the access, and they can grant different levels of access to different parties. It is not an open system, and the privacy of each individual is under their control. It is a student controlled system. It should also be noted that the bill introduces a civil penalties and infringement notice scheme to deter those who, among other things, may seek to alter an authenticated VET transcript, make a fake VET transcript or undertake other fraudulent behaviours. This bill also clarifies the cases in which an individual may seek an exemption to being assigned a student identifier if they do not want to be in the system.

This bill supports the government's commitment to strengthening our VET system to be a modern, flexible and trusted sector that provides an excellent standard of education and training. It will broaden student controlled access to authenticated VET transcripts, assisting businesses to streamline recruitment processes and validate training and qualifications. It also provides further utility to the investment the government made in this system in developing and implementing it in the first place. All of this underpins the $3 billion the government is investing in VET over the 2019-20 period and its commitment to the VET sector in general.

Having a strong and vibrant VET sector is vital to our country. Having a skilled and trained workforce is vital to our country. And this government is absolutely committed to it. The VET providers in my electorate who I've met with and who the minister and the assistant minister have visited are absolutely delighted with the government's commitment to strengthening and investing in VET. It's on that basis, and speaking on behalf of them, that I am delighted to be speaking in support of this particular bill.

Mr GORMAN (Perth) (18:34): In preparing to speak on this bill, I thought, 'Can I remember my student numbers from my time at Curtin University and the University of Western Australia?' For those in the vocational and further education community who are paying very close attention to this debate, I will say that my Curtin student identifier started with 1262, so they're the only numbers you need in order to date when I was at that particular institution, and my University of Western Australia numbers—

Mr Morton: That's your credit card PIN number, isn't it?

Mr GORMAN: I'm happy to give it to you personally, Member for Tangney! My UWA number started with 2044. These numbers do stick with you for life, as this legislation intends. Labor supports the intention of this legislation to have a unique student identifier, hopefully removing duplication across many parts of government and also providing for more longitudinal data that allows us to analyse the sorts of journeys and where students might be successful in their vocational training and where they might have had problems. It might also tell us things about where our system is not working. In that sense, it is going to be a real improvement. But it is not transformative; it is not going to be something that they hear in Finland and say, 'Oh, my God, Australia has the best system in the world. We have got to get that number thing!' It simply will allow other entities—employers, employment agencies and licensing bodies—to access a student's transcripts.

It will have a civil penalties regime so that when people fraudulently access, alter or produce transcripts there will be a proper penalty for that, as there should be. People work really hard to get a VET qualification. You meet those people and they are proud of what they have achieved. Think about the sorts of things done by people who have these qualifications—be they electricians, plumbers or mechanics. Falsifying those records can actually lead to huge safety implications. So, providing an appropriate civil penalties regime is a really important step to take.

Some students might need an exemption and this legislation appropriately provides for that exemption. You can imagine that some people may be facing particular circumstances where their ability to be identified or tracked would put their personal safety at risk. I am pleased this legislation recognises their needs as well. But whenever a government, particularly this government, is building a new system I do worry that the threat of privatisation might be just around the corner. This will be incredibly valuable data that the government is collecting and compiling. My understanding is that it will be accessed free of charge. There is always a temptation, as we have seen with ASIC databases and other things, to start to add a little fee, then becoming a big fee, onto these sorts of databases and indeed, in time, possibly even privatising them.

Think about the government databases where things haven't been quite managed. Some of the obvious challenges we face on a regular basis are the challenges with the Centrelink and social security databases and mainframes. They still call them mainframes, don't they? I don't think that is the modern technical lingo. I think it
is because we are talking about a 1980s mainframe system that is sitting somewhere deep underneath our Centrelink system. I at least hope that the student identifier process will be on something slightly more modern.

Think about digital systems like CapTel, which has been an item of debate in this place in recent months. It is a service that the government funded—a private service, provided by a business provider from the United States. It is a system that the government, through a government decision, has switched off—again, where you build systems and people build businesses. I was speaking to a vet who relies on CapTel to help people with their pets in case of emergencies. When you switch off a service, all of a sudden you have these huge challenges and disruption of business and disruption of people's personal lives. With this, I see that there is a risk that this would happen. We know that this government closed Smartraveller in November 2019, a database that ensured people could register their travel with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, making sure that they could lodge their travel details and that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade would be able to easily contact them. Again, a government service that was switched off. I just need to say the words 'My Health Record' to know that there is huge distrust amongst many about the sort of data that the government retains on people.

When you think about the positives of what this legislation could achieve in expanding unique student identifiers, one of the other areas that it is obvious we should move to over time is to include this in our early childhood system. I am a strong believer that our early childhood system is part of our education system. It is not just a service so that people can get their kids somewhere while they go to work. It is actually about those very little people having an educational experience.

We as a nation invest a large amount of money in that education. The government invests a large part; parents invest a large part. Wouldn't it be great if we had a unique student identifier to track that part of their journey as well, so that in 20, 30, 40 years time we could have a look and say, 'This student went here for their early childhood education, they went to these primary and secondary schools and here is their VET outcome,' and, as we continue to move to lifelong learning, see even more of that education journey and then make sure that we are investing in the right places? It is amazing the data that we don't have in this place, and the legislation that we pass where we have relied on the good people of Treasury and other departments to guesstimate what things might be, when, by simply expanding something like this student identifier to young people, you could have even more data about where their success and failure lies.

Equally, those sorts of analytics would allow us to look at where there are underperforming vocational education and training providers. I don't think anyone in this place today could say that every VET provider in Australia is a high-quality provider that deserves to have government support. Having more data about where students fail or don't actually make the transition from enrolling to graduating or completing that certificate course would definitely allow us to know where those failures are not just on the basis of quality review but looking at where students jump around, because we know that students, as discerning consumers looking for good quality education wherever they can find it, will look to go from one provider to another if they are not happy with the service. This will give us that data, and that is a good thing. I commend the government for that.

In my electorate of Perth I am proud to have four TAFE campuses: Leederville, with approximately 3,010 students enrolled; Mount Lawley, with approximately 1,356 students—it is early in the year, so these numbers will fluctuate somewhat—Northbridge, known as the biggest Perth campus, with 8,979 enrolments; and East Perth, with 1,221 enrolments. All are fabulous TAFE providers that bring in people from far away, if they are in the great electorates of Moore or Tangney, particularly if they are keen on fashion design. There is a fabulous fashion design school at the Northbridge TAFE campus, which I have been pleased to visit a number of times. They have worked on Australian productions, films and dramas and, indeed, just ordinary Australian TV. It is a fabulous campus, and I am very proud of each and every one of those TAFE campuses in my electorate of Perth.

There are a few risks for all of those 14,866 students who are about to get this unique student identifier that, as the member for Curtin said, stays with you for life. I have never been brave enough to get a tattoo. I don't think I could make that sort of a life commitment, but this student identifier is going to stick with you for life, and there are some risks in that. Not everyone has a nice linear path through the education system. Some people do enrol, fail, go and do other things and then come back again. There is a risk that this doesn't give people that fresh start that they might need. I would encourage the government to think, as they actually implement this, how to make sure that they do, indeed, deliver on their promise of, 'If you have a go, you get a go.' because the reality is that, under this proposal, if you have a go, you get a record. Most of the time that it is a great thing, because it allows verification and for people to have very clear data and proof of what they did.

But sometimes it means that someone might be less willing to show their qualifications and might be worried or embarrassed. Even though, as many will know, you don't really care about whether someone failed something 20 years ago, that is not always how people will see that themselves. So, it is important to ensure that students don't face disadvantage when applying for jobs and don't face any sort of unfair discrimination for challenges,
setbacks, failures or even just enrolling in a silly unit that they never should have enrolled in in the first place. I myself enrolled in a film degree, which is probably why I have a little bit of affection for the film production and design students at North Metro TAFE. I did not finish that film degree. I didn't have the patience for 20-hour days on sets making pointless movies with my colleagues. I caught the politics bug. I instead finished my political science degree. That was good for everyone else who was enrolled in the film degree at Curtin University, and it was good for me.

The control that students have over their data that is held in the system is important. It is important that they know when their transcripts are accessed. It's important they have control over what level of data is available to others. It's also important that they are educated on how that data is provided, what they can do and how they can easily log in.

Mr Morton interjecting—

Mr GORMAN: I know the member for Tangney wants my credit card number and everything that comes with it. You won't be able to buy much with it, member for Tangney, so I don't know it will be as exciting as you think. It definitely won't fit out the Applecross Tennis Club!

It is important that people feel a sense of security over their data and easy access. We all have got myGov accounts. We've all got access to Medicare online and everything else. But 10 to 15 years after you have been enrolled in a vocational education and training course, being able to get in and make sure you still have control over that data is important, and making sure that data is secure. It is reasonable that people are concerned about the security of data that government holds about something that is important to them, like their education.

I also think it is important that we recognise that while this is a very small step, it is a small investment in our vocational education and training sector. I am not a believer that we need small investment to keep that sector strong; I think we need huge investment to keep that sector strong.

I will take the opportunity to commend the McGowan government in Western Australia on their investments to cut the fees for TAFE courses for some 34 target priority qualifications—aged care, disability services, defence, hospitality and tourism—making it more affordable for West Australians of any age to go and get the qualifications they need to succeed into the future.

Some of these fees have gotten ridiculously out of hand. What we do see across this nation is a dispersed range of TAFE fees. Whether you go to Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia or New South Wales the fees are not consistent. Over time, if we don't do something nationally to bring the fees more into line that might lead to some states paying for the training of people and other states saying,'They have got a lot of trained plumbers. We might go and grab them and bring them across the border.' It is important that all states invest in TAFE and it is important that the federal government leads on TAFE.

Of course, the coalition's form is a $3 billion cut from the TAFE and training budget since they came to office. We now have 150,000 fewer apprentices and trainees than we did when this government came to office. There are more people dropping out of apprenticeships and traineeships than there are people finishing those apprenticeships or traineeships. We have this huge disconnect.

At the same time, there are 1.9 million Australians who are unemployed or looking for more work. That's huge lost capacity in our economy. Vocational education and training is the glue that will connect those people to jobs that fit their skills, fit their interests and take advantage of their natural drive. These are 1.9 million Australians saying they want to do more work. The economy is not working for them. The vocational education and training system is not working for them. I am going to break it to them now: the unique student identifier is probably not going to do it for them either. So we do need to see something to address that lost capacity in our economy. We do need to make sure that we have more students enrolling and more students completing their vocational education and training. It is also what businesses tell us day in and day out. They want more trained staff. They want more young Australians who come in with the right qualifications from a reputable training institution, ready to do the job and ready to learn more. We all know that you do learn stuff on the job, but you need to have a really good foundation. TAFE, vocational education and training, gives people that foundation. I thank you very much, Deputy Speaker.

Ms WELLS (Lilley) (18:49): The member for Perth issues a good challenge in trying to remember your university student number. I knew straightaway what mine was, but I'm reluctant to put it on Hansard in case people go trawling for my transcript—which was perfectly adequate, thank you—for further inquiries. But it also made me remember that when I was applying for different law firms, when I was finishing my law degree and trying to get a graduate traineeship as a lawyer, you did have to surrender your academic transcript. No matter what your GPA was, there was still questioning of particular erratic marks. You had to explain what had happened that semester and why that mark was lower. That's all right if you are someone who is trying to become a lawyer
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and advocating and arguing are literally going to be your bread and butter. But that's not what everybody is trying to do when they're going for jobs, and that isn't a skill set that people should need to have when they're going for jobs. That's the potential implication of some of the parts of this bill.

Talking about first principles, I would say that improving data collection for the vocational training sector is of critical importance to improving the quality of training in Australia. The idea of a unique student identifier within the vocational education and training system was developed almost a decade ago under the Gillard Labor government as a tool to provide students with the ability to obtain a complete record of their training from a single source. The member for Lalor, who spoke before me today, has made a number of very salient points about why that is important and, ultimately, how that provides us with really useful data about where there might be pockets of things not working or patterns that emerge, across years or decades of time, that we might not spot without this particular unique student identifier system. Overall, it's got valuable things to do.

I also take the point of the member for Perth about how, ultimately, we should be expanding this to early education, because we know that there is nothing more important than the first five years in the education of our children and the learning that they do during that time. I know the member for Perth would agree with me that there is almost no amount of funding that we could give that area that would be sufficient to properly prepare our children—and consequently our community and consequently our country—for the things that we could do with a well-educated, skilled, grounded and healthy workforce.

I recognise the importance of protecting the integrity of vocational education and training transcripts, and I recognise the importance of deterring people from fraudulently altering the record through the introduction of a civil penalty regime. But this unhampered access to records has to be balanced against the apprentice or trainee's right to privacy—something we're talking about over in the Federation Chamber at the moment—and the consequences of giving employers full access to a student's full records. I don't think that can be underestimated.

I also would like to commend the points that the member for Perth just made about data and privacy. As I said, I've just come from the Federation Chamber, where I made speech about the outstanding privacy reform we're waiting on from the government at the moment and, through the introduction of cyberactivity, we've now got gaps in our privacy laws—gaps that need to be filled. The people most at risk of exposure are our young people, particularly children and minors. These are things that are live issues, and I urge this House to continue to consider them and the government to put forward good legislation for us to support.

On behalf of the students at Bracken Ridge TAFE, I envy the number of TAFEs that some of my peers have in their electorates. My TAFE is the Bracken Ridge TAFE that sits on the boundary between the electorate of Lilley and the electorate of Petrie. Because there is just the one, it takes students from right across the north side of Brisbane. On their behalf, and having visited them a few times since being elected, I worry about the risk that these proposed amendments may strip away their ability to make a fresh start. We do need to make sure that students aren't placed at an unreasonable disadvantage when they are applying for jobs, that their privacy is protected and that they can properly control the data that they share with potential employers.

We need to balance access controls to ensure that apprentices and trainees can select the amount and granularity of the data that is shared. If someone flunked out of a TAFE course when they were younger because they faced some kind of unexpected hardship or because they had to become a carer for a sick family member or they themselves became sick, and they have the courage and resolve to go back and finish that course, their resilience should be applauded, not potentially exposed or shamed. They should not be compelled to share their entire vocational education and training transcript with their new employers if it is not applicable to their job.

More importantly, this small tweak to the existing legislation does not change the fact that this third-term government refuses to deliver a genuine strategic plan or reform package to fix the crisis in vocational education. The training and skills shortage was highlighted in the member for Sydney's motion. This is a crisis of their own making. For more than seven years we have had a Liberal-National government that has been responsible for the failure of the vocational and education sector and the national skills crisis. In a predicament that defies logic, this government has made it harder for employers to fill skilled job vacancies at the same time as we are seeing record underemployment. The number of Australians doing an apprenticeship is lower today than it was a decade ago, having lost 150,000 apprentices and trainees at the same time that we have a shortage of workers in critical services that most Australians use every day, like plumbing or carpentry or hairdressing or mechanics.

According to the Australian Industry Group, which is hardly a bastion of socialism, 75 per cent of businesses surveyed are struggling to find the qualified workers that they need. At the same time, almost two million Australians are currently unemployed or looking for more hours of work. So why isn't the Prime Minister training jobseekers for jobs in these industries where there is a shortage of workers? This seems like first-year economics 101 stuff: supply should meet demand. Where we have employers crying out for more qualified workers and
jobseekers desperately looking for more work, only this government could fail to connect the two. Making it easier for employers to check an applicant’s qualifications will not meaningfully help the businesses who are crying out for more trained staff. Our real problem is encouraging Australians to get involved in TAFE and vocational education and training courses, not how we do their credentials after they gain them. After years of being shunned and swept under the rug by this coalition government, too many Australians, particularly young Australians, are being locked out of employment. Young people across Australia are desperate to work, but can't fill the gap in the technical industries because they haven't been given the chance to gain the skills they need for these jobs. We are simultaneously experiencing a crisis of youth unemployment and a crisis of skills shortages. In my home state of Queensland I think the youth unemployment rate is something like 6.3 per cent for the Brisbane East SA4 area. That is higher than the national average, but the youth unemployment rate across the national average is 11.2 per cent. In my home state of Queensland that rises as high as 25.7 per cent for kids who are growing up in regional Queensland areas like Mount Isa.

So we have a crisis in youth unemployment and we have a crisis in skills shortages, but for some reason this government fails to put the two together. One of these is bad enough to be faced with if you're growing up here in Australia, but both of them at the same time is really tough. Our apprentices and tradies, people who were told that if they have a go they would get a go, have been the worst affected.

The school students and the young job seekers in my electorate of Lilley have been clear with me about what they need. They need a skills training sector that is adequately funded, properly resourced and has educators who are properly trained so they can aspire to and secure highly skilled and highly paid jobs. But instead of listening to what young people need to find these highly skilled and highly paid jobs in the technical industries, the coalition government has come up with one of the most limp, visionless, mean-spirited plans for fixing the problem. That plan is this: step 1, cut $3 billion from the TAFE and training budget. Step 2, short-change TAFE and training by underspending almost $1 billion of the remaining budget that is allocated. Step 3, hire a TV personality and make Scott Cam to be a national careers ambassador for a cost of $345,000. It is just staggering: the complacency and mean-spiritedness of a government that would do that rather than just fund the area properly or at least give all of the money allocated against the item in the budget to the area. Yet that is where we are.

Is anyone surprised that under that kind of management we have some TAFEs that are in disrepair and apprentice and trainee numbers have fallen off a cliff? This government is starving TAFE and training institutions of funding, then they are putting a bandaid, like tweaks to accessing records, over the problem. As I come back to the House, I think for the second time since I was elected last year, I feel like I am standing in this chamber saying this and over again. It is like the government asked the departments to bring forward all the technical things that could be pushed through—the busy work—while they themselves tried to sort out some kind of agenda for a third term. So here we stand each time, saying that we might have some issues with the technical amendments and we might support the merit of technical amendments. But, ultimately, we are just tinkering around the edges and not achieving meaningful change, which is what all of us sought office to do and what the people of Australia asked us to do when they entrusted us with their vote in the election last year. We need big, nation-reforming, nation-building change, and instead we get bandaids, tinkering around the edges and a bit of complacency and trophies for everyone at question time about what a great job they are doing. It is hard to watch, and I am glad that at least some members in the House are prepared to stand up and talk about what should be done and to ask the government to provide us with some big nation-building agendas—whenever you can get it through the party room. I wish you luck.

Late last year, I had the pleasure of visiting a TAFE north of Brisbane and taking a tour of the facilities with the member for Sydney and the state minister for TAFE. The campus has a shared delivery arrangement with TAFE Queensland, TAFE Queensland Skills Tech and the Queensland Pathways State College. We heard about the fantastic work that the Queensland Labor state government is doing in spite of funding cuts, including providing free apprenticeships for people under the age of 21. There are over 20 free apprenticeships for those under 21 available in the north Brisbane campus, including apprenticeships in electrotechnology, construction, plumbing and marine mechanical technology. Since July 2019, over 115 new apprentices commenced training on that campus. Put simply, when TAFEs are properly invested in, we get results, and I'm sure the member for Petrie would agree with me on what a great job the Queensland Labor government is doing in that space.

