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SITTING DAYS—2019

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FORTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

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

House of Representatives Office Holders

Speaker—Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn Smith MP
Deputy Speaker—Mr Kevin John Hogan MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell MP

Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Hon. Kevin James Andrews MP, Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Hon. Dr John Joseph McVeigh MP, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Wicks MP, Hon. Sharon Leah Bird MP, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP, Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Hon. Dr David Arthur Gillespie MP, Mr Trent Moir Zimmerman MP
Leader of the House—Hon. Christian Porter MP
Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Darren Chester MP

Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Anthony Stephen Burke MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Mark Butler MP

Party Leaders and Whips

Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Scott John Morrison MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Joshua Anthony Frydenberg MP
Chief Government Whip—Mr Albertus Johannes van Manen MP
Government Whips—Mr Rowan Eric Ramsey MP and Ms Nicolle Flint MP

The Nationals
Leader—Hon. Michael Francis McCormack MP
Deputy Leader—Senator Hon. Bridget McKenzie
Chief Whip—Hon Damian Kevin Drum MP
Deputy Whip—Mr Kenneth Desmond O'Dowd MP

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

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<tr>
<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
<td>La Trobe, VIC</td>
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<td>Wyatt, Hon. Kenneth George, AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young, Mr Terry James</td>
<td>Longman, QLD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zimmerman, Mr Trent Moir</td>
<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
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**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

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

### Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Pye
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanić
Parliamentary Budget Officer—J Wilkinson
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<td>The Hon. Scott Morrison MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Public Service</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Women</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Australians</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Ken Wyatt AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Ben Morton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Michael McCormack MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. David Littleproud MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Mark Coulton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Scott Buchholz MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Andrew Gee MP</td>
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<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Michael Sukkar MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Housing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Jane Hume</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Finance</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities and Electoral Matters</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Zed Seselja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Agriculture</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Jonathon Duniam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Marise Payne</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Alex Hawke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Pacific)</td>
<td>The Hon. Mark Coulton MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Regional Tourism</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Christian Porter MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Industrial Relations</td>
<td>The Hon. Christian Porter MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Jason Wood 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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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Industry, Science and Technology</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Matthew Canavan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction</td>
<td>The Hon. Angus Taylor MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for the Environment</td>
<td>The Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence</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></td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence Industry</td>
<td>The Hon. Melissa Price MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Families and Social Services (Manager of Government</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Stuart Robert MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community</td>
<td>The Hon. Luke Howarth MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</strong></td>
<td>Senator Jenny McAllister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Richard Marles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Shayne Neumann MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel</td>
<td>Pat Conroy MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting for Defence</td>
<td>Matt Keogh MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence Industry</td>
<td>The Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Penny Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Pat Conroy MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific</td>
<td>Andrew Giles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator Jenny McAllister</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Kristina Keneally</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Home Affairs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Tony Burke MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting for Immigration and Citizenship</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business in the House of Representatives</td>
<td>The Hon. Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Government Services</strong></td>
<td>Emma McBride MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Carers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Education and Training</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Graham Perrett MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Skills</td>
<td>Ged Kearney MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
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<td>Stephen Jones MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Attorney-General</td>
<td>The Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
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<td>Sen Kimberley Kitching</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator Patrick Dodson</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing and Seniors</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Employment and Industry</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Small and Family Business</td>
<td>Clare O'Neil MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Innovation, Technology and the Future of Work</td>
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<td>Matt Keogh MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Manufacturing</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>The Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP</td>
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BILLS—
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The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 09:30, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

COMMITTEES
Selection Committee
Report
The SPEAKER (09:31): I present report No. 3 of the Selection Committee relating to the consideration of committee and delegation business and private members' business on Monday, 9 September, 2019. The report will be printed in the Hansard for today and the committee's determinations will appear on tomorrow's Notice Paper. Copies of the report have been placed on the table.

The report read as follows—

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

1. The committee met in private session on Tuesday, 30 July 2019

2. The Committee deliberated on items of committee and delegation business that had been notified, private Members' business items listed on the Notice Paper and notices lodged on Tuesday, 30 July 2019, and determined the order of precedence and times on Monday, 9 September 2019, as follows:

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Notices

1 Mr Bandt: To present a Bill for an Act to establish the National Integrity Commission, and for related purposes.
   (National Integrity Commission Bill 2019)
   (Notice given 30 July 2019.)

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

   Mr Hayes: To move—That this House:
   (1) acknowledges Australia is a major contributor to the Syria humanitarian response plan, designating approximately $220 million dollars to Syria and neighbouring countries between 2016 and 2019;
   (2) notes that:
      (a) western Sydney is a primary settlement region and has received one-fifth of Australia's recent humanitarian intake, as a result of years of ongoing conflict in the Middle East; and
      (b) local health, education and migrant service providers, particularly in Fairfield and Liverpool, are running beyond their funded capacity and as a result, have been put under considerable pressure when trying to assist families to settle and integrate into our local community; and
   (3) further acknowledges:
      (a) that the insufficient funding to support these frontline services has widened the gap between supply of and demand for settlement services to support vulnerable individuals, particularly from the minority Christian, Assyrian, Chaldean and Mandaean communities; and
      (b) the need to effectively invest in the settlement of refugees to enable them into integrate into the community, fulfil their potential and make a positive contribution to this country.
   (Notice given 30 July 2019.)

   Time allotted—20 minutes.
   Speech time limits—
   Mr Hayes—5 minutes.
   Other Members—5 minutes each.
   [Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 4 x 5 mins]

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

   Dr Allen: To move—That this House:
   (1) recognises National Science Week took place from 10 to 18 August 2019;
   (2) acknowledges:
(a) National Science Week is an opportunity to recognise the economic and social contribution of those working in science disciplines;
(b) National Science Week highlights the importance of sparking an interest in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects from an early age and maintaining participation by students throughout primary and secondary schooling;
(c) last year almost 1.2 million people participated in more than 2,100 events around the country; and
(d) Questacon's leadership role during National Science Week and throughout the year in inspiring young people and promoting STEM study; and
(3) notes the Government's ongoing investment in science, research and innovation, which totalled $9.6 billion in 2018-19.

(Notice given 30 July 2019.)

Time allotted—50 minutes.
Speech time limits—
Dr Allen—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 10 x 5 mins]
The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Orders of the day
1 Prostate cancer: Resumption of debate (from 22 July 2019) on the motion of Mr Gorman—That this House:
(1) notes that:
(a) according to Cancer Australia an estimated 3,306 men have died from prostate cancer in 2019;
(b) there is an estimated one in six risk of a male being diagnosed with prostate cancer by his 85th birthday; and
(c) it is vital that men take their health seriously;
(2) acknowledges the tireless work of men's health advocate, prostate cancer survivor and Maylands resident, Mr David Dyke, for raising awareness about prostate cancer and promoting the importance of men's health in the electoral division of Perth and across Australia;
(3) commends Mr Dyke for his:
(a) advocacy in championing men's health;
(b) efforts in producing a deeply personal documentary on his battle with prostate cancer; and
(c) committed work in raising awareness about prostate cancer; and
(4) encourages Members to watch Mr Dyke's YouTube documentary 'David Dyke Prostate Journey: From Diagnosis to Rehabilitation'.

Time allotted—remaining private Members' business time prior to 12 noon
Speech time limits—
All Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]
The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Items for Federation Chamber (11 am to 1.30 pm)
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS
Notices
1 Ms Owens: To move—That this House:
(1) notes:
(a) that western Sydney is home to two million people, which is nearly 10 per cent of Australia's population and Australia's third largest economy;
(b) that western Sydney's population is expected to grow by an additional one million people in the next 20 years while the population in the corridor between Parramatta and Sydney is expected to grow by 420,000;
(c) that more than 300,000 new jobs are expected to be created in the same period and that traffic congestion is expected to cost Sydney nearly $15 billion by 2031;
(d) that Parramatta is western Sydney's Central Business District (CBD) and is Sydney's second CBD;
(e) the benefit of the proposed Sydney Metro West project to connect Parramatta and Sydney via the Bays Precinct and Sydney Olympic Park; and
(f) that the project, when operational, is expected to slash travel times between the two CBDs to just 20 minutes (on trains running every two minutes) and reduce traffic congestion;
recognises the NSW Government's commitment of $6.4 billion in funding to the project and additional commitment to fast-track the project to begin construction in 2020;

(3) further notes that Federal Labor committed to $3 billion funding to the project prior to the 2019 federal election; and

(4) calls on the Federal Government to urgently allocate the funding that will ensure the project can begin construction in the fast-tracked timeframe.

(Notice given 29 July 2019.)

Time allotted—40 minutes.

Speech time limits—
Ms Owens—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

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

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

2 Mr Entsch: To move—That this House:

(1) notes that 31 July 2019 is World Ranger Day;

(2) acknowledges the significant contribution that indigenous rangers make to our national parks, including environmental management, restoration and education;

(3) pays tribute to rangers that have lost their lives while at work;

(4) supports the Government's funding of indigenous ranger groups with $254.6 million invested through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy over three years from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2021, including $61.8 million in the state of Queensland; and

(5) welcomes the work of 123 ranger groups nationally, which provided 2,160 jobs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in 2016-17.

(Notice given 30 July 2019.)

Time allotted—40 minutes.

Speech time limits—
Mr Entsch—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

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

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

3 Mr Dick: To move—That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) it has been more than four years since the Government established the independent Review of Small Amount Credit Contracts (SACC);

(b) the review panel provided the final report to the Government on 3 March 2016, listing 24 recommendations relating to the SACC and consumer leasing laws;

(c) the Government released its response to the report on 28 November 2016, in which it agreed with the vast majority of recommendations in part or in full;

(d) the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services at the time said 'the implementation of these recommendations will ensure that vulnerable consumers are afforded appropriate levels of consumer protection while continuing to access SACCs and leases';

(e) the Government released draft legislation on 23 October 2017, whereby the Minister for Small Business and now Deputy Prime Minister said that the 'Government will introduce legislation this year to implement the SACC and consumer lease reforms';

(f) the Assistant Minister to the Treasurer pledged in May 2018 that SACC and consumer leasing laws would be progressed in 2018;

(g) former Prime Minister Turnbull confirmed the Government supported the vast majority of recommendations from the independent Review of SACC and also pledged to introduce legislation enacting the recommendations in 2018;

(h) the Assistant Treasurer in December 2018 also noted the importance of protecting vulnerable consumers from harmful financial practices, but would wait until the conclusion of the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry;

(i) the Royal Commission has now been completed, however there is still no legislation before the house to enact the 24 recommendations from the independent Review of SACC;

(j) on 22 February 2019 the Senate Economics References Committee completed an inquiry into credit and financial services targeted at Australians at risk of financial hardship, which recommended that the National Consumer Credit
Protection Amendment (Small Amount Credit Contract and Consumer Lease Reforms) Bill 2017 exposure draft released by Treasury be introduced, and passage facilitated by the Government; and
(k) the Government has continuously broken its promises to legislate these important reforms; and
(2) calls on the Government to introduce legislation without any further delay so that Australians are given the protections they need from harmful pay day lending practices.

(Notice given 30 July 2019.)

Time allotted—40 minutes.

Speech time limits—
Mr Dick—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 8 x 5 mins]
The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Mr C. Kelly: To move—That this House:
(1) notes the Council of Australian Governments Disability Reform Council met on 28 June 2019 and resolved a number of long-standing issues, including the interaction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) with the health system;
(2) welcomes the council's agreement to a range of disability-related health supports that will be provided through the NDIS; and
(3) notes the:
(a) NDIS will fund disability-related health supports where the supports are required as a result of the participant's disability and assist the participant to undertake activities of daily living;
(b) types of health supports that will be funded by the NDIS include continence supports, dysphagia and nutrition supports, respiratory supports and supports for wound and pressure care; and
(c) approach agreed to by the council to fund disability related health supports under the NDIS recognises participants need to be placed at the centre of all decisions.

(Notice given 4 July 2019.)

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

Speech time limits—
Mr C. Kelly—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]
The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Items for Federation Chamber (4.45 pm to 7.30 pm)
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Notices—continued

Ms Sharkie: To move—That this House:
(1) notes that:
(a) the OECD:
(i) calculates that Australia's expenditure on age pensions is currently 4 per cent of public spending, and is projected to be 4 per cent in 2050, which compares with 9 per cent and 10 per cent respectively for the OECD, and
(ii) has stated that 'the old age income poverty rate in Australia is high at 26 per cent compared to 13 per cent across the OECD in 2015';
(b) the Benevolent Society:
(i) released The Adequacy of the Age Pension in Australia: An assessment of pensioner living standards report in September 2016, concluding from its research that 'the age pension in Australia is inadequate', and
(ii) also concludes that 'home ownership constitutes the single biggest factor contributing to financial hardship among pensioners' and 'age pensioners who are renting, in particular those who are single, are the worst off';
(c) deeming rates dramatically affect the wellbeing of Australian pensioners; and
(d) whilst the Government has reduced deeming rates for the first time since 2015, it has not been adequately responsive to changes in the cash rate; and
(2) calls on the Government to:
(a) establish an independent tribunal to:
(i) assess the base rate of the pension,
(ii) assess the Commonwealth Assistance Rate,
(iii) assess the deeming rate, and
(iv) determine the best mechanism for regular review, and
(b) reduce the financial gap between age pensioners who are home owners and those who are renters.

(Notice given 22 July 2019.)

Time allotted—30 minutes.
Speech time limits—
Ms Sharkie—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]
The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

6 Mr Thompson: To move—That this House:
(1) notes the important role Australian small business has in the future of our national and economic security through its integral role in our defence industry;
(2) recognises the defence industry's potential for growth in electoral divisions like Herbert and other regional electoral divisions across Australia;
(3) supports opportunities to maximise the participation of Australian companies in all facets of defence procurement; and
(4) acknowledges the Government's commitment to deliver a robust, resilient and internationally competitive Australian defence industry.

(Notice given 30 July 2019.)

Time allotted—40 minutes.
Speech time limits—
Mr Thompson—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 8 x 5 mins]
The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

7 Mr Zappia: To move—That this House:
(1) notes that:
(a) as at 30 June 2019 there were 221,415 applications for Australian citizenship by conferral;
(b) under this Government the backlog has risen from 27,037 in 2013-14;
(c) the timeframe for finalisation of 90 per cent of applications is now within 24 months;
(d) some applicants wait longer than two years for their applications to be finalised; and
(e) Australian Citizenship provides a number of important benefits including,
(i) the right to enrol and vote,
(ii) eligibility for a HECS-HELP loan for university,
(iii) access to an Australian passport, and
(iv) sometimes satisfying a requirement for employment; and
(2) calls on the Government to immediately address the backlog and lengthy wait times for citizenship applications so that people who want to fully participate in Australian civic life are able to do so.

(Notice given 30 July 2019.)

Time allotted—30 minutes.
Speech time limits—
Mr Zappia—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]
The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

8 Mr van Manen: To move—That this House:
(1) notes with concern the growing congestion in our major cities, which makes it harder for workers to commute and takes time away from people to enjoy with their families;
(2) recognises that governments at every level need to invest in congestion busting infrastructure to provide the best outcomes for their citizens; and
(3) commends the Government on committing additional funding across urban and regional Australia, in particular the additional $3 billion to the Urban Congestion Fund so that $4 billion is now available through the fund to target pinch points in major cities to further reduce congestion.

(Notice given 23 July 2019.)

Time allotted—45 minutes.

Speech time limits—
Mr van Manen—10 minutes.
Next Member speaking—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 1 x 10 mins + 7 x 5 mins]

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

Orders of the day
1 Home care packages: Resumption of debate (from 29 July 2019) on the motion of Ms Owens—That this House:

(1) notes that:
(a) the latest Government report indicates more than 129,000 older Australians are waiting for their approved home care package;
(b) more than 75,000 older Australians on the waiting list have no home care package at all; and
(c) since 2017 the wait list for home care has grown from 88,000 to more than 129,000 older Australians;

(2) recognises:
(a) the majority of older Australians are waiting for level three and level four packages, who have high care needs;
(b) some older Australians have been waiting more than two years for their approved package; and
(c) older Australians are entering residential aged care or even emergency departments instead of receiving their approved home care package;

(3) condemns the Government for failing to stop the wait list growing; and

(4) calls on the Government to immediately fix the home care packages waiting list and properly address this growing crisis.

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

Speech time limits—
All Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 4 x 5 mins]

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

THE HON A. D. H. SMITH MP
Speaker of the House of Representatives
31 July 2019

BILLS

Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Rural and Regional Measures) Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Fletcher.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts) (09:32): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Rural and Regional Measures) Bill 2019 amends the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983 (ABC Act) to ensure regional communities are provided for in the functions of the corporation and represented on the ABC Board.

The ABC occupies an important place in the lives of regional communities. Over many decades, its services have informed and entertained communities in areas where other media options are limited.

This bill contains a range of measures to support and cement that role, and ensure the ABC continues to focus on and meet the diverse needs of rural and regional Australia.

I will now turn to the specifics of the bill.

Amending the ABC Charter to include regional and geographic diversity
One of the functions of the ABC, as stipulated by its charter, is to provide broadcasting programs that contribute to a sense of national identity and inform and entertain, and reflect the cultural diversity of the Australian community.

The bill will broaden that mandate to ensure the charter makes specific reference to the function for the ABC’s broadcasting programs to contribute to a sense of regional as well as national identity, and reflect the geographic as well as cultural diversity of the Australian community.

Most Australians would be surprised to learn that the charter currently has no such references. This is an important amendment that codifies the relationship that the ABC already has with regional Australia, and helps to ensure the organisation continues to provide services that are valued by, and reflect the needs of, rural and regional communities.

**Establishment of a Regional Advisory Council**

While the ABC Charter sets the broad mandate for the organisation, its capacity to deliver on that mandate necessitates having in place the right governance arrangements and operational structures. The ABC must be able to understand the needs and perspectives of regional areas if it is to well service rural and regional Australia.

To this end, the bill will require the ABC Board to establish a Regional Advisory Council within three months after the day the bill receives royal assent.

The role of this council will be to reflect the views of regional Australia, and the ABC Board will be obliged to consult with the council on any change to its broadcasting services that will have a substantial impact on regional Australia.

The Regional Advisory Council will be established by the ABC Board in the same manner as the existing ABC Advisory Council, under section 11 of the ABC Act.

The Regional Advisory Council will be made up of members who have a substantial connection to, or substantial experience in, a regional community through business, industry or community involvement.

Regional Advisory Council members will not be permitted to be members of another advisory ABC council or committee, and the ABC will be required to report on all consultations with the Regional Advisory Council through its annual report.

This amendment will ensure that a more formal mechanism is in place to ensure decisions of the ABC Board are taken after proper consultation with affected audiences.

**ABC Board connection to regional Australia**

The bill also makes changes to ensure a minimum level of representation by individuals with an understanding of rural and regional communities on the ABC Board.

The bill will require the ABC Board to have at least two appointed non-executive directors who have a substantial connection to, or substantial experience in, a regional community through business, industry or community involvement.

This measure will ensure that, at the highest level in the organisation, the needs and views of regional and rural areas are appropriately represented.

The bill will require the minister (in relation to non-executive directors) or the Prime Minister (in the case of the ABC chair) to table a statement in each house of the parliament outlining the person's substantial connection to, or substantial experience in, a regional community.

This provision allows the government to establish a 'baseline' for the regional skills of the ABC Board, and any future appointment processes will then need to take this into account.

Through its appointments to the ABC Board, the government has ensured that this new requirement will already be satisfied. This amendment has the effect that the ABC Board will always have at least two members who have an understanding of the needs of rural and regional communities.

**Annual reporting obligations**

Finally, the bill will introduce a number of additional annual reporting obligations for the ABC.

These will require the ABC to provide statistics on the number of individuals employed in regional and metropolitan areas.

This will include details on the number of journalists employed in regional areas, as well as the total number of hours of local or regional news bulletins broadcast each year.

This is important for transparency. It is appropriate that the parliament, and the Australian people, are able to see the deployment of staff and the production of local content.
Conclusion
As a whole, the bill contains a range of measures to strengthen the focus of the ABC on rural and regional communities. These constitute important safeguards for those Australians living outside the capital cities and larger metropolitan areas.

They will help to secure the outcome that our primary national broadcaster retains and deepens its connection to communities in the bush.

I commend the bill to the House.
Debate adjourned.

Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Extend Family Assistance to ABSTUDY Secondary School Boarding Students Aged 16 and Over) Bill 2019
First Reading
Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Fletcher.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading
Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts) (09:38):
I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill is being introduced to implement a measure announced as part of the 2019-20 budget. The government announced that it would extend family tax benefit to the families of Abstudy students who board away from home to attend secondary school. Currently, family tax benefit stops when an Abstudy student turns 16. Changes introduced by this bill will support families of Abstudy boarding students by continuing their eligibility to receive family tax benefit until their child completes secondary school. It will support more Indigenous students to complete year 12 and is consistent with the government's focus on closing the gap in educational attainment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Under current arrangements, once an Abstudy boarding student turns 16 they no longer receive family tax benefit. This can create a perverse incentive for families to retain family tax benefit by removing their child from boarding school. This is not aligned with supporting Indigenous students completing year 12.

Many remote communities have no local secondary school, so boarding is frequently the only option for children to attend secondary school. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students are disproportionately dropping out of boarding education around the age of 16. Data from the Department of Human Services shows that the number of Abstudy boarding students drops by approximately 60 per cent between the ages of 15 and 17.

The Prime Minister's 2019 closing the gap address to parliament emphasised that for Indigenous students in remote and very remote areas access to quality education can be a lifeline to future prosperity and wellbeing. This statement echoed the views of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs in its 2017 report on Indigenous education, which stressed the importance of education but found room for improvement in the support of Indigenous boarding students.

Amendments introduced by this bill will build on the 2018-19 budget measure '50 years of Abstudy', which improved assistance for Indigenous secondary students who need to study away from home. This included better, fairer and more flexible travel provisions and the portability of Abstudy benefits if students change schools. This bill will extend family tax benefit to eligible secondary students aged 16 years and over who receive Abstudy assistance to study away from home. These changes will commence on 1 January 2020 subject to the timing of the passage of this bill.

Extending family tax benefit to Abstudy boarding students is consistent with broader family tax benefit rules. It also aligns with recommendations from the 2014 Forrest review Creating parity. The Forrest review recommended that Indigenous families with children at boarding school have access to family tax benefit payments until students finish year 12 in recognition of the costs parents incur for their children.

Currently, families of Indigenous boarding students aged under 16 are generally eligible for both Abstudy and family tax benefit. Abstudy for these students is paid directly to the school and boarding provider to cover tuition and boarding costs, while family tax benefit is paid to the family to help with the cost of raising children. Families rely on family tax benefit to assist them with the ongoing costs of their children's daily incidentals while they are away at school, such as clothing, toiletries, medicines and pocket money, as well as their essential living costs when they are at home during school holidays. Once the student turns 16, family assistance legislation precludes
Abstudy students from receiving family tax benefit, leaving families with no assistance for the cost of everyday essentials for their child.

The loss of family tax benefit when a boarding student turns 16 is a significant drop in income support for families, which can be as much as $6,900 per year. This contributes to financial pressure for families at a critical stage in a young person's education. It can also create a disincentive for families to continue sending their child away to school and attain a year 12 qualification. This puts the student's performance and completion of secondary school at risk. This is not ideal. The students who complete school are in a much better position to transition to work in adulthood.

Modelling using the priority investment approach shows Abstudy students who stay in boarding for their senior schooling are less likely to need income support in the future. On average, within five years of leaving school, Indigenous young people who study year 11 as boarding students are projected to have income support costs that are 38 per cent lower than those of their peers who leave school early. This modelling shows that these students do better in the long term compared with Indigenous young people who drop out of school early. For example, ten years after leaving school, Indigenous young people who drop out early are:

- one third more likely to be on an unemployment payment, and
- 25 per cent more likely to be a young mother on income support.

The priority investment approach modelling suggests that an increase in support for young Indigenous Australians to complete year 12 would lead to longer-term benefits for income support outlays.

Changes introduced by this bill will mean that from 1 January 2020 families of Indigenous boarding students will stay in the family tax benefit system until their child reaches the end of secondary school. Eligible families of boarding students aged 16 years and over can receive both ABSTUDY for school and boarding fees, and family tax benefit to assist them with the ongoing costs of raising the child. These improved payment arrangements will better reflect the needs of remote Indigenous families with children studying away from home.

The families of more than 2,000 Indigenous secondary students will benefit from these changes. On average, these families would receive an additional $5,911 per year.

Through these changes the government is delivering an additional $36.4 million in support over the next four years. This investment will increase the proportion of Indigenous students who complete year 12—improving their work prospects and lifetime wellbeing, and reversing the potential costs to the community that come with long-term unemployment and welfare dependency.

This investment is an addition to the investment of $38.1 million over five years, contained in the 2018-19 budget measure "50 Years of ABSTUDY".

By providing additional assistance to Indigenous families who do not have access to local secondary schools, changes brought about by this bill will help close the gap and address recommendations from the Forrest review and the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs' report on Indigenous education.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

New Skilled Regional Visas (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2019

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Coleman.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr COLEMAN (Banks—Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs) (09:47): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The New Skilled Regional Visas (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2019 makes consequential amendments to legislation administered by the Department of Social Services, the Department of Education and the Attorney-General's Department. Specifically, the bill amends:

- A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999
- Disability Services Act 1986
- Fair Entitlements Guarantee Act 2012
- Higher Education Support Act 2003
The bill will give effect to government policy that holders of new provisional skilled regional visas, which come into effect on 16 November 2019, will have access to government services consistent with skilled permanent visa holders.

The new provisional skilled regional visas are set out in the Migration Amendment (New Skilled Regional Visas) Regulations 2019.

They are:

- Subclass 491 (Skilled Work Regional (Provisional)) visa for skilled people who are nominated by a state or territory government or sponsored by an eligible family member to live and work in regional Australia; and
- Subclass 494 (Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional)) visa, enabling an Australian business to sponsor skilled workers to work in their business in regional Australia.

These new visas are part of the Australian government's plan for Australia's future population to ease the pressure on the big capitals while supporting the growth of those smaller cities and regions that want more people. The plan includes reducing the annual migration ceiling from 190,000 to 160,000 places and, in addition, setting aside 23,000 of those places for these new regional visas.

The visas, introduced by regulations tabled in parliament on 2 July 2019, support regional economies to get the skills they need.

A key feature of the new visas is a requirement for regional migrants to live and work in a regional area for three years before being eligible for permanent residence.

This will encourage visa holders to remain in regional Australia, which in turn will support the local communities and enhance the economies of regional parts of the nation.

The amendments in this bill will ensure that holders of the new visas have access to government services in line with the current arrangements applicable to permanent residence visas.

These changes will have a low financial impact while ensuring that provisional skilled regional visa holders are not disadvantaged compared to holders of permanent skilled visas available for people to work in metropolitan areas.

Changes to legislation, service delivery and ICT systems—administered by the Department of Social Services, Services Australia, the Department of Education and the Attorney-General's Department—are required in order to give effect to the government's policy regarding holders of these new visas.

This would be subject to meeting the same eligibility requirements for the payments and services and serving the same applicable waiting periods that exist for permanent skilled visa holders.

These visa holders will be supporting local economies and contributing to rural and regional communities throughout Australia. I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

**Australian Passports Amendment (Identity-matching Services) Bill 2019**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Coleman, for Mr Hawke.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr COLEMAN (Banks—Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs) (09:51): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Australian Passports Amendment (Identity-matching Services) Bill 2019.

This bill will provide a clear legal basis for ensuring that the foreign minister is able to direct the automation of the sharing of passport data for the purposes of national security. This legislation responds to the Commonwealth and the states and territories' decision at a special meeting of the Council of Australian Governments held on 5 October 2017.
These services are a key component in ensuring a nationally consistent approach to preventing and responding to national security threats, in particular terrorist threats. They will help protect Australians by making it easier for security and law enforcement agencies to identify people who are suspects or those who are victims of terrorist or other criminal activity, while maintaining robust privacy safeguards.

The services will also contribute to preventing and detecting identity fraud, and safeguard general law enforcement, national security, protective security, community safety, road safety and other identity verification measures.

Identity crime imposes significant economic costs through fraudulent financial and commercial transactions. It facilitates terrorists, narcotics and money-laundering offences. The services will make false identities more difficult to obtain and to use, and improve the ability of law enforcement agencies to detect fraudulent identities.

The bill will amend the Australian Passports Act 2005 to add a new purpose for disclosing personal information through automated means. This is consistent with sharing already occurring between Commonwealth agencies—namely, to participate in a service to share or match information relating to the identity of an individual. The kind of service, and the persons to whom the service may disclose the information, will be specified in a minister's determination.

The bill also updates the Passports Act in line with comparable Commonwealth legislation to provide that the foreign minister may arrange for the automation of data-sharing with Commonwealth, state and territory agencies.

Automated disclosure of passport data will enable agencies to detect identity fraud and national security threats in real time.

This is particularly important in ensuring the safety of Australians in public venues, such as at large-scale events and in transportation hubs.

It will also enable the automation of other passport decisions such as decisions to renew passports where there is a match with facial images and biographical data already on file from previous passport applications.

**Conclusion**

The measures in this bill are timely and essential, especially in helping to protect Australians from criminal activity, including terrorism and identity crime. I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

**Identity-matching Services Bill 2019**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Coleman.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr COLEMAN (Banks—Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs) (09:55): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Identity-matching Services Bill 2019 implements the Intergovernmental Agreement on Identity Matching Services which was agreed between the Prime Minister and the first ministers of all states and territories at the Special Meeting of the Council of Australian Governments on Counter-Terrorism on 5 October 2017.

Under this intergovernmental agreement, the Commonwealth and all states and territories agreed to preserve or introduce legislation to support the sharing of facial images and related identity information, via a set of identity-matching services, for a range of national security, law enforcement, community safety and related purposes, while maintaining robust privacy safeguards.

The imperative for this legislation is just as strong as it was when the bill was first introduced into the previous parliament in February 2018.

The identity-matching services to be enabled by this bill include a Face Verification Service which will make it easier for documents containing facial images to be safely verified online, making access to government services more secure, accessible and convenient for citizens. This means that, over time, more and more services can be provided completely online, making life easier for everyday Australians.

The Face Verification Service will also help to protect Australians from identity crime, which continues to be one of the most common crimes in Australia. One in four Australians will be a victim of identity crime at some point in their lives, with an estimated annual direct cost of more than $2 billion to the economy. The face
verification service will also help people to reclaim their lost or stolen identification documents faster, without the need re-establish their identity.

Identity crime is a key enabler of serious and organised crime, including terrorism.

Australians previously convicted of terrorism related offences are known to have used fake identities to purchase items such as ammunition, chemicals that can be used to manufacture explosives, and mobile phones to communicate anonymously to evade detection.

Identity crime is aided by the growing sophistication of criminal syndicates and the technology now able to support them in manufacturing fake identity documents.

Organised criminal groups are now producing false driver licences and other documents in bulk, often using similar technology to that available to the government issuing agency itself. These documents often have genuine biographic details but a fraudulent photograph, and can therefore be difficult to detect.

For many years government agencies have been able to verify biographic information on driver licences and other government issued identity documents, such as passports, by using the Document Verification Service.

However, name based checking tools such as the Document Verification Service cannot detect documents that contain legitimate biographic details with a substituted photo, nor can they identify an unknown person from a facial image.

This is a particular problem for driver licences, which are the most commonly used photo identification documents in Australia and, therefore, the most sought after by criminals.

The new face-matching services enabled by this bill will make it harder for people to obtain driver licences in false identities in an attempt to conceal their true identity or avoid traffic fines, demerit points or licence cancellations. This will improve road safety by increasing the detection and prosecution of these offences and deterring dangerous driving behaviour.

The new face-matching services will also greatly assist our law enforcement and national security agencies by providing authorised agencies with the means to rapidly share and match facial images drawn from existing databases in order to identify unknown persons, and detect people using multiple fraudulent identities.

Since the bill was first introduced in 2018, two states and territories have passed legislation to implement the intergovernmental agreement. There are now five states with such legislative frameworks in place. This bill will ensure that the Commonwealth also meets its obligations to implement legislation under the agreement.

What the bill will do

The bill will help deliver these benefits by providing explicit legal authority for the Department of Home Affairs to collect, use and disclose identification information in order to operate the technical systems that will facilitate the identity-matching services.

The passport, visa and citizenship images that are used in the face-matching services will continue to be held separately in databases by the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as the agencies that issue these documents.

Driver licence images will be made available via a National Driver Licence Facial Recognition Solution. This system will be hosted by the Department of Home Affairs on behalf of the states and territories in accordance with the intergovernmental agreement.

The system will consist of a database of driver licence images and information supplied by each state and territory, and a facial recognition system for biometric comparison of facial images against facial images in the database.

The design of the driver licence database will enable each state and territory authority to control access to its data via the face-matching services.

It will not provide the Department of Home Affairs with the ability to modify or update identification information supplied by state and territory authorities.

The bill defines the types of identification information that may be used in the services. In doing so, the bill excludes certain types of personal information from being used in the services, such as information about a person's political opinions or religious beliefs. This is to ensure that the department may only collect, use and disclose those types of information that are reasonably necessary in order to provide the identity-matching services.

It is important to note that private sector and local government organisations may only use one of the identity-matching services described in the bill, the Face Verification Service, and may only do so with the consent of a person whose information is being checked. In addition, these organisations will just receive a 'yes/no' match
response when using this service. They won't be able to receive a person's photo or any other identity information that a person hasn't already provided when doing the check.

The bill also provides for a Face Identification Service which law enforcement and national security agencies will be able to use to identify unknown persons or detect persons using multiple fraudulent identities.

Recognising the privacy impacts of this service, its use will be constrained only to those agencies with national security, law enforcement or anticorruption functions that are specifically listed in the bill and only for specified purposes.

The Face Identification Service cannot be used for live facial recognition of people in public places. While this type of technology is being used in some overseas jurisdictions, the system has been designed so that it cannot consume live video feeds of any kind. A human operator will always be in the loop for all uses of this service, so that people and not machines are making the final decision about a person's identity.

In addition, the bill prevents criminal history information from being used as part of the face-matching services. This means that the Face Identification Service cannot be used to match images against criminal watchlists.

The bill also provides for other face-matching services that are designed for use by state and territory driver-licensing authorities to help improve the integrity of their data and licence-issuing processes.

The bill limits the department's provision of the face-matching services to the following purposes:

- Preventing and detecting identity fraud
- Law enforcement
- National security
- Protective security
- Community safety
- Road safety
- Verifying identity

The bill does not provide any additional legislative authority for other agencies or organisations to collect personal information in order to use the services. These organisations will need to have a separate legal basis to support their use of the face-matching services.

The bill will provide robust accountability and transparency measures to help maintain public confidence in the operation of the face-matching services. These include an offence for unauthorised disclosure of information by Home Affairs workers, annual reporting to parliament on the extent of the use of the services and a statutory review to be commenced within five years and reported to the parliament.

**Conclusion**

This bill will give effect to the commitments made by the Commonwealth in entering into the Intergovernmental Agreement on Identity Matching Services.

The face-matching services enabled by the bill will assist Australians to access services online more easily and securely.

The bill will also help to reduce the impact of identity crime on the community, helping Australians to prove their identities more securely and easily.

The bill will also promote a range of law enforcement, national security and community safety outcomes, while providing robust privacy protections over the use of personal information.

I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

*Counter-Terrorism (Temporary Exclusion Orders) Bill 2019*

*Counter-Terrorism (Temporary Exclusion Orders) (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2019*

*Future Drought Fund Bill 2019*

*Future Drought Fund (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2019*

*Assent*

Messages from the Governor-General reported informing the House of assent to the bills.
Royal Commissions Amendment (Private Sessions) Bill 2019

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (10:05): In 2013 this parliament amended the Royal Commissions Act 1902 to allow the chair of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to authorise a fellow commissioner to hold a private session to receive information from survivors and others affected by child sexual abuse. I introduced this change as former Prime Minister Julia Gillard's Attorney-General. As I said at the time, a traditional royal commission hearing setting will not generally serve as the best way to facilitate participation in a royal commission by survivors of abuse. For many survivors, telling their story is important to the work of the inquiry but is also deeply personal and potentially traumatic. The use of private sessions made it possible for as many as 8,000 survivors of child sexual abuse to tell their stories to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Such a regime is likely to also prove valuable to survivors of elder abuse and also to people with disabilities who have been subjected to abuse.

Labor is therefore pleased to support this bill, which will enable other royal commissions to hold private sessions where a regulation is made under the Royal Commissions Act authorising it to do so. In effect, this would extend the private sessions regime that applied to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to other royal commissions in appropriate circumstances, including the disability royal commission and the aged-care royal commission, both of which are now underway.

However, simply providing the legal mechanism to assist survivors to appear before a royal commission is not sufficient. For that reason, the Gillard government provided the funding necessary to establish a legal service called knowmore, which provided free legal advice and information to any member of the public who had suffered child sexual abuse in an institution and who wanted to tell their story to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. That legal service still exists today. We note that the government has followed Labor's policy lead in this regard and set aside funding in the budget to provide assistance to witnesses appearing before the disability and aged-care royal commissions. Labor welcomes this; however, we call on the government to regularly review those funding levels to ensure that no survivor of abuse or their relatives and carers are denied an opportunity to receive the support they need to tell their story to either of these two vitally important royal commissions.

I'd like to say a few words about the disability royal commission. Ensuring that survivors of abuse are properly supported so that they can tell their stories to the disability royal commission will be critical to the success of that royal commission. But all the well-intentioned legal mechanisms in the world and all of the funding under the sun will be for nothing if survivors of abuse still do not feel comfortable telling their stories. Regrettably, that is what the disability community has been telling us, and it is what they have been telling the government too. Specifically, the disability community has made it very clear that John Ryan and Barbara Bennett should never have been appointed as royal commissioners, not because they are anything other than committed public servants but because they have clear conflicts of interest. Both have held senior government roles overseeing some of the very programs that are likely to be examined by the Royal Commission. That is unacceptable. As my colleague the member for Maribyrnong said last week:

This commission is a chance to let sunlight in, expose historical wrongs and learn from them so we can provide better services to people with disability and eradicate abuse and neglect from their lives in the future.

But that will be impossible to achieve if we have two commissioners who could end up in charge of investigating themselves, their former colleagues or their former workplaces.

When the Prime Minister announced the disability royal commission he said:

This will provide the opportunity for Australians to truly understand how people with disabilities live in this country and what our obligations are to share the journey with them, to show them the respect that they deserve as a fellow Australian, as a fellow human being.

I ask the Prime Minister: how can we hope—to use his words—to truly understand how people with disabilities live in this country if we do not hear from them? Australians with disabilities are telling you that you made a mistake when you appointed John Ryan and Barbara Bennett as royal commissioners. Australians with disabilities are telling you that these two commissioners have to either step down or be removed. Australians with disabilities are telling you that, if that does not happen, many people, many victims and many survivors, will not give evidence to the royal commission at all. We all hate to make mistakes, and admitting them can be hard. But the integrity of this royal commission is more important than a Prime Minister's pride. It is more important than a Prime Minister's ego.
It is long past time for the Prime Minister to show people with disabilities the respect that they deserve, to use his words again, by acting on their clearly stated concerns about the commissioners the Prime Minister has appointed. This royal commission is not about the Prime Minister or this government; it's not about John Ryan or Barbara Bennett either. It is only about the far too many Australians with disabilities who have been subjected to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. I implore the Prime Minister to do the right thing, set aside his pride and listen to the people who this royal commission is about. They are speaking loudly and clearly. They are telling the Prime Minister that John Ryan and Barbara Bennett should step down as commissioners and that, if they do not, the Prime Minister should remove them.

I move:

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

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

(1) notes that:

(a) the use of private sessions made it possible for as many as 8,000 survivors of child sexual abuse to tell their stories to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse;

(b) a private sessions regime is likely to prove equally valuable to survivors of elder abuse and people with disabilities who wish to tell their stories to the Disability and Aged Care Royal Commissions; and

(c) the Government has set aside funding in the budget to provide financial and legal assistance to witnesses appearing before Disability and Aged Care Royal Commissions; and

(2) is of the view that:

(a) the Government should regularly review the amount of funding it has set aside for financial and legal assistance to ensure that no survivor of abuse is denied an opportunity to tell their story to either the Disability or Aged Care Royal Commission; and

(b) there is more that the Government can and should do in order to ensure the integrity of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability”.

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

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (10:14): I second the amendment. I rise to speak on the Royal Commissions Amendment (Private Sessions) Bill 2019, and I commend the member for Isaacs for his amendment and his words. The work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has certainly been extraordinary, and I am going to take some time to touch on that before returning to the amendment legislation before the House and the member for Isaacs's amendment.

I'm very proud to have been a member of parliament in November 2012 when Prime Minister Gillard announced that she would recommend to the Governor-General that a royal commission be appointed to inquire into institutional responses to child abuse. What a legacy that has been for Prime Minister Gillard; something that has changed so many lives and brought so much hope in an area often associated with despair. It did not make past wrongs right but for many people it certainly made them more bearable.