When I was speaking to these apprentices, what really stood out to me was the outstanding work that their teachers are doing leading them through. I met Andrew Begbie, who taught carpentry and cabinetmaking; John O'Shea, who taught outdoor power and equipment; and Dave Compton, who taught automotive industry. And I met all of their students, who were diligent and hardworking in the hopes that they would be able to secure a job as a result of their efforts. We need to make sure that these fantastic teachers have the support that they need. They are passing on their knowledge and their skills to young people who want to learn and to work, and they
deserve better than $1 billion in underspending. I also want to commend Zupps Aspley, who are providing apprenticeships in Certificate III in Light Vehicle Mechanical Technology to young locals on the north side. They are stepping up and doing what this government should be doing.

The Prime Minister isn't training young people looking for jobs in industries facing skills shortages. Instead, he is starving TAFEs and training funding and wondering why the rate of apprentices and trainees is dropping. Australia's economic growth has been the slowest it has been since the global financial crisis. Wages are stagnant, household debt has skyrocketed and business investment is at its lowest level since the 1990s recession. A decline in vocational education and training is only worsening these outcomes.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough):** I call the assistant minister.

**Mr Howarth:** My point of order is in relation to relevancy: the speaker is not actually speaking on the bill. It's nice of her to mention Zupps Aspley in my electorate; they are doing a great job.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Please resume.

**Ms Wells:** Fiddling at the edges of the TAFE system, like we are seeing with this amendment, will not address the problem that the Liberal-National government has created in the vocational education and training sector and, if the member for Petrie had an actual defence, he would be speaking on this bill, but I note that he isn't on the list.

If we continue down this path of underfunding, we will sabotage future economic growth, undermine the opportunities for young Australians looking to upskill to meet their full potential, and compromise our national productivity. We know that nine out of 10 jobs created in the future will need a post-secondary school education, including TAFE. We need to act now to increase the participation in our vocational educational sector to make sure our young people have the skills necessary to meet this demand. Look at what adequate funding has done at the TAFE campus in Brisbane's north. I know how important supporting vocational education and training is to local economies and local jobs. The Liberal government either doesn't care or doesn't have the capacity to do the hard work that needs to be done to build a path to skilled jobs. The Prime Minister claims that he wants to lift the status of vocational Australia; his actions prove he doesn't. Australians are sick of the marketing, the hollow men, the publicity stunts and the empty gestures. The vocational educational and training system managed by this government is failing students, workers, businesses and the economy. Australians want this government to take serious action now and grow job opportunities for the young people of today and tomorrow.

**Mr Irons (Swan—Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships) (19:04):** I present an addendum to the explanatory memorandum. I thank all members for their contributions to this debate. The Student Identifiers Amendment (Enhanced Student Permissions) Bill 2019 will broaden student controlled access to a range of entities, allowing them to request access to a student's authenticated vocational education and training transcript. This change will provide confidence to industry on the authenticity of vocational education and training qualifications. It also supports the Australian government's commitment to strengthening our VET system to be a modern, flexible and trusted sector that provides an excellent standard of education and training. The bill introduces a civil penalty regime to protect the integrity of the student identifiers initiative and to act as a deterrent to unwanted behaviour in the sector. It also clarifies that the Student Identifiers Registrar has the power to determine, by exemption, whether a vocational education and training qualification or statement of attainment can be issued by a registered training organisation to a student who does not have a student identifier. Lastly, it clarifies spending powers associated with the Student Identifiers Special Account.

An addendum to the explanatory memorandum for the bill has been tabled to respond to concerns raised by the Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills. The committee requested that the key information provided in my response to the committee be included in the explanatory memorandum to the bill, and I confirm that this action has now been taken. 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 Sydney has moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. So, the immediate question is that the amendment moved by the member for Sydney be agreed to.

The House divided. [19:10]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

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

Third Reading

Mr IRONS (Swan—Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships) (19:16): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Measures No. 3) Bill 2019

Second Reading

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

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (19:17): As the Clerk has said, the Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Measures No. 3) Bill 2019 is succinctly described as:
A Bill for an Act to amend the law relating to taxation, corporations, competition, financial services, consumer credit, product grants and benefits, superannuation and legislative and other instruments, and for related purposes.
It's one of those omnibus bills filled with amendments to Treasury legislation. There are three schedules to the bill. Labor do support the bill but we will be moving some amendments. A second reading amendment has been circulated in my name, and I'll be speaking to that together with the substantive bill and foreshadowing that some further amendments may arise at the third reading stage.

Schedule 1 of the bill closes a loophole that allows testamentary trusts of deceased estates to be used for tax evasion purposes. Under current laws, the income minors receive from testamentary trusts is taxed at adult marginal rates, which access the $18,200 tax-free threshold. Some taxpayers are, therefore, able to appropriately obtain the benefits of this lower tax rate by injecting assets unrelated to the deceased estate into the testamentary trust. The government want to close this loophole, and we fully support them. It means that income from testamentary trusts will be limited to income derived from the assets that are transferred from the deceased estate or the proceeds of the disposal or the investment of those assets.

Schedule 2 of the legislation is the one that I am particularly interested in. It amends the Corporations Act to delay the deadlines for existing financial advisers to comply with new educational and exam requirements. This is an amendment that Labor supports, but I've got to say that the utter shambles of this government that was on display after question time—in fact, it's been on display since Christmas—is threaded through the circumstances that lead to the sorry state that has this bill before the House today. I'd like to take some time to go through the background of the bill.

I could start in 1997, when the Wallis financial systems inquiry gave us the twin peaks, as it was described, of financial markets regulation in this country—the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, a new authority back then, set up to deal with the prudential regulation of financial markets, and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, taking over the requirements hitherto dealt with by state authorities for licensing, disclosure and consumer protection. The recommendations of the Wallis inquiry were legislated for in 2001 through amendments to the Corporations Law, which gave us chapter 7 of the Corporations Law, that part of the Corporations Law that deals principally with the regulation of financial markets. Chapter 7.6 deals with the licensing of financial advisers; chapter 7.7 deals with the disclosure that is required of financial advisers, brokers and others; and chapter 7.7A deals with the requirements of advisers when giving financial advice.

There were a number of amendments to this chapter in the Corporations Law, before this bill arrived with us today. It is also important that I give some background to that, to underscore the importance of the harsh
criticisms that I make of the government, because the amendments they are having to make today are a result of their own incompetence and dastardly management of recommendations that have been on the books since at least the Wallis inquiry, certainly known to industry participants since 2001, and brought into sharp focus since November 2009. I mention 2009 because this is when the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services tabled in this parliament—in this place and the other place—its inquiry into financial products and services in Australia, colloquially known as the 'Ripoll report'.

The Ripoll report followed hot on the heels of the global financial crisis and the collapse of large financial schemes—Opes Prime, Westpoint, Trio and Storm Financial—leaving mum-and-dad investors millions and millions and millions of dollars out of pocket. The Ripoll inquiry focused specifically on those collapses but also on the broader question of financial advice within this country. It made a number of pointed recommendations. At recommendation 1, it recommended the introduction of a statutory fiduciary duty for financial advisers, requiring them to put the interests of their clients ahead of their own. That was recommendation 1. Second was the development of an appropriate mechanism by which to cease payments from product manufacturers to financial advisers—shorter words: commissions and conflicted remuneration. Third, and relevant to the bill before us today, was the establishment of an independent industry-based professional standards board to oversee nomenclature, competency and conduct standards for financial advisers. Point to note: that was November 2009. The Future of Financial Advice reforms were introduced into this parliament and enacted in 2012. They included the Corporations Amendment (Further Future of Financial Advice Measures) Act 2012 and the Corporations Amendment (Future of Financial Advice) Act 2012, colloquially known as the FOFA or Future of Financial Advice bills. The legislation took effect from July 2012, with compliance becoming mandatory from 1 July 2013. The main components of these bills included the introduction of a best interest obligation, which requires financial advisers to act in the best interests of their clients when giving personal financial advice; the introduction of the first phase of a ban on conflicted remuneration, including commissions, volume payments and soft dollar benefits, when financial product advice is provided to retail clients; and, thirdly, increased transparency, through a requirement that providers of financial advice obtain client agreement to ongoing advice fees and enhanced disclosure of fees and services associated with ongoing fees.

Prior to the introduction of all of these reforms, we had the Ripoll inquiry. We also had the financial services industry, consumer groups and ASIC raising considerable concerns around the education and training requirements applicable to financial advisers. Frankly, standards were considered to be too low. This was, in turn, contributing to a lack of confidence in both the competence and conduct of financial inquiry. Both the PJC inquiry—that is, the Ripoll inquiry—and the financial systems inquiry identified that existing professional standards for financial advisers were too low and did not ensure that all advisers had the skill to provide the sort of high-quality advice that was required. Those reviews found that the regulatory framework was insufficient to generate the sort of consumer confidence in the industry that, quite frankly, we need and customers deserve.

In response to both of these inquiries and the Financial System Inquiry, on 20 October 2015 the government said that it was committed to ensuring that consumers received professional and fair treatment from advisers and that it would raise the education standards. So we had the 1997 Wallis financial systems inquiry, we had the 2001 amendments to the Corporations Law, we had the 2009 Ripoll inquiry, we had the 2012 future of financial advice reforms—these were all related—and then we had the October 2015 announcement. They were followed in 2017 by the Corporations Amendment (Professional Standards of Financial Advisers) Act. This introduced several measures that would require financial advisers to have a degree, to pass an exam and to undertake a professional year to be authorised to provide unsupervised personal advice to a retail client. It required existing advisers to bring their qualifications up to degree-equivalent and required all advisers, both old and new, to undertake continuing professional development and to be party to a code of ethics monitored by ASIC, amongst other things.

Anybody who is enrolled in a profession, as I am, would look at all of these things and say, 'Yes, that's pretty much par for the course.' If you're an accountant, a legal adviser, or a medical professional, these are all pretty standard requirements. They were recommended as early as 1997. The government committed to them in 2015 and legislated for them in 2017, but the passage of events between the acceptance of that series of recommendations and advice and today has been a sorry series of incompetence, blunders, stuff-ups and delays, which means that once again this parliament is being asked to delay the implementation of these professional standards requirements.

This is nothing short of a disaster. I don't blame the financial advisers. There's a lot being visited upon them today. Their industry has been turned upside down, mostly, I should say, for good cause. All of the reports and the legislative changes that I have spoken about, together with the recommendations of the Hayne royal commission, point to the fact that systemic changes are needed within the financial advising industry. We are on the path to delivering that—
ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough) (19:30): Order! It being 7.30 pm, I propose the question:
That the House do now adjourn.

Australian Natural Disasters

Mrs PHILLIPS (Gilmore) (19:30): My electorate received some very welcome news over the weekend. The Currowan bushfire, which raged for 74 days, burnt through 499,000 hectares and destroyed 312 homes, was out. The Comberton fire is also now out. The Clyde Mountain fire, which has destroyed 493 homes and burnt through 98,000 hectares in the Eurobodalla, is listed as being under control. This is very good news and a cause for celebration locally. I again thank our amazing Rural Fire Service, emergency service workers and volunteers for their incredible efforts to contain these fires, which have done so much damage.

But the fires were not the first natural disaster our community has dealt with over recent years. Once again I rise today to talk about the drought that has gripped my electorate for so long now. I have said many times in this place how local farmers are struggling under the weight of the drought, how our dairy industry is in crisis and how more needs to be done to help farmers doing it tough. The recent bushfires were, no doubt, intensified by the drought. We know how our farmers were struggling before the fires, and these issues have now grown.

We have lost hundreds of thousands of hectares of bush in firestorm after firestorm. Local farmer Rob from Milton has described his farm as looking like a lunar landscape. Two-thirds of Rob's property was burnt by the fire on New Year's Day. Rob's story is nothing short of harrowing. Since Christmas, Rob's farm has been hit by the fires four times. While he was fighting the flames on one side of his farm, he was being approached by another fire from the opposite direction. Heartbreakingly, he lost many calves and his herd was badly impacted.

But Rob was suffering long before the fires. Last week he decided to paint his farm gate yellow to bring attention to the drought and to demand action on climate change. Rob is part of Farmers for Climate Action, and he began the call for the Show Our Colours campaign to bring attention to this important issue. Rob is a fifth-generation farmer, and he says that his family have never seen conditions like this in 150 years.

To put it simply: Rob and farmers like him have been suffering under the drought the government denies we are in. That is why it was so disheartening to see the Morrison government waste yet another opportunity to provide drought relief funding to struggling farmers. Once again, the Eurobodalla, Shoalhaven and Kiama were not included in the newly-rejigged Drought Communities Program Extension. It was a golden opportunity for the government to provide funding relief to farmers suffering not only from the drought but also from the bushfires—wasted.

Exactly how they are calculating this and how they determined these new council areas is still unclear. The government has said that we don't have enough agricultural industry. It's no secret that the New South Wales South Coast has a high retirement population. The South Coast is the most beautiful area in the country. Who wouldn't want to retire there? But—and this is an important point—this can create some significant bias in our employment figures. Even so, we employ significant numbers of people directly and indirectly in agriculture in my electorate, and agriculture makes a significant contribution to our local economies. In the Eurobodalla, agriculture exports contribute 14½ per cent to the total local economy, or $64 million. That is direct impact only and doesn't factor in indirect industries. In the Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands, agricultural production provides $136 million to the local economy. The impact of that in a regional and rural area like mine cannot be overstated.

What really baffles local farmers though is that the New South Wales government says that we are not only in drought but in intense drought. All of Kiama, all of the Eurobodalla and practically all of the Shoalhaven is in intense drought. Local farmers are simply caught in a black hole when it comes to the Morrison government. Our community has been to hell and back, and it is far from over. Today, after battling fires for 74 days, we now have flooding in many parts. But—and this much has been made clear—this is not drought-breaking rain. The drought is far from over. (Time expired)

Newnham, Professor John, AM

Fogarty, Mrs Annie, AM

Ms HAMMOND (Curtin) (19:35): I rise today to reflect upon the achievements of two inspiring individuals who live in my seat of Curtin: Professor John Newnham AM and Mrs Annie Fogarty AM.

On Australia Day this year Professor John Newnham AM was awarded the honour of being named Senior Australian of the Year for 2020. His outstanding contributions to his local community, his nation and the global...
medical community have seen him recognised as one of the world's leading researchers in the prevention of preterm birth.

John Newnham studied medicine at the University of Western Australia, graduating in 1976, before travelling to the United Kingdom, the United States and Africa to continue post-graduate training in obstetrics. He became a professor in 1989, and it was then he founded and led the 1989 Raine Study, the world's first lifetime cohort study focused on pregnancy. The study was set up to follow the health of 2,900 unborn babies for life and monitor the health of them and their families. It continues today. The study was ground-breaking and saw an immediate result in an eight per cent reduction in premature births across Western Australia. It long-term impact can be seen in how it paved the way for Australia's scientific and medical communities to become some of the world's leading researchers into the health of unborn children, particularly focusing on preventing preterm birth.

The stunning success of Professor Newnham's research and the immeasurable benefit it provided in preventing preterm births and improving the health and lives of Australians, both born and unborn, saw him continue to lead the way in researching the health of the unborn. In 2014 he launched the Western Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Initiative, and in 2018 he founded the Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance, the world's first program focusing on preventing preterm births on a national scale.

For his work John Newnham has received numerous accolades and awards, rightly deserved, including the Gold Medal of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in the UK in 1991 and the Order of Australia in the general division for his contribution to medicine, in particular in the field of obstetrics, in 2013. Professor Newnham's life work has been and still is dedicated to the improvement of the health of women and their children. His research has led the world in preventing preterm births. Professor Newnham's work demonstrates his enduring integrity, compassion and devotion to protecting the most vulnerable members of this community. His service and contribution to this cause make him a perfect recipient of the award. Professor Newnham will continue to pioneer research in the field of obstetrics and will continue the strive to improve the health of unborn children.

Mrs Annie Fogarty AM, another resident in my seat of Curtin, is Western Australia's Australian of the Year 2020. With her husband, Brett, Annie Fogarty founded the Fogarty Foundation in 2000 to help advance education, to support young people and is committed to ensuring quality instruction in schools by investing in education programs, teachers and school leaders. Through the foundation Annie has developed the Fogarty EDvance program, which improves the educational outcomes of children who attend schools in lower socioeconomic communities. This is a sensational program, which is delivering tangible improvements across Western Australia. The foundation's scholarship program for tertiary students provides financial support for a leadership program, enrichment opportunities and supportive networks to help develop future leaders.

Annie is also involved with several boards and committees to help foster innovation and creativity in young people and is committed to ensuring excellent education and learning for all. Both Professor Newnham and Mrs Fogarty are outstanding members of our community who have committed themselves to improving the lives of others.

Let me also recognise and congratulate the many other recipients of Australia Day honours in Curtin, men and women who have dedicated themselves to their community and who have tried to put others first. They are a fine example for us all.

Welfare

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (19:40): For many years, along with my colleagues, I have raised in this place our concerns over the debt notices many in my community received from Centrelink. This became the infamous robodebt saga. While much has been said about the robodebt disaster administered by the government, the facts are simple: the government sent debt collectors to harass honest Australians. In many cases, these Australians did nothing wrong and owed the government nothing. It was morally bankrupt. As we found out in recent months, they, the government, those opposite, knew it was also not legal.

My office and I heard from too many innocent locals who were struggling with responding to finding they had a debt notice. Many of them had been in and out of secure work over many years. Some were caring for ageing parents or disabled children. Many were students who were given a notice for years previous. These hardworking locals, in many cases years later, were told they had a debt, the implication being that they had defrauded the Commonwealth. There is absolutely no argument here: you get this notice and you are basically being accused of
defrauding the Commonwealth. And, let's remember, some of these letters went out with an AFP logo on them as well, in the original iterations. Receiving these unlawful notices was detrimental. It was time-consuming and it was financially strangleing, and I know because I sat with many in my office to assist them navigate a way to have their debt, which didn't exist, wiped.

Hearing the trembling fear in their voice would have been hard for all members in this place. The fact that members opposite would have heard those voices too, in their own electorates—and, if they didn't, they heard our voices in this place—and that, as we now believe, they knew this was not a legal process is appalling. Leaving aside the questions of the morality of the actions of the minister and the government, the biggest questions remain: for the innocent Australians who owed the Commonwealth nothing and assumed the government wouldn't falsely send in the debt collectors, where is the money they paid up? Where is their apology? In a scheme based on the principle that money was wrongly payed to the recipient, when will this government pay back the debt they owe these people?

Following the announcement of the independent Commissioner for Defence and Veterans Suicide Prevention, I was pleased to meet with Nikki, a former Navy officer, on Friday morning at her request, so quickly in response after the government's announcement. While Labor would have preferred an open and transparent royal commission to shine a light on the problems for our young veterans, we welcome the government's announcements nevertheless. We will watch closely to ensure that the commissioner has the powers promised and that veterans and their families are heard.

Nikki was able to provide a fresh insight into the struggle that many modern ex-service personnel face while trying to re-establish themselves in civilian life. She spoke to me about the mental side effects that the military's culture can place on young people and the innovative ways young veterans use an app called REDSIX to look out and care for their mates. It's quite remarkable seeing modern technology being used in such an innovative and supportive way by our modern veterans. Social media often gets a bad rap, and so do apps, but in this case it was great to see them being used in such a positive way.