Her Excellency Quentin Bryce, the then Governor-General, announced in January 2013 the six commissioners who would undertake the onerous task of conducting the inquiry, to be led by Justice Peter McClellan, AM. I commend all of the commissioners for the wonderful work they did under the direction of Justice Peter McClellan. I'd particularly like to mention former Queensland police commissioner Bob Atkinson who, after a long, distinguished career fighting crime in Queensland and helping communities in Queensland, then took on that role as a commissioner in a very difficult job.

The royal commission handed down its final report in December 2017 and the commissioners made a total of 409 recommendations, showing that the workload of that royal commission was phenomenal. So I thank all of the commissioners and their staff for their work over those five years, work that will no doubt leave a lasting imprint on their lives as well those who they listened to. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse received 42,041 telephone calls; they received 25,964 letters and emails; they held 8,013 private sessions—yes, that's the correct number—where they would have heard horrific information; and they made, most importantly, 2,575 referrals to the authorities, including the police.

The success of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse relied on victims being prepared and supported to tell their stories, often stories that had never ever been told before. I know that, and I'll come back to that in a second. In order to ensure that success, the Gillard Labor government made an amendment to the Royal Commissions Act 1902 to allow the chair of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to authorise a fellow commissioner to hold a private session to receive information from victims and others affected by child sexual abuse. That amendment allowed, as I said, the more than 8,000 victims to tell their deeply personal and often incredibly traumatic stories.
It was also essential that victims attending private sessions to give information about abuse to the royal commission were supported and were represented. The then Attorney-General and now shadow Attorney-General, the member for Isaacs, launched knowmore legal service, which was a free national legal advice line for people interested in providing information to the commission. knowmore was accompanied, most importantly, by funding of $18 million over four years. That funding was later extended to match the extended reporting date for the royal commission, and in fact continues to this day. The service offered advice on issues like witness and informant protections, compensation and the implications of existing confidentiality agreements. knowmore is now dealing with the redress scheme, so it has continued some of that work it started.

I speak to those in the chamber, particularly the minister who will have carriage of this—and I know we have chatted about this—about the importance of those private sessions and the support and representation that went to them. It was provided for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and I think the value of it is shown in this—is summed up by—a note from a survivor who was actually sent to the royal commission. This is a direct quote: 'Thank you for the opportunity to tell my story. You cannot know what it meant to be listened to with such respect and made to feel that what happened to me really mattered. I hope my experience will help to promote the change needed to prevent this ever happening to another child.'

I should declare an interest in this particular law firm, knowmore, because my wife, my partner of nearly 30 years, was the managing lawyer for the Queensland and Northern Territory office. She no longer works there, but I say to Lea and all those who worked there under the direction of the executive officer, Warren Strange: thank you for the great work that you did. I know how difficult it was; I used to hear stories of providing legal support and all sorts of support to those giving testimony. Thank you to all those who worked at knowmore and to the people who supported victims who gave evidence to the royal commission.

Labor supports the bill currently before the House, obviously with the amendment from the member for Isaacs, because it will enable other royal commissions to hold private sessions where a regulation is made under the Royal Commissions Act authorising it to do so. It extends the private sessions regime that applied to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and to other royal commissions. As I said, there were 8,000 victims who told their deeply personal and traumatic stories to a commission. This is a direct quote: 'Thank you for the opportunity to tell my story. You cannot know what it meant to be listened to with such respect and made to feel that what happened to me really mattered. I hope my experience will help to promote the change needed to prevent this ever happening to another child.'

Two more royal commissions have been established: the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, which has already commenced hearings; and the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, which is now open for submissions. Some witnesses who may wish to give evidence to both of these royal commissions may prefer to tell their stories in a private session. Whilst public evidence is very compelling, those private sessions are still of incredible value to people. But, I stress, supporting getting people in front of a commissioner is crucial. Some of the victims in the aged-care community, and, likewise, people with disability and their families, will be some of our most vulnerable in society.

I would just reiterate that it is very important that any witnesses wishing to make use of private sessions be given support and representation. That means that the government will have to dip into its pockets to support the legal services or other advocacy services that do so. There is already a mechanism set up with knowmore, so it would not be a huge leap. As I said, I used to have a conflict of interest with knowmore but I no longer do; they do great work. I'd ask the minister to make contact with the executive officer, Warren Strange, to advance that. It's a low-cost support service—relatively low cost to the government. They already have the processes there. I'd reiterate that it's very important that any witnesses wishing to make use of these private sessions be given support and representation, and I'm sure the minister and those responsible for the carriage of this will ensure services such as knowmore are given the appropriate funding to support those witnesses. Obviously these communities—the aged community, people with disability, their families, their support people—are best served if they are given the opportunity to tell their stories.

I will finish with, sadly, one concern, which is about commissioners Barbara Bennett and John Ryan having conflicts of interest as mentioned by the member for Isaacs and the shadow minister with responsibility for this, the member for Maribyrnong. We can't have a royal commission starting with baggage, especially in such vulnerable areas. I'm sure that these well respected public servants will understand that they can't start with that conflict of interest, and I'm sure that, with their long careers, they don't want to be accused of investigating themselves. That would not be an honourable way for them to finish up their careers. I'm sure they will do the right thing. If not, I'm sure the minister will step forward to make sure that these commissions have the best chance of doing the right thing by the Australian community. I look forward to the aged community, the disability community and their families stepping towards justice and to making sure that we get the best outcomes possible.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (10:24): I and my Centre Alliance colleagues strongly support this bill, the Royal Commissions Amendment (Private Sessions) Bill 2019. The conduct of the intensely important Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has overwhelmingly demonstrated the great value
in being able to hold private sessions. Where there are deeply sensitive matters at hand, private sessions are critical not only in allowing for full participation of individuals and their families in a royal commission process but also in allowing for personal trauma to be given the privacy and confidentiality that it indeed deserves.

This bill also presents the opportunity for the parliament to remedy a series of antiquated provisions that remain from the original drafting of the 1902 Royal Commissions Act. Most of them are administrative in nature, aiming at improving the general efficacy of the act and bringing it into modern practice, and draw heavily from the recommendations and good work of the Australian Law Reform Commission—specifically, their 2009 report, *Making inquiries: a new statutory framework*.

Centre Alliance will be circulating a series of amendments in the other place rather than in this House, but I will briefly summarise some of the issues that we will be seeking to address in that chamber. One of them is to require royal commission reports to be tabled in parliament within 15 sitting days of receiving the final report of an inquiry or, if a part of that report is not being tabled, a statement of reasons why the whole report is not being tabled. Another is to require that inquiries that may have a significant effect on Indigenous peoples consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, groups and organisations to inform the development of procedures for an inquiry. Another is to require the government to publish non-binding guidance akin to an inquiry's handbook related to the administrative conduct of the royal commission as to human resources, communications, finance, information technology and records management, including archiving. Another would require the government to publish an update on the implementation of recommendations of an inquiry that it accepts one year after the tabling of the final report of a royal commission, and each year until the fifth anniversary thereafter, to reflect any ongoing implementation activity and to require the publication of an expenditure statement for each royal commission within at least 18 months after the inquiry has concluded.

Centre Alliance believes that it's important to require compliance with the Archives Act 1983 when dealing with royal commission records and to require an explanation from the minister if those records have not been transferred to the National Archives of Australia after five years from the end of each record. It's important that we allow that the minister may, upon application by a person summoned to appear before a commission, authorise payment for all of any part of their legal costs, with the minister being required to have regard to a range of practical factors in making their determination. Finally, there is an amendment to allow for royal commissions to be able, on their own initiative, to refer a question of law to the Federal Court for decision and not to give a decision to which the question is relevant while the reference is pending, or proceed in a manner or make a decision that is inconsistent with the opinion of the Federal Court.

I thank the parliament in advance for their consideration of these amendments of Centre Alliance. We will be sharing them more broadly across both chambers. I look forward to working constructively with all parties in the process. I very much commend this bill to the House.

**Ms TEMPLEMAN** (Macquarie) (10:28): I rise to speak on the Royal Commissions Amendment (Private Sessions) Bill 2019, which provides for a royal commission to be able to hold private sessions if a commissioner believes it is appropriate. I certainly want to speak about this bill in the context of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. Many people from the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury in my electorate of Macquarie—whether they be carers or family members of residents or residents themselves of aged-care or supported accommodation services, care workers, or aged-care and disability service operators—have raised with me issues that I hope are going to be well explored by each of these royal commissions.

What has struck me is the sensitivity of their observations and experiences. This is especially the case if they are currently living within a facility or have a family member living within a facility or are receiving care from that same provider as to whom they have concerns. I think that, when we're asking people to speak about really sensitive matters, including some that may affect and be about their own family members, there is a fear in doing that. People do feel vulnerable, and the fear of speaking out silences too many people.

When the Gillard Labor government amended the Royal Commissions Act in 2013 to allow the chair of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to authorise another commissioner to hold a private session so that they could receive information from victims and others affected by child sexual abuse, it really was a pivotal moment, because it acknowledged that a traditional royal commission hearing setting will not generally be the best way to encourage participation in the process by people who've been affected by child sexual abuse.

Hearings are held in quite sterile, formal environments much of the time—quite intimidating environments. Even when we hold our own regular committee hearings, we as parliamentarians see some evidence of that. Recognising that and taking steps to change it and make the process more accessible was really key. It recognised
that telling their story would be a deeply personal and traumatic process for victims, and it understood that it was in the best interests of the royal commission that every effort be made to understand the impacts of the crimes against those children.

Extending private sessions made it possible for as many as 8,000 victims of child sexual abuse to tell their stories. I note the member for Moreton quoted the comment from someone about what it meant to them to be able to tell their story, and men and women around the country have had similar sentiments about the difference it has made in their lives, as a first step, to be able to tell that story. I’m pleased that a Labor initiative is being continued by this Liberal government, recognising its value to victims of elder abuse, to people with disabilities who’ve been abused and neglected and to others who may not feel comfortable speaking publicly.

I suppose some people might be wondering why private hearings might make a difference and what difference they make. Even if you don't compare it to what we saw in the previous royal commission, I can think of multiple conversations I've had about this with carers, with people with disabilities, with staff who work in facilities. Friends, in my experience, often look on in despair as an ageing partner cares for their wife or husband, determined to do it on their own and refusing to admit that they need physical or emotional support to do it. They need a safe place to explain why that 12- to 18-month wait for high care as part of an in-home package is too long to wait. They barely admit it to themselves, let alone want to admit it to a wider audience.

Parents who care for a child or adult with a disability often talk to me about the need for respite but also their guilt in having to admit they need help. They need to be able to explain what difference that week of respite care makes, not just to themselves as carers but to the rest of the family. What's more, they need a private place to explain how it feels to learn that, during that respite, an abuse or neglect of their loved one has occurred. These are hard things to admit and heartbreaking to witness, but they are the stories that we need to hear.

For someone who has a loved one in aged care, I know there's also that fear of speaking out about what consequences there might be for making any criticism. People do feel vulnerable. I see that even in the hesitation that people have in making a formal complaint to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. This is just a bit of insight into why these private sessions are so important in this royal commission process. People need to be able to talk about these issues in privacy, in a supported environment.

One of the really important things that we did as Labor, when enabling victims to appear at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, was to recognise that they would need support in just getting to that point. We provided the funding to establish a legal service giving free legal advice and information to any member of the public who wanted to tell their story. That legal service still exists today, and I note that the government has set aside funding in the budget to provide financial assistance to witnesses before they appear at the disability and aged care royal commissions. I'm very pleased to see that. We would ask the government to review that regularly and review the funding levels to ensure that no victim is denied an opportunity to share their experiences.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to reinforce our view that two senior public servants who were key decision-makers in areas that will be examined by the disability royal commission should be removed from it because of the inherent conflict of interest that they bring to the process. We can't have the integrity of the royal commission undermined from the start; it isn't a good way to start.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to encourage people in the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury to make a submission to these royal commissions. It isn't a time for silence; it is a time to share your experiences so that we can learn from those experiences. If you have experienced neglect or abuse, or know of someone with a disability who has experienced neglect or abuse, please tell that story. If you are involved with somebody who is in an aged-care facility or who receives in-home aged care and who is a victim of elder abuse, we also need to hear those stories. So, please make a submission. If you need support in making that submission, my office will be very pleased to assist. It doesn't have to be a daunting process, but it is really important to take part in the process. I commend this legislation.

Mr Morton (Tangney—Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet) (10:36): I thank all members for their contribution to this debate on the Royal Commissions Amendment (Private Sessions) Bill 2019. I particularly acknowledge the contribution from the member for Moreton and make a commitment that I will follow up on the issues that he has raised in good faith.

The member for Mayo has also flagged a number of amendments that her colleagues intend to make in the other place. The government will consider these amendments in good faith. However, the government will be noting that this bill specifically relates to issues relating to private sessions of royal commissions, and the amendments that have been flagged are much wider ranging. While we'll look at these issues in good faith, we do note that the bill in front of the House today is a request of the two royal commissions that are currently active and
I would be reluctant to do anything to delay the passing of this legislation that would inhibit, in any way, the functioning of those two commissions.

The private sessions framework made an important contribution to the work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The primary purpose of this bill is to enable the private sessions framework to be used in other royal commissions via regulation. Subject to the passage of this bill, the government proposes to recommend to the Governor-General that private sessions be made available for both the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

As I said in my second reading speech, private sessions are designed so that individuals can tell their story to a commission. Depending on the subject matter under inquiry, stories could be of a deeply personal and traumatic nature and it might take courage for individuals to come forward. For this reason, private sessions have less formality and are not public. The bill adopts the limits on the use and disclosure of private session information that applied to the royal commission into child sexual abuse. This includes the approach to rights of public access under the Freedom of Information Act and the Archives Act.

When a royal commission is completed, the records of the commission are deemed to be Commonwealth records. This bill will exclude private session information from a right of access under the Freedom of Information Act. The bill also treats private session information in the same way that a census record is treated under the Archives Act. That means that these records won't become publicly available until 99 years after the year that the record was created.

Under the Archives Act, even when a record is in the open access period exemptions can be applied. This includes an exemption covering the unreasonable disclosure of information relating to the personal affairs of any person, including a deceased person. As a result of lessons learned from the child sexual abuse royal commission, the bill extends the limits on the use and disclosure to also cover information given outside of a private session—that is, to address an operational reality.

In order to deal with matters such as eligibility and scheduling, a royal commission will gather information about a person's experiences outside the private session itself. In the bill, there is a presumption in favour of the commissioner-held private sessions. For flexibility, the bill also proposes that appropriately qualified and senior staff of a royal commission can hold a private session. These individuals will be called assistant commissioners in recognition of their special skills and qualifications. It is envisaged that this power could be particularly useful for commissions where there are one or two commissioners. It is also a discretionary power: it is excisable if the chair or a sole commissioner considers that there are circumstances that justify a private session being held by an authorised staff member. Private sessions are a valuable tool for obtaining personal and sensitive stories from individuals. This bill will help authorise royal commissions to gather the information that they require for their inquiries. I commend the bill to the House.
(2) notes that:

(a) this Government has not proposed legislation to deal with important workplace relations matters, such as wage theft, flat lining wages growth, or deaths in the workplace;

(b) this bill and the Act it seeks to amend represent an inconsistent approach by the Government to responding to Royal Commissions; and

(c) the Government's entire approach to workplace relations laws is to attack workers' organisations with the specific intention of weakening the capacity of those organisations to combat wage theft, achieve wage growth, and ensure that workplaces are safe”.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell) (10:42): The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Ms KEARNEY (Cooper) (10:42): I rise today to speak to the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Ensuring Integrity) Bill 2019. It's not the first time I've had to point out a completely Orwellian misnomer in the title of a bill. Last week, I spoke to the Migration Amendment (Repairing Medical Transfers) Bill. That is a complete misnomer, because repairs are absolutely not needed. The name of that bill, like this one, is totally misleading. This bill is about ensuring 'integrity'. This government does not know the meaning of that word. This is nothing but a union-bashing bill that will not improve the lives of workers who desperately need their unions.

I take personal umbrage and offence at the title of this bill—let alone the content. For all my working life, I was a union member. The day I started nursing, I joined the Australian Nursing Federation. I was part of the legendary 50-day strike in Victoria that resulted in massive improvements for nurses: career structures, with pay rises; recognition of qualifications, with remuneration; and access to paid leave for education to upskill, which also led to better pay. That industrial action change the lives of nurses for the better. But if this legislation had been in place the government of the day might have deemed that action irresponsible, or outright unacceptable, and applied to have the union deregistered.

I was president of the Victorian branch when we fought in Victoria for nurse-patient ratios. We took industrial action, some of which was unprotected. Yes, we broke the law. Nurses in Victoria were prepared to go to any lengths to fix a health system that had been decimated by Jeff Kennett and his government. We had to deal with ridiculous workloads due to the shortage of nurses, which of course resulted in a drop in the quality of care. We simply could not deliver the care our patients required and needed. We won that battle, and nurse-to-patient ratios were implemented. My goodness, the impact of the ratios on the working lives of nurses and the quality of care is immeasurable. Those ratios are now law in Victoria.

Some would say our actions were reckless. Some of those in positions of power might not have understood the power of good that the unions’ actions did. Some, like this government, might have deemed those actions worthy of punishment and, with the powers this legislation gives the minister and others, it could have led to the ANMF being deregistered. The Attorney-General denies this, but it is true. In fact, to think of it: perhaps the Attorney-General doth protest too much. With none of these important gains we made for nurses and the broader community, where would we be now? This law would have made those outcomes almost impossible to achieve and we would all be so much worse off. Unions do a power of good.

I was elected as an assistant federal secretary of the ANMF and then federal secretary, a position I was so proud to hold. At a national level, we fought to save Medicare and we saw the creation of nurse practitioners, a valuable addition to the healthcare workforce. We worked on health reform with the excellent Nicola Roxon, when she was health minister. We oversaw the establishment of AHPRA. We produced competency standards for nurses and worked really hard to make sure our health system was the best it could be and to ensure our members who elected me had a voice in every part of the health system and the health reform process.

But do you know what? Not everybody was happy with the outcomes. The AMA argued vehemently against nurse practitioners getting prescribing rights, but we campaigned and lobbied heavily for them. Imagine if the AMA could make a case to have the nurses union deregistered because they had a vested interest in prescribing rights for themselves. A sympathetic minister or judge might just agree. That's what could happen under this dreadful bill.

The nurses union is the largest in Australia, with 250,000 members. They elect their leaders and demand outcomes and representation. If they don't deliver, the members turf them out at the next election. That is democratically their right. Like freedom of the press, the freedom of workers to associate and form unions to bargain collectively is enshrined in international law. It must be done without the state interfering. This legislation inserts the state into that process, destroying that freedom. As Senator Ayres said in his excellent first speech last night, everyday people must be able to engage in our democracy. Undermining unions undermines our democracy.
In fact as I mentioned in my previous examples, this goes further. This bill allows interested parties to make an application for deregistration. In an article by Ewin Hannan of The Australian just last week we heard of an employer, Gerry Hanssen, fined $62,000 after a court found his blind hatred of the CFMMEU resulted in unlawful behaviour towards union officials. Under this law and this government, with their hatred of unions, someone like Mr Hanssen could be made to apply to have the union deregistered. If someone like George Calombaris had discovered the union was investigating underpayment of his employees, he too could have applied to have the union deregistered before they did their work. This legislation is dreadful. It is far more extensive and extreme in the regulation of unions than what exists for businesses or even politicians.

We've recently asked serious questions about the ethical behaviour of ex-politicians Christopher Pyne and Julie Bishop. We think the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction has some serious questions to answer. Maybe the PM should be ensuring the integrity of his own side before launching into bashing hardworking union members. We are still yet to see legislation presented to this parliament with respect to the egregious behaviour of banks—talk about needing to ensure integrity! Where is the effort to ensure the integrity of banks in the wake of the most damning royal commission in recent times? My own family fell victim to one of the most outrageous banking rorts. It has come to light in the last month or so that a financial institution continued to charge my father-in-law for financial advice after he had died. If the government want to ensure integrity then how about some legislation to fix the banking sector's lack of it?

Right now, there are thousands of workers being ripped off by their bosses, having their wages stolen. It is impossible to know how many. It is impossible to know the dollar amount of that theft. I know many employers do the right thing, and they are being unfairly disadvantaged by the dodgy ones. We owe it to the workers and to the good employers to ensure integrity in the workplace. Where is the legislation or government action to crack down on wage theft? There's none. They do not care about the workers—not one iota. These laws will mean that unethical employers get a free kick. In fact, the only people who would benefit from these laws are the Morrison government and unethical employers. If these laws applied equally to corporations, we would see banks, multinational pizza chains and restaurants of celebrity chefs all close down for repeatedly breaking workplace laws and their top executives sacked. Outrageous, you might say. Well, if that's outrageous for employers and multinationals, then it is equally outrageous for unions.

If this government cared about ensuring integrity in the workplace, how about tackling the issue of worker exploitation, which is rampant, especially among our migrant workforce, who are so very vulnerable. Recently, the National Union of Workers drew together a report on the exploitation of workers in the agricultural sector. The results are alarming. Farms are a big part of Australian life. We know that they are struggling at the moment, and this parliament has resolved to help. But what of the workers that pick, pack and protect farmers' produce? They deserve our help too. If we are serious about ensuring integrity for workers in this country we must help those exploited workers.

The vast majority of people who work on Australian farms are migrant workers from south-east Asian and Pacific nations. They are not bronzed Aussie kids or European backpackers. They live and work on a patchwork of precarious and unequal visas that separate workers by race and ethnicity. Many of them are undocumented. Those workers often face appalling working conditions that few, if any, other Australian workers are expected to face. They make as little as $4.80 per hour cash in hand with no tax or super. They are employed day to day with no job security by dodgy, unlicensed subcontractors. The NUW report found that they live in appalling, crowded conditions; work in extremes of weather; are subject to dangerous working conditions; often have no access to breaks, toilets, shade or even drinking water; and women are sometimes sexually harassed or isolated. It sounds like the slave based industries of the southern US before the Civil War but it is here in Australia right now.

The NUW surveyed 655 farmworkers and here is what they found. They found that $14.80 per hour before tax is the average wage of farm workers, $9 below the minimum wage. As I said, some earned as little as $4.80 per hour. They also found that 68 per cent of workers surveyed worked for a cash contractor or subcontractor; 33 per cent of workers reported holding a valid visa; and 57 per cent of workers work at a farm that supplies Coles and Woolworths. That's as far from ensuring integrity as one can get. It is the union that is bringing this to our notice, raising the workers' voices. They don't ask for much; ensuring integrity in the agricultural sector is not hard. They want fair wages. Every farm worker needs at least $24.36 an hour, with no more piece rates. They need visa justice with a fair visa system that gives migrant farm workers, dignity, security and safety. They want secure jobs, with no more cash contracting—direct, reliable, on-the-books jobs—and freedom of association. Migrant workers need union rights like any other worker. None of those things are on this government's agenda. They are on the unions' agenda and they are on the workers' agenda. Freedom of association might be on the government's agenda but only to totally put it at risk.
What of the biggest threat to our economy right now—stagnant wages? The RBA governor has been desperate to get wages rising again. At least he stopped telling workers to just ask for a pay rise. Who can just walk up and ask for one? The gig economy worker, who will definitely find herself without a gig? The casual worker, who knows anytime she puts her head up she'll lose shifts? The short-term contractor, who is desperate to get that next six-month contract? The cleaner, who has no bargaining power because of the fragmented nature of her industry? I could go on and on; none of them have the power to just roll up and ask for a pay rise.

We all know that the best bet for getting a pay rise is to join a union. That is why this government hates unions. They don't want workers to get pay rises. We saw in The Guardian this week an excellent missive on why they want to keep wages low. The Minister for Finance himself has said on national television that it was a deliberate strategy of the government to keep wages depressed. Of course they want unions out of the picture; they always have.

Enter this bill, and many others they keep putting up to bash unions about and to get rid of them. Who is the government to assert that they and big business should have a say in union amalgamations? It is the members who decide the structure of their unions. No union amalgamation can be against the public interest. It's a nonsense! How could ensuring the economic viability and increasing the bargaining power of the union be against the public interest? Union members are the public; they have a right to determine their own union's future. Again, this is the government trying to hold back the rights of workers to improve conditions. Why? To protect the profits of their mates in big business.

We just have to look at the creation of the Registered Organisations Commission. If it weren't so heinous I reckon it would be a joke—the very so-called independent body that implemented a dodgy strategy for the government against the AWU, orchestrating a media circus around completely unnecessary and unwarranted raids on the union offices, all in the name of trying to make the then minister for IR look good. Well, she sure as goodness did not look good! It was a complete farce, and this bill gives that organisation, the ROC, even more power.

Talk about integrity! How about this government putting integrity into its IR system and getting rid of the ROC? Workers in this country deserve to be protected. They deserve the right to join their unions and they deserve the right for their unions to act under their own democratic structures.

Dr Gillespie (Lyne) (10:57): This Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Ensuring Integrity) Bill 2019 is designed to enforce the rule of law in the workplace. Privileged positions should be respected and the law should be respected. Unions and employer groups hold a special place in the Fair Work legislation and they need to respect that responsibility.

The problem, though, is that there are glaring occasions when registered organisations are not working in the best interests of their members or they are not complying with the law. We only have to look at what happened from depositions given at the Heydon royal commission: from abuse of the right-of-entry privileges, exhibiting coercion and secondary boycott conduct right through to extortion and blackmail. Unfortunately, this sort of behaviour hasn't finished. We only have to see what the Leader of the Opposition has been attempting to do to expel a member of a union. That just brought out all this bad behaviour again for everyone to see.

This legislation means that actions by unions which are unlawful will have major consequences. It's not just the royal commission that outlined a lot of these misbehaviours; there has been a lot of analysis of the consequences of this breaking the law and this militant industrial activity in infrastructure and new builds. Everyone knows about the money that we put into roads, schools and hospitals through the state governments and local government. The delays and extra costs as a result of militant behaviour that is unlawful means that there is less money because everything costs more. So there are fewer roads, fewer schools and fewer hospitals built.

The Master Builders Association estimates that this increasing cost is 30 per cent more due to unlawful industrial action and militancy. BCA and Infrastructure Australia estimate that infrastructure costs in Australia, as a result of this sort of activity, are 40 per cent more than similar projects in the USA. The McKellar Institute in 2016 analysed the costs for a standard two-lane non-divided road—and we have many of those in the Lyne electorate and we'd love to build more—and said that, because of the costs that are generated by these unlawful activities and militant behaviour, it costs 26 per cent more in Australia compared to in the UK, 42 per cent more than in the USA, 53 per cent more than in Canada and 78 per cent more than in the EU.

I would really love to be able to say to my local councils that the money that goes to fixing Clarence Town Road will go a whole lot further. But it's these big infrastructure projects where most of this behaviour is happening—big greenfield sites, not just local domestic building. Big projects that state governments and the federal government fund—sites that are funded by taxpayers—all cost much more than they should. Privately funded infrastructure and privately funded construction projects all cost much more. Major real estate developments cost...
more. People buying property end up having to pay more because of the construction costs we've outlined. Everyone who has analysed it deems this is real, not just a confected allegation. Things do cost more in Australia because of some of the activities on these big sites.

How frequently is this happening? One only has to look at the figures that the ABCC, the Australian Building and Construction Commission, has just assembled in one of their reports: over 2,000 times in 15 years, and 200 times alone in 2018-19. Currently, there are 32 cases and 766 individuals contravening the law as it stands. That is the justification for these amendments. If there is unlawful behaviour of this extent across the length and breadth of the country, you can imagine how it's holding the nation back. The unlawful behaviour by the CFMMEU and their members just in this last calendar year, 2018-19, is $4 million. If you look at all the fines they've accumulated since 2004, including predecessor organisations to the ABCC, it's $16.4 million. That just gives you an idea of the extent and the breadth of this unlawful behaviour.

There are five schedules outlining what will be done, and they are sensible, reasonable amendments, which will allow the courts to adjudicate and ensure that officials that do demonstrate a disregard for the law or otherwise engage in misconduct will not be able to hold office in the registered organisation anymore. A person convicted of any offence that carries a penalty of five years imprisonment or more will now be automatically disqualified for the existing exclusion period of five years. This was recommended by the royal commission into trade union governance and corruption. There is justification for it, and it will ensure that individuals who commit serious criminal offences will not be able to hold office in a registered organisation.

It also expands the grounds on which the Federal Court can make an order disqualifying an individual from holding office for a period of time that it determines appropriate. Officers who deliberately flout the law who are found not to be fit and proper will risk losing the privilege of representing their members. The schedule also makes it an offence for anyone who has been disqualified to continue to act and interfere in the industrial scene. Even influencing the organisation that you've been dismissed from is captured by that amendment. It will improve the standards of integrity in registered organisations and it means that people who do break the law will face the consequences. The costs and the fines that have been imposed so far seem to be no barrier to this bad behaviour. Since 2017, they have looked at the earlier iteration, and it will bring these guidelines for actions by the courts in keeping with what corporations have to deal with under the Corporations Act. These are very sensible, measured changes.

The royal commission also heard evidence that a culture of lawlessness and disrespect continued in some of these organisations, and the bill will ensure that the Federal Court is appropriately empowered to deal with organisations or parts of an organisation that break the law or fail to act in their members' best interests. The vast majority of these organisations are operating within the law. This isn't a broad attack on the union movement; it's a very specific attack on bad behaviour, such as coercing people, abusing the right of entry, forcing people, extortion and blackmail, which are all there on the record. Dysfunctional organisations will be able to be directed so that their affairs are brought into order. You only have to look at what happened with the Health Services Union. There was a dysfunctional organisation there; all the parties involved agreed. But this bill means the courts can appoint an administrator to sort out the affairs, correct all the dysfunction and make sure substandard behaviour comes to an end. Whilst the organisation is under administration, the administrator will control the property and the affairs of the organisation and perform the functions and exercise the powers that their members need, and officers or employees of the organisation under administration must give the administrator all the relevant information, so anything that is reasonably required will be available. There will be new increased penalties. And the removal of a potential imprisonment term for failing to help an administrator and failing to provide an organisation's books on request is an appropriate change which responds to stakeholder concerns.

When corporations merge, they have to face a public interest test, and the ACCC assesses whether a merger is in the interests of the economy and whether competition is reduced as a result. Similarly, with the amendments in this bill, a proposed merger of registered organisations, including but not limited to those with significant economic influence, should be subject to a public interest consideration. I think this is a reasonable and a very wise move. When you look at the size of these mega unions, they have the capability to shut down vast parts of the Australian economy. In the corporate sphere, if similar mergers are on the cards, the ACCC has an ability to stop that merger happening. This bill will ensure that the Fair Work Commission applies a public interest test when any other mergers are brought forward. Under the bill, the Fair Work Commission will have an overarching discretion to determine whether this is a good merger or whether it should not proceed. While the bill outlines a number of matters for the commission to take into account, the ultimate decision is left to the commission itself. So there are many practical amendments in this bill which address the concerns that are evidenced in the commission and in the public press.
We want the rule of law to apply in the workplace. We want militant, unlawful action to cease and we want there to be consequences for repeated bad behaviour. All of the things that I've outlined shouldn't be a feature in the workplace or on major construction sites like the major highways that we're building. We've got $100 billion worth of construction and infrastructure planned over the next 10 years. Wouldn't it be great if lower costs meant that the infrastructure could be delivered 20, 30 per cent more efficiently? It would benefit the Australian taxpayer and the users of that infrastructure, and it would be a major benefit to the economy. And people who are borrowing for a home unit or a house would know that the construction costs haven't been put up because of militant action.

With all the home units being built, you've got to think: how much cheaper could those properties be for consumers? You've got to think of the consequences of increased construction costs for all the infrastructure that goes with new developments and major land releases. All of these things mean things cost more. We're trying to make housing more affordable, and we're trying to stamp out the militant, unlawful actions. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (11:11): This Liberal Party enjoys delivering lectures on integrity. Last week, I heard the Attorney-General on the radio doing it again in relation to this bill. He and the other phony tough guys in the Liberal Party are telling us that they are going to ensure the integrity of the union movement. But, as the old saying goes, this seems to be a case of do as I say, not do as I do. To paraphrase another old saying, this Liberal government should focus on putting its own house in order before it lectures others on matters of integrity, because this Liberal Party has an uneasy relationship with the concept of integrity. There is not enough time in the day to go through them all, but let's just touch on a few examples that illustrate that fact.

We know that the member for Hume, along with his friend the Treasurer of Australia, still has questions to answer about the alleged illegal poisoning of critically endangered grasslands on a property partly owned by—guess who? The member for Hume. We know that his own department, the Department of the Environment and Energy no less, is now investigating this honourable member because of his interest in a company called Jam Land Pty Ltd, which was involved in that alleged poisoning of critically endangered grasslands. We also know that record-breaking amounts of money were paid by the Commonwealth to buy water from a company with links to this same member for Hume, a company that was owned by a Cayman Islands based entity that the same honourable member for Hume—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Andrews): Order! I'm having great difficulty, Member for Isaacs, in relating the remarks you're making at the moment to the subject matter of this bill.

Mr DREYFUS: The subject matter of this bill is related to ensuring integrity, Deputy Speaker, with respect.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is a bill to amend the Fair Work Registered Organisations Act, Member for Isaacs. I will listen a little more, but—

Mr DREYFUS: Referred to by the Prime Minister, with respect, and every other member of the Liberal Party as the 'ensuring integrity bill'. So perhaps there's a problem—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I said I'll listen a little more, but you're getting a long way away, I think, from the subject matter of this bill.

Mr DREYFUS: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. We don't know the full story yet—not yet, anyway—because the member for Hume won't tell us and his Prime Minister won't make him. You could deliver an entire speech about the member for Hume's own uneasy relationship with the concept of integrity, but I don't want his colleagues to feel left out. After all, we also heard Senator Cormann accepting free overseas holidays from Liberal Party donors—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member is now straying well away from this bill. I ask him to come back to the subject matter of the bill.

Mr DREYFUS: With respect, Deputy Speaker, the subject of this bill is integrity, and there is a second reading amendment which has been moved by the Manager of Opposition Business and which talks about the government's inconsistent approach to royal commissions, the government's entire approach to workplace relations laws being to attack workers' organisations and the government not proposing to deal with legislation on a range of other matters.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I understand that. I'm still of the view, Member for Isaacs, that your current remarks have strayed far away from even the purport of the amendments.

Mr DREYFUS: I'll endeavour to relate my remarks more to the liking of the Deputy Speaker on the subject matter of this bill.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It's not about my personal liking, I should say; it's about the standing orders and whether or not the remarks go to the bill itself.

Mr DREYFUS: This is a bill which purports to impose standards of integrity on a small sector of Australian society or a small sector of the Australian economy. It is symptomatic of the approach of this government that it is not prepared to deal with a whole range of other integrity matters that are before its eyes. I've given one example of an integrity matter that is before the government's eyes which it is not prepared to deal with; rather, it wishes to try to say that it is dealing and is entitled to deal only with a small part of what it alleges are integrity issues arising in a small part of Australian society or a small part of the Australian economy. But it's not prepared to look at the issues around the integrity of the member for Hume. It's also not prepared to look at integrity issues arising in relation to Senator Cormann accepting free overseas holidays from Liberal Party donors and failing to declare them, linked to the whole shady Helloworld Travel scandal that also involved former Liberal Treasurer Joe Hockey.

We've had another integrity matter that this government is saying does not warrant the attention of this parliament in the slightest. That would be Senator Cash refusing to cooperate with an Australian Federal Police investigation into the leaking of sensitive information about police operations, leaks that came out of her own office.

Let's talk about another integrity matter that this government had no interest in: who could ever forget the 'choppergate' scandal in which the former member for McKellar Bronwyn Bishop so comprehensively disgraced herself? She's not here anymore, but the member for Fadden is still here. This is another integrity matter that the government thinks does not warrant the attention of this parliament. Who could forget that the member for Fadden was sacked from the ministry by the previous Prime Minister over multiple conflicts and the misuse of his ministerial position in the pursuit of the business interests, in particular, of Liberal donors in China as well as his own business interests? This Prime Minister's brought him back into cabinet, no less, not content with putting him in the ministry, presumably because it would be a gross inconsistency to exclude someone from this particular ministry because of a lack of integrity.

Then we've got the member for Dickson. He calls himself a minister of the Crown. He's a senior cabinet minister. This is another integrity matter that the government doesn't seem to be interested in taking any action about. It is not interested in taking action at an executive level and certainly not interested in having any discussion in this parliament. It wants to talk about integrity only in relation to a small sector of Australian society and a small sector of the Australian economy. The member for Dickson is the same honourable member who had 'no sight'—his words—of the payment of $423 million by his own department to a company called Paladin, which was based in an empty beach shack on Kangaroo Island, all without an open tender or other transparent process. What about that same member for Dickson, as Minister for Home Affairs, awarding a $591 million contract to a mysterious Brisbane based company to run garrison and welfare services on Nauru, again without an open tender or a transparent process? It happens to be the same company whose chief executive officer made a personal donation to the Minister for Home Affairs' branch of the LNP while the terms of that very contract were still being negotiated.

What about the Minister for Home Affairs, the same Minister for Home Affairs, agreeing to extend that lucrative contract and pay that mysterious Brisbane based company even more in the same month that the Liberal National Party received a donation from a related company registered to the same business address? This government's got a very narrow view of integrity; it only wants to bring bills to this parliament that deal with integrity in a small part of Australian society and a small part of the Australian economy. To go on about the Minister for Home Affairs: what about the Minister for Home Affairs personally intervening, against the advice of his own department, to award visas to at least two au pairs who were facing deportation for breaking Australian law—au pairs who were employed by the minister's former colleague and the family of a well-known Liberal Party donor?

I could then come to the Attorney-General. He's meant to have some interest in integrity. He's, after all, the minister who introduced the bill that's before the House—the 'Ensuring Integrity Bill', as he likes to refer to it. This Attorney-General is badging himself as the architect of ensuring integrity for a small part of Australian society and a small part of the Australian economy, namely the unions. This Attorney-General has treated the Administrative Appeals Tribunal—appointments to which he's responsible for—like a Liberal Party employment agency, appointing dozens of former Liberal Party MPs, former Liberal Party staffers and failed Liberal Party candidates to high-paying taxpayer funded jobs which should be going to properly qualified and experienced experts. The situation there has become so bad—and, again, we won't hear the Attorney-General talking about this part of integrity in government operations—that a review of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal by a former High Court judge, a review that the Attorney-General sat on for some seven months, recommended that all future
appointments to the tribunal should be made on the basis of merit—merit! That idea will no doubt come as a rude shock to the Attorney-General! Yet this Attorney-General has the temerity to stand up day after day and tell this parliament and the people of Australia that he's the man who will ensure the integrity of the union movement.

It's easy to forget, in the welter of discussion that this government would like to have about ensuring integrity in the union movement, that this Liberal government—that failing, tired, third-term Liberal government—went to the election promising to establish a Commonwealth integrity commission. They don't like to talk about it much anymore. They only committed to the idea because they were forced into it. But it's true—I need to remind Australians that it's true—that this government went to the election promising to establish a Commonwealth integrity commission. The current Attorney-General and the current Prime Minister announced it together in December last year; I do have the tapes. They even put money into the budget for this Commonwealth integrity commission. Of course, we've heard nothing of it since the election. We've had a list of legislation for this year published by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet which did not include legislation for a Commonwealth integrity commission. Apparently that's now gone back to the drawing board—or perhaps it's gone into the wastepaper basket. That's how much this government thinks of integrity. Its promise of a Commonwealth integrity commission has gone into the ether.

Of course, even if the Liberal government did follow through on its election commitment to establish a Commonwealth integrity commission, the body as outlined by the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General wouldn't ensure the integrity of the parliament and it certainly wouldn't ensure the integrity of the government. The Liberal Party's favoured model for an integrity commission would ensure no such thing. As many experts, including quite a number of eminent retired judges, observed at the time the Attorney-General and the Prime Minister made their policy announcement, their integrity commission would be the kind of model that you announce when you don't want an integrity commission. Their model for an integrity commission would give special treatment to politicians by establishing two separate divisions: the so-called law enforcement division would be tasked with investigating allegations of corruption by law enforcement, and the public sector division would investigate allegations of corruption involving politicians. But the powers of the law enforcement division to investigate allegations of corruption would be far more extensive than the powers of the public sector division, and only the law enforcement division could hold public hearings. One rule for the police, another rule for the Attorney-General and his colleagues—that's the indication that we should take about the attitude of this Liberal government to integrity, particularly on a national level, across government, which is what a national integrity commission should be about.

Putting to one side the many problems with the Liberal Party's preferred model for a Commonwealth Integrity Commission—their title—it is notable that we haven't heard a peep from the Attorney-General or any other member of the government about their proposed Commonwealth Integrity Commission. Since the election. There have been no sermons from them about ensuring the integrity of this parliament or the government of Australia. They are so allergic to ensuring integrity—that's the title of this bill, 'ensuring integrity'—in their own ranks that they can't even bring themselves to talk about an election commitment that they made, which was to bring legislation for a Commonwealth Integrity Commission to this parliament.