Many of our modern veterans don't find traditional veteran organisations a place where they fit in, and they don't necessarily find it provides the support that they need. That's why I am happy to hear Nikki will spearhead a way for veterans who have served more recently to connect with one another in our community. None of us can identify from any source where our veterans live, but I assume in our affordable suburbs we'll find plenty. These veterans have served our country, and we need to do more to support them in their life post-service.

I want to congratulate Nikki and thank her for taking the time, responding so quickly, and for taking on this task. I stand ready to help her in whatever way I can.

Canning Electorate: Infrastructure

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (19:44): Tonight, very simply, I'm going to talk about roads in Canning. We all know how important roads are to people for business, daily life and commuting to and from school or work. People in Canning are waiting for roads to be built. In 2018, the coalition government announced a major $5.4 billion WA infrastructure investment package, and it included exciting news for Canning, including $253 million for the Tonkin Highway stage 3 extension and $241 million for the Byford rail extension. This was huge news for our region. Our community had worked and waited for years to get these projects, especially the Tonkin Highway extension. I know that over the last decade a lot of people have written letters, posted on social media, and advocated to their local, state and federal representatives, and here we are. We've got the money.

At that time, I explained how the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale is one of the fastest-growing local governments in Australia. We need this investment to make our roads safer. We've had a lot of accidents and people are sick and tired of big trucks driving through their subdivisions. So we waited, and we expected the WA government to get to work, but nothing has happened. It turned out that the WA government wanted more money. Rather than splitting the costs fifty-fifty, they wanted the Commonwealth to contribute 80 per cent of the cost, and we did that. We came to the party because we want to make sure that people have good roads. So, in March last year, the Morrison government increased its funding for the Tonkin Highway extension to $404 million of the $505 million cost. The money was committed in the budget irrespective of the outcome of the election. It was a significant investment, but one definitely worth making. As the PM said at the time:

We are prioritising investment in the major projects needed to better support regional areas, ease congestion in and around Perth and reduce the terrible impact of road trauma by delivering safer roads.

So where are we now? One year on from that announcement, two years since the federal government first committed funding and over four years since we started campaigning in earnest for it, the state government is yet the put a shovel in the ground for the Tonkin Highway. The Main Roads website says, as it has for a long time, that the project is undergoing planning and development. My community are sick of waiting. They're sick of the
trucks and they're sick of the congestion. They're sick of the accidents and they're sick of people being injured and sometimes, I am sorry to say, killed by these terrible accidents. I regularly receive questions from people living in Byford, Whitby, Serpentine, Mundijong and beyond who want to know when it will get done, and my colleague the member for Darling Range in the state parliament in WA, Alyssa Hayden, wants to know too. We are asking the same question.

The WA government needs to give our region the attention and urgency it deserves. Several weeks ago, I received a letter from a Labor state member calling on the Commonwealth to commit a further $80 million towards regional road safety upgrades. It's an important issue and it's a conversation I'm always happy to have. I'm happy to collaborate with the state government and I'm happy to work with them on projects of mutual benefit to our community. But, before they put their hand out for more, the WA state government should show they can use what the federal government has already given them, because the Tonkin Highway extension is not the only Commonwealth funded project in my electorate that we are still waiting on the WA state government to build. There's also the Pinjarra heavy haulage deviation—a $27.5 million initiative that will get over 600 trucks a day out of the narrow streets of Pinjarra and around the town. We want to revitalise that town and make it a tourist town. It's situated on the Murray River. It is very beautiful, and there are too many trucks going through it with heavy loads on them. I'm really keen to see that built.

An honourable member interjecting—

Mr HASTIE: I beg your pardon. I withdraw. Then there's the Thomas Road-Nicholson Road intersection, a hotspot for crashes and fatalities that received $20 million to get fixed. On both counts the WA government is dragging its feet, so tonight I call on the WA state government to get on with the job, to think of the people in the Peel region, to think of my constituents in Canning and to build those projects that we all want to see done.

Coalition Government

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (19:50): I love music and have a soft spot for a top 40 list. So here's my top 40 coalition countdown of incompetence. No. 40: the NBN rollout—a lesson in incompetence. Our internet speed has gone from 30th in the world down to 68th. No. 39: spending taxpayer money buying air purifiers for the prime ministerial residence while the rest of the country endured some of the worst air quality in the world. Buying a sous vide machine—something I had to Google, but apparently it's very big on MasterChef. No. 38: deploying the robodebt scheme against one million Australians. It was like attack dog on our own citizens, but when the coalition got to court, they said, 'We agree. We don't have an argument. We agree we got it wrong.'

No. 37: privatising the Australian visa-processing system and accidentally recording a $165,000 donation to the Liberal Party from Scott Briggs' Southern Strategy. Only two consortiums are bidding for the $1 billion visa contract, and one is Australian Visa Processing, a company linked to Scott Briggs. No. 36: the Reserve Bank downgrading forecasts for economic growth for the third time since the May election. No. 35: claiming that electric vehicles were set to 'end the weekend' while the rest of the world actually embraces electric vehicles. No. 34: another big drop in retail sales data in December. No. 33: Australians struggling with stagnant wages, record levels of household debt and sky-rocketing bills. No. 32: our new minister for resources and water is the government's biggest advocate of nuclear power and a dedicated opponent to global action on climate change.

No. 31: one year after the banking royal commission and only six of the 76 recommendations have been fully implemented. Don't forget they voted against that 26 times. No. 30: mismanaging the NDIS by taking $4.6 billion out of the scheme and away from vulnerable Australians who need support. No. 29: repealing the medevac bill, which allowed people who need urgent medical treatment to come to Australia to receive it. No. 28: ignoring the RBA governor's call to bring forward infrastructure spending to stimulate the sluggish economy. No. 27: overpromising and underdelivering on infrastructure by $5 billion over their first five budgets. No. 26: refusing to fast track the Coopers Plains rail crossing in Moreton—a dangerous level crossing that puts lives at risk every day.

No. 25: breaking their promise to release a draft bill for a national integrity commission by the end of last year. No. 24: failing to tackle corruption and promote integrity by establishing the aforementioned Commonwealth integrity commission. No. 23: failing to answer serious questions about the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction and his dodgy document. No. 22: treating the ministerial standards like an optional extra. No. 21: talking about themselves. No. 20: fighting amongst themselves. No. 19: on the day parliament came back to remember bushfire victims, the National Party had a blue. No. 18: they're more worried about the marketing spin than a plan for all Australians. No. 17: the Auditor-General's report into the orchestrated misuse of sports grants recognised it was used as part of the coalition's re-election strategy.

No. 16: ripping off fair dinkum grassroots sports clubs in the aforementioned sports rorts. No. 15: using federal taxpayer money for political purposes by having LNP candidates—including in my electorate—announce successful grants funding for local clubs and not telling the actually elected sitting MP. No. 14: defending their
sports rorts by claiming it was funding female change rooms but actually rejecting 12 applications to build female change rooms. No. 13: another sports rort where clubs didn't even have the chance to apply, and the only guidelines seemed to be electoral boundaries. No. 12: the former sports minister having to resign for an undeclared conflict of interest.

No. 11: childcare costs going up by 34 per cent under the coalition. No. 10: wholesale power prices going up by a whopping 158 per cent. We're in the top ten now. No. 9: aged-care waiting lists blowing out by a massive 300 per cent. No. 8: the minister for aged care falsely claiming that the plan to privatise aged-care assessments was supported by the royal commissions. In an extraordinary intervention, the aged-care royal commissioners publicly corrected the minister. No. 7: a scathing interim report by the aged-care royal commission simply titled, 'Neglect'. No. 6: leadership spills. No. 5: no energy policy. No. 4: almost no action at all on climate change. No. 3: failure to meet our Kyoto targets, and we're not on track to meet the Paris targets either. No. 2: an old favourite that's been around for over a decade and often sung on that side of the parliament—failure to have any climate change policy at all. And No. 1, with a bullet—absolute failure to lead during the catastrophic bushfires over this 'black summer'. The Prime Minister didn't lead; in fact, the Waikiki kid left the country. I do love a top 40, but it is less than 30 months until the Australian people can throw this lot out.

The SPEAKER: The assistant minister on a point of order.

Mr Howarth: I just ask the member for Moreton to refer to the Prime Minister by his correct title.

The SPEAKER: That's absolutely right. He needs to refer to the Prime Minister by his correct title, so he can just withdraw that term.

Mr PERRETT: I withdraw.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Mr CONAGHAN (Cowper) (19:55): Tonight I would like to speak on the important work done by this government to improve the Quality and Safeguarding Framework of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I congratulate the government on the considerable amount of work done since the enactment of the NDIS Act 2013 to ensure that people with disabilities are supported to exercise choice and control over the care and assistance they receive. Since 2013 the NDIS has supported some 250,000 people with disabilities and their families. It has provided financial assistance towards the necessary care and services for people with a disability, helped people to gain employment and social activities and helped people to live the life they want to live by providing reasonable supports. It was timely to have established the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission in 2018 to ensure high standards of quality and care are being exercised by NDIS service providers.

It has come to my attention through constituents, however, that there are concerns with the quality and accountability of service providers, particularly unregistered NDIS service providers. Unregistered providers have just three requirements imposed on them, whereas registered providers have seven requirements guiding their services. Unregistered providers currently are required only to register an ABN, which can be done online, follow the NDIS complaints process and comply with the NDIS Code of Conduct, whereas registered NDIS providers are currently required to do the following: follow the NDIS complaints process; comply with the NDIS Code of Conduct; have current insurance policies in place—being professional indemnity and public liability; have mandatory criminal record checks and worker screening; have reportable incident requirements; have audited certification against the practice standards; have restrictive-practice reporting; have clear internal and external regulatory processes; have specialised ongoing training for support staff; provide every participant with a service agreement; have strong recruitment and induction processes; and have governance and quality assurance processes.

The lack of requirements for unregistered NDIS service providers has led to a number of unsafe and compromising situations for people with a disability in my electorate of Cowper—situations that I find unacceptable. For example, one unregistered NDIS provider reportedly crossed professional and personal boundaries whereby the service provider developed a personal relationship with the participant. Another example I have been made aware of is an unregistered NDIS provider offering to provide insulin injections to a participant on a daily basis without having the proper qualifications.

It was timely that our government established the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. Since it commenced operating on 1 July 2018 the NDIS commission has already taken compliance and enforcement action in response to breaches of the code of conduct by more than 15 people and providers who were not registered and were not providing NDIS support and services. These matters came to the attention of the NDIS commission through complaints from the participants and referrals from other regulatory bodies, including police.

It is my view that we need additional compliance and education measures to detect the actions of unregistered providers to ensure the safety of NDIS participants. The new National Disability Insurance Scheme rules 2018
came into effect on 1 January 2020. These rules set out some of the conditions providers must comply with to become and remain registered. Whilst these are welcome for the contribution they will bring to the registered provider market, my concern lies with the responsibility and checks and balances put on unregistered providers.

As individuals and as members of parliament I believe we are judged by how we treat the most vulnerable members of our community. People with disability are more likely to experience poverty, live in poor quality or insecure housing and have low levels of education. Depending on their disability, they may face physical barriers, communication barriers and language and cultural barriers. It is for these people that we must do our very best as a government to tear down these barriers and improve their quality of life through the NDIS.

**House adjourned at 20:00**

**NOTICES**

The following notices were given:

**Mr Joyce:** to present a Bill for an Act to amend the Representation Act 1983, and for related purposes. *(Representation Amendment (6 Regions Per State, 2 Senators Per Region) Bill 2020)*

**Dr Mulino:** to move—

That this House notes the Government's economic mismanagement and its sustained failure to deliver improved economic outcomes for Australians during its seven year term in office, measured by:

(a) wage stagnation;
(b) near record levels of underemployment;
(c) high and rising rates of labour underutilisation, particularly for young people and in regional areas;
(d) high levels of youth unemployment;
(e) Australia's higher unemployment relative to peer nations;
(f) weak consumption growth;
(g) weak business investment; and
(h) weak and declining productivity growth.

**Ms T. M. Butler:** to move—

That this House:

(1) notes:
   (a) the devastating effect of drought on water supplies in Australian local communities; and
   (b) that the recent bushfire crisis has compounded water insecurity in affected areas;

(2) further notes:
   (a) the Eurobodalla Shire Council's 2016 proposal for a second water storage facility in the southern part of the shire would add 3,000 mega litres of water storage to the region;
   (b) that the project has support from local and state governments, with the NSW state Government committing $26.3 million in October 2019;
   (c) that the Eurobodalla Shire Council has called for a $51 million commitment from the Government to build the dam, noting they will fund the rest of the $105 million project; and
   (d) all supporting parties should ensure the project is environmentally sound;

(3) notes that:
   (a) Australians and regional communities are rightly sceptical about the Government's track record on water infrastructure and drought policy;
   (b) in 2013, Prime Minister Abbott said he would build 100 dams across Australia—three terms later and in its seventh year of power, the Government has failed to fulfil its promise;
   (c) Prime Minister Morrison was caught out for being loose with the truth in October 2019 when he claimed his government was contributing more investment in NSW dam infrastructure than they actually were; and
   (d) more than two years after the announcement of the $2 billion National Water Infrastructure Facility, not a single dollar has been spent;

(4) further notes that the Eurobodalla community has been waiting for a response from the Government since October 2019 in relation to their water storage proposal; and

(5) calls on the Government to urgently respond to the Eurobodalla Shire Council's request for funds for the Southern Water Supply Storage project.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta) took the chair at 16:32.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Francis, Ms Sally, OAM

Mr Byrne (Holt) (16:32): I rise today to congratulate an outstanding local resident by the name of Sally Francis who resides in my electorate and who was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2019 Queen's Birthday honours list and most recently received the 2020 Holt Australia Day Award. Not only has Sally resided within the community for over 50 years but she has contributed to the local community continuously over that period of time. At the age of four, Sally was taught by her mother, a top-level riding coach, how to ride and communicate with horses. It was at this stage that Sally discovered her passion for riding. She now teaches riders of all levels at her Tooradin property and is developing a trail-riding challenge course for people with disabilities.

In 1986, Sally started her journey at Riding for the Disabled Association of Victoria and, over the years, she has been a volunteer coach, trainer and mentor. Over her years of riding, Sally has been part of the Australian Paralympic equestrian team. Her passion has taken her all over the world. She assisted at the Paralympics in Atlanta in 1996 and at the Sydney Paralympics in 2000. She became assistant coach for the Australian para-equestrian team at the Beijing Paralympics in 2008. At the 2012 Paralympics and at the 2016 Rio Paralympics she led the team as, effectively, team manager. She is responsible for the overall management of the team.

Sally has many attributes and makes key contributions to her community and she also makes her town work. She has been quoted as saying: 'It's just so rewarding to see kids with disabilities communicating with the horses and communicating with me and the other people who are also helping them. In turn, just preparing them for life and improving their general living skills is so rewarding.' I rise today to thank Sally and to acknowledge her for her tireless efforts. (Time expired)

Australian Bushfires: Fodder Donations

Mr Pasin (Barker) (16:34): I spoke in this place last week about recent bushfires, and, in that speech, I mentioned how proud I was to represent such a resilient and generous community. Today, continuing on that theme, I specifically want to talk about the donations of hay that are emerging from the Limestone Coast and the south-east of South Australia. Unlike much of the rest of the country, which is in drought, the Limestone Coast has had a relatively good year in terms of fodder production. Combined with the generosity I spoke about earlier, pledges of hay for bushfire affected regions have not been a problem. The problem lies in getting the hay there. In South Australia, we have farmers in the Adelaide Hills, Kangaroo Island and Keilira in my electorate needing fodder for their stock. But, unlike New South Wales and Victoria, the South Australian state government has no transport subsidy program in place to help them get it there.

The Mount Gambier Hay Run has already participated in a huge convoy of hay to New South Wales. The organisers have a further 15 truckloads to give to farmers on Kangaroo Island, but they've encountered some issues when it comes to covering the cost of fuel and transportation. Our community, as I've said on numerous occasions in this place, is continuing to give, and we will ensure this fodder makes it to those who need it. But, quite frankly, the South Australian state government needs to step up and help. This is how you prove regions matter.

Petition: Mr Julian Assange

Mr Wilkie (Clark) (16:35): On Saturday, I'll fly out for London, at my own expense, to visit Julian Assange in Belmarsh Prison. My aim is to check on his welfare and to assure him that a great many people, especially here in Australia, are rightly concerned he is being treated unjustly.

A lot has been said and written about Julian Assange, and there's a broad range of views about the man. But the substantive matter here is quite simply that he's being persecuted for publishing information that was in the public interest, including hard evidence of US war crimes. That the perpetrator of those crimes, America, is now seeking to extradite Mr Assange to face 17 counts of espionage and one of hacking is unjust in the extreme and, arguably, illegal under British law. If the extradition goes ahead, not only would Mr Assange face life in a US prison but the precedent would be set for all Australians—and particularly for journalists—that they are at risk of extradition to any country they offend.

Last week, the member for Dawson and I were presented with the Free Julian Assange petition. It contains nearly 300,000 names and is a powerful document, one that mustn't be ignored by the Australian government. I now seek leave to table this document for consideration by the Petitions Committee.

Leave granted.
Mr WILKIE: I table the petition.

Bonner Electorate: Public Transport

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (16:37): I would like to take this opportunity to share with the House some great news regarding progress of the Brisbane Metro in my electorate of Bonner. The Morrison government delivered $300 million to support the Brisbane City Council project, and I recently joined Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner to tour the depot site, which will house a fleet of 60 fully electric vehicles. What an exciting milestone for the $944 million Metro project! It will create 165 direct jobs during construction and 185 jobs once completed. With four Metro stops in my electorate of Bonner, residents will be able to enjoy a service into the Brisbane CBD every three minutes during peak periods. This is not only a win for commuters, with reduced travel times, but will help bust congestion on the region's busy roads. I'm so pleased to be part of a government that jumped at the opportunity to fund this vital public transport infrastructure which will do away with timetables and revolutionise the way commuters travel. With construction of the depot now underway, stage 1 will begin next year. Once completed, the Brisbane Metro will provide a 21-kilometre service connecting 18 stations along dedicated busways between Eight Mile Plains and Roma Street and the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital at the University of Queensland.

International Greek Language Day

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (16:38): Yesterday, 9 February, was International Greek Language Day. The commemoration honours the importance of the Greek language as the mother of all Western languages, spoken for 40 centuries without interruption, and written the same way using the same alphabet for 28 centuries and the same spelling rules for 24 centuries. It is the native language of 13 million people worldwide and millions of others as a second language learnt in the Greek diaspora or as a foreign language. International Greek Language Day was initiated in 2014 by communities of Greeks and Italians in Italy, and it was officially enacted in 2018. This year, Naples and other places, including Australia, are hosting major celebrations. As to our own local Greek-speaking diaspora, I want to commend their efforts since early migration to Australia to ensure retention of Greek language capacity in successive generations. The diaspora is now in its fourth and fifth generation. Australians of Greek heritage have the opportunity to learn and speak the Greek language. This is possible because of the infrastructure which has been built over successive decades by Greek language schools—both afternoon schools and bilingual day schools—established by the Greek church and the Greek community, which also have given rise to Greek language programs in public schools and universities. This is all made possible by the strong multicultural policies that are an integral part of our contemporary multicultural Australian community.

Fisher Electorate: Listening Posts

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (16:40): I believe it's vital as a parliamentarian to begin every year listening to local residents, and I've started 2020 doing just that with another nine Listening Posts across my electorate of Fisher. I took a stall at the Hinterland Aussie Day Expo in Maleny on Australia Day and held further Listening Posts at Buddina, Moooloolah Valley, Kings Beach, Landsborough, Mooololaba, Currimundi, Glass House Mountains and Alexandra Headland. Many were even livelier than usual, with strong turnouts everywhere. It was clear that Sunshine Coast locals wanted the opportunity to be heard this summer.

I spoke to many about the recent bushfires, the government's comprehensive response and the ongoing issue of climate change. I also had important conversations—for example, about the Bruce Highway with Craig from Currimundi; about housing and homelessness with Wayne in Kings Beach; and about the disrepair of local roads with Marilyn in Moooloolah Valley. I'd like to thank the volunteers who were able to make time to help me out on one or more of these Listening Posts: John Pozzey, Helen Burke, Eric Westman, Peter Hughes, Keith Allison and Lizabeth and Doug Ballantyne. I'd also like to thank Stuart Coward, the LNP candidate for the Queensland state seat of Caloundra, for coming along and helping to support constituents who also had state government issues. Remember, Fisher residents who want to meet me at a Listening Post should follow my Facebook page for notifications of upcoming times and locations.

Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program

Ms McBRIE (Dobell) (16:41): Sports clubs in my electorate are asking why the neighbouring Liberal-held electorate of Robertson received $1.09 million from the Community Sport Infrastructure grant program but Dobell received $416,000. Why did the Liberal candidate for Dobell announce a grant as an election promise, much like Georgina Downer's novelty cheque? Dobell and Robertson are in the same local government area, the Central Coast Council area. Dobell has just as many sporting clubs who need funding. Why did Robertson get double the money? My office, like many others, wasn't appropriately informed about these grants. Central Coast Council found out via websites and a joint media release from Senator McKenzie and the member for Robertson. I wasn't given this opportunity. Many local sports clubs weren't even aware these grants were available.
A football club in Robertson—and I'm a strong supporter of women's sport and women's participation in sport, as we all are—was given two grants. One of these was $488,000 for women's change rooms and upgrades. It scored 55—below Sport Australia's funding threshold of 74 out of 100. Now we learn of another slush fund. This government secretly spent $150 million, supposedly for female change rooms, but only $20 million was spent on women's sporting facilities. The other $120 million was splashed on swimming pools, almost entirely in coalition-held marginal seats. Our sporting community deserves better.

**Horsham Regional Livestock Exchange**

**Dr Webster** (Mallee) (16:43): Sale days at livestock exchanges are fabulous occasions for regional farming communities. They aren't just opportunities to buy and sell stock, they are a chance for people to come together, to see old friends, to build new relationships and to break down the isolation some farmers experience. That's why I was proud to turn the first sod for the Horsham Regional Livestock Exchange project to modernise their facilities and construct a massive roof over the entire saleyard. The new roof will cover over 23,000 square metres, which equates to 88 tennis courts or 18 Olympic-size swimming pools. This upgrade will provide a safe and comfortable environment for buyers and sellers and will improve conditions for the animals. The exchange is also installing 100 kilowatts of solar power and a rainwater storage system, which will ensure the ongoing sustainability of the exchange.

Horsham Rural City Council received $1.5 million via the Building Better Regions Fund to reach this project's total cost of $3.7 million. This kind of project is exactly what the government had in mind when the Building Better Regions Fund was established. We know that these upgrades will create jobs, drive economic growth and increase output for the region. Throughout its 20-year history, the Horsham Regional Livestock Exchange has seen 10 million sheep and lambs pass through its gates. *(Time expired)*

**Parliament**

**Ms Murphy** (Dunkley) (16:44): This parliament is the cauldron of Australia's democratic national conversation, and those of us privileged to be elected to sit here are its custodians. I'm proud to be a parliamentarian, and I'm proud to represent the people of Dunkley. But, like the people in my community, I am deeply concerned about the loss of trust in our democratic processes and governments. Less than half of all Australians are satisfied with the way democracy works. Trust in government has had a 20-year slide from 48 per cent to 26 per cent.

I was elected on a promise to be a parliamentarian that works to address this decline in trust, and I intend to keep that promise. We must have better behaviour and processes for accountability in the parliament, starting with reforming question time. We must have better integrity in the political system, starting with a federal ICAC and a return to upholding the principles of the Westminster system of responsibility. I also believe that all elected parliamentarians should have to undertake ethics training, sign up to a parliamentary code of conduct and engage in ongoing education and training.

We must strengthen our democracy. We need to start with an Indigenous voice to parliament, respecting the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Four-year terms is also an important reform. And, of course, we must look to becoming an Australian republic, where our citizens can look to an Australian as our head of state. These aren't the only things we need to do, but I'm putting them forward as practical examples of how we can bridge the divide. *(Time expired)*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Rob Mitchell):** In accordance with standing order 143, the time for members' statements has concluded.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Syria**

**Mr Georganias** (Adelaide) (16:46): I move:

That the House:

(1) notes with great concern:

(a) Turkey's military operation targeting Kurds in northern Syria;

(b) Turkey's actions which are causing further destabilisation in the region, worsening the humanitarian disaster in Syria, and risk undermining progress against ISIS;

(c) evidence that innocent civilians are being killed and injured by Turkey's military operations and forces associated with Turkey in Syria;

(d) reports of possible war crimes being committed by forces associated with Turkey; and
(e) reports of Turkish intentions to resettle refugees from Turkey into northern Syria outside of UN-sponsored mechanisms;

(2) recognises that the Kurdish forces in Syria have:

(a) been instrumental in fighting Daesh as an ally of the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh/ISIS; and
(b) lost over 10,000 fighters in the fight against Daesh in Syria; and

(3) calls on the Government to:

(a) urge Turkey to cease its unilateral military operations in Syria; and
(b) support international efforts to hold Turkey to account for its actions.

It was of great concern late last year when we saw the fallout in October 2019 from the US forces moving out of Syria. There have been deep concerns about the fallout from back then, October 2019, around the Turkish military operation which targeted Kurds in northern Syria following the decision, as I said, by the Trump administration to withdraw US forces from the area. I suppose what we can say is that most governments around the world have called on Turkey to permanently cease unilateral action which is having devastating consequences in the region.

We know that Turkey's operation risks further destabilising the region and undermining further progress against terrorism—Daesh, ISIS and those forces that had total control of that area. We know that the Kurds were our allies in this war against the forces of evil—Daesh, ISIS et cetera—and fought shoulder to shoulder with Western forces to ensure that that part of the area, once again, became safe. Unfortunately, though, for those Kurds, I feel that we have let them down in the Western world.

The most important priorities right now are halting that fighting, the protection of the civilian population and the unrestricted access of humanitarian actions to the population of that region. These are important factors that should be taken into account, and I think our government should call on all parties to investigate reports that we have heard of, and which are very concerning, of human rights violations in the region, including violations of international humanitarian law.

We know that more than 30,000 civilian Kurds and other minorities in the region have been internally displaced as a direct result of the Turkish aggression in that area. I note with concern that the Turkish military actions have included the indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas, which has been raised in international circles—in the UN and many other places. It's of great concern that there have been reports that the Turkish-backed militias in that area are committing crimes against humanity, including but not limited to killing many, many Kurdish civilians, and we want to make sure that the resurgence of Islamic State does not take place again—that this is not the right way of going about it.

We also need to recognise what vital allies the Kurds were to the West and the role they played in securing the ousting of ISIS and others. The Kurdish forces played a vital role in the defeat and capture of Islamic State terrorists. The Turkish military action in north-eastern Syria has jeopardised that hard-fought and very fragile victory over Islamic State, and there are reports that 12,000 captured Islamic State terrorists and supporters have been freed as a direct consequence of this Turkish invasion.

We have heard Erdogan, the leader of Turkey, say the reasons why this action was taking place. I have to say it brought back memories of 1974, when the exact same excuse was used to invade northern Cyprus, where 40,000 troops still are today, having not left since 1974. This action and the excuses that are being used are exactly the same as in 1974, so this should be of great concern to the leaders of the world. We want stability in that region. We want to ensure that there is peace in that region. But I cannot see it, with the meddling of Turkey in places like the eastern Aegean, Libya and, of course, this horrific event which is taking place at the moment.

We have to speak out. I urge the Australian government to talk to Turkey and to ask them to cease their unilateral military operations in Syria. I urge us to support international efforts to hold Turkey to account for its actions in this region. We want a stable world. We want a world with peace. But we know that, at the current point of time, this is not happening, with people meddling in politics in that entire region. We want to make sure that the Kurdish people are safe and we need to support them as the good Western allies that they were.

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

Dr Mulino: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Dr GILLESPIE (Lynne) (16:52): Never in my history have I been so shocked by the blatant aggression and transgression of borders by a country I had grown to know and love. I spent several weeks in Turkey when I was a young man working in the United Kingdom, on the NHS. It's a rich, vibrant culture. I was so shocked when I saw Turkish forces invade another country's territory. Everyone knows the recent horrors of the Middle East. Now there is the spectre of ISIS being let loose again on that area and the cradle of civilisation being torn asunder by
conflict, with hundreds of thousands, millions, of people displaced, many murdered, and the evil Daesh/ISIS cult holding sway.

Who stood up to them? The Kurds. The Kurds were one of the most feared opponents of ISIS. They allied with the West and they freed that part of the world from ISIS. If we don’t speak up loudly against Turkey doing what they’ve done, we potentially will be accused, as history goes by, of appeasement. We know what happens when you appease nations who do bad things: they go a little bit further. It is with great sorrow that I’m standing here saying this, but I do call on Australia to speak up—I think we have already; I’ll have to check with DFAT. But, in principle, we shouldn’t let this lie.

The issue is that borders are where countries are defined. If you disrespect borders and you allow aggression in a pre-emptive sense, which is their whole rationale, then the whole international order breaks down. It is really critical that we look after the Kurds. The Kurds have now allied with the Syrians, who were at one stage their enemies. It is such a complex dynamic in the Middle East. But the principle that applies around the whole world is that borders must be respected. The second principle is: we shouldn’t appease things.

I am sure our government has already spoken against what has happened, but this motion brings up a very important issue: we must vociferously speak to Turkey, not just once but continually, and make sure they get the message. Most Australians whom I talk to think the Kurds have got a very raw deal. They got rid of people who were truly evil and now they’ve got another invasion in their area. I support the concept and the motion that the member has raised. As I said, if we don’t follow the principles of not allowing appeasement and respecting borders there will be just continual conflict.

**Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (16:55):** I rise to speak about a topic and a country which may, at present, seem remote from our national priorities. I speak of the ongoing Syrian war. The motion is of great importance, but I’d like to first cast our minds back to the bigger picture and the history of how we got here before getting to the motion itself. The context is incredibly important when discussing the decades old and centuries old geopolitical and other rivalries in the Middle East. There was a time, honourable members right recall, when the Arab Spring swept across North Africa and the Middle East. A positive mood dominated the views of Western foreign policymakers and thinkers. The Tunisian revolution was seen by a great many as ground zero of a tsunami of democratisation across the Middle East. Those protests soon spread to Oman, Yemen, Egypt, Syria and Morocco. We all remember the shock after Mubarak resigned in Egypt and Yemen's president fell. We recall the historic fall of Tripoli to the rebels and Gaddafi's regime crumbling.

Tragically, this was only the beginning of the events and we are still living with the consequences each and every day. We remember terribly well that history didn't end in 2011. We remember the protesters shot, tortured and killed in Damascus. We remember the Coptic Christians attacked with tanks in Egypt. We remember the brave, peaceful protesters across the whole region at that time who took such great risks for ideals that all of us in this room would share at enormous risk to their own safety, their own health and often their own lives. We remember, too, that the Gillard Labor government joined in offering international support to the Libyan transitional government, but, despite an international coalition's military and political efforts, the country's civil war has raged on and off for nearly 10 years. As of today, Libya is still torn apart by infighting between rival warring factions, backed militarily by competing great powers. The scale of human tragedy in Yemen is almost beyond belief, as is the fact that some democratic governments, like ours, have sold arms for use in Yemen in contravention of international norms.

But one of the most bitter and costly civil wars to have devoured the region since the heady days of the Arab Spring is, of course, in Syria. Syria matters strategically, but let's just look at the human element. The basic fact before us is that the Kurds have been reliable, outstanding and fearsome allies of coalition forces since the 1990s. They have been allies not only to the US but also to Australia. In 1991, following widespread violence in Iraq, 75 ADF personnel were deployed to Kurdistan in northern Iraq under Operation Habitat. This was part of an international operation to defend four million Kurds fleeing their homes in the Gulf War and to provide humanitarian aid. The ADF's medical teams treated over 3,000 people for a range of diseases and illnesses. While the information is necessarily classified for now, we can reasonably expect that our brave pilots and men and women in uniform in Operation Opera in the Middle East often relied either directly or indirectly on the ground support—the reconnaissance and intelligence support—of their Kurdish mates on the ground. This is one of the reasons I am particularly concerned.

This is a very important motion: it signals that we are deeply concerned about the fallout from the October 2019 Turkish military operation, which followed the decision by the Trump administration to withdraw US forces from the area. It is an operation which targeted the Kurds, which risks destabilising the region and which risks further progress against Daesh. This motion also tells the Kurds, who are both US allies and our allies, that we don't forget or abandon our longstanding partnership and friendship. There are also longer-term risks to Australia's...
national interest from this unfortunate series of events, which we should reflect on. One risk is the effect on the morale and trust of other local allies in the Western and ADF soldiers deployed in the Middle East region. Another is the potential knock-on effect across the Indo-Pacific region.

Mr LEESER (Berowra) (17:00): I rise to speak on this motion on Syria. The Kurdish people know all too well what is meant by the phrase 'in the firing line'. For decades, they have lived across the borders of a very tense and dangerous part of the world with no homeland of their own. They've been caught in the crossfire of other people's conflicts, but they've also been an easy target of hostility themselves. Despite being the fourth-largest ethnic group in the Middle East, numbering about 35 million, the Kurds have no nation-state and have straddled the borders of Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Iran and Armenia for many years. After World War I, the Treaty of Sevres made provision for a Kurdish state, but, when the boundaries of Turkey were created in 1923 at the Treaty of Lausanne, no Kurdish state was created. The Kurds have instead been a minority group spread across multiple countries. The interests of Kurds have frequently been sacrificed for the desires of governments that don't have them as a priority. Throughout the 1980s, Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq systematically targeted the Kurdish people. The Anfal campaign included bombings, firing squads, the raping of women, and chemical warfare against the Kurds. We don't know exactly how many people were killed during the years of Anfal, but the numbers are estimated to have been as high as 182,000, including women and children. Thousands of schools, hospitals and mosques were destroyed, and about 90 per cent of Kurdish villages in the region were wiped out.

From the earliest days of the Islamic State, Kurds have been caught in the midst of violence. In 2013, ISIS attacked Kurdish areas of northern Syria. It wasn't long before Kurdish fighters were at the forefront of the international coalition's fight against ISIS. The Kurds have done more than their fair share of fighting and dying for a cause we also believe in. In the fight against ISIS, Kurdish fighters, under the name of the Syrian Democratic Forces, have been steadfast allies. They have been central to the fight, and Australia will never forget their courage and sacrifice.

Their service continues as the Kurdish forces continue to assist the international community by providing security and support for internally displaced persons camps. The Kurds are continuing to keep the international community safe. Thousands of ISIS fighters are now under Kurdish guard. While the territorial defeat of ISIS brought desperately needed peace to Syria and its neighbours, that stability was interrupted by Turkish military operations crossing the border into the Kurdish controlled area of northern Syria late last year. The Turkish invasion of Syria has reignited conflict, caused civilian deaths and displaced tens of thousands of people. Thousands of Kurds are living as internally displaced people in the midst of a cold winter. They continue to experience untold levels of suffering, as civilians are raped and killed and people are displaced. I also want to acknowledge that 15 February will mark 21 years of Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan being held in a Turkish jail.

Turkey's actions will have significant consequences for the security of the region and the ability of the international coalition to ensure ISIS doesn't regain a foothold. Turkey has legitimate domestic security concerns, but taking military action across borders will not solve those concerns. Australians are deeply troubled by these events. Turkey's actions will increase the displacement of people, compromise the ability of international agencies to provide humanitarian support, and cause more unnecessary suffering. As our foreign minister and Prime Minister have indicated, Turkey alone is responsible for the decisions it's made conducting this incursion. Turkey alone is accountable for the actions of its military forces and the militias it's employing. Turkey alone is responsible for the humanitarian suffering it's causing and its military operations. And Turkey is fully accountable for the detention, custody and escapes of ISIS fighters. If Turkey embarks on a program of changing the demography of these occupied Syrian territories through mass relocations of ethnic groups, or worse, Turkey will be fully accountable for that as well.

Australia calls on all parties to exercise restraint and prioritise stability at this time. When the incursions first occurred last year, I said in the House that Australia has a good and perhaps unique relationship with a Western secular Muslim democratic Turkey, formed on the principles of Kemal Ataturk, whom so many Turks and Australians admire for his bravery at Gallipoli and his conception of modern Turkey. I repeat that sentiment again today. Turkey is a nation with a proud and strong history to draw from. President Erdogan and his regime should remember that legacy and ensure his nation does not again choose to be on the wrong side of history.

I urge all parties in the region to act with restraint, to prioritise stability and humanitarian care and to prevent the needless re-escalation of conflict. Australia's priorities are to stop ISIS resurging and focus on avoiding a humanitarian crisis. It's also important that the Kurds aren't forgotten again by the international community. I want to finish by thanking the Kurdish people for their extraordinary service and recognise the role of many of the leaders of the Kurdish Australian community and the wonderful role they play in this nation. We should do all we can to protect the Kurdish people, to whom we are indebted.
Mr CHAMPION (Spence) (17:06): It's a great privilege to speak on this very important motion brought by the member for Adelaide, who I know is very passionate about, if you like, voicing the interests and concerns of his local constituents of Kurdish background, as am I, and the member for Makin. Many of those people have come to our state fleeing the persecution that speakers in this place have spoken about so eloquently.

Local Kurdish people are great Australians. They are often business people. They're community leaders. They're very friendly. We're happy to have them. But we wish that the Kurdish people could live in peace, preferably with some government of their own, whether that be some autonomous region or a nation of their own. There was a time in this parliament when you could not go a day without talking about ISIS in some way. That has now largely vanished from our national consciousness with the defeat of the regime. But we have to recognise that the ISIS regime was not defeated by ground troops from Western nations but, rather, local militia fighters like the Kurds. They are the people who defeated the extremist regime that occupied vast parts of Iraq and Syria. Their bravery should have been respected and celebrated.