Just to go back to the list, published by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, of legislation that's proposed for introduction to this parliament in 2019; there is there nothing about the Commonwealth Integrity Commission. They have listed, however, the Overseas Welfare Recipients Integrity Program Bill as a priority; the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Payment Integrity) Bill is also apparently a priority—again, these are very small, focused, targeted integrity measures—but nothing at all about a national integrity commission, which would grapple with integrity at the national level and across government. When it comes to welfare recipients, you might observe that these phony tough guys are all about ensuring integrity; when it comes to the union movement, they love to talk about integrity, but if they're putting their own house in order you'd be left wanting.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (11:27): It's a great pleasure to be able to rise in this place on behalf of the people of Goldstein and in particular in support of the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Ensuring Integrity) Bill 2019. I don't doubt for a second that the people of Goldstein have a basic expectation that those who seek to represent others in a union might be law-abiding citizens in their task and duties and as a consequence would support this bill. We have just heard one of, and we always enjoy, the—one how would you put it?—I'll be charitable and say 'speeches' of the shadow Attorney-General. What we saw alive, and what we have been seeing since the election—I don't say this with any sense of joy; it's a sadness—is the opposition's enlivenment of the seven stages of grief. Immediately after the election we had shock and disbelief at their defeat and that they wouldn't be able to go on and do the opposite of what this bill seeks to achieve, to enlarge the space for their mates and paymasters in the unions to do as they wish on any industrial worksite around the country.
Then we had denial about the basis on which they lost the election and what that was driven by. Their solution to this denial was to select the current Leader of the Opposition to lead them rather than reflect on their dilemma and why they did not attract the votes of the Australian people. Then we had guilt. We saw that yesterday from the former Leader of the Opposition, who talked about his very great disappointment that he wasn't serving on this side of the chamber and able to lead his team to victory in order to do the exact opposite of what this legislation seeks to achieve. We then have seen things like anger and bargaining. We saw that particularly with the allocation of the shadow ministry, where people were included or excluded proportionately based on the rage over who was responsible for what, the chief victims of that being not only the former Leader of the Opposition but also the former shadow Treasurer. We've seen depression, loneliness and reflection. We saw that specifically through their complete incapacity to deal with basic issues like tax cuts, where prior to the election they opposed $387 billion in tax cuts and today they say that apparently we're not doing enough.

Then, of course, we've just seen, in the shadow Attorney-General's speech on this bill, the reconstruction and working through of the issues, and trying to understand and to find a meandering narrative—

Mr Simmonds interjecting—

Mr TIM WILSON: and it meandered, as the good member for Ryan has reminded me—about why they can rationalise turning a blind eye to the illegality of union officials while concurrently lecturing others in this place about integrity!

At some point, I'm sure, the opposition will reach a moment of acceptance, having gone through those stages. And we are about to come up to a five-week break in the parliamentary schedule where they may just do that. It's entirely possible, of course, that they will go in the reverse direction and go back to things like denial and guilt, certainly anger and bargaining, and perhaps a reconstruction, working through the issues that they face.

Mr Simmonds: Blaming the voters!

Mr TIM WILSON: And yes, as the member for Ryan says, part of it will be, I'm sure, about blaming the voters—'Don't they understand how good they could have had it if only there had been a change of government'—because, apparently, $387 billion of new taxes and ripping off the restrictions on those who seek to break the laws would somehow end up in a better outcome for the people of Australia.

But the matter before us right now is a relatively simple piece of legislation in its objective, its ambition, and its concurrence with the values of most of the people of this country. The simple proposition is that, if you are a union official seeking to represent others in an industrial capacity, you may be expected to adhere to the law, and that, if you do not adhere to the law, there is a pathway to disqualification—in exactly the same way as we look at it for people like company directors who are custodians of other people's money in pursuit of opportunity. We want people to meet basic standards in the workplace.

We all know horrific stories—and, tragically, they're coming out far too frequently these days—where we have registered organisations, whether they be business organisations or those in the trade union movement, where people breached the trust of the people that they are there to represent, where they use the weight and authority that they have and throw their weight around to do the wrong thing. Of course, a critical part of that is also around sometimes overstepping the mark on behalf of the people they represent in their engagement with employers, in breaking the law, in misallocating money and in seeking to advance their own interests at the expense of those they're representing.

When those things occur, it is not just an issue of integrity—though it is that. It is also a fundamental breach of trust. And the expectation that we have as a government is that, whether you are in business or in a representative body or a union, you have a basic obligation to those you represent to honour their trust, and that, if you don't, there should be penalties. It goes to the heart of your character and, therefore, your capacity to play your role.

That's why we, on this side of the House, support this piece of legislation. It's to elevate the basic expectation that's adhered to by so many others to the paymasters of the Australian Labor Party. And that's precisely why they oppose it, because sitting behind the modern Labor Party is a patronage network and, once a bright light is shone upon it and people are held to account and questions about conduct are asked in courts of law, a light is turned not just on the trade union movement—though that's critically important—but on themselves. They say sunlight is the greatest disinfectant. But there is a lot to disinfect on that side of the chamber. There is a lot to disinfect in the trade union movement. And what they do, in pursuit of that, is, of course, to trade on the trust of good, decent, hardworking Australians who empower them to represent their interests. And if those on the other side had any skerrick of integrity, they would support this piece of legislation.

I fully accept that many of them have traded their way through the system of the trade union movement to sit in this place and carry the trust of the Australian people and their communities in the parliament. They absolutely have. I realise the uncomfortableness that must sit with many of them, including those who have their backs
turned to us now, to shine that light. That relationship does not end once you enter this place, because those people who sit atop the union movement and do the wrong thing continue to pull the purse strings, the membership strings and the factional strings. But at some point leadership is actually about standing up and turning to your colleagues and saying, 'We may have got here, but our responsibility is to now do what is right.' That is the test that they are failing in their opposition to this bill.

As a basic benchmark of what will happen if this bill passes, will workers be worse off? No, they will be better off. Will the institutions of our democracy be worse off? No, they'll be better off. The only people who will be worse off are the people sitting on that side of this chamber and the trade union leaders who break the law. If that is the basis of their opposition to this legislation and they are trying to conflate other issues with the concerns about criminal law-breaking that occurs in this country, then it is no wonder the Australian people kept them on that side of this chamber.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (11:36): I won't take up much of the chamber's time here today. The final report of the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption was a damning indictment on the conduct of senior union members and the culture of self-interest that flourished under their watch. The Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Ensuring Integrity) Bill 2019 is in part a response to recommendations made by the royal commission and purports to effectively deal with registered organisations that are dysfunctional or are not serving in the interests of their members. It does so by expanding the grounds for disqualification from office for the officials of registered organisations, expanding the grounds for cancelling the registration of registered organisations, adding a public interest test to amalgamations of registered organisations and allowing dysfunctional registered organisations to be subject to government intervention. The government says this bill strikes the appropriate balance, ensuring that registered organisations and their officers act with integrity and obey the law without unduly restricting the vast majority of organisations that do the right thing and diligently represent their members and act in their best interests.

The bill has been referred to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee, with a final report due late October this year. My Senate colleagues and I will closely follow the committee's process and consider the recommendations that arise from that Senate committee.

We are particularly concerned by the provision in the bill that gives the minister a power to lodge an application to deregister a union or union official. It may be that safeguards should be in place to ensure that this power is not exploited for political purposes. Centre Alliance will consider the recommendations of the committee through the lens of the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption in which Justice Dyson Heydon QC wrote in his final report:

It is difficult to overstate the importance of a strong, efficient and focussed committee of management for the proper governance of a union. The committee of management is the body which on a monthly basis needs to be questioning, checking and, if necessary, challenging accounting records and resolutions promulgated by the officials at the unions. The committee of management is perhaps the most important safeguard for ensuring that members' money is deployed properly. A position on a committee of management is not a position to be taken lightly. Its members must learn to use two words more. One is 'Why?' the other is 'No'.

That statement bears a striking resemblance to those of another eminent jurist the Hon. Kenneth Hayne AC QC in the final report of the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry:

There can be no doubt that the primary responsibility for misconduct in the financial services industry lies with the entities concerned and those who managed and controlled those entities: their boards and senior management.

Nothing that is said in this report should be understood as diminishing that responsibility. Everything that is said in this report is to be understood in the light of that one undeniable fact, and that is that those who engaged in misconduct are responsible for what they did and for the consequences that followed. It is the entities, their boards and their senior executives who bear primary responsibility for what has happened. Close attention must be given to their culture, their governance and their remuneration practices. Clearly, unions aren't the only organisations that require urgent legislative action to hold their leaders to account.

My qualified support for this bill in this House is not a comment on the merits of the union movement or on the actions of individual union members. Centre Alliance is not yet satisfied that the government has taken all the reasonable steps to protect the public from the type of behaviour detailed in both the royal commission into trade unions and the royal commission into financial services.

This bill, I believe, is an improvement on the 2017 version. However, as I mentioned, my Centre Alliance colleagues and I will continue to talk with government and stakeholders to ensure that the government implements a measured and proportionate response to both royal commissions.
Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (11:42): I rise to speak on the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Ensuring Integrity) Bill 2019. I just want to clarify the word 'integrity' for those people who would have seen it in the title of the legislation and would have no doubt thought that this was the Liberal and National parties' Commonwealth Integrity Commission legislation. I'm sure that people like Monica from Sydney would have thought: 'This is it. This is the legislation promised by Prime Minister Morrison back in December last year. Here we are, on the last day of July—surely, with this government, they're doing what they said and bringing in legislation to establish a Commonwealth Integrity Commission to make sure that parliamentarians are doing the right thing.' But, no—sadly, this is not that legislation. This is a broken promise from the government. Instead, it's focused on kicking unions.

I've listened to the speakers from both sides of the chamber on this bill. I take some comfort from the indication from the member for Mayo that she will be looking closely at this legislation, because it is very important.

I do declare that I have worked for trade unions. Before coming into parliament, I worked for the Independent Education Union of Australia, the union that looks after private schools, so I understand the good work that unions do. I've actually helped people with unfair dismissals, all sorts of industrial matters and discrimination matters, so I have some understanding of the work of union officials.

I also should declare that I have three brothers and a couple of nephews who work in the construction sector, so I have some understanding of that sector. I declare this because the construction union is mentioned by government ministers two or three times every question time and probably 10 or 20 times a day by the Prime Minister. He seems to be obsessed with this union.

Sadly, this coalition government seems to be obsessed with union bashing. It is their favourite pastime. They are obsessed with it and think that it is in the national interest to do so. They don't care about the terrible conditions that employees have to put up with. They don't care whether employers are paying workers their entitlements. There's a deafening silence from those opposite when it comes to the theft of wages. They especially don't care whether worksites are safe.

Labor took to the election a suite of policies that would protect workers and make sure building companies cannot avoid their obligations to their employees; to government, to pay their taxes, obviously; to homeowners; and to honest businesses. I'm just going to touch on some of these: the tradie pay guarantee, which was a requirement for large Commonwealth construction projects that would ensure that tradies who do the work on time get paid on time, something that both sides of the chamber would support; the $7 million tradie litigation fund to give the Australian Securities and Investments Commission the ability to run more difficult court cases without draining the corporate watchdog's resources; the director identification number so that all company directors would be required to obtain a unique director identification number with a 100-point identification check; increased penalties associated with phoenix activity so that the bad employers, the sharks who rip people off over and over again, would be prevented from doing so; and a policy of naming and shaming that would allow the Commissioner of Taxation to name individuals and entities as part of the penalty for the most serious tax offences, for those people not doing the right thing by society.

These policies would have made a real difference to working Australians, and I ask those opposite to consider them. They're roaming around the policy wasteland looking for something to do. But for their kicking the occasional union tumbleweed, there'd be no movement at all. The coalition government begins its seventh year in office in September, and I'm sure the member for Blaxland remembers how long that has been. They aren't concerned about policy that would actually make a real difference to working people. They aren't concerned about economic policy to boost growth, wages and living conditions for all Australians. Instead, they just want to distract from their failures and entrench privilege.

Yesterday's HILDA survey report confirmed what most of my constituents already know: that living standards are going backwards under the Liberals. We see CPI data today confirming that. The median household income has declined by almost $500 in 2017, a fall of 0.6 per cent from 2016. What is particularly concerning is that there has been no increase in median household incomes for a decade. Many workers are finding it tough to make ends meet. Tradies in the construction sector who aren't being paid on time or aren't being paid at all by unscrupulous employers find it impossible to put food on the table or pay for the roof over their head. It's damaging for their financial health and also for their mental health. Labor always has a positive plan, so we wanted to stop dodgy bosses ripping off subbies, their workers and taxpayers, policies that would have made a real difference. So I ask those opposite to consider these policies that I've detailed if they actually care about small businesses.

In contrast, the coalition took to the election one plan: that was tax cuts. So now, finding themselves back on that side of the chamber without any plan to govern, what do they do? They turn to their old favourite from that
well-worn song sheet: divide, divide, divide. It's a policy that begins with the verse 'We hate unions', and we've heard it in every speech so far from those opposite.

This bill or something not dissimilar to it was introduced in 2017 but lapsed when the parliament was prorogued in April. The stated purpose of the current bill before the House is:

… to respond to community concern and the recommendations of the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption … to ensure the integrity of registered organisations and their officials, for the benefit of their members.

The royal commission formed the view that the governance requirements of organisations should be more like those imposed on corporations rather than incorporated associations, but this bill proposes much harder regulation—make sure you understand that: much harder regulation—on registered organisations than exists for corporations. For example, it allows not only the Registered Organisations Commissioner and the minister but also any other person with sufficient interest to apply to the court for an order to disqualify an official of a registered organisation. This is a much harsher regime than that for corporations, and differs from the recommendations of the Heydon royal commission. The Heydon royal commission specifically recommended that only the Registered Organisation Commissioner should have standing to seek disqualification orders. This could be a disaster. So let's call this out for what it is: it's an attack on the mighty union movement. Shame on this Morrison government!

Trade unions have a proud history in Australia. Workers rely on the union movement—be they union members paying fees or those workers who work alongside union members and get the benefits of what they fight for. Since many years before the High Court's Harvester decision in 1907, unions have been an accepted part of the fabric of society. It has been accepted that all Australian workers deserve to earn a fair day's pay for a fair day's work and, at the end of the day, return home safely to the families. It would be a very different working environment if trade unions did not exist. If it were not for unions, we would not have annual leave. We would not have industrial awards that underpin pay and conditions of employment for millions of workers. We would not have penalty rates—aIthough penalty rates are actually under threat from the coalition government by both deed and inaction. We would not have maternity leave, superannuation, equal pay for women, health and safety, workers compensation, sick leave, long service leave and redundancy pay. We would not have allowances, including for uniforms. We would not have meal breaks and rest breaks. Workers once had to get through the whole day without any break at all. We would not have collective bargaining and unfair dismissal protection. That is a long list, and there are many others I could add.

I won't detain the House too long as I now go through the list of employment conditions spontaneously provided by employers since that 1907 Harvester decision.

Mr Zappia: None.

Mr PERRETT: I’ll take that interjection from the member for Makin. Zip—absolutely nothing. We know that union density has been on the decline since the 1970s. So if ever there was a time when workers needed fearless union representation, it is now—and particularly in the construction industry. As I said, I talk to my brothers and nephews who work in this industry. We see people getting ripped off—and even worse. I have one brother who was literally inches away from death when two people were killed right alongside him. We know it is a dangerous industry. There was significant slowing in the annual rate of growth in average weekly earnings for adult men working full time in the construction industry between November 2013 and November 2018—the time the coalition has been in office, the years when the coalition has been asleep at the wheel. For all employees in construction during that period, there was an annual average growth of 0.8 per cent in weekly earnings, which is considerably below the annual average growth of 4.7 per cent achieved between November 2008 and November 2013—the Rudd and Gillard years.

But the growth in average weekly earnings is only one measure to gauge how crook the economy is. Arguably the best measure of wage growth by industry is the wage price index. Using this measure the annual growth in wages in the five years to 2 December 2018 was more subdued in male dominated industries such as mining and construction. The wage growth in these industries was 1.6 per cent and 1.9 per cent respectively. The all industry average wage growth was actually 2.2 per cent. What is most telling is that the average annual growth in mining and construction in the five years from December 2007 to December 2013 was four per cent and 3.5 per cent respectively.

That is government data. It is absolutely clear that wages in those industries are stagnating. So don't listen to the fear campaign coming out of the Liberal Party. I have seen the information they are putting out there. Dodgy figures are being trotted out by the dodgy Liberal Party propaganda union about the costs associated with the
building industry. On top of stagnating wages under this government's watch, dodgy building firms are deliberately avoiding paying workers.

A government member interjecting—

Mr PERRETT: Find your own chair if you want to make a comment, thank you! Phoenixing is a practice where dodgy companies deliberately burn companies in an attempt to avoid their obligations to employees, government, home owners and honest businesses. Phoenix activity not only hurts hardworking Australians, their families and their communities but costs the economy billions of dollars. One estimate is that it costs the Australian economy in excess of $5 billion per year, which is more than $200 for every person in Australia. But the Morrison government is doing nothing to stop these dodgy companies from ripping off hardworking Australians. Instead, it attacks the very organisations that stand up for workers and their families.

Just last week, a Perth court fined a Perth builder, Gerry Hanssen, for breaking industrial laws by refusing to allow union officials entry to a worksite—the same worksite where a German backpacker had died weeks before after falling 13 floors through an open shaft. The union officials had a lawful right at all times to enter the site and there clearly was a need, but the judge said Mr Hanssen was driven by his blind hatred of unions. I don't know Mr Hanssen, but it was not the first time that Mr Hanssen or his company had been brought before the law. He had previously been fined for exploiting migrant workers. Mr Hanssen is a major coalition donor and proudly admits that he is a member of the Western Australia Liberal Party. So why isn't the Prime Minister outraged about Mr Hanssen's law-breaking? Why hasn't the PM or the Western Australian industrial relations minister sought his expulsion from the Liberal Party? It's clear that the Liberals are equally driven by a blind hatred of unions. The Liberals' only agenda is to destroy unions without regard to how this will impact on the fabric of Australian society.

Unions make sure that worksites are safe for workers. Union officials need to enter worksites to carry out inspections. The very lives of workers depend on union officials being granted access to worksites. Surely no-one would argue that shutting down an unsafe worksite until it can be made safe is not a life-saving function of the union movement. The actual working days lost through worksites being shut down due to industrial action have been decreasing for the past two decades. That's in total. Even though there are millions of more Australians, the total number of working days has actually gone down as well as obviously the ratio. There are already laws in place that limit industrial action taken by employees. There are limits on the types of allowable bargaining demands through protected industrial action. Many enterprise bargaining agreements prevent industrial action during the term of that agreement. In fact, some might say that the industrial relations power has completely shifted. Even though it was a Labor government that actually brought in that change to centralised bargaining and the like, that is something that does not give a lot of rights to the employees in the workplace.

So is the Prime Minister tightening up the laws and against this despicable behaviour by dodgy builders that endanger the lives of Australians? No; we are not seeking action on that at all. The only industrial laws that the Morrison government have brought into parliament are all about attacking unions. As I said from the start, this is not legislation bringing in the Commonwealth Integrity Commission, as promised in December last year by Prime Minister Morrison. Instead, this is a piece of legislation that is all about attacking unions, and the government should be ashamed of it.

Debate adjourned.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mrs MARINO (Forrest—Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories) (11:57): I move: That orders of the day Nos 3 and 4, government business, be postponed until a later hour this day. Question agreed to.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

Consideration resumed of the motion:

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

May it please Your Excellency:

We, the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Australia, in Parliament assembled, desire to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the speech which you have been pleased to address to Parliament—
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Andrews): Before I call the honourable member for Longman, I remind honourable members that this is his first speech, and I ask the House to extend to him the usual courtesies.

Mr YOUNG (Longman) (11:58): Well, this is cool. There are lot of people shaking their head back in Longman and Kallangur, where I was brought up, particularly a couple of high school teachers! Thank you all for giving up your time to listen to my maiden speech. No-one has proofread this. Many people offered to assist—many much more qualified than I—but I believe a parliamentarian's first speech should be theirs and theirs alone. I will be accountable for every word spoken. As a believer in personal responsibility, I assure you that these words are all mine.

My decision to enter the political arena was borne out of a desire for one thing: to be involved in making positive changes to improve the lives of the people of Longman and the people of Australia. The first election I was involved in wasn't a victory; it was a loss. This was of course when I ran for pre-selection for the seat of Longman in the 2018 by-election, where I was defeated by Trevor Ruthenberg. Losing is not a bad thing; in fact, it has been my experience that I learn more from my losses in life than from my victories.

My small, hardworking campaign team were a true representation of the Longman electorate. They were headed up by four-foot 10-inch pocket-rocket retiree, Beth, and her husband, Peter. The core team of Tony, John, James, Brett, Peter, Harvey, Margie, Lou and Andrew managed our very limited—and I mean very limited—campaign funds to ensure we extracted great value for every dollar. We were often outnumbered two to one on prepoll and polling booths by Labor but, to their credit, my team of volunteers were not deterred. I thank them and the numerous volunteers I have not mentioned by name for their unwavering commitment to our party's cause and to me personally.

My thanks go out to our campaign team, led by Andrew Hirst and Lincoln Folo, for their great strategising, and to the Prime Minister for making time in his busy schedule to drop into the Caboolture Sports Soccer Club for a visit and to charm some of the locals two days out from the election. To say you cannot win an election by yourself would be the greatest understatement of all time!

I speak to you today, not as a member of parliament but as an everyday Australian. I'm a year 10 state-school-educated man from Queensland, as were most boys who left school in the early 1980s. Attending Dakabin State High School in the Longman electorate in just its third year of operation, the school oval hadn't even been constructed and the dairy farmer across the road kindly removed his cattle each weekend from one of the paddocks so we had a school oval to use during the week. Some may say we were hard done by, but a school oval with an electric fence and fresh cow patties was a teenage boy's version of heaven!

My mum and dad were typical middle-class Australians, both brought up on dairy farms—dad at Youngs Crossing in Petrie, where our family settled in 1873, and mum in various places, like Beaudesert, Morayfield and Beachmere. My mum, Rita, was a public school teacher for over 40 years and my dad, Jim, started off as a ringer in Boulia and ended up as a newspaper journalist for the Sunday Sun and Telegraph newspapers before owning his own local paper and eventually a magazine.

There is no doubt that these were simpler, and sometimes tougher, times, but I have no regrets. My childhood, which I remember fondly, was spent playing sport—mainly cricket, soccer, and rugby league, with a little tennis thrown in—all in bare feet of course, as much to our delight we didn't have to wear shoes until high school. I grew up with two younger brothers, Steve and Ron. Between us and all our mates, living in what was then the far outskirts of Brisbane in the suburb of Kallangur, there were always enough of us for a great game of cricket. In fact, two of my best mates from school, Ginny and Guesty, are here today.

Dad was not around at home a lot, as he worked hard. These days, we would probably have been labelled a dysfunctional family. Yet I remember my childhood with much fondness. Regardless of the fact that he was not around much, like most boys, my dad was, and still is, my hero. In my eyes, he was the best fighter, the best cricketer, the best driver and the best everything. Nothing made me feel better than hearing his voice on the sideline saying, 'Shot!' as a cover drive went for four, or getting in the car after soccer and going through the great things I'd done on the field. Never can I recall a negative conversation. Fortunately for me, my dad is an encourager.

Mum was, and still is, a saint. She's here today too! Many cuts, bruises, black eyes and trips to doctors—the inevitable stitches and plaster casts that active boys inflict upon themselves—were lovingly attended to by Mum. Her greatest attribute is her wisdom; she still continues to impart wisdom to me to this day.

I was first married at 21, and at 23 had four kids and a vasectomy—for obvious reasons! Unfortunately, that marriage failed and at 28 years old I was divorced. To the credit of my first wife, Dee, she and her now husband, Shane, and my second wife, Alex, and I have put the welfare of the most innocent parties in the divorce, the children, ahead of any differences we may have had. I'm pleased to say that, as a result, Kirsty, 34; Andrew, 30;
and Kelly, 28 are all doing okay on this journey we call life. My boy is here today—hey buddy! It is one of my greatest joys, watching them develop into fine adults, with the bonus of blessing us with five grandchildren, whom I adore.

My second wife, Alex, and I have an 11-year-old daughter, Jess, who, when I asked her if she'd like to come and hear my maiden speech replied, 'I've got a busy week with assignments at school, Dad, so I'd better not.' I don't know whether to be proud or hurt, but I guess it was a bit of both! I'm incredibly proud of all my kids and I love them dearly. My beautiful wife, Alexandra, is my greatest strength. Whenever I start to wander off course, she gently corrects me, and if that doesn't work she uses a frypan! Not really—it's okay! I believe in strong marriages, and when I was elected she was elected too. There is not a topic I don't talk to her about to gain the trust of community I intend to break. Our small community of Woodford, Bribie Island, and the Narangba area has over 12,000 small business owners like Akorn Civil, Phelans Bakery or Cutters Rest Cafe are all hardworking locals, employing locals and spending their money locally. Unfortunately the onset of online
businesses and multinationals has made the life of the local business owner that much more difficult. Sadly, we have started to see the decline of sponsorship for community groups and sporting clubs from local small businesses as they find their margins squeezed. These lower margins and profits, along with restrictive IR laws, also mean that these small businesses are being forced to casualise their workforces, bringing about underemployment, which is preventing many Australians from achieving that great Australian dream of owning their own home. This needs to change.

As a small-business owner for 18 years I understand more than most the challenges facing small business, because I've lived them. I can tell you that, when I speak to small-business owners in the Longman community, we all have the same desires. We want to employ more Aussies full-time, but we are hamstrung by draconian IR laws for full-time employees. Not one employer I've spoken to has ever wanted to terminate an employee that added value to their business. No, quite the opposite—most will continue to work with employees to keep them.

Unfortunately, these IR laws I speak of, meant to protect full-time employees, are actually reducing the number of full-time employees. As an example, I recently spoke to a business owner who had an employee in his Victorian branch who, during business hours, drove a sign-written company vehicle with her kayak on the roof for an afternoon paddle—as you do! When removing the kayak from the company car, she dropped it on a neighbouring car and damaged that car. The owner of the other car took a photo of the damage and, a few days later, contacted the business asking for the damage to be repaired. Of course the business owner was unaware of the incident. After finding out the details of the incident, the owner—since the character of the employee was undesirable, since she had effectively stolen from him as she was kayaking on company time that she was being paid for and she had been dishonest by not owning up to her error—made the decision to terminate her employment. Naturally, she took him for unfair dismissal! I mean, who wouldn't! A short time later, out of pocket $18,000, can you understand why this employer would not want to refill this position with a full-time employee? Surely any reasonable person would say, 'This is ridiculous.'

The other thing about Longman is that it has many people that are commonly known as the silent majority. I've always maintained that they are not silent; they just whisper. So, to hear them, you just need to be quiet and listen to them. These everyday, hardworking Aussies have always had the same dreams. We want a future for ourselves and our kids. We don't want charity when things are tough. We want to be treated fairly by governments and employers alike. And we want to feel safe.

As an everyday Australian myself, I can say: we want our children to go to school and be able to hear all points of view presented to them and make up their own minds. The greatest gift human beings have is the gift of free choice. Indoctrination of any type robs our children of this gift. That also has to change. We want our children and grandchildren to hear the theories of evolution and creation, different religions, climate change advocates and climate change sceptics. I can say: what we don't want for us and our kids is to be brainwashed with extreme left or right ideologies.

When I hear a school principal stand up at school assembly and say: 'If this government doesn't do anything about climate change, the world will end in 2030,' I get angry, because we should not indoctrinate our kids with fearmongering. They need to be taught personal responsibility and what their part is in looking after our planet.

In contrast, I love the fact that, as conservatives, we have always used the same two-word phrase: 'environmental protection'. We simply believe that we need to look after this magnificent planet because it's the right thing to do, not because a scientist or an extremist scares us into it. A classic example of this is: during the election campaign, my wife and I had a couple of friends over for a meal, and the inevitable conversation arose about politics and how the right of politics didn't care about the planet and climate change, yada yada yada. I sat silently as the barrage continued for some time, and, after they left, my wife commented, 'You were remarkably silent during that conversation,' to which I replied: 'I'm still bemused by the fact that all of these people have financial means, probably more than we do—and we all have two cars in our families—but we are the only ones who have a hybrid or electric car—in fact, we are on our third hybrid—and we are the only ones of the three couples who have solar panels on their roof.' This is a typical example of a conservative in Australia. While others talk about protecting the environment, we get on with doing our bit and actually contributing to protecting our planet. Actions speak louder than words. There are greater two-word phrases than 'global warming', 'climate change' or 'climate emergency', and those two word phrases are 'environmental stewardship', 'personal responsibility' and 'common sense'.

I love being a conservative, and I love being part of a conservative government. I love the fact that we don't yell or scream what we believe. Our voters don't glue themselves to city streets. Instead, we go about our business quietly and efficiently. I love that we don't talk about getting things done; we just get things done.
I love the fact that we understand that people sometimes fall into a hole in life, like when someone loses a job, and, rather than make it more comfortable to stay in that hole that they're in, we provide help for them to climb out of the hole they're in—practical help, like providing incentives to employers and employment agencies to get people working again—because studies tell us: when people are working, all of society benefits. When people work, crime rates go down; drug use drops; domestic violence, mental health issues and suicide rates fall. The individual who was unemployed, once employed, has more self-esteem and becomes a better citizen. The benefits are almost endless. Any future government financial assistance for the unemployed must go towards getting people working again. This is the only sane strategy.

I also love being part of this particular government under the leadership of Scott Morrison. He is indeed a breath of fresh air and, I believe, exactly what Australia needs. The thing that struck me about Scott is the first time I met him, unlike every other person I had met up until that point, he didn't ask me how I was going to win my seat; he asked: 'How are you? Tell me about yourself. Are you a family man? What do you do?' This shows he genuinely cares for people, not what people can do for him. He had my commitment from that moment on.

To the people of Longman, who elected me, I just want to say, 'I get you.' Many of battles in life you have faced and are facing now, I have faced. I know what it is like to work for a minimum wage and try to make ends meet. I have married a single mum and had the privilege of loving a child who wasn't mine biologically. I have had to deal with a daughter in an abusive relationship and the agony of watching my own child battle a scourge of our society: drug abuse. I can still remember the pain of divorce and dealing with the issues of a blended family. I get the challenges you face, because I have been there.

I have been to the funeral of mates who in their 30s died of cancer or took their own lives. We faced the drain of IVF for six years, so, to those who can't conceive, I understand you. The scourge of cancer has also made its mark on me. My wife in the past five years has suffered two lots of surgery, one to remove a melanoma on her back along with two lymph nodes. After recovering from this, Alex went through three separate surgeries to try to prevent early stage breast cancer. Unfortunately, a safe margin could not be achieved, so a mastectomy was performed. My wife's strength, grit and guts through this incredibly difficult time only magnified my admiration for her. I love you, babe. I remember the pain of my son Matthew dying in my arms from SIDS at just six weeks of age, 28 years ago, which will never leave me, because parents shouldn't bury their children. To those who have lost a child, I am with you.

Even though I have endured these battles, I believe that it is not the knocks we receive in life that define us but the response to these knocks that define us. As Jesus said, 'In the world you will have tribulation'—he didn't say, 'In the world you may have tribulation'—and ain't that the truth. Every time we face adversity we have a choice as an individual, as a government and as a nation on how we deal with that adversity. We can run, bury it under the carpet or put it in the too-hard basket or we can roll up our sleeves and deal with it. I am proud to be part of a government that faces all challenges that arise and quietly goes about the business of finding solutions and implementing those solutions.

Finally, to the men and women, young and old, of Longman and Australia: if a boy from Kallangur, whose grandfather was a South Sea Island slave, commonly known as a Kanaka, in the late 1800s; who came from simple beginnings; and who left school with just a junior certificate can end up in this great House, anything is possible, so you go for it. I am a living example of, 'If you have a go, you'll get a go.' You live in the country where the only limits to what you can achieve are the limits of your own dreams and aspirations. Don't listen to the knackers who say that you can't, because you're not from the right neighbourhood or the right school, you're not educated enough you're the wrong colour, the wrong sex or the wrong age. I encourage you to dream big and I commit to support you in those dreams, whatever they may be. To the people of Longman, who entrusted me to represent them, I won't promise you perfection, but I promise you that will get 100 per cent of me. I will fight for you with every breath. My team and I have a vision to make Longman the best place in Australia to live, and we are determined to make that happen. Thank you for your time.

Debate adjourned.

BILLS

Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Ensuring Integrity) Bill 2019

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:
"the House:
(1) declines to give the bill a second reading; and
(2) notes that:
   (a) this Government has not proposed legislation to deal with important workplace relations matters, such as wage theft, flat lining wages growth, or deaths in the workplace;
   (b) this bill and the Act it seeks to amend represent an inconsistent approach by the Government to responding to Royal Commissions; and
   (c) the Government's entire approach to workplace relations laws is to attack workers' organisations with the specific intention of weakening the capacity of those organisations to combat wage theft, achieve wage growth, and ensure that workplaces are safe".

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (12:21): I rise to speak in opposition to this draconian, reactionary legislation, the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Ensuring Integrity) Bill 2019. In 2016, Marianka Heumann, a young German backpacker working on a Perth building site, fell into an open lift shaft. Marianka plunged 14 storeys to her death. We cannot imagine the horror of the final seconds that she would have experienced. She was only 27, a promising life cut short, on a visit to Australia from which she never returned to her native land.

The CFMEU received photos from the site that appeared to show safety contraventions. Two CFMEU organisers arrived at the site with right of entry permits. Why were they there? They were there to carry out what is a prime duty of trade union officials: to ensure the safety of workers—to ensure that workers who leave home in the morning get to go home to their family, friends and local community at night. The fact is that Marianka was tragically let down. She was never going home. Those CFMEU organisers wanted to know why, and they wanted to make sure that it never happened to any of Marianika's colleagues.

This construction company was owned and run by Gerry Hanssen. Gerry Hanssen, of course, is a Liberal Party member. He's a Liberal Party donor. How does he react to this response to a pointless waste of such a young life cut short? How does he respond to this move by a union to come in and to inspect the site to ensure that it doesn't happen again? You would think that he would make every effort to ensure that it would never happen again to another person in his care, whom he has a duty to as the owner of this company. You would think he would welcome every possible inspection to ensure that safety was there on the site and that those who worked for him to gain profits for him got to go home at the end of the day. Oh, no. He responded by illegally excluding the union from the building site.

Speaking with The Australian newspaper he described himself as 'A Liberal at heart'. A young woman in his employee was dead, and his response was to bar the CFMEU organisers from entering and doing exactly what the law allowed them to do. A young woman was dead, and Hanssen wanted to block the union from investigating. A young woman was dead, and Hanssen said he was unrepentant about blocking the union from doing the very job that the law—the magical thing that those opposite say they want to uphold—sanctions the union to do. A young woman was dead, and Hanssen said the enemy was the union.

Federal Circuit Court judge Sandy Street said Hanssen was 'blinded by his hatred' of the CFMEU. Where might he have got that hatred from? It's the sort of rhetoric that we hear from the dispatch box every question time in this House. It's the sort of rhetoric that we hear from those who are supposed to represent the national interest rather than sectional interests when it comes to workplace relations. It's the sort of rhetoric that we hear, for partisan political purposes, perpetrated by those opposite, day after day. Here we have a legitimate role of a union, a legitimate role of a company too.

I've made it very clear for my entire time in this place that Labor, at our best, understands that there are common interests between workers and employers, that you can't actually have trade union members unless you have a private sector that's employing those trade union members, that we have common interests in boosting productivity, that we have common interests in ensuring that workers can contribute in their work places, that businesses which are most successful are ones that have the harmony and the enthusiasm of their workforce. Profits aren't created in abstract—certainly not profits in companies that employ people; there are some speculative operations so enamoured by those opposite who think everyone engages in that sort of activity. But the truth is that businesses that employ people rely upon those people. Smart employers who I've got to know over the years—the Lindsay Foxes of this world—understand exactly that; they want not just workers who work for them for a wage, but workers who are proud to work for them. They understand that safety is critical.

Yet, what do we have with this legislation before us today? What do we have with the rhetoric from those opposite with this legislation? They ignore the Gerry Hanssens. We know that he was fined some $62,000 for
excluding the union from the work site. What we know, though, is that this young woman, Marianka Heumann, won't be coming back.

Those opposite, when they talk about industrial relations, are so unbalanced in their approach. This is a government that's just won its third term in office. In this third term in office, they come to this place with wages stagnating. In their third term in office, we have examples of wage theft of $8 million-plus by a very prominent member of the community, Mr Calombaris. We have penalty rates cut yet again, on 1 July, just before this parliament resumed sitting.

The circumstances surrounding Marianka's death are not unique. There are fatalities and serious injuries on too many worksites right across the country, and some of those, not all, are absolutely preventable. What we have from those opposite, though, is just an anti-union obsession. They're not concerned about the impact of the current industrial relations system on the economy, or the fact that enterprise bargaining isn't working in a fair way. When I met with the Business Council of Australia, it said that. It's not just the ACTU; it's both sides. The Reserve Bank of Australia says that. Every economist says that. What's the government's solution to the problem with the economy and stagnant wages? Get rid of the trade union movement! What do you think that will result in—wages going up or wages going down?

We know that the most successful economies in the world are the ones that understand that trade unions have a critical role to play in our democracy. It is a vital role: the right to organise labour. Those opposite say there is some contradiction in our position and in the position I've taken with regard to Mr John Setka. One of the first things I did as the leader of the Labor Party was advocate for his suspension from the party. That remains in place. I've said this man does not have values that are consistent with the values of the Australian Labor Party. The recent court conviction confirms that. There is no contradiction in my saying that he should no longer be a member of a party that I lead and the fact that I respect the right of trade unions to determine democratically who leads them. That's not the job of parliamentarians; that's the job of the unions—democratically. That is a fundamental principle of democratic engagement.

If you look at totalitarian regimes, one of the things that defines them is attacks on the rights of organised labour to have their own independent organisation. So, yes, the Labor Party has proud connections with the trade union movement going back to 1891, but we are separate entities. I have always regarded that as an important principle for the Labor Party. But it is also an important principle for the trade union movement: their right to act independently of us. We are not one organisation. We are a political party that has to represent more than just trade union members. We have to represent independent contractors. We have to represent the interests of people who aren't members of unions. We have to represent small business. We have to represent people who are looking for work but are unable to get it, hence why we are arguing the case for Newstart recipients. We're a broad party. What we won't do is stand back and support bad legislation that is aimed, yet again, at providing an argument rather than a solution.

This government are obsessed with trying to provide wedges to the Australian Labor Party. They're not governing in the national interest. They don't have an agenda for their third term. The average trade unionist is not a CFMMEU member. The average trade unionist in 2019 is female, in their mid-40s and likely to be a nurse or a childcare worker. That's the face of the modern trade union movement. What this legislation does, though, is provide for penalties against unions that aren't there for employer organisations. No-one here in the government is arguing that Mr Calombaris should be barred from ever having a business, or, indeed, continuing in his business. You've got to be consistent—and we on this side will be consistent. From time to time, people might have noticed that Mr Setka hasn't responded warmly to my actions! From time to time, I've got the guts to make decisions that are in the interests of the nation. Those opposite don't. They represent sectional interests. They are not prepared to call out bad behaviour by employers. They don't ever do it. They stand up and defend their sectional interests. They are defending, in this case, their donors and their advocates in the Liberal Party. That is why this legislation should be rejected. They should go back to the drawing board.

We are prepared to discuss legislation that genuinely advances the needs of employees and employers. I don't want unions behaving badly, but I don't want employers behaving badly either. This legislation attempts to provide political power and take away the rights of workers. Most people affected by this legislation are volunteers. They are people who give up their own time to sit in committee of management meetings or executive meetings of trade unions. They do it because they care about their fellow workers. Usually it costs them money to do it—let alone time. If those opposite don't understand the concept of solidarity, maybe they should understand the concept of mateship—because the talk about it occasionally. This legislation should be rejected. It's a substitute for real action from the government—a government like a chook with no head, frantically doing a few laps of the yard, running around with lots of noise but no real action. (Time expired)
Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (12:37): We've just heard a very clear, powerful and persuasive argument from the Leader of the Opposition as to why the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Ensuring Integrity) Bill 2019 is bad legislation and should be rejected. As other speakers from this side of the House have made absolutely clear in their contributions to this debate, this legislation is another attack on unions and the Australian workers whom those unions represent—the men and women of Australia who do the work that many others would rather not do, who have families to provide for, whose own lives are becoming much harder because of rising costs of living and stagnant wages. They are increasingly being exploited and their only protection from further exploitation is from the unions that represent them.

This government and previous coalition governments have sought to demonise and destroy unions in this country. They do this because coalition governments see unions as their political enemies and a thorn in their side—opponents to them and supporters of the big business operators whom coalition governments ultimately rely on. They are the people who back the coalition governments, and this government is simply doing their work for them. Big businesses profit continually from the workers they exploit. In recent years, not only have business profits continued to rise while wages flat-lined, but this government has continued to back and support big businesses who, time and time again, have been shown to be engaging in unethical practices—one after the other. The government continues to back those businesses even after we have seen a continuous range of damning assessments of their performances.