Instead, what we have seen is the most dangerous of actions—and we now see this pretty regularly—unilateral actions by leaders, seemingly with a very narrow regard to nation interest. We saw it in the first instance with President Trump's withdrawal of US troops from this region. The flipside of that withdrawal was the Turkish intervention. This intervention was first flagged at the United Nations in leaders week, with President Erdogan proposing a 'safe zone' for refugees in Syria. We now know that was simply another way of masking a military intervention in this part of the world to basically push the Kurds from this region and perhaps replace them with other people. The United Nations is not involved and international observers are not involved and the whole thing is shrouded in the fog of war. We now that when that happens, tragically, extrajudicial killings occur, civilians are targeted and people are subject to ethnic cleansing. That is what happens in these circumstances.

What we should call upon the Turkish government to do is restrain itself. The previous speaker very eloquently mapped out the fact that this will be solely their responsibility if it goes wrong. What we do need is for this government to restrain itself, for the use of armed forces to be halted, for international observers to be allowed in, for the United Nations to play a role in the resettlement of any refugees and for international law to be paramount. Sadly, what we see more and more in the world is unilateral actions by countries, and these actions will lead to tragic consequences, not just for the people who are on end of the gun, if you like, but also for the nations committing these acts themselves. Turkey has a long history of responsible government, of being a responsible international citizen, and we can only hope that that tradition prevails against what have been very serious and alarming actions by the current Turkish government.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (17:11): An injustice somewhere is an injustice everywhere. That fundamental principle guides so many of the discussions that we believe in our common humanity about the ideals that we share for ourselves, but also the safety and the security for so many other people across this world. The reality is that that is not being fully realised for the Kurds as a result of the situation in Syria, along the border with Turkey, because, as many speakers in this debate have already raised, the Kurds have no homeland. It's a contest that dates back for a very long period of time and is compounded by significant military events that have occurred in the past. The member for Berowra rightly challenged the ages faced by the Kurds and the attacks they received under the regime of Saddam Hussein and Iraq—a deliberate attempt to inflict pain, suffering and murder on the Kurds, against a group of people who are our country's natural allies.

The tragedy of the Kurds isn't one that sits in isolation; it sits across a backdrop of many equivalent ethnoreligious targeted attacks on minorities in that part of the world, and, drawing on my own family's experience, including targeted against the Armenians in the past. One of the things that we learn at every point where there are forms of genocide or deliberate or malicious attacks or murder based on ethno-religious identity, we say, 'Never again,' yet, they keep going. I say that particularly because of the disturbing situation and the decision of the United States to withdraw. Of course, they are not the ones who are responsible for this attack, but we cannot ignore the contribution of their withdrawal to the situation that Turkey has taken advantage of. The Morrison government and Australia rightly make it clear the Syrian Democratic Forces have been steadfast and reliable partners for our country and, of course, the international coalition, against the fight of our common enemy, Islamic State. That is the basis on which, among many others, we should be supporting them and their purpose and their right to live freely from persecution without violence. The Syrian Democratic Forces have suffered significant casualties during their counterterrorism operations, and Australia has greatly acknowledged and will continue to acknowledge their courage and their sacrifices against Islamic State.

As the member for Berowra rightly outlined, Turkey has legitimate security concerns, but it's not the basis on which to cross borders; it is to confront the challenges that they face within their territory. Instead, by crossing over, it has created issues of stability, safety and security—and, ultimately, Turkey is responsible for the conduct in which they have engaged. By crossing the border into Syria, the Turkish military forces and Turkish-supported
militia forces have operated under Turkish government orders and committed terrible crimes. This incursion is having a significant humanitarian impact and the full brunt of it is being borne by the Kurds. It is causing additional civilian suffering and massive population displacement and, of course, it is inhibiting the capacity of many humanitarian organisations to provide their support to those who need it. We don't know the full consequence of the Turkish incursion so far, but they own every part of their incursion—and its humanitarian impact, and as a nation we should never turn a blind eye to that.

Our best interests, like that of all other countries, are in having safety, stability and security for all peoples. Culture and traditions inform the boundaries that nations take, and our interests are in being allied to those who are allied to us. And that is what the Kurds have done. So, in their time of suffering and need, it's incumbent on us to stand up and speak out with one voice, in their favour, against the behaviour that has led to their suffering. I know that many members of the Kurdish community in Australia suffer too because they do not know the impact it has had on their fellow countrymen and countrywomen and their nation. In that, we can only offer our steadfast support.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (17:16): I join others in speaking in support of this motion moved by the member for Adelaide. There are an estimated 25 million to 30 million Kurdish people in the world. Most still live in the Middle East, in territories controlled by Iraq, Iran, Syria, Armenia and Turkey. These are 25 million to 30 million people who do not have an official homeland. They don't have a country to call their own, although an autonomous Kurdish region was established in 1991 with support from the USA, the UK and France.

The Iraqi constitution acknowledges Kurdish autonomy, yet for decades the Kurdish people have been pushed around, persecuted, attacked and killed; poison gas has been used against them, as have chemical weapons—and so, many of them have had to seek refuge in other countries. Those countries include Australia, where, I understand, today around 10,000 Kurdish people are successfully settled.

Yet, in the midst of being attacked on all sides, they always stood firm in the face of the rising threat from ISIS and Daesh. Kurdish people supported anti-ISIS forces, stood their ground and held back ISIS advancements. Now that ISIS has been contained, or repelled, the forces whom the Kurdish people fought alongside and supported have abandoned them. The likelihood of a Kurdish country is slipping away, and Kurdish people are once again being attacked. That comes after about three million of them voted not long ago in favour of independence in Iraq—that is, some 92 per cent of those who could vote voted that they wanted independence. For years, it seemed that they were on the road to independence, but, once again, that appears now to be slipping away from them.

Australian Kurdish people living here in Australia have family, friends and relatives back in their homelands. They fear for their wellbeing and they fear for their safety, and that is totally understandable to each and every one of us. I have spoken to several families in my own electorate who have family members back in their homelands. I empathise with them and I totally understand the fears and concerns that they have for the safety of family members and of friends. Their only option whilst here in Australia is to call on the Australian government for assistance, for help, and that is something that they have been doing and continue to do.

Today, in both President Joko Widodo's address and our own Prime Minister's address, we heard of a sharing of values by our two countries—values which talked about democracy, freedom, good neighbours, justice, opportunity and so on. These are all things that we as a nation stand for and, I believe, have fought to uphold over the years. Australia should now be upholding those same values for the Kurdish people, wherever they are, and, in particular, for those in their homelands. It's all about trying to protect their human rights—again, something that this country has a very proud record of doing.

These people should not be ignored simply because they don't have a country of their own and, therefore, diplomatic relationships with Kurdish people are not quite the same as diplomatic relationships with a country that has foreign affairs officers and the like. They are people who need support, and we should be respecting their needs here and now, particularly given their history of working alongside Australia in other areas of conflict. We've heard from all of the other speakers today about some of those areas of conflict where the Kurdish people have fought alongside Australians.

The Kurdish Lobby Australia has been trying to raise this issue now for some years. I'm aware of their efforts, and I'm also aware of their concerns about what is happening back home. In October, they issued a statement. It's a statement which calls for six specific actions that the Australian government could and should be taking. Time does not allow me to go through all of those actions today, but I'm sure that the Australian government and foreign affairs department of our country would be very familiar with the Kurdish statement that was put out in October. I call on the government to have a look at that statement, to look at what the Kurdish people are asking the Australian government to do and, where possible, to give them the support that they are calling for.

Debate adjourned.
Cybersafety

Mr CONNELLY (Stirling) (17:21): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises:

(a) that society is more connected online than ever before in history; and

(b) the importance of keeping Australians safe online;

(2) notes that:

(a) the Government established the world's first Children's eSafety Commissioner in 2015, and expanded this role to cover all Australians in 2017;

(b) in 2018 the Office of the eSafety Commissioner undertook research to examine some of the challenges faced by young people aged 8 to 17 in Australia online; and

(c) this research indicated that:

(i) 25 per cent of young people have been contacted by strangers/someone they did not know;

(ii) 13 per cent of young people reported receiving repeated unwanted online messages from someone; and

(iii) 13 per cent of young people reported having lies or rumours spread about them;

(3) further notes the bipartisan support for the work of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner; and

(4) congratulates the Government for this world first initiative.

Modern communications technology has brought some amazing benefits to our society. Friends and family can now stay connected even when separated by vast distances. We can share important photos such as a first day at school, a wedding or, in the case of some who likes to do so, even a wonderful meal that we might be eating. But modern communications technology has also brought some significant risks, and these are risks which we need to continue to assess and to mitigate.

I'm sure everyone would agree that it's really heartbreaking to hear stories of people being abused or even exploited online. Like many of my parliamentary colleagues, I am a father. I'm a father of three teenage children. I share the concern of parents right around the country that our children stay as safe as possible online. Of course, a key part of achieving this does fall to parental responsibility. So, in our case, our children know that they have to share their passwords with mum and dad, and we keep an eye on them so that they're not spending an inordinate amount of time on their devices, especially late at night, and so that they're taking every opportunity to engage with other human beings the old-fashioned way—face to face. However, there are absolutely some really important steps that governments should take and have taken to help keep Australians safe online.

In 2015 we established the world's first Children's eSafety Commissioner. It's now just called the eSafety Commissioner because it's for all Australians, not just children. The eSafety Commissioner is Australia's national independent regulator for online safety. The purpose of the eSafety Commissioner is to help safeguard Australians at risk from online harms and to promote safer, more positive online experiences. What a fantastic charter! The eSafety Commissioner leads and coordinates online safety efforts right across Commonwealth departments, authorities and agencies. In a clear indication of the significant importance that this government places on online safety, we're providing over $100 million to support vital online safety initiatives. This includes overseeing and take-down mechanisms to remove cyberbullying. This is material which is often aimed at children and includes intimate images shared without consent. These are prohibited and illegal.

In 2019 eSafety received 638 complaints about serious cyberbullying targeting Australian children. They received 1,511 reports of image based abuse. There's a high level of cooperation from social media services for the rapid removal of cyberbullying material, in certain cases as quickly as within 30 minutes. Funding of $10 million is being provided over four years to support online safety programs for non-government organisations administered by eSafety. Funding of $9.3 million is being provided to extend for another year the Be Connected program. This program helps older Australians to navigate the internet safely. The eSafety Commissioner also administers a number of programs that directly support Australians staying safe online, and these include initiatives to assist young children, older Australians, teachers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women with intellectual disabilities.

The Morrison government is also holding the tech industry to account. Australians expect more from tech companies, and we are keeping pressure on those companies to deliver. We've passed strong laws on abhorrent violent material to incentivise companies to take the prevention and rapid removal of terrorist content on their platforms seriously. The eSafety Commissioner agreed to a set of safety-by-design principles, placing the safety and rights of users at the centre of the design, development and deployment of online products and services. Recognising the need for even more work, in December the Morrison government released a consultation paper
outlining proposals for a new online safety act, a commitment that we took to the 2019 election. The proposal includes introducing a new adult cyberbullying take-down scheme, introducing take-down periods being reduced to just 24-hours and expanding the remit of eSafety's powers to capture relevant players such as gaming platforms, app stores and search engines. Online safety is a shared responsibility, so I call upon the community, companies and organisations to review our proposals and have your say.

The government reacted swiftly in response to the Christchurch attacks in March 2019. We established new penalties for providers of online services who fail to act in a timely manner in relation to abhorrent violent material that can be accessed using their services. These penalties were captured within the Criminal Code Amendment (Sharing of Abhorrent Violent Material) Act 2019. A task force has been formed to combat terrorism and extreme violent material online. The task force released a consensus report on 30 June 2019, a report which made 29 recommendations for tangible action from industry and from government. These recommendations fall into five streams: prevention; detection, including removal; transparency; deterrence; and capability building. We continue to expect digital platforms to do more to combat terrorist and extreme violent material on their services. On 9 September, the eSafety Commissioner issued directions to internet service providers requiring them to block access to the eight rogue websites continuing to host footage of the Christchurch terrorist attack. Our proposals for reform of online safety include a new measure to quickly block access to terrorism material in the event of future online crisis events.

The Morrison government has also been advocating for platforms to step up the ambition and pace of international efforts. This includes at the G20, the G7, the Five Country Ministerial and the OECD. We'll also be working with industry to lift the safety of their products and services, making devices marketed to kids default to the highest security settings, having online safety information available at all points along the supply chain and making sure a filtered internet service is available to those families who want them. I'm sure that everybody in this place and indeed right across the Australian community would concur that the purpose of the eSafety Commissioner to help safeguard Australians at risk from online harm and to promote safer and more positive online experiences remains a vitally important pursuit.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Gillespie): Is the motion seconded?

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

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (17:31): I thank the member for moving this motion which has bipartisan support. I too want to recognise the important work that the eSafety Commissioner does to help minimise online harms to Australians. The eSafety Commissioner does enjoy bipartisan support. On the eve of Safer Internet Day, it is timely to acknowledge its work. But this day does give us occasion to reflect on how we are going at responding to emerging internet harms. It's fair to say in this regard that the responsibilities of the eSafety Commissioner today traverse a wide range of online threats. The eSafety Commissioner stands alone today in the world having responsibility for triaging complaints about online child sexual abuse, online bullying, non-consensual sharing of private sexual material via the internet and the distribution of abhorrent violent content on the internet, particularly terrorist material in the wake of the Christchurch terrorist attacks. This strange miscellany is the result of the improvised way that government has developed policy in this area.

The eSafety Commissioner has been performing its core functions well over time, particularly on the prevention and education front. It has been rewarded in this success through an ever-growing portfolio of responsibilities. But in 2020 we need a more coherent approach to proactively thinking through the best way government and society can respond to the evolving ways that people use the internet to cause harm in our society. While I respect the eSafety Commissioner's work, a better approach to some of these emerging issues might simply be better educating existing law enforcement agencies about the role they play in responding to new harms, the powers they already have in responding to these harms and then providing them with the resources that they need to properly police these issues.

I know the government are engaging in consultations about their online safety act at the moment—introducing a new law. I do encourage those opposite to look at the existing powers—particularly criminal powers—available to law enforcement responding to some of these issues. It seems to be a common failure in the Australian government's response to many of these online harms to date to focus more on educating people about how to stay safe online and less on teaching people that their actions online have consequences. It is true that the rules that govern internet platforms matter here, but so too do perpetrators and the response that they receive from law enforcement. I'm thinking particularly in this instance about online intimidation, abuse and stalking. Any Australian can be a victim of hate speech, intimidation or stalking. A report the eSafety Commissioner recently participated in about online hate speech provided dispiriting if not surprising results in this regard, reporting that 14 per cent of adult Australians had experienced online hatred in the last 12 months.
We know from multiple studies that women and minority groups are disproportionately targeted—they are two to three times more likely to be the targets of online hate speech. But, when victims enter police stations in Australia to report these crimes, and they are response, that victim is not always guaranteed a satisfactory response. They're not even, indeed, guaranteed a consistent response. Unfortunately, it's still a postcode lottery—a lottery of who happens to be on the front desk at that police station on that night. Yet I wonder if anyone in this place appreciates the seriousness and the prevalence of this kind of abuse and how detrimental it can be to people in our public. I also wonder how seriously law enforcement takes it across the nation.

It is an issue of police resources that this kind of abuse has been proliferating in recent years, but it does demand a response from government. Take, for example, the situation of journalist and comedian Vicky Xu. She's been subject to a tide of organised online abuse for her reporting in Australia. It's not trivial. It's a coordinated attempt to intimidate her into silence. There have been thousands of abusive messages from many people living in our own community, but what is the coordinated response from the Australian government? I ask the question: who's assuming responsibility for this? Who's assuming responsibility for protecting people with politically unpopular opinions from online campaigns of this kind? Are our local police stations trained to respond to this threat? Do they take it seriously?

Then there's the emerging contagion of misinformation and disinformation. In recent weeks, conspiracy theories and malicious untruths about the coronavirus and the Australian bushfires have proliferated online. In the case of the virus, they've encouraged panic and racial vilification. In the case of the bushfires, they've helped obscure a vital policy debate. In both cases, institutions spoke quickly and credibly. The New South Wales department of health denounced the concocted media release as an obvious fake, and various police jurisdictions have denied the purported fact that a majority of Australia's fires this year were deliberately lit. But, in some instances, misinformation has either been shared by some in this place or misinformation has been allowed to spread without intervention. Again, who is taking responsibility in government for monitoring and responding to these disinformation campaigns? We require a more coherent approach moving forward.

Ms FLINT (Boothby—Government Whip) (17:36): I would like to begin by commending my colleague the member for Stirling for presenting this motion to the House today. As the father of three teenage children, he and his lovely wife know better than anyone the challenges that parents face in this day and age in helping their children navigate the online space and keeping their kids safe online. I also want to acknowledge the tireless work of our colleague the member for Forrest in this area as well. She fought for many years to see the eSafety Commissioner established and was successful in doing so, and she has presented hundreds of information sessions to schools all over Australia, but particularly in her electorate, helping to educate children as to how to stay safe online.

Recent technological advances have made us more connected than ever. We can stay in touch with friends, family and colleagues, even if they're on the other side of the world. Modern communication has created great social, educational and economic benefits. But these technological developments have come with challenges, especially when it comes to young people and smartphones. These challenges are illustrated in the 2018 research conducted by the eSafety Commissioner, referred to in this motion, which found that among young people aged eight to 17 who are online in Australia 25 per cent have been contacted by strangers or someone they did not know, 13 per cent have received repeated unwanted online messages from someone and 13 per cent have reported having lies or rumours spread about them. As a community, we don't tolerate physical bullying or abuse, and we must ensure that we don't tolerate online bullying or abuse either. Protecting the community, especially our children, is at the heart of our government's online agenda, and I'm proud of Australia's record as a global leader on e-safety.

In 2015, the Liberal government established the world's first Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner to help protect Australian children from cyberbullying and to take a national leadership role in online safety for children through education, advice and enforcement. Again, I acknowledge the very good work of the member for Forrest in this area. Australia has also enacted the world's first kids cyberbullying-material take-down regime, giving the eSafety Commissioner the power to direct social media organisations to take down materials and issue end-user notices to individuals. This power to compel social media organisations is significant given that 53 per cent of images constituting image based abuse are distributed through Facebook, while 11 per cent are distributed through Snapchat.

Similarly, we have provided the eSafety Commissioner with additional powers to combat image based abuse, including revenge porn, by issuing removal notices to websites and content hosts. Thanks to reforms introduced by the Morrison government in 2019, online platforms that fail to remove abhorrent violent material in a reasonable time frame can now be subject to tougher penalties. Our government has been at the forefront in ensuring that regulators and law enforcement agencies have the resources and authority to act swiftly to combat
abhorrent online activity and abhorrent violent content, like terrorism and child exploitation material. In total, we have invested around $100 million to support these activities and increase online safety.

At the local level we can all play a part by educating ourselves and our communities about online safety. We're lucky to have a number of dedicated organisations in our community who do vital work with children, parents and school communities alike, facilitating conversations on e-safety and giving people the tools to protect themselves online. The Carly Ryan Foundation, a harm-prevention charity based in South Australia, undertakes life-changing work in delivering online safety and healthy relationship seminars to students and parents around the country. The foundation is named in memory of Carly Ryan, who was 15 years old when she was murdered by an online paedophile and predator. The foundation was established by Carly's mum, Sonya Ryan. I have had the honour of hosting an online bullying and cybersafety forum with Sonya Ryan, along with my state colleague Carolyn Power MP, at the Edwardstown Primary School. I know that the parents, students and teachers in attendance learnt so much from this, as did I. It gave children and their parents and teachers some very practical advice on how to stay safe online. Sonya's courageous work has taken her to the United Nations, and her tireless advocacy has seen law reform introduced both federally and at the state level.