Let me relate some of the examples. If we go into the aged-care sector, we have seen providers of those services in a string of scandals—now the subject of a royal commission, finally. Hopefully its recommendations will bring some good to that sector. We had the banking royal commission, which exposed the disgraceful behaviour of the big banks whilst they wallowed in their multibillion dollar profits. Yet, how many of their executives were charged or brought to account? Indeed, we are still to see most of the 76 recommendations of that commission even brought in to this parliament for debate and implementation. We have had national fast-food chains and restaurateurs who lobbied for penalty rate cuts whilst they were not even paying basic wages. We've had housing developers keep trading, when they were knowingly in financial difficulty, ultimately becoming bankrupt and in the process ripping off prospective homeowners of their life savings or subcontractors and workers of tens of thousands of dollars.

It was only a few weeks ago that I met with two subcontractors of a building firm that went bankrupt in South Australia. They run their own small business. They were owed half a million dollars by a bankrupted developer. The half a million dollars that they lost, that they were owed and that they will never get almost bankrupted their own business. It brought incredible stress to their own individual households, and it put mental health strain and stresses on them, which they have to deal with each and every day. So, it not only ruined them financially; it literally ruined their households and their lives, and yet they have fought tooth and nail to cling to their business and rebuild it. They are doing that, and I congratulate them for doing so. But, it's an example of what happens when developers go bankrupt. From my experience in most cases those developers knew that they were going to go bankrupt and kept trading whilst they were insolvent. There is no way I accept that those developers that have gone bankrupt in South Australia—and there has been a string of them now—would not have foreseen what was happening to them financially. Yet, again, what happens to any of them? Very little. Indeed, many of them go on to establish a new business and start the whole cycle all over again.

We have seen building companies who do substandard construction work, using cheap materials, and in the process put lives at risk or take short cuts, which, as the Leader of the Opposition alluded to just a moment ago, result in the death of workers—and in the case that he referred to, Marianka, the young German woman. I could refer to another death that happened in South Australia in a similar way, where again it was preventable. It was of a South American worker who came to the state and was engaged on a building site. But again, nothing ever happens to bring those people to account whilst lives are being lost. With respect to the use of cheap building materials and with respect to the combustible cladding that has been used on many building sites—and I make no apologies in saying this—I do not believe that the people who constructed and used that material did not know that it was combustible. Yet they put lives at risk; lives have been lost. In the process, the rectification costs are going to be in the hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars.

I don't see too much action being taken against any of those people, whether it's people working in those industry sectors or elsewhere. Yet we do know that each year about 190 lives are lost in work related accidents. Those are the lives that are lost; those don't include the people who are injured, quite often in a permanent way, which in turn changes their lives forever and a day, and it doesn't include the people who lose their lives because of work related illnesses that arise because employers don't take the necessary precautions. We're seeing that right now with people dying from silicosis, as we saw it with people dying from asbestos in years gone by.
Any workplace death is indeed a tragedy, but when it can be prevented and it knowingly isn't, quite frankly, it is a crime. Yet we see members of the government come into this House to speak in support of this legislation and provide not a scintilla of justification for it. I read the second reading speech of the minister. He makes one reference to one person and one union in order to justify the draconian measures in this legislation. It is overreach on the part of the government to try to argue that this legislation is necessary on the basis of one person and one union.

This legislation is about weakening unions by not allowing them to run their affairs in the manner that they believe is in the interests of their members, and this legislation seeks to prevent unions from doing that in several ways. The first is not allowing them to amalgamate, because that clearly makes them look stronger and that's not in the government's interest. The legislation also makes it easier to have a union official who's holding a particular office disqualified. Preventing union officials from doing their jobs is effectively denying workers the protections and the support provided to them by the union, because if a union official cannot do their job then clearly the workers remain unprotected.

I've noted from legislation that has already been brought in in recent years by this coalition government that the job of union officials in standing up for their members and simply arguing for what is fair, right and decent has become much harder. I refer to the case of Ark Tribe in South Australia a few years ago, where the Australian Building and Construction Commission wanted to prosecute him simply for taking a stand on workplace safety.

When they wanted to haul him in and question him about it, he was denied legal representation, one of the fundamental tenets of our justice system in this country. Ultimately, he won that case, and rightly so, because it was unjust. But it's an example of the draconian legislation that this government brought into this place and continues to support and believe in. But it doesn't believe in it when it comes to doing the same to employers. The ensuring integrity bill imposes harsher regulations on unions than on any other organisations, despite the denials of government members. It is simply not true to say, as the government does, that this bill brings the regulation of unions in line with the regulation of corporations.

There is no justification for the measures in the bill which go much further than the recommendations of the Heydon royal commission. I will use some examples. Under this bill, the minister, the Registered Organisations Commissioner or any other person with sufficient interest, which could include an employer or an employer organisation, can bring action to disqualify a union leader, deregister a union, restrict and control the union's funds and property, or impose an administrative scheme on a union and prevent union amalgamations. In other words, this legislation totally allows others outside of a union to interfere with the operations of that union.

For example, grounds for disqualification from office include a single minor technical contravention of a civil penalty provision in the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act such as filing financial or membership records even a day late. That could be the basis for action against the union. Another example is that an application for disqualification could be brought against a member of a branch council who changes position within a union and is unable to complete the required financial duties training within six months of taking office because that worker is a full-time shiftworker, perhaps in a rural location, and unable to take the time off from work to travel to a metropolitan area to complete the necessary training. Again, that is an example of the kind of thing that someone with the wrong intent could use against a union. That's not the kind of justice system we want in this country.

I say with respect to members from the government side who made contributions to this debate who constantly referred to union members 'acting unlawfully' that, if they are acting unlawfully, by definition it means there is a law in place to deal with that matter. Quite frankly, we have enough laws in this place to deal with all kinds of breaches relating to industrial relations or criminal acts or other civil acts that are against the law. We don't need additional legislation to control unions, as this legislation seeks to impose.

The employment conditions of people in this country have been won over more than 100 years of efforts by unions in this country. It has been a hard battle for Australian workers today to have the rights and entitlements in their workplace that they have. They are entitlements that I suspect no coalition government member would like to see taken away from them or any of their family members. And, yet, they come into this place and argue for legislation that could well do that. And they do it at a time when, more than ever before in my memory, worker exploitation is rife. It doesn't matter which industry sector I look at, I can point to bad examples where workers are being exploited in a way that it was never intended that the laws of this country would allow—yet it still happens.

What is the focus of this government while all of that is happening? It's not to try to protect the workers but to bring in laws to protect those who are exploiting them. This is bad legislation. It is unnecessary legislation. There is no justification for it. It is simply another attempt by this government to try to demonise and bring down unions simply because unions oppose many of the policies that this government wants to introduce into this place and simply because it has to support its backers, the big business operators of this country.
Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (12:52): I don't know where to begin, to be honest. This Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Ensuring Integrity) Bill 2019 is just so appalling in every way. This government's come back after the election just to bash unions. We've had stagnant wages in this country for a long time. I've just spoken in the Federation Chamber about the state of the economy under the government. Wages are flat. And what the government wants to do is demonise among the few organisations in this nation that are actively out there, every day, advocating for higher wages for workers. We know they are successful. We know it's a simple fact that unionised workplaces enjoy higher wages for their workers.

The HILDA report of 2013—not the one that was announced yesterday, but the one before that—said that in workplaces that are unionised men earn 12 per cent more and women earn 18 per cent more. Wages are 18 per cent higher if you're a woman and 12 per cent higher if you're a man in unionised workplaces. If it wants to lift wages in this country, what the government should be doing is asking: how can we help the unions do a better job? If it really believes there is a cultural issue with unions, or particular unions, it should address those particular issues and stop bashing unions.

The Leader of the Opposition gave a very good speech earlier, talking about Mr Gerry Hanssen, a Liberal Party member and building contractor in WA. Mr Hanssen was referred to by a judge as having a 'blind hatred' of unions. 'Bling hatred' is a strong term, especially from a judge. That's what we see opposite every day in this place. We see blind hatred towards unions. There's no acknowledgement from those on the opposite side of this chamber that unions have a legitimate and lawful right to exist in this country and to advocate on behalf of their members. It's a real concern, because we've seen in the past—certainly in the 1930s in Europe—what happens when you demonise and delegitimise unions and construct laws to restrict the way they can lawfully operate. We have seen what can happen as a result of that.

The blind hatred that Mr Hanssen has is, I think, replicated on the other side of this chamber. It's a shocking cycle to be in. Those opposite need to be acting in the national interest, not the corporate interest. Those opposite are not there to look after just one segment of the community. They are meant be to representing the entire community, and that includes union members. Instead what we saw in the last parliament was this ferocious defence of the big banks. A day did not pass without those opposite defending the big banks, despite the most awful perfidy on the part of the banks. There were stories in the media about the absolutely disgraceful behaviour—and criminal behaviour—by banks. Yet those opposite voted 26 times to try to avoid a royal commission into the banks. We've since had a royal commission, and 76 recommendations came out of the royal commission, but nobody on that side or, indeed, this side is suggesting that banks should be made illegal because of the criminal activities they undertook. Instead, what we seek to do is clean them up.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned also that the average unionist is a middle-aged woman. Yet those opposite would have everybody in this place believe that every union member wears a hard hat and is a big, beefy bloke in a blue singlet, full of vulgarities, on a building site. That's the picture they paint, and it's just not true. It's women in the finance sector, the health sector and the aged-care sector, women generally in low-paid jobs, who need every bit of protection they can get in the workplace and every extra dollar in a pay packet. They are the people unions represent, and they are the people who will be hurt by this legislation, if this legislation goes through, because this legislation is all about corralling unions and making it harder for unions to do their job.

What we know is that unions are finding it harder and harder to do simple things like check wage records—to go to an employer and check the time sheets and the records. The red tape they have to go through is extraordinary, and it gives the dodgy employers the time and the ability to basically hide the paperwork. By the time a union gets permission to go on site, there's nothing to see. The old days are long gone when a union official could turn up unannounced and say, 'I'm here to check your records and the wage records of our members,' and carry out those checks on behalf of members. Those days are long gone. As a result, we're seeing wage theft at extraordinary levels. It's become a business model: wage theft and theft of super. Industry Super Australia is a very reputable body; I don't think anybody over there would disagree with that. Industry Super Australia says one-third of employers are underpaying superannuation entitlements to their workers. That means 2.4 million Australians are having $3.5 billion a year in superannuation entitlements stolen from them, and one of the major reasons is that unions can't get into the workplaces to check the books and make sure their union members are being looked after.

One of the principal problems with this legislation, of course, is that it brings the dead hand of the parliament onto the democratic ideals of an organisation. Can you imagine this parliament saying to a bowling club or anybody else, 'No, you can't elect that person to be your president or your secretary. You can't have that person working for you.' It's up to the members of those organisations to determine who they want to represent them. By all means, go out there and publicly state, 'This person's got this sort of record,' or 'This person has this sort of reputation.' That should all be transparent and accountable. Let the members decide for themselves who they wish...
to represent them. That's certainly how this place operates. If this place had the same standards that the government seeks to impose on unions, half this chamber would be empty because half the people elected wouldn't be allowed to stand. What this legislation seeks to do is an absolute outrage.

I've watched with interest the comings and goings of this new parliament. There are a fair few new faces. Two faces I'm yet to see in these halls are those of Reith and Howard, yet this bill has their fingerprints all over it. Those of us old enough will remember Mr Reith and his attack on the trade union movement, particularly the waterside workers movement, back in the 1990s.

Did we see the style of attack that was used on unions used on the banks? No, we didn't. Where was this level of watchdog action after the royal commission into the banks? Where are the restrictions on the banks similar to those that they seek to place on trade unions?

Why go after the workers' representatives? The principal reason this government goes after the representatives of workers is that they are too good at their job. The reason those opposite go after unions is that unions are too good at their job representing their members. They represent them on wages, on safety and on all sorts of working conditions, so the big employers and the dodgy employers go to those opposite and say: 'Hey, unions are costing me money. I've got to do all these safety regulations now. I've got to pay higher wages. I've got to do all these things. How about you bringing the unions into line?' Those opposite, like good little lapdogs, doff the cap to their employer donors and say: 'Yep, sure thing. We'll bring in laws that will stop unions doing their job and make it harder for people to get good wages and to enjoy safer conditions at work.'

The original version of this bill was dangerous and extreme. That's why the 45th Parliament rejected it. We, on this side, will again reject it in the 46th, and we'll see what happens in the Senate, in the other place, where the government's trying it on again. They've got a friendlier Senate, and we'll see what happens up there. Every time they can, they bash the unions. That's all they want to do: bash unions—not lead and not govern but just bash unions.

We've seen countless examples of employers ripping off their workers in recent years, from 7-Eleven to Domino's Pizza to Chatime to Michael Hill jewellers and others. There was the recent celebrated case of Mr Calombaris. In Tasmania, the biggest theft case was that of the employees working at ACL Bearing Company many years ago. The owners walked away with all the entitlements of the workers, leaving a debt for the government to pick up. What happened to them? Nothing. Are they banned from being employers in the future? No, the government goes after the unions.

Wage theft is a real issue, and those opposite are paying lip service to it. It's become a business model. Wage theft is the real problem in this country, along with super theft and safety at work for workers. These are the real industrial relations issues that the government should be confronting, not bashing unions, which are among the few organisations in this country whose entire reason for existence is to help workers get a better deal. There is no mention of that and no mention of going after wage theft in this.

How many times have the so-called tough cop on the beat, the ABCC, hauled employers before the courts for safety breaches? None as far as I'm aware. They don't go after the dodgy employers and the unsafe workplaces, but by gee they'll go after a union member who wears a sticker on their helmet on a construction site. That's a serious breach of the law according to the ABCC—wearing a sticker on your helmet.

The reverberations that will follow this bill if it is successful will affect every working person, every member of a trade union and every employee of a trade union, and that's what those opposite are trying to achieve. As I say, it's not just the big, beefy blokes in the blue singlets who are affected by this; it's teachers, aged-care workers and childcare workers—people who are on low incomes and in insecure work, who need every single bit of protection they can get. Those opposite are not seeking to protect those workers; they're seeking to put barriers in the way of better protections. We have the architect of this disgraceful bill, the apprentice to Mr Reith, walking into the chamber now.

What we know of this bill is that it seeks to hobble the ability of unions to operate within their own governance structures, structures that have been in place for years and have stood the test of time. Talk about a sledgehammer to crack a walnut! There is not a systemic issue with unions in this country. There may be a few or two examples that they could deal with; in fact, the existing law could deal with those. But instead they see this as an opportunity to bash unions, to get unions out of the way and to stop unions from being able to represent low-income workers in insecure work. The effect of this legislation will be to keep wages stagnant, to hurt safety conditions at work and to prevent union officials from doing their job and looking after their workers.

This bill is far more extensive and extreme in the regulation of unions than what exists for business or indeed, as I said, for politicians. It will make it possible for government ministers and disgruntled employers to shut down unions and to deny working people their right to choose their own representatives. It's an absolutely outrageous
assault on the right to freedom of association. Those opposite like to talk about freedom of association, the freedom to choose and liberty, and this is just an absolute assault on those principles.

This is an outrageous bill. I fully support the member for Watson's amendments, because this bill is a disgrace. It's antiworker, it's anti-Australian and it should fail the House.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (13:06): As we come into this place, into this parliament, there's a giant portrait of the first member for Kennedy. I always give Charlie McDonald a salute as I go past. We're still out there, Charlie! We won arbitration in Australia in the 1900s. Prior to the 1900s, with the balance of power, the labour movement had won arbitration in New South Wales and later in Queensland. When we won arbitration, the two employers in Queensland were the sugar mills—they owned all the plantations; it was plantation farming which, sadly, we're going back to again now—and mining. Those were the only two industries we had. We had a little bit of shearing but we were never a big sheep state.

What happened when we got arbitration was that the employers said: 'Oh, we'll bring the coolies in to work the mines and we'll bring the Kanaks in to work the cane fields. So where did that get you, Mr Worker? Ha, ha, ha!' Charlie McDonald, in his first speech to the House, was ranting and raving against people coming in from overseas, undermining our pay and conditions and taking our jobs. The only force in Australia that has been voicing those opinions and who has fought the fight against this submergence of we Australians by the mass import of people from overseas—until Sally McManus came along with the ACTU, pointing out that one in every two new jobs created since 2013 has gone to a temporary visa holder—has been the CFMMEU.

Now, the rightists over here, who secretly squeal and yell about all these people coming to Australia, haven't got the guts to say it publicly but the CFMMEU has. And on the lily pad Left of course the CFMMEU is popping hell because they want all the refugees of the world to come in. The rightists over here don't, but they're not game to open their mouths.

I'll start my contribution to the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Ensuring Integrity) Bill 2019 debate on that note. A lot of people say, 'He's in the CFMMEU?' It's shock and horror. How come I'm in the CFMMEU? I jumped university to make a squillion dollars, which I was proceeding to make by floating my own mining company, when the mining crash came. I ended up labouring in the lead smelter at Mount Isa Mines, the lowest of the low in the sense that if you're good enough they take you out of the smelters and put you underground. But I wasn't good enough. That's where I was.

We had a shaker—and it bears telling the story. I had to jump up on one side of this shaker and hit it with a sledgehammer and then jump off really quickly, because when it started working it was supposed to go backwards and forwards. It would freeze, but when it started working it came at you at 60 miles an hour. So I had to jump off and then jump back on again and hit it. So I'd jump on and hit it and jump off, and then the bloke on the other side would jump on and hit it and jump off. We complained about this and got absolutely nowhere at the safety meetings, so I went to the delegate. This particular incident was after a big strike. All of the delegates were acting foremen, so the union shopfloor delegates weren't going to open their mouths. So I went to the union downtown in Mount Isa. The delegate came the next day, and I saw him up there in the glassed-in control panel, pointing me out to my bosses as a troublemaker. So I got out of that union and joined the CFMUE because I could see that that union was not on my side; that union was on the side of the bosses.

That situation was really dangerous—extremely dangerous. If you stayed on the flue for more than a minute, your boots caught fire. Of course, once the flue started moving, it came at you at 60 miles an hour! You were wielding a big sledgehammer, with big heavy steelcapped work boots, and you had to jump on and off. I was also given a huge hopper full of lead dust. It got stuck, so I had to jump in with an airspear to get the hopper moving again. I kept hitting it with the airspear, and it started to move a little bit. My workmate was killing himself laughing, and I asked, 'What are you laughing for?' He said 'Because when that starts moving, you're going to be buried alive!' He shouldn't have been laughing, but I suppose he was laughing because he had to tell me. I scrambled up and grabbed it. I was supposed to put a belt on with a steel cable so that when it started to move I wouldn't be buried alive in deadly poisonous lead dust.

Those two examples are what is happening at the coalface. It's all right for you little people over here. You've come out of a law school, a law building, somewhere, and those people over there have come out of a university and got a little cushy job with some member of parliament. That's how all the careerists get in here, right? For those of us who live in the real world and have to go into a hopper and nearly get killed and then have to go onto a shaker, and then have the union we have representing us sell us out—

An honourable member interjecting—

Mr KATTER: Well, that's how you arrive at supporting a union that stands up for you and tries to deliver safety to you. I went out in the real world. I had an awful lot of money, of course, as a lot of people here would be
So, the logic in us taking... was extremely dangerous. They got up, the price went up 300 per cent over the subsequent three years.

Sell food products to and the people of Australia have only two people to buy food from—Woolworths and Coles.

...and I suppose inland North Queensland, similarly. There would be 1,000 of us out there.

When I was going to union meetings, the comrades took over the unions and squeezed through or people just walked. Again, Kevin Rudd's family and mine were good examples. We walked out of the Labor Party and we ended up in the Country Party. That was really what happened in Queensland. Then all of the seats outside of Brisbane were being run predominantly by the then Country Party. The great historian said nothing changes in Queensland—same people, same policies, just a different label. That was fundamentally true. Kevin Rudd's family were the dominant family in the Country Party north of Brisbane, in the Sunshine Coast area—and my family—and I suppose inland North Queensland, similarly. There would be 1,000 of us out there.

Arbitration—there is no understanding or knowledge of Australian history or economic history.

We sold effectively as a single-desk seller under arbitration, and we had a very powerful selling unit. We were aggressive, nationalistic sellers of our product. When that power was taken away from us, we were torn to pieces. So 70 per cent of the Australian sheep herd has gone. There you are. There's the four great industries: dairy, beef, wool and sugar—four of the five—all destroyed by this place and the abolition of arbitration.

One thing that my life—74, 75 years on this planet—has taught me is that you must have a collective operation; you must have access to arbitration or the sharks will eat you, and the sharks are not Australians anymore. We've only got little fishes. Our big corporations in Australia are really little fishes. That just means the big foreign corporations are going to eat us all if we don't have arbitration. I tell you, the farmers need arbitration infinitely more than the workers. For the entire history of Queensland, they were in the same boat.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr KATTER: You blokes got out of the boat. It was the ALP that got out of the boat, not us. It was the ALP that got out of the boat. You're the blokes that introduced free markets and abolished arbitration. Don't think it was just the farmers that got arbitration. Keating, the father of collective bargaining in this country, undermined a lot of your bargaining power, and well you know it.