We know that online safety requires a whole-of-community approach. Parents, teachers, governments and wonderful organisations like the Carly Ryan Foundation all play a part in ensuring our children and young people stay safe online.

As adults we are always operating in the 'always on' state with our phone in hand, ready to click on a link to stay on top of things. Arguably, as adults, we are able to make an educated decision on whether we click on a link, knowing full well the cybercookies that will create crumbs of personal data right for the mining. But what about our kids? A survey on the BBC's children's station found that more than three-quarters of 10- to 12-year-olds had social media accounts. Here in Australia, the legal age to have a Facebook account is 13, but, worryingly, there is evidence that this statistic might be false, with 27 per cent of minors having reported that they entered a false age to get on the site. In most cases, children using Facebook don't have the capacity to understand the effects that clicking a link can have on their privacy, nor do they know how to protect their privacy on the internet. Statistical data shows that only 55 per cent of minors know how to change their social media privacy settings and only 61 per cent know how to erase their browsing history.

The question before us, as lawmakers, is: do we resign ourselves and our children to the mercy of data mining and accept it as a normal and unavoidable part of cyberlife? With the right federal legislation, we don't have to. Spain, France, the Netherlands and Belgium have all taken action to protect the privacy of their citizens online. In Spain, personality rights and the right of protection of personal data is enshrined in their constitution and regulated by the act for civil protection of the right to honour privacy and image. Each right has its own sphere of protection. The right to honour, the right to privacy of image and the right to personal and family privacy are privacies that are guaranteed.
In 2016, the French Federal Court of Appeal struck down a Facebook term because it created such an egregious imbalance of rights in favour of Facebook at the disadvantage of the user. Possibly the most significant legislation in modern privacy security—the European Union introduced strict new data privacy and security laws in May 2018, imposing harsh fines against those who violate privacy and security standards. The legislation places the onus on data controllers to prove they are complying with the legislation and to ensure that the protection of data is considered by design and by default. The EU legislation also places restrictions on when a person's data can be processed with unambiguous consent to enter into a contract, to comply with a legal obligation, to save somebody's life, to perform a task in the public interest or if the processor has a legitimate interest that doesn't contravene another person's right to freedom. In comparison, Australia's privacy act does extend to protection against Facebook but will not grant protection of data for personal use, and we cannot enforce privacy rights against an individual.

I urge the government to consider the privacy rights of the child on the internet, especially the ability of children to consent to access to data in this bill. As Senator Elizabeth Warren said, 'If we do not have a seat at the table, we are probably on the menu.'

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (17:59): I thank the member for Stirling for this motion. There can't be any of us now who do not recognise that, alongside many benefits, the online world has brought new threats to our safety and to our mental health. We see scans, Trojan software, image based abuse, cyberbullying, online grooming, radicalisation, hacking, identity theft and more impacting on those who we care about or which are reported on in our national media every week. To counter these threats, we certainly need stronger regulation and enforcement. The coalition government should be commended for leading the world by creating a regulator with teeth. Already we've seen thousands of abusive posts and illegal images removed from the internet within hours thanks to this bold initiative and due to the eSafety Commissioner and her hard work.

However, just as much as regulation, we are going to need a true culture shift in this country. We need to begin applying the same rules and the same standards of respect, decency, and humanity online that we apply in our offline lives. In other words, if you can't do it or say it to someone's face offline, you shouldn't be able to do it on the internet. It's as simple as that. In creating this cultural change, the government could have made no better decision than to appoint Julie Inman Grant as the eSafety Commissioner. I've worked closely with Ms Inman Grant and, throughout, her professionalism, her command of her brief, her passion for changing our online culture and her sense of vocation have shone through. I'm sure that we've only seen the beginning of the fantastic work she's going to achieve as the eSafety Commissioner.

I first met Julie when, at the then Prime Minister's suggestion, she, along with Alastair MacGibbon, introduced me in early 2018 to what's called the Digi Group. This group includes representatives of the world's most powerful online businesses, including Google, Facebook and Microsoft. I was determined to speak to them about the terrible impacts that the abuse, harmful content and bullying which floods their platforms every day have on our mental health and about the international ideas for change that could make a real difference. These constructive conversations that started with Julie and Alastair's help have continued, although there is still a long way to go. I've been pleased to see concrete action from Facebook and Instagram to lessen their impact in recent months, but there is a lot more work to be done.

I also invited Julie to Fisher in February 2018 to promote the work of the commission and support my own efforts in educating our community about how they can be safer online. Once again, her passion came to the fore as she spoke about educating young and old about the Young & eSafe youth platform and how to equip young people with resilience and respect online. Most recently, the eSafety Commissioner has given evidence to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, of which I am the chair. The committee is undertaking an important inquiry into the issue of age verification to access online pornography and wagering. Julie's input was, as usual, invaluable. This inquiry—and the eSafety Commissioner's ongoing work—will make important recommendations that will help keep more of our young people safe online.

But there remain many, many more challenges that I believe this parliament should be examining. We should, and must, do more, for example, to prevent access to websites, blogs and social media posts which promote an unhealthy attitude to food and encourage or facilitate people suffering from an eating disorder. These so-called pro-ana sites are deadly, and they should have no place in our society. We should, and must, do more to protect children and young people from grooming and abuse through the chat functions of online gaming. Many parents are not even aware that, through many of these games, anonymous adults can have direct access to communicate with their children. This has to change.

Finally, we should, and must, do more to protect children from the creeping infiltration of gambling into online video games with so-called loot boxes. I am absolutely appalled at some of these loot boxes and what they can do to young people, and I'm very keen to ensure that we get rid of them altogether in this country.
Dr ALY (Cowan) (18:04): I fully support the sentiments in this motion, particularly with regard to the protection of children online and particularly given the ubiquitous nature of the internet. But I'd like to also speak today and bring the attention of this House to the dangers exposed in online chat rooms. For example, there is the online gaming platform Discord, which was used to plot and to organise the Charlottesville rally—the Unite the Right rally—in 2017. The group Stormfront—which is a well-known white supremacist group—has paid moderators who wait for young people, in particular, to come into rooms like Discord with questions. They wait for them to recruit them.

An investigation by Annabel Hennessy—a very proper and thorough investigation, I might add—for The West Australian newspaper looked at how extremist groups are targeting young people through online gaming chat rooms such as Discord. That investigation also revealed that some of the more benign online games that are non-violent and not the ones you'd expect—for example, the one with the shoot-'em-up cars and whatever; really non-violent games—are attracting young people and are being used as gateways to get to young people and recruit them for violent, extremist and terrorist organisations. One of the examples is Minecraft, which you wouldn't think is a violent game. But, for example, in one chat room for Minecraft, they've reconstructed a Holocaust site. In another one, they reconstructed the Christchurch attacks. I found a chat room where My Little Pony—the one that those gorgeous little young girls play—is being used to recruit Neo-Nazi sympathisers and violent right-wing supremacists.

Online gaming chat rooms open and expose young people to potentially millions of people around the world who are able to contact a young person, to influence them and to recruit them—for many different reasons, and we could talk about honey potting and recruiting them for child exploitation. This particular investigation by Annabel then led to an hour-long television program on Channel 7 in Perth that explored this even further. This particular investigation looked at the recruitment of people—young people, in particular—for violent right-wing and violent white supremacist groups and other forms of terrorism through the use of online chat rooms and online gaming.

I was on that one-hour show on Channel 7, and one of the things that I said to the parents who were watching was: 'If your 13-year-old, 14-year-old or 11-year-old child were spending a couple of hours every day outside of the house hanging out with a group of people that you didn't know, you'd be concerned. At the very least, as a parent, you'd ask questions.' If it were me, I'd have a tracking device on my kids; but that would be me! You would at least be very concerned. So, when a young person is in these online chat rooms and is talking to people who their parents don't know and who the young person doesn't know—the person on the other side of the line could be anybody—then parents need to be equally concerned about who their children are interacting with in the online space.

The motion before us today raising awareness of this issue provides a really good time to remind people that healthy online behaviours are just as important as other kinds of healthy behaviours. We need to raise our children in this day and age—where, as I said earlier, the internet is everywhere; it's ubiquitous—to be able to interact online in ways that protect them and in ways that ensure their safety. I commend this motion to the House, and I urge all parents to make sure they know what their kids are doing online.

Mr SIMMONDS (Ryan) (18:09): Can I start by complimenting my colleague the member for Stirling for bringing forward this very important motion. He is a dad himself, and he shares with many colleagues on this side of the chamber a passion for making sure that our kids are safe online. It's a timely motion because, as we know, tomorrow is Safer Internet Day 2020, an opportunity for parents and government alike to take a moment and consider: what are we doing to make sure our children are safe online and what more can be done in this space?

We all know—and a number of speakers before me have recounted—just what a positive impact new technology is having. It has an enormously positive impact on all sorts of aspects of our lives, from education to work and entertainment. But it is important that we as a society and as a government do not accept that reduced safety online is the cost of those benefits. It is not. It is not a foregone conclusion that we should have to put up with reduced online safety in order to achieve the benefits that new technology brings to society. The government does not accept that as a legitimate cost of new technology. I don't think the Australian community accepts it either. We know that, because the community is rightly troubled by the statistics, as is the government.

Twenty-five per cent of young people have been contacted by strangers or somebody they did not know. Thirteen per cent of young people reported receiving repeated unwanted online messages from someone. Thirteen per cent of young people reported having lies or rumours spread about them. These statistics are incredibly troubling. My experience as a dad, albeit a new dad, is: I've done it myself; any parent can—I've handed the iPhone to the young fella to watch some cartoons, because mum and dad were tied up and the stress of life takes over, completely forgetting that this is an internet enabled device. As soon as you hand a child an internet enabled
device, as a parent you have to think: do I have the appropriate protections in place? It is absolutely my nightmare scenario as a father.

The previous speaker from our side of the chamber was talking about our fantastic eSafety Commissioner. She was in *The Australian* on the weekend talking about some of those scenarios. It used to be that, as a parent, if your child was in your home, you knew they were safe. But some of the most horrible experiences with a lack of online safety that the eSafety Commissioner recounted were cases where children were being taken advantage of online and you could literally hear the parents talking in the background in another room. That's why it's so important to take this opportunity, with Safer Internet Day and with this motion, to consider, as a parent: is my child safe online? The opportunity is there. The toolkit is there, provided by this government. We have been at the forefront of online safety regulation. There is more to be done. But every year we are increasing the awareness of online safety. The Office of the eSafety Commissioner now has over $100 million worth of funding for the next four years.

I would like to commend the eSafety Commissioner's approach. She talks about the importance of new technology and she talks about the fact that we should have the expectation as a community—and I certainly do as a dad—that these types of new applications, as they become available, should have safety built into them from the ground up. It's not a bolt-on; it's not an add-on that happens when the community starts to rail or be concerned. All these applications should be built from the ground up with safety considerations in mind. But it's my view that Facebook and some of these other online platforms can and should be doing more. They can do more. That's why I'm proud that the government has legislated the world's first kids cyberbullying material take-down regime, giving the eSafety Commissioner the power to direct social media organisations to take down materials and issue end-user notices to individuals. Already this is proving incredibly successful. We have to partner that with the community expectation that we put pressure on these providers and other platforms to do more. So take the opportunity in your family, with online safety day tomorrow, to consider this. The toolkits are there online with the eSafety Commissioner. Download them for your family, and protect your family.

**Mr Gosling** (Solomon) (18:15): I rise to speak in support of the motion and give my thanks to the member for Stirling for bringing attention to this important issue. I thank all those who spoke in support of this motion—

*An honourable member interjecting—*

**Mr Gosling:** except this bloke here. One thing I get really sick of is when members of this place say, 'On this side, we take child safety seriously.' There's nothing that gets my goat more than that. I just wanted to share that with you, Deputy Speaker. So pull your head in, son. We're talking about the safety of kids. Wipe the smirk off your face.

Eric Schmidt, the former CEO and executive chairman of Google, described the internet as 'the first thing that humanity has built that humanity doesn't understand, the largest experiment in anarchy that we have ever had', while Jimmy Wales, the co-founder of Wikipedia, has urged society to remember that we are still in the beginnings of the internet and that we need to use it wisely.

There's no doubt that the internet has been a boon for many but a curse for some. And there can be no doubt that there are some in society who use the internet as a tool to inflict embarrassment and to cause pain and suffering. One in five young Australians has been bullied, socially excluded, threatened or abused online. Unfortunately, it is common for our young Australians not to tell an adult about cyberbullying. As the honourable member's motion points out, research undertaken by the eSafety Commissioner shows that 25 per cent of young people have been contacted by strangers or someone they didn't know; 13 per cent of young people reported receiving repeated unwanted online messages from someone; and 13 per cent of young people reported having lies or rumours spread about them. This is why it's important to acknowledge the work of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, as the honourable member has done in his excellent motion.

I want to reaffirm the bipartisan support that the office has. They support a number of safety programs and online resources to help Australians combat online abuse. I won't repeat some of the statistics that we've heard, because they've already been provided to the House. But I'd like to place on the record my thanks to the eSafety Commissioner, Julie Grant, and her team for the important work that they do. I'd also like to acknowledge some Territorians—the work done by Kate and Tick Everett and their NGO, Dolly's Dream. Dolly's Dream was set up by Kate and Tick in memory of their daughter Amy 'Dolly' Everett, who took her own life at the age of 14 after an extended period of bullying and cyberbullying. Dolly left behind her parents, Tick and Kate, and her sister, Meg, who are now focused on preventing other families going through the same devastating experience. Dolly's Dream is helping deliver the rollout of eSmart Schools in Queensland and the Northern Territory, a tool which will reduce school bullying. For their efforts, Kate and Tick, deservedly, received the 2019 Australian of the Year award in the Local Heroes category.
The internet and social media offer a forum for human interaction which, in the main, is positive. A case in point is the bushfires, where social media connected people and raised funds. But we all know that sometimes human interactions go wrong, offline or online. When that happens, the internet and social media, in particular, can be a lightning rod for toxic and bullying behaviours, making it a dangerous place for vulnerable people and, very often, our younger Australians. We can all do more to make the internet a safer place. But sometimes, because of the volume of the toxicity that we find online, we can become complacent with how we deal with cyberbullying and online abuse. We need to remember that online abuse is never okay and that those perpetrating it should not go unpunished. If you see something abusive or something that you believe is unacceptable, jump online and report it. I note that tomorrow is Safer Internet Day and this year's theme is 'Together for a better internet'. So let's remember that we all have kids and we're all on the same side—and that's against the perpetrators and for our kids.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Captioned Telephone Handsets

Mr GORMAN (Perth) (18:20): I 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 ageing 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.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace): Is there a seconder for the motion?

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

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to, and I give the call to the member for Perth.

Mr GORMAN: Being disconnected is a horrible feeling: that anxiety when you think you've lost your phone, or when you run out of battery and you're out at dinner, or—as we experienced in this place just last Thursday—when you get an SMS to tell you that the email server is down and they don't know when it's going to be put back into service. The government's handling of the CapTel service is worse than any of these feelings. It has left hundreds of Australians feeling disconnected and uncertain about whether the government actually understands how this service works or what they use it for.

I moved this motion because of a woman in my electorate, Peggy, who lives in Inglewood, just around the corner from my electorate office. She wrote to me and said: 'I can't believe the government is shutting down this service.' When I first read her letter I thought: 'I think and I hope that Peggy is wrong.' But Peggy was 100 per cent right.

The government is sending the users of the CapTel service back to using 1980s technology. I loved my Nintendo Entertainment System as much as anyone. I loved Game Boy and its old-school physical link cable. And I played—I can't remember the name of it—that helicopter game you played on the Apple Mac classic, the first computer to come into my household. I loved all of those pieces of technology. But I don't use them in 2020. This is like asking people who rely on this service to use Betamax to watch a 4K movie.
There are so many people who have been using their voice on this issue for a number of months now. I commend the Facebook group Save CapTel, who have been campaigning vigorously and enthusiastically, trying to get their voice heard. These are people who rely on services that thankfully most of us in this place don't need to rely on to be able to communicate with the outside world. You get a sense of desperation from the users of this service. Joan writes on the Facebook group: 'I lost my CapTel service yesterday and the alternative on offer was so antiquated and difficult to navigate I refused to accept it.' These are long-term users of this service refusing to accept the dodgy alternative being provided by the government. Karen writes: 'The new system is not available for my father because he is in a nursing home. It means no more phone conversations for us. I live in a different state to him. He is 93. He may never hear me again.' And Nola writes: 'I need my CapTel phone. It's the only way I can ring anyone.'

Another person who has been in contact with my office is Dr Alex Harrison. He told me: 'I am the first and only profoundly deaf veterinarian in Australia. I use my CapTel phone every day.' He uses it for his work. Now that it's not available he is relying on FaceTime and other devices, which causes a lot of problems for some of his customers as, if they're not on the Apple network, he can't communicate with them. He says that he's had to wait in queues for an operator. He can't be waiting for 30 minutes on this dodgy second-rate service to talk to a pet owner in an emergency situation. For those of us who love our pets, for those of us for whom they are members of our family, to be stuck in a situation like that—again, because of the government trying to make a small, insignificant saving on an important service—is simply not good enough. That saving? Eight million dollars. They are cutting the service. What they save doesn't, in any way, justify cutting the quality of the service. Surely, if the government wanted to find efficiencies, they could have found many more places to start than switching off the CapTel service on 1 February this year.

I want to commend the member for Greenway, the shadow minister for communications, for her ongoing advocacy on this matter. She's been a champion for CapTel users, fighting to protect vulnerable Australians from these cuts. I want to end with a quote that I think sums things up. The minister for communications part-acknowledged what the problem is, but, in saying that he acknowledged it was hard, he said:

I certainly acknowledge any transition of this kind is challenging, particularly for older Australians who may not be as familiar with technology.

The reality is that it has been challenging—so challenging, in fact, that Australians have had to rely on the charity of a US corporation—that is, the CapTel service provider—to continue this service while the government continues to sort out a mess entirely of its own making.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Perth. The question is that the motion be agreed to. I give the call to the member for Shortland.

**Mr CONROY** (Shortland) (18:25): I rise to speak on this excellent motion by the member for Perth, which notes the importance of the CapTel handset to at least 4,000 people in the Australian hearing impaired community and condemns the government for removing this important service without consultation. I thank the excellent member of Perth for moving this motion. I note the fact that not a single government member has the guts or intestinal fortitude to get up and defend their decision. The new member for Curtin—probably in an act of being new to this place—put her name on the list to speak about this and suddenly she's been detained.

**Government members interjecting—**

**Mr CONROY:** I look forward to her coming up after the member for Newcastle. There are a couple more speaking slots and I look forward to her coming up to defend this appalling decision by the government after I and the member for Newcastle speak. The truth is that this heartless Morrison government is making life harder for Australians with a hearing impairment, particularly older Australians who have lost their hearing altogether. Like many others in this place, since mid last year I've been contacted by constituents with a hearing impairment who are alarmed and distressed at the news that, from February this year, they are no longer able to use their CapTel phone service. February is here and we've seen some panicked reactions by the minister for communications, but no satisfactory solution for elderly deaf Australians and their families. Why on earth would this government remove access to the CapTel handset from the National Relay Service? The answer is, quite simply: budget cuts. Some Australians have come to rely on this service. People in my electorate such as Noel, aged 85, who has cancer, relies on CapTel to make medical and transport appointments. Maree, aged 77, has partial hearing but relies on CapTel to make sure appointment details are accurate. Andrina, aged 69, still has some hearing and can enjoy the sound of her grandchildren's voices but relies on CapTel for adult conversations. John is aged 70, and his wife had a long career as a teacher but lost all confidence when she lost her hearing. With CapTel she has confidence to make her own appointments. Marilyn, aged 75, relies on CapTel to keep in touch with her daughter. Paul, aged 86, needs CapTel to call the ambulance when his wife collapses. And Kathy, aged 63, says CapTel has
changed her life. She is no longer socially isolated because of her deafness and can manage her own affairs. All this is being ripped away by this government.

The minister has not taken responsibility for his appalling decision. He's so far blamed the 2013 Labor government, the Public Service and the previous National Relay Service provider, and he's now blaming the American company that licenses the technology, all because the government won't admit this debacle is its own fault. All we are seeing is cost-cutting. The communications minister did expect and acknowledged that the transition to this new and, as we've discovered, inferior technology would be challenging, particularly for older Australians, who may not be as familiar with technology. He said the migration to alternative services would be supported by 'extensive training, information and transition', including in some cases 'in-home assistance'. What does this training look like? In the words of one of my constituents from Valentine:

Since my last email I have had a government trainee to my house. The National Relay Service is useless!

No one from NRS answers and you have to use a log on every 18 hours.

My lovely helper in the home from the government rang me through the NRS and we both chatted for ages ... no, not on the phone, side by side, while waiting for the NRS to answer!!

Eventually she—

the NRS worker—

had to hang up but said the on hold music was very nice.

And how would other people know how to ring us through the NRS?

So I tried the Live Transcribe option holding one mobile screen up against the speaker on the other mobile

This does a great job of transcribing what I've said, but I know what I'm saying …

It was absolutely hopeless, useless, for transcribing the caller.

Mostly nothing came up, but if a few words did they were incorrect anyway.

My constituent goes on to say:

This Liberal Government has no empathy whatsoever. They cannot have even got any experts to look into this to see if it would actually work.

He or she finishes by saying:

PLEASE SAVE CAPTEL.

This is what happens when a government fails to plan. This is what happens when a government does not care—when a government puts the budget bottom line ahead of Australians who need support. Elderly and deaf Australians deserve so much better than this, and I condemn the government for its heartless treatment of these 4,000 Australians. I dare the minister to come to my electorate and meet with some of my constituents who have broken down in tears, explaining what this service meant to them. Shame on this government for attacking so many vulnerable Australians.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (18:31): I thank the member for Perth for bringing this important issue before the House today, and my colleague the member for Shortland, who preceded me, for his contribution to this debate. It's very disappointing that we don't have any government members speaking to this motion tonight. I understand it's difficult—indeed, probably embarrassing—to try and defend this cruel and harsh decision. But what we really need now is government members with the courage to say, 'We got it wrong and we're going to fix this and overturn this cruel and harsh decision.' This is an issue that has caused great distress to so many people in my community. The Morrison government has cut the National Relay Service budget from $30 million to $22 million, making it nearly impossible for any provider to continue offering all of the existing services, and resulting in the end of the much-loved CapTel service. I have received pleas from a number of deaf and hearing-impaired Novocastrians who have told me of their profound distress at the prospect of losing this service.

Today I would like to share with the House the story of Mr Roy Bisson, from Maryville in my electorate of Newcastle. Once a week, Mr Bisson does what many parents do; he settles down for a chat on the phone with his son. They don't get to see each other very often in person because his son has a busy life as an electrician in Sydney. But they enjoy their Sunday morning chats, when they get to catch up on everything that's been happening in each other's lives over the week. This is especially precious to Roy because he has only 20 per cent hearing in his right ear and a cochlear implant in his left. In order to communicate by phone, Roy has been using CapTel, which provides real-time captions for every word in the conversation. But, sadly, all this is at risk, thanks to the Morrison government's cruel and small-minded budget cuts.
Mr Bisson wrote to me about this senseless cut last year. He wanted me to know how it would hurt him and thousands of other deaf Australians, and he asked me to advocate for him with the government. In his letter, Mr Bisson wrote:

Like thousands of Australians with hearing loss, the CapTel handset has provided with me a reliable and effective option for communicating by telephone for more than two years. It provides me with a level of independence and freedom not offered by alternatives like the Internet Relay Function and web-browser captioned relay which require pre-planning to make and receive calls.

The Government's decision to stop supporting the CapTel handsets is unfair and will discriminate against thousands of Australians who rely on CapTel in both their work and personal lives.

I believe this is an important point. This Liberal government says it's all about giving people a go if they have a go, and yet it is shutting down the very service that allows deaf and hearing-impaired Australians to do just that. Mr Bisson summed up his letter with this strong statement:

CapTel must remain available so that all Australians with hearing loss or impairment can participate in our society on an equal basis and stay connected to the people we care about.

Hear, hear, Mr Bisson. It's hard to imagine what an isolating experience the loss of CapTel would be for Mr Bisson and other deaf and hearing-impaired Australians, and it's impossible to see how the government can justify this callous cut.

The decision by Ultratec to continue supporting Australian CapTel handsets as an interim measure is testament to the strong community campaign against these cuts. But it should not be up to any private company to make up for the Morrison government's bad decisions—and it's still only a temporary reprieve. I've written to the minister multiple times on this matter, and, each time, I just get the stock-standard response—and no adequate solution for the deaf people in my community. My Labor colleagues and I understand the profound importance of CapTel to deaf and hearing-impaired Australians. CapTel offers Australians the ability to communicate more easily, a greater quality of life and an improved sense of safety. It's time for the Morrison government to stop the buck-passing and to do what is necessary to secure ongoing access to CapTel. I look forward to a government member rising to make a contribution on this debate: to admit to deaf and hearing-impaired Australians that the government got it wrong and that they're prepared to stand up and fix it.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (18:36): I rise to speak on this motion. Whilst I appreciate that the government put the National Relay Service, the NRS, out to competitive tender in order to curtail significant budget overruns, I am concerned that this attempt to rein in costs will have a profound impact on older Australians with a hearing impairment. The government's tender process has reduced operational spending on the NRS by 20 per cent to $20 million at a time when the number of older Australians—those aged over 65—has increased by around 20 per cent, to more than 1.2 million.

Technology is evolving at a rapid pace and we as a society are the beneficiaries of these advances. However, there are some within our community, including older Australians, who do not benefit from technological changes, either through access, capacity or choice. That's not to say that all seniors are not tech-savvy, because, of course, many are. But when I consider the feedback from my community regarding changes in technology, whether that's the rollout of the NBN or the pressure to do online banking due to bank branches closing, it is usually the elderly who express their anger and confusion at being forced to migrate to a technology they don't want to use.

CapTel is a telephone service that provides live captioning on a special handset and, until 1 February, it was provided under the NRS. This motion says that there were 4,000 CapTel users in Australia according to the Department of Communications figures. The minister says there were 1,722 active users as of October 2019. I've been unable to ascertain exactly how many CapTel users live in my community. But I have been contacted by some of those affected by this decision, including Dr Alex Harrison of Flagstaff Hill, a veterinarian, for whom CapTel was a game changer in dealing with clients after he signed up in 2017. Dr Harrison says that CapTel provides him with a level of independence and freedom not offered by alternatives, such as the Internet Relay function and web-browser Captioned Relay, that require pre-planning to make and receive telephone calls. Dr Harrison is Australia's first profoundly deaf veterinarian and, as a person with a hearing impairment, he says he's tired of fighting for every little thing.

The average age of a CapTel user is actually 82 years. Mrs Smith-Beale, who lives in the Adelaide Hills, is 83. She doesn't own a computer and she's worried that, without CapTel, her world will pass her by. CapTel is the preferred medium for communication by older Australians with hearing impairments, with around 70 per cent of CapTel clients aged over 70. My electorate of Mayo has the highest median age of any federal seat in South Australia, currently standing at 46 years of age, and nearly 23 per cent of my community is aged over 65. There
are some parts of my community, such as Goolwa and Victor Harbour, where around 40 per cent of the population are aged over 65. I'm concerned that older Australians will be disproportionately affected by the new NRS arrangements, which, in the main, are delivered online. Some older people in my community are comfortable with using internet devices, but many older people are not. If you are an older person familiar with using the CapTel telephone service, it is unreasonable to then require them to keep their computer connected to the internet at all times—that's assuming that older people have a computer—in case they need to make an emergency medical call. I'm concerned that the removal of CapTel from the National Relay Service will not adequately serve the needs of the growing number of older Australians with hearing impairments.

I appreciate that governments have to work to budget and that this government wasn't happy about the cost blowouts with CapTel through the company that had the exclusive rights to use the technology in Australia—I understand that. I note that the owners of CapTel and Ultratec are continuing to support CapTel handsets independently of the NRS. Ultratec has not indicated how long this arrangement will last. But, as this motion states, I want to acknowledge the distress caused by the discontinuation of CapTel, and I call on the government to continue to work constructively with Ultratec and the current NRS provider to strike a suitable financial agreement. We can't leave so many people with hearing impairments in Australia without a voice.

Ms HAMMOND (Curtin) (18:41): The member for Perth has raised a number of valid points in this motion, but I completely disagree with his criticism of the government on this matter. I also understand comments have been made by previous speakers as to the government not speaking on the matter. This would seem to be regrettable, opportunistic and political points scoring, as I am about to speak on it right now.

I would like to acknowledge the popularity of the CapTel service among the Australian deaf and hard-of-hearing community, including in my electorate of Curtin. In fact, a number of constituents have contacted me with their concerns about having to move from a CapTel service to a new service. I understand, as does the government, their concerns about having to learn how to use a new system and whether or not it will provide a service which they need. But I would also note that the government has been diligent and proactive in responding to the concerns which have been raised and that if any condemnation needs to be made here, it should not be sheeted towards the government.

To understand this issue, context is needed. The CapTel service is just one of 19 services offered through the National Relay Service. The National Relay Service, funded by the Australian government to the tune of $22 million per annum, is a very important communications service for Australians in our communities who are deaf, who are hard of hearing or who have a speech impairment, as it allows them to make and receive phone calls through what is called a relay call. The NRS is available 24 hours a day every day and relays more than a million calls each year throughout Australia.

There are a number of ways in which the relay calls can work and a number of different devices which are used within the NRS to facilitate this. The CapTel handset is just one of them. The appropriate device is determined by the impairment or the need of the user. Since November 2019 services through the NRS have been transitioning from the previous relay service provider, Australian Communication Exchange, to Concentrix. The decision to move from ACE to Concentrix was made following two tender processes conducted for the NRS in 2018 and 2019. The minister has been very clear on numerous occasions as to why the government put the NRS out to tender. The minister has also been very clear on numerous occasions as to why the incumbent provider, ACE, was not successful.

In relation to the continued usage of CapTel, what is important to note here is that the government did not seek to exclude the CapTel handset from the new service. ACE was the only tenderer which could offer the CapTel handset because they held exclusive Australian rights to the technology, and they sought to leverage that exclusivity by almost doubling the cost per minute of providing the NRS services. This situation was compounded by the fact that the owner of the CapTel system declined to deal with other NRS tenderers, including Concentrix. On this point, the minister has made it very clear that if the owners of CapTel's system are willing to work with Concentrix, and if they are willing to make an acceptable offer to Concentrix, the government stands ready to support the continuation of the service to current CapTel handset users, whether on a commercial basis or as part of a sustainable NRS.

At this point in time it is unclear whether the commercial parties involved here will come to the party. Because we don't want vulnerable Australians to be caught up in a company's commercial negotiations, the government are encouraging CapTel users to continue to migrate to either NRS supported alternatives or other options. And, yes, I agree with the member for Perth that many of the elderly users in our community can find it difficult learning to use the new technology. Although I would also say: let's not underestimate them. That's why the government have been working with and will continue to work with CapTel handset users to move to other services which will meet their needs. I will note here that 700 users have received in-home assistance and training to make this transition.
The Morrison government is fully committed to keeping those who are deaf, hearing impaired or speech impaired connected through a fully funded, efficient and sustainable National Relay Service. It will continue to monitor the situation and ensure that assistance is provided wherever required for whoever needs it and that it gets put in place.

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

Leifer, Ms Malka

Mr SHARMA (Wentworth) (18:46): I move:

(1) notes that Malka Leifer, the former Principal of the Adass Israel Girls School in Melbourne, fled Australia in 2008 as child sexual abuse allegations against her surfaced;

(2) reaffirms the formal extradition request that was filed by Australia in 2014 requesting she be returned to Victoria to face 74 charges of child sexual abuse;

(3) acknowledges the bravery of Ms Leifer's alleged victims - especially Dassi Erlich, Nicole Meyer and Elly Sapper for their tireless pursuit of justice;

(4) further notes that over five years have elapsed, and over 60 court hearings have been held in Israel, since this extradition request was first lodged, without any significant progress having been made;

(5) expresses regret and concern at the numerous attempts to prevent and delay Malka Leifer facing justice in Australia; and

(6) calls for the immediate extradition of Malka Leifer to Australia to face 74 charges of child sexual abuse.

I wish to address the House today about an important issue of justice. Ms Malka Leifer, who was principal of the Adass Israel School in Elsternwick, Melbourne, bolted from Australia in 2008, two days after she was sacked by the school board amid allegations surrounding inappropriate relationships with some of the pupils at the school.

In 2013, 74 charges of sexual assault were filed against Ms Leifer in connection with her time at Adass school. In 2014, Australia made a formal request for the extradition of Ms Leifer in order to face these 74 charges. In the same year, in August 2014, this extradition request was filed in the Jerusalem district court. I recall this well. I was living in Israel at the time, representing Australia as our ambassador. I distinctly recall receiving and formally conveying our extradition request. I expected it would be a straightforward case, that the wheels of justice would turn and that, within the space of 12 to 18 months, we would see Ms Leifer extradited to Australia in order to face justice for these most grave and serious charges levelled against her.

But I regret to report that in the five years that have elapsed since the extradition request was first made the wheels of justice have stalled. There have now been upwards of 60 court hearings in this case and yet only now are we just beginning, painfully slowly, to see the wheels of justice break free from their shackles and ever so perceptibly begin gradually to turn. The actual petition for extradition has in fact never been argued before the courts in Israel because, prior to each hearing, Ms Leifer would claim to be experiencing a psychiatric episode and fail to appear before the court. This behaviour is not only an affront to justice; it is deeply traumatic for the victims of this abuse, it is damaging to Israel's reputation and it is increasingly becoming a point of contention and friction in our otherwise positive and productive relationship with Israel.

Since I last spoke about this issue in the House, however, there has been a noteworthy development. On 13 January this year, 2020, the Office of the State Attorney in Israel requested that the extradition request be expedited. The Office of the State Attorney did so on the basis that a psychiatric panel appointed to assess Ms Leifer reported to the court on 9 January. In its report, the psychiatric panel stated their findings that they:

… unanimously and unequivocally determined that Leifer was mentally fit to stand trial and that she had been faking her mental incompetency all along.

Let me repeat that: they found unanimously and unequivocally that Ms Leifer was mentally fit to stand trial and that she had been faking her mental incompetency all along. The Office of the State Attorney in Israel added in their commentary:

The psychiatric panel's findings lead to the inevitable conclusion that over the past five years, the court and the mental health system have fallen victim to a fraud perpetrated by Leifer and her supporters.

I could not agree more wholeheartedly.

As a result of the state attorney's request, the 63rd court hearing in this case was held in the Jerusalem District Court on 24 January 2020. Media reports describe this hearing as 'an excruciating 90 minutes of groundhog day,' with Ms Leifer's lawyers once again attempting to frustrate and further delay the process, which has already been far too prolonged. They have been granted an opportunity to cross-examine the members of the psychiatric panel which assessed Ms Leifer. I hope that this cross-examination happens quickly and we can move forward.
Ms Leifer has continually used claims about her mental state to frustrate and delay attempts to extradite her. The willingness of the Israeli legal system to entertain these claims seems to make no consideration or allowance for the fragile mental state of Ms Leifer's alleged victims and their legitimate desire to see justice served in this case. At a hearing in October last year Israeli Supreme Court Justice Anat Baron said:

The doubt itself regarding the credibility of the defendant in everything relating to her mental status creates the concern that this is an attempt by her to escape justice and to disrupt the legal proceedings.

I endorse those comments.

Members of the House would be aware that, in a further twist in this case, the Israeli police have recommended the indictment of the Health Minister, Yaakov Litzman, in Israel for allegedly pressuring the officials in his office to prevent the extradition. This is an exceptionally serious allegation. If true, this would be a gross interference in the course of justice. I hope and, indeed, I expect that it will be fulsomely and fearlessly investigated.

In December last year, the member for Macnamara, Josh Burns, and I met with Dassi Erlich and Nicole Meyer, two victims of Malka Leifer's abuse who came to personally lobby for fast-tracked extradition. The passion and determination that Dassi and Nicole and others have shown in continuing to fight for justice in this case is inspiring. Nicole said of her motivations:

We're trying to send a message to all survivors that even if you have been abused life can go on, justice can be served, and we want to stand strong on behalf of all others, not just ourselves.

After five years of waiting, the persistence of Nicole, Dassi and other victims looks close to being rewarded. But the fact that an extradition like this has been held up for five years based on a claim that the alleged perpetrator has been in the midst of a psychiatric episode that was later found to be fake is, quite simply, unacceptable. I do not doubt the independence and the integrity of the Israeli legal system; nor do I doubt the commitment of the Israeli justice ministry in pursuing this case, but, quite simply: enough is enough. This case has gone on for far too long.

I endorse the recent comments of the Israeli Ambassador to Australia, Mark Sofer, when he said:

… the case has gone on for far too long and nothing short of full justice can be acceptable.

Indeed, nothing short of full justice can be acceptable. As a friend to Israel, I can only advise that this case is causing harm to Australia-Israel relations. It is doing damage to Israel's reputation as a country governed by the rule of law. It is very important that Israel knows, at all levels, that this is an important case for Australia. It is one that is, increasingly, having an impact on bilateral relations and on how Israel is viewed and perceived in Australia. It is one that we will not let rest until we see Ms Leifer extradited to face justice in Australia.

I and others, including those here today, will keep faith with the victims of this awful abuse, and we will be relentless in ensuring that justice is done in this case. Those who suffered from Ms Leifer's abuse should be praised for their persistence in the pursuit of justice. Those of us in Australia with the capability to do so owe it to them to stand up and fight alongside them.

I'm confident that others in this House will continue to work alongside us and that the Australian government will continue to pursue the extradition of Malka Leifer. With the breakthrough finally made in January of this year, I am hopeful and, indeed, insistent that this case will reach a satisfying conclusion and that justice will be served. We will not rest until that is the case. Let me also acknowledge the work of the member for Macnamara, here in this place today, who has done a tremendous job in highlighting this issue and bringing it to public attention.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace): Is there a seconder to the motion?