Now I might mention the Anthony family. They are a very devout Christian family, the Anthonys. The grandad came from Sicily. Then there was Jack McEwen, who was brought up by his grandparents. His parents died when he was only eight. His grandfather was a Presbyterian minister. The founder of the AWU, which was the labour movement in Australia, was a Methodist minister. So there was a very strong strain of Christianity in demands for arbitration so that we could get a fair go. In Australia this is overlaid by the fact that we have only two people to sell food products to and the people of Australia have only two people to buy food from—Woolworths and Coles.
When I went to university, that was called a duopoly or an oligopoly. And I was taught that that was very, very bad indeed—that someone was going to get screwed royally.

So I call upon the people on both sides of this House to understand that farmers need arbitration, a collective will to be able to bargain—not powerfully but to have some power. The employee is the aspirational class these days. There is the bludger class and there is the aspirational class. The aspirational class cut your cane and work in your meatworks. These people, the aspirational classes in Australia, need both sides of this parliament to understand that the world is a very fierce place and, unless you pull together, you are going to be eaten alive. Some people don't understand the value of pulling together. I hope people understand the necessity of arbitration. (Time expired)

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (13:21): I thank all members for their contribution to the second reading stage of this bill. I say to the member for Kennedy that if our now long deceased shared and wonderful relative could see that I was following you in a second reading debate in the House of Representatives, I think she'd be very pleased. It is an unusual set of circumstances, to be sure.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr PORTER: I've already been outed as a relative of the member for Kennedy, so there should be nothing! I do remember hearing that same speech in about 1993—around our kitchen table.

With respect to the second reading speech, what I thought I might usefully contribute is simply to look over and correct the record on a few of the technical arguments that have been put with respect to this bill. There have been a number of emotional arguments made with respect to it. But on the actual drafting of the bill, there have been a number of things said that I think are worthy of significant correction. The first of those goes to the issue of 'standing' under the bill. A number of members opposite have argued that the bill should be opposed because of the way in which standing to take proceedings to either disqualify a person from holding office in a registered organisation or deregister an organisation is defined—in particular, the use of the definition that appears at section 222, which is 'a person with a sufficient interest'. The three persons who can make these applications are the commissioner, the minister or 'a person with a sufficient interest'. There has been a lot of argument from members opposite that the definition of 'a person with a sufficient interest' is somehow novel, unusual or unfair.

The first point to make is that the rules pertaining to standing in the bill obviously ensure consistency across the various schedules of the bill as far as possible. With respect to the concept of the minister having standing, it is already the case, under the existing provisions of the Registered Organisations Act, that the minister has standing to make an application for cancellation of the registration of a registered organisation—and that surely accords with common sense. That has been a longstanding provision in this legislation dating back to 1977. So the use of that as a reason to oppose the bill is unfounded.

The 'person with a sufficient interest' formulation is also a longstanding feature of industrial relations legislation, and that includes in relation to standing to apply for the cancellation of an organisation's registration. In fact, that formulation dates all the way back to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1904, which the member for Kennedy was talking about. So, again, using the idea that the standing definition of 'a person with a sufficient interest' as a reason to oppose this bill, when that has been in the industrial relations law of Australia going back to 1904, is unfounded.

I might note that Labor's own Fair Work Act continued with that formulation of words in 2009. 'Person with a sufficient interest' was a standard term used in that legislation. I might also note that 'sufficient interest' has been interpreted simply as an interest beyond that of an ordinary person. It would include those people whose rights, interests or legitimate expectations would be affected by the relevant decision. Those opposite now take great issue with this sufficient interest formulation as a basis for standing. It was in their own Fair Work Act and the formulation of that in 2009.

I might also note that when the then workplace relations minister, the member for Maribyrnong, sought to demonstrate in 2012 that the HSU East branch be put into administration, he did so arguing that he was a person with a sufficient interest in that action. The argument, and I think the words used by various members opposite, that that definition of 'person with a sufficient interest' would be weaponised is ridiculous. In any event, looking back into recent history, it was the member for Maribyrnong himself who used that basis of standing to try and argue in 2012 that the Health Services Union East branch should be put into administration. It has just been a longstanding rule in the bill.

The standing rules in the bill are based on provisions that already exist in the Fair Work Act and the registered organisations act. As a threshold issue, any applicant who is seeking an order for disqualification or deregistration is going to bear the legal onus of establishing that a relevant ground has been made out before a court can consider.

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making an order. Merely an unsubstantiated allegation is not going to suffice. This idea that anyone can simply turn up to court, argue that they have a sufficient interest and not have a substantial case to argue before the court is absolutely absurd. First of all, that person would have to be a person whose rights, interests or legitimate expectations would be affected by the decision, like the former industrial relations minister, the member for Maribyrnong, in 2012. Then they'd have to be able to demonstrate a threshold issue. They'd have to have very good grounds and bear a legal onus of establishing a relevant ground to be made out before a court would consider making an order.

It's also the case that there are very strong existing protections against frivolous and vexatious claims in the Federal Court and the Fair Work Commission. They can both dismiss vexatious claims and order costs against any person who tries to bring them. The Federal Court has a wide range of powers with respect to vexatious litigant orders under the Federal Court Act. It is only the independent Fair Work Commission and the Federal Court who can exercise any of the powers under this bill. For disqualification or cancellation, the court is ultimately going to have to be satisfied that it would not be unjust in all the circumstances. This argument by absurdum that someone can wander in and utilise that longstanding provision in a way which weaponises the law is as untrue now as it has been for decades—indeed, since the very earliest usage of that definition back in 1904.

The second issue is with respect to disqualification, particularly automatic disqualification. There is a new ground in this bill for automatic disqualification under the trigger of a serious offence. A serious offence is if someone is convicted of an offence that carries a penalty of more than five years in prison. A ground for automatic disqualification would be if someone were convicted of a serious offence—that is, one that carries a penalty of more than five years in prison. Several members opposite, including the shadow minister himself, raised the example that someone who had twice driven without a licence could therefore be automatically disqualified from holding an official position in a registered organisation. That is simply untrue. The bill only extends automatic disqualification, as I've noted, to offences punishable by imprisonment for a period of five years or more. That drivers licence example is just absurd; it's not the case. There is no state or territory law in Australia that meets that threshold—that is, five years imprisonment—for twice driving without a licence. It's just untrue—said in here multiple times, but it's untrue. I might note that, even if someone had been automatically disqualified, they could still seek leave of the court under this bill to continue to hold office or stand for election.

One of the major problems we have at the moment, and one of the issues that this bill seeks to rectify, is that if someone is disqualified at the moment, which is a very high threshold, there is no offence that actually prevents them from still operating for all intents and purposes as an official in the union for which position they were previously disqualified. That is a ridiculous situation to let persist, and it is right at the heart of all of the problems we're experiencing trying to have a lawful culture in certain industries, particularly the construction industry.

Continuing from this point, a number of members opposite have argued that minor conduct can give rise to a ground for disqualification. Examples that have been given are of minor conduct such as mistakenly giving wrong notice under a workplace law—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): Order! I thank the honourable minister. The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Federal Election

Mr KEOGH (Burt) (13:30): Around the country, and particularly in Western Australia, the recent election campaign was hard-fought. We had an ambitious target. Five fantastic Labor candidates were vying for election in five target seats, and there were other candidates around the state. We'd had Hannah Beazley in Swan, Melissa Teede in Canning, Melita Markey in Stirling, Kim Travers in Pearce and James Martin in Hasluck. All of them worked so hard, pounding the pavement for more than a year—and, in some cases, over 18 months.

I want to pass on to each of our candidates just this: there is nothing more that you could have done—no more doors to have knocked, no more calls to have been made. Your campaign teams were hardworking, and your commitment was unwavering. You all would've made fantastic members of this parliament, but this time—alas!—it was not to be. I commend you for all of your sacrifices made through the election campaign. You should be proud of what you did achieve—as, I'm sure, your families are.

I, too, applaud my Western Australian colleagues who have been returned to this parliament. To the member for Brand, my congratulations on her promotion to the shadow cabinet. Also, to the member for Fremantle, and Senators Louise Pratt, Pat Dodson and Glenn Sterle, congratulations on their appointments as shadow assistant ministers. Together, we'll work with our caucus colleagues Patrick Gorman, the member for Perth, and Anne Aly, the member for Cowan, to be strong advocates for Western Australia in this 46th Parliament.
Page Electorate: Reconciliation Australia Narragunnawali Awards 2019

Mr HOGAN (Page—Deputy Speaker) (13:31): Maclean High School has been named a finalist in the Reconciliation Australia Narragunnawali Awards for 2019. I'd like to thank the committee, staff and volunteers, for their fantastic commitment: Gregory Court, Sam Kapeen, Anjanette Warburton, Krystal Randall, Deborah Breckenridge, Krystle Jurd, John Ambrose, Rhonda Pitson, Ben Patch, Beris Duroux, Jacelyn Bebb, Andrew Black, Margaret Johnson, Sarah Bramwell, Matthew Fisher, Helen Bowie, Nicole Smith, Brenda Rice, Wayne Rice, Liza Hamilton and Belinda Cameron.

The award acknowledges schools and early learning centres for programs that build and strengthen reconciliation within our communities. Entrants must develop and establish a reconciliation plan, which is then submitted to the committee.

Maclean focused on 'relationships, respect and opportunities'. For the past 10 years, they've organised regular cultural tours to local places of Indigenous significance. They also held the River of Learning celebration day. Maclean also has an ongoing program called the National Indigenous Science Education Program, in partnership with Macquarie University. Students have also been involved in the production of two Desert Pea Media video songs that focused on intergenerational understanding between local elders and students. Well done to all the people involved in the Maclean High School project!

I'd also like to congratulate Allyson Cuskelly and her staff from the Evans Head-Woodburn Pre-School, and Kelli Fraser and her staff from the Friends childcare centre in Lismore. Both had commendations from the committee and judging panel. Well done!

Gilmore Electorate: Water Safety

Mrs PHILLIPS (Gilmore) (13:33): Our volunteer surf lifesavers play an essential role in saving lives and promoting water safety, health and wellbeing. Our Surf Life Saving clubs bring thousands of locals together and play an essential role in our community. With more than 5,000 members on the South Coast, it is one of the largest local volunteer organisations. The Surf Life Saving movement provides support to our local hospitality and tourism industries by making our beaches safer. They also provide training and skills development for all ages, from nippers right up to the masters and elite levels.

Recently I attended the South Coast Surf Life Saving annual awards evening. It was an honour to be present at this evening, with so many people who serve our community so well.

During the election, I had the pleasure of working with local surf lifesavers, and I was delighted that the government has matched Labor's commitment to a new training centre for South Coast Surf Life Saving in Nowra. This project will benefit all local surf lifesaving clubs on the South Coast, providing better training and administrative facilities. I pay tribute to Steve Jones and his entire executive team for driving this project. I would like to especially thank each of our local clubs, their leadership and volunteers.

Boothby Electorate: Infrastructure

Ms FLINT (Boothby—Government Whip) (13:34): The Morrison Liberal government is working hard to bust congestion in my local community. That's why I was shocked by the South Australian Freight Council's Moving freight report today. If implemented, it would increase congestion on our local roads and reduce safety.

The Freight Council want to see bigger trains, planes and trucks on our roads, rail lines and at Adelaide Airport. They then want to put those bigger trains, planes and trucks into my electorate which, for the benefit of the House, is not a heavy industrial area but suburban Adelaide, filled with families, households and small businesses.

This is madness! I will fight the Freight Council's proposal to dig a tunnel for trucks underneath our beautiful hills—underneath Brown Hill Creek, historic Carrick Hill and thousands of homes—and then put those trucks past thousands more homes and the reactivated repat hospital. And I will fight their alternative proposal to put trucks down Cross Road. Their dangerous plan completely and utterly ignores the South Australian Liberal Party's excellent Globe Link plan, which will solve all the issues in my local area that they've identified. The plan was spearheaded by me, my new colleague the member for Sturt, and state colleagues the members for Waite and Elder.

The South Australian Freight Council claim that they're all about identifying issues and finding solutions. Well, so am I. They can take their congestion-increasing safety-reducing report and stick it in the shredder!

Werriwa Electorate: Edmondson Park Railway Station

Ms STANLEY (Werriwa—Opposition Whip) (13:36): By 7 am, and on some days even earlier, Edmondson Park railway station is full. Commuters who are trying to get to work, university and appointments are turned away. They have two choices: to drive to work or to another station, or to park illegally.

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The station car park is woefully inadequate, and it has been since it was opened by the New South Wales Liberal state government eight years ago. It has 452 spaces, with 10,000 people living near the station—and more are moving in every day. Before the 2019 state election in March, the local member and the Liberal government promised $40 million to provide 700 extra spaces by 2020. Our residents were happy with that, that they would finally have somewhere to park. But after the state election, the Liberal government has changed all that. They earmarked $212,000 in the state budget for, I’m told, what they need to engage with the community.

The community doesn’t need any further consultation, and have made it clear with constant letters, emails and petitions that they need a car park and they need it now. If the member for Holsworthy, the Minister for Transport and Roads and the Premier need to consult the community, I suggest they visit the station early one morning with me. I’m sure the community would be more than happy to tell them that the car park is needed now. I call on the New South Wales state Liberal government to build the parking station they promised—our community deserves it.

Dairy Industry

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (13:37): I remind the House that the ACCC dairy inquiry in 2018 noted that there was a major power imbalance between processors and dairy farmers in their negotiations, and that there was no transparency. The ACCC called for a mandatory code of conduct. Australian Dairy Farmers, the Queensland Dairyfarmers’ Organisation and Dairy Connect also called for it.

Two rounds of consultations were held on what should be included in the code of conduct and a regulatory impact statement was released. Former Minister for Agriculture in the 45th Parliament, David Littleproud, announced it was proceeding, and a draft code of conduct was released for public discussion. I look forward to it proceeding. Amongst the things it will deliver will be a ban on retrospective price cuts or step-downs; a ban on exclusive contracts; a ban on mid-season price cuts occurring unilaterally, unless force majeure, along with two-tier pricing; and a ban on withholding loyalty payments until the end of the contract so that people aren’t discouraged from swapping processors.

Other announcements in the last parliament were for a novel milk-pricing initiative and a new platform for selling milk, which I encourage this parliament to proceed with so that we deliver a fair go, market transparency and better prices for our producers.

Donate for Life Week

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (13:39): This is Donate for Life Week, which encourages Australians to register as organ donors. My very good friend Jessica Sparks inspired me to register, and I want to share her words in the hope that it will inspire others to go online and register. This is from Jessica:

Organ donation has been the difference between life and death for me. A generous organ donor and their family have twice saved my life now, giving me an incredible 10 extra years of life, learning, laughter and love. This true 'gift of life' has meant I've been able to live to enjoy so many amazing new friendships and experiences that I never thought I'd have—simple things that many of us take for granted like being able to talk without struggling to breathe and walk on the beach; to bigger things like graduating from university and adventures travelling the world. Organ donation opened up my whole world and everything became possible again.

I'm so thankful and it means a lot to me to make the most of my extra time here, helping others and making my donors proud. To anyone who is considering donating their organs and tissue, I really encourage you to get 'organ-ised': register your decision online and discuss it with your family.

Just one person saying 'yes' to organ and tissue donation has the power to save up to 10 lives like mine was, and not only completely turn around that person's life, but that of their family's and friends' too.

Moore Electorate: Higher Education

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (13:40): Improving access to quality higher education facilities in Joondalup is one of my priorities. I am a strong advocate for increased investment in the expansion of the Joondalup Learning Precinct, including the master planned building program at Edith Cowan University over the next five years, estimated to cost over $200 million. Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Daryoush Habibi recently led me on a tour of the new $48 million science building under construction, which is due to open next year. Further investment is required to transform the Joondalup Learning Precinct, with both state-of-the-art university and vocational education and training facilities necessary to develop the skilled workforce of the future. I strongly support increased funding for research and development, and the commercialisation of Australian intellectual property. The Minister for Industry, Science and Technology, the Hon. Karen Andrews, recently met with key stakeholders, along with the Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash. Through continued federal investment in the Joondalup Learning Precinct, local students will be granted access to some of the best tertiary education facilities in Western Australia.
Quad Bikes

Mr WILKIE (Clark) (13:42): Quad bikes are dangerous, and governments need to do a better job of regulating them. In the first half of this year alone there have been seven quad bike deaths, including a child aged seven and another aged nine. Tragically, two deaths this year were in Tasmania, where there is no legislation for quad bikes on private property and nothing to stop children from riding quad bikes despite the simple fact that kids and quad bikes don't mix. The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons has called for a ban on quad bikes under any circumstances for all children under 16 because, to quote a well-regarded paediatric surgeon, 'kids lack both the cognitive ability and the physical strength and size to ride a quad bike safely'. Relevant is the US state of Massachusetts, where they banned children under 13 from riding all-terrain vehicles and required 14- to 17-year-olds to be supervised by an adult. The result? Emergency department presentations decreased by as much as 50 per cent for some age groups.

Despite all this, though, the Tasmanian government is dithering until after the ACCC deliver their final report on this matter later this year. Frankly, that is not good enough. We know what needs to be done, and further delaying reform will just see more lives lost and ruined, including those of children.

Canning Electorate: Crime

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (13:43): Today I want to talk about crime in Mandurah, in my electorate of Canning. It is the first role of government to keep its citizens safe. As federal legislators, our focus must be on Australia's borders, defence and national security. State governments take the lead on local policing—and rightly so. But in this place the law and order of our local communities is also front of mind. I speak today because of the failures of the WA Labor government. Labor removed local police in Mandurah. We lost local sergeants, and our overall police patrolling presence has shrunk. This has led to increased crime. We have suffered repeated business break-ins. We've had retail workers harassed by shoplifters. We've had an increase in hoons on residential streets. We've seen CBD night crime. People are generally feeling unsafe at home and in public places.

That's why this weekend I'm joining the Liberal member for Dawesville, Zak Kirkup, at his rally for more police in Mandurah this Saturday. The McGowan government has ignored Mandurah's pleas for action, so we are escalating the situation. Our local police do a great job, and I thank them publicly in this House. But we need more of them. We will rally for more police at 10.30 this Saturday on Mandurah's eastern foreshore, and I encourage all concerned citizens and residents to join us and help send a message to the McGowan government: stop ignoring Mandurah and step up and do what needs to be done to keep our community safe.

Volunteers

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (13:45): I would like to recognise the extraordinary contribution of the army of helpers and volunteers I am grateful to have in Brand across the cities of Rockingham and Kwinana. Many of them have helped on many federal and state campaigns over the years. Lois Robinson is our star doorknocker. Her enthusiasm knows no bounds. Thank you so much, Lois. Brian Preston, the amazing man of Singleton, ran our Port Kennedy prepoll. His humour is always very welcome. Owen Farmer didn't miss a single campaign event in Brand and his work with the homeless community in Rockingham is greatly appreciated by all. Margaret Sweeney is always effective and reliable, whether she's calling voters or manning a polling booth on election day. Then there are Bill and Val Ashman. Bill put up many yard signs across my electorate and Val fed our army of volunteers with her extraordinary sausage rolls which we have to hide to say too many!—and Val fed our army of volunteers with her extraordinary sausage rolls which we have to hide to so that my staff don't eat them all—or me, for that matter!

I'd also like to thank Norm Harding, Joe Laukkanen, Vic Smith, Dallas Brown, Joyce Riordan, Kaylene De Piazza, Brayden Greig-Brown and Cayla Woolhead. There are so many volunteers; I'm sad I can't mention them all at this point.

Mr Laming: Table them.

Ms MADELEINE KING: Good idea. Some are veterans, some are new hands and all are very valued. I certainly would not have been elected for the second time without my volunteers across Rockingham and Kwinana, and I want to thank them for their support across the campaign and their hard work across the electorate and in the businesses they work in. Their efforts don't go unnoticed. I really look forward to working with them over the next three years of the 46th Parliament. Thank you all so very much.

Volunteers

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn—Deputy Nationals Whip) (13:46): Since 2010 I've worked hard, and so have my staff, to get millions of dollars in new health and educational services, roads, bridges, business support and water infrastructure. But there is still more to do in the face of the go-slow state government that has plagued politics at every step of the way. Gladstone's state member likes to pull the wool over one's eyes and pass the proverbial
buck to the federal government for this slowdown. However, that's not the case. This is why my last election was so important for Flynn, and I take this opportunity to thank all the people who helped during the campaign to make it a great success. You were a part of an amazing team that was diligent and hardworking, never