Mr BURNS (Macnamara) (18:55): I am pleased to second the motion put forward by the member for Wentworth. This motion has not only brought the member for Wentworth and me together but united members and senators in a rare but significant display of bipartisanship in this place. I want to thank the member for Wentworth for the collaborative and productive way in which he has approached this motion as well as all of the representations in this case. He has acted in good faith, and I really appreciate all of his efforts in this as well. I also want to acknowledge Dassi Erlich, Nicole Meyer and Elly Sapper. Dassi and Nicole visited Canberra recently and, on a suggestion made by the both the Leader of the Opposition and the Speaker of the parliament, a motion was put forward to continue the representation and to continue the pressure being put on Israel in this case.

In a free, democratic society such as Australia or Israel, everyone who is accused of a crime is entitled to a fair trial, to representation and to be able to defend themselves. But this case has gone far beyond any course of natural justice. It has been 12 years since Malka Leifer, the former principal of the Adass Israel girls school in my electorate, fled Australia for Israel in the dead of night. She fled as questions were beginning to surface around her conduct as the principal.
It has been nine long years since the first brave victim, Dassi Erlich, gave her statement to Victoria Police. It has been six long years since Australia filed a formal extradition request to Israel so that Malka Leifer could be returned to Australia to face the 74 charges laid by Victoria Police relating to cases of child sex abuse. It has been four long years since Dassi Erlich began her public campaign to bring Leifer back, joining forces with her sisters, Nicole and Elly, to tell their story and to enlist the support of the Australian Jewish community, the wider public, our parliament and our government. In that time, the case of Malka Leifer's extradition has had 63 court hearings, and not one of them has been about the extradition. The actual extradition process hasn't yet begun. They've been about her fitness to appear before an extradition process.

It is known that sexual assault victims face a significant dilemma when they are forced to decide whether to come forward. It's a very hard thing to go public. It's a very hard thing to tell your story. If you are a victim, having other people know what you've been through is probably the last thing that you would want. It is to be forced to relive your trauma under the glare of the public, of your family and of your friends, and yet that is what these sisters did. They spoke out not just for themselves but so that the culture that had infected our institutions would be confronted.

The shocking secrets of the past were exposed by our Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, courageously set up by Julia Gillard. The results were horrifying and overdue. It was found that, in the Yeshiva schools in Melbourne and in Sydney's Orthodox Jewish communities, rabbis had been forbidding the reporting of child sexual abuse to the authorities. It was revealed that victims and those who stood by them were ignored. It is important to acknowledge the work that one such victim, Manny Waks, did in going public at this stage. Just like for Dassi, Nicole and Elly, the choice of coming out publicly meant choosing to leave behind everything that these young people had known. Drastic change was necessary.

The bravery and courage Dassi, Nicole and Elly have shown is remarkable. They've spoken out for not just themselves but all other victims at the Adass Israel girls school and for all child sexual abuse victims. Their campaign has not just enlisted the member for Wentworth and I; they have met with former Prime Minister Turnbull, Prime Minister Morrison, former opposition leader Mr Shorten, opposition leader Mr Albanese, the Treasurer, the deputy opposition leader, the Premier of Victoria and several members of the Israeli parliament. I also pay tribute to former Premier of Victoria Ted Baillieu. Ted has been an enormous support for the sisters and has helped elevate their case from the very beginning.

They, our sisters, have made immense progress in alerting not just Australia's attention but Israel's. Only a few short years ago, this matter was virtually unheard of in Israel. Today, this story is a headline not just in the Australian and the Israeli press; it makes international headlines on a regular basis. Make no mistake: if justice is allowed to run its course, it will be because of the inspiring pursuit by three brave women. But, despite all that progress, we are here today because the wheels of justice are turning too slowly. In fact, the wheels of justice have been corrupted. That is not just our opinion here in Australia; that is the opinion of the Israeli police.

Israel police have rearrested Malka Leifer, accusing her of faking mental illness. Israeli police are accusing Yaakov Litzman, formerly the deputy health minister in the Israeli government, of corruptly abusing his position to protect Malka Leifer. Israeli police are arguing that Litzman pressured Jerusalem's district psychiatrist, Jacob Charmes, whom he appointed, to declare Leifer unfit to stand trial. Under scrutiny from police, Charmes backflipped and then backflipped again. Charmes has now been stood aside from the case, and a new psychiatric panel has come to the unsurprising conclusion that Malka Leifer is fit to stand trial. Yet still the delays continue.

We still have no idea if or when Malka Leifer will ever board a plane to Melbourne. And Yaakov Litzman is no longer the deputy health minister; he is now the health minister of Israel, promoted by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. There is an ancient concept in Judaism called mesira. It is said that a Jewish person shouldn't hand over another Jew to authorities. It is the warped justification of many of Leifer's supporters. But I say to anyone here in Australia or in Israel: anyone who is assisting further delays is choosing to help an adult evade consequences after they robbed children of innocence and dignity. Anyone who is helping Leifer should be held to account as well.

This motion is a reminder to Prime Minister Netanyahu that Australia demands and will continue to demand justice. Australia and Israel are close friends. We share a bond that predates the existence of the modern Jewish state. Australia was the first nation to vote in favour of the establishment of Israel at the United Nations. Former Labor foreign minister Doc Evatt was instrumental in arguing the case for the United Nations to resolve for its establishment. Today our nations enjoy warm ties and great friendship. But on this issue our friends have let us down.

Two years ago, Prime Minister Netanyahu visited Australia. It was a historic visit: for the first time, a sitting Israeli Prime Minister had come to this country. Prime Minister Netanyahu said: 'Israel has no better friend than...
Australia and Australia has no better friend than Israel.' But to quote my friend Jeremy Leibler, President of the Zionist Federation of Australia, in an open letter to Prime Minister Netanyahu, 'Friendship must go both ways.' And right now our friends are not doing right by us. Australia does stand up for Israel, and right now we need Israel to stand up for us. This is not merely about what is right for us or for Israel; this is about what's right for three sisters and countless others who deserve justice. This is about what's right for every victim of abuse in Australia and Israel and all over the world. The Australian Jewish community is united. The Australian parliament is united. The Australian public is united. We are asking our friends a very simple request: do what is right; do what is just; end this farce, and bring Leifer back.

Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (19:03): I rise in this place to support the motion put by the member for Wentworth and commend the strong support for the motion by the member for Macnamara. It's pleasing to see such bipartisan support on this very important issue. 'Justice, justice, you shall pursue.' These penetrating and powerful words from the Book of Deuteronomy resonate in everything that we must do in this place and must do for society. It's time that the pursuit of justice succeeds in the case to extradite Malka Leifer. Malka Leifer, the former principal of the Adass Israel girls school in Melbourne, left Australia almost 12 years ago after child sex abuse allegations against her surfaced.

I recently had the privilege of meeting Dassi Erlich and Nicole Meyer here in Canberra following the anniversary of our national apology to victims and survivors of institutional child sex abuse. I had the opportunity to sit with them and to hear their story. I was astounded by Dassi and Nicole's overwhelming sense of strength, courage and, above all, bravery. These sisters have been fighting for justice for themselves and for survivors of sexual abuse. Long-lasting impacts can include guilt, shame and anger.

The important thing is that, because justice has not been served, closure cannot occur. Abuse can occur over a person's lifetime and impact every facet of their lives. Child sexual abuse can affect many areas of a person's life: mental health, interpersonal relationships, physical health, sexual identity, gender identity; sexual behaviour, connection to culture; spirituality and religious involvement; interactions with society; and education, employment and economic security. These are not small things. During the royal commission on institutional responses into child sex abuse, 94.9 per cent of interviewees reported suffering from mental health impacts. We also now know how an institution's response to child abuse claims can have a very profound effect and impact on children. It can compound the issues if ignored or it can help alleviate the impacts if recognised and steps are taken to respond and rectify the situation. I know this as a paediatrician, having cared for families for 28 years at the Royal Children's Hospital. It's important that closure occurs.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 19:06 to 19:18

Dr ALLEN: As I was saying, the extraordinary situation is that this case was raised first 12 years ago. It is five years and 60 court cases since the extradition was lodged for 74 charges of sex abuse. A psychiatric panel has finally declared that Malka Leifer is fit for extradition, in January this year, and that is after the determination of so many people on all sides of parliament, at state and federal levels.

Australia stands side by side with Israel. We have a shared democracy. Our judiciaries are both independent, as they should be. Our religions have a shared history as well: both are built on tenets of respect, justice, peace and love. It is with this in mind that my colleagues and I, on both sides of the House, respectfully make this plea today to urge the Israeli government to step in and ensure that Malka Leifer returns, in line with the formal extradition request made in 2014.

The ripple effects of child sexual abuse can have adverse and ongoing social, cultural and economic impacts. The Jewish community is strong in faith and culture in Melbourne, where my seat of Higgins is, but it is disappointing that this dark cloud is still hanging over the Jewish community after repeated calls from so many state and federal MPs on both sides of politics, and Jewish leaders too, to bring Malka Leifer to Australia so she can face the justice system and her accusers.

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (19:20): I rise to speak on the motion moved by the member for Wentworth and seconded by the member for Macnamara, and I thank them for bringing this matter before the House. I wish to associate myself with the comments by my colleague from across the aisle, along with the contributions of the member for Macnamara and the member for Higgins. We cannot overstate the importance of the words put before us in this motion and the standard that they set. We are talking about an individual who, aside from allegedly committing some of the most heinous crimes, has demonstrated complete contempt for the rule of law in our land and sees themselves as above our nation's judiciary.

The individual in question, Malka Leifer, was placed in a position of power over children. She was placed in a position of great importance, being responsible for the care
and academic development and wellbeing of children. She had a respected role and title and, as such, had the trust of members of her immediate community and of the community in general. She cared for the community's children. As a paediatrician—and I'm sure the member for Higgins would agree with me—I see it as a sacred duty to care for those children and to care for them in a way that nurtures their development. It's alleged that Ms Leifer violated that trust in the most horrific and heinous way on multiple occasions.

As the motion before us indicates, this individual was the former principal of the Adass Israel girls school in Melbourne. When allegations were raised about her conduct over a number of years, she fled our nation instead of facing the allegations and charges laid out before her. This individual acted as though she did not need to answer to our legal system and to our families and has refused to return to answer for her alleged conduct. As we've already heard, her conduct could be responsible for devastating psychological effects on children over many decades and, indeed, for the rest of their lives. In my opinion, her utter contempt for the rule of law speaks volumes about any potential plea she may make.

On what has been said about the Israeli legal system, I'm horrified that over 60 hearings have taken place into this matter. I'm not a lawyer. I'm not entirely sure how the Israeli legal system works. But, to me, the fact that there have been over 60 hearings and the fact that the Israeli health minister has, in some way, accommodated Ms Leifer is very concerning. I really do believe that the Israeli legal system needs to bring Malka Leifer to justice.

Australia has rightfully requested that Ms Leifer be extradited to answer for her sins. In fact, Australia filed for extradition some six years ago, requesting that this person return to the state of Victoria to face up to no less than 74 charges of child sexual abuse. That is at least 74 heinous acts and crimes that this individual has not answered for. I commend, in particular, the bravery of Dassi Erlich, Nicole Meyer and others for trying to bring Ms Leifer to justice, but I am very concerned that it has taken so long. Australia has made a formal extradition request, and this remains unresolved. Surely Australia's support of Israel since Israeli nationhood suggests that they should support us in this. Reports have indicated that medical professionals have declared this individual is fit to stand trial, and I cannot see why she can't be brought to justice in Australia.

I share the frustrations of many Australians—not just Jewish Australians but Australians across the board—as parents, as fathers, as mothers and as grandparents, as to why this person cannot be brought to justice. The fact that an individual who is alleged to have committed such heinous acts can flout the rule of law is abhorrent and unacceptable to all of us. I am comforted by the fact that there's such a consensus across the parliament for this, in defence of the laws of our land and in the belief that this person should be, and will eventually be, held to account. I thank the House.

Mr Leeser (Berowra) (19:25): Over the past decade in Australia, many institutions have had to face painful and dark truths about the systemic way that child sexual abuse was allowed to take place, unstopped in their midst. We've had to face, to our deep shame, our failure to listen, to believe and to provide justice. We've said sorry to the children we've failed and we've grieved the extraordinary cost of our failures.

For five years, Malka Leifer has been able to avoid the Australian justice system, despite having 74 charges of sexual abuse to answer. Malka Leifer is alleged to have repeatedly abused children while she was supposed to be protecting and teaching them in her role as principal of the Adass Israel girls school in Melbourne. Few people are trusted as much in a family's life as the people who are asked to educate and teach them in their role as principal of a child's school. As a paediatrician, I've been involved in institutions have had to face painful truths about the systemic way that child sexual abuse was allowed to take place, unstopped in their midst. We've had to face, to our deep shame, our failure to listen, to believe and to provide justice. We've said sorry to the children we've failed and we've grieved the extraordinary cost of our failures.

In August 2014, as a result of extensive police investigations, an arrest warrant was issued for Malka Leifer, who'd fled to Israel a few years earlier when the allegations began to surface. An extradition request was placed with Israel, and Leifer was arrested by Israeli police and put under house arrest. Extradition proceedings began in Israel in 2014. However, they were suspended in 2016 because Leifer's lawyers claimed she was unfit to stand trial due to poor mental health. Since then, there've been numerous psychiatric examinations to determine whether Leifer's actually fit to face extradition proceedings. Many of these examinations have found her mentally competent and well enough to face trial.

A psychiatric panel assessed Leifer late last year to make what was meant to be the final determination of her ability to face extradition proceedings. That panel determined she'd been faking mental illness to avoid extradition. Despite these findings, her lawyers have again stalled proceedings by requesting the Jerusalem District Court grant them time to cross-examine members of the psychiatric panel. For Leifer's lawyers to be obstructing justice by using technicalities to prevent a process of justice occurring is to make a mockery of the justice that both Australia and Israel are committed to.

As a Jewish Australian, I know that Israel has provided a safe haven to many people who have no safe place and no home in which to belong. Malka Leifer is not one of these people. A fair trial must take place. Over 60 court proceedings have been heard, and no serious progress has been made to achieve her extradition. Courts should not be involved in the business of obfuscating and delaying justice but in seeing it realised. No-one seeks
for Malka Leifer to be tried without having a chance to answer the allegations, but for the process of justice itself to be denied is unacceptable.

Perhaps another reason why this matter weighs so heavily and is so difficult to speak about is that the denial of justice runs completely contrary to Jewish faith. As Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi of the Commonwealth, has said, Judaism's greatest leap of faith is the belief that the world is ruled by justice. Even in the darkest days of Jewish history, the belief of the Jewish people has been that goodness is the way of life, that humans have dignity and that we must treat people accordingly. Justice must have its time. It's not simply an exercise of ticking a box or finding technical ways around laws. It's about the truth being told and judgement occurring. Malka Leifer must answer the charges against her.

I want to finish my remarks by taking a moment to also acknowledge the victims, who've not yet been able to have their day in court. I want to commend them for their bravery and tenacity. I'm sorry we haven't been able to give them what they rightly deserve at this time and that their bravery hasn't seen the outcomes they should have seen yet. I continue to hope that justice will be served for them and their families, and I call on Israel to extradite Malka Leifer immediately so that justice can be served. Then we will live out the words of Deuteronomy: 'Tzedek, tzedek, tirdoph; justice, justice, shall you pursue.'

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (19:29): The preceding speakers—I thank them all for the contributions they've made to this debate—have thoroughly set out the background facts of this matter. Rather than stand trial in Melbourne for the horrendous crimes that Malka Leifer is accused of—if she wants to claim her innocence, to have the opportunity to clear her name before a court of law—she instead fled to Israel. She fled from accountability, she fled from justice and, some 11 years later, she remains in Israel, a fugitive from justice to this day.

Australia first requested the extradition of Malka Leifer in 2014, but five years later, and despite 63 court hearings, that extradition is yet to be determined. This delay is utterly unacceptable. The ongoing anxiety and stress these delays cause to those who suffered from her crimes demonstrate the truth of the legal maximum 'justice delayed is justice denied'. It is long past time that Ms Leifer were extradited to Australia to face justice for the horrific crimes that she is accused of, and for Israel to honour its commitment to the rule of law and to justice. It is my hope that the long friendship between our two nations will encourage the Israeli authorities to do all that they can to bring this matter to a resolution.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to once again acknowledge the courage of Dassi Erlich, Nicole Meyer and Elly Sapper in their pursuit of justice in this matter.

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

Federation Chamber adjourned at 19:31
QUESTIONS IN WRITING
Richmond Electorate: Centrelink
(Question No. 279)

Mrs Elliot asked the Minister for Government Services, in writing, on 05 December 2019:
1. In respect of the Tweed Heads South Centrelink Service Centre, what is the average daily:
   a. number of customers attending or calling; and
   b. waiting time for customers attending or calling.
2. In respect of the Tweed Heads South Smart Centre, what is the average daily:
   a. number of customers attending or calling; and
   b. waiting time for customers attending or calling.
3. In respect of the Tweed Heads Centrelink Zone Office, what is the average daily:
   a. number of customers attending or calling; and
   b. waiting time for customers attending or calling.
4. For clients making Centrelink claims in the electoral division of Richmond, what is the average current:
   a. claim processing time; and
   b. payment processing time.
5. For clients making Medicare claims in the electoral division of Richmond, what is the average current:
   a. claim processing time; and
   b. payment processing time.
6. For clients making Aged Care claims in the electoral division of Richmond, what is the average current:
   a. claim processing time; and
   b. payment processing time.
7. How many full time and casual staff were employed each year, from December 2013 to December 2019 in:
   a. Tweed Heads South Centrelink Service Centre;
   b. Tweed Heads South Smart Centre; and
   c. Tweed Heads Centrelink Zone Office

Mr Robert: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
1. As at 30 November 2019, financial year to date, the Tweed Heads South Centrelink Service Centre average daily:
   a. number of customers attending is 240; and
   b. wait time for customers attending is 14 minutes and 36 seconds.
2. As at 30 November 2019, financial year to date, the Tweed Heads South Smart Centre average daily:
   a. Not applicable. Call distribution is on a National level.
   b. Not applicable. Telephony wait times are calculated on a National level.
3. The Tweed Heads Centrelink Zone office does not provide face to face or telephony customer services.
4. As at 30 November 2019, financial year to date, for clients making Centrelink claims in the electoral division of Richmond, the median days to process a claim is 21 days.
5. As at 30 November 2019, financial year to date, for clients making Medicare claims in the electoral division of Richmond, the median days to process a Medicare claim is 0 days. It typically takes 48 hours after the date of processing a Medicare claim for a payment to be made to a customer's bank account
6. As at 30 November 2019, financial year to date, for clients making Home Care claims in the electoral division of Richmond, the median days to process a Home Care claim is 0 days.
7. The number of full time and casual staff employed each year, from December 2013 to December 2019 in:
   a. Tweed Heads South Centrelink Service Centre as at 30 November each year:

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b. Tweed Heads South Centrelink Service Centre as at 30 November each year:
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**c. Tweed Heads Centrelink Zone Office as at 30 November each year:**

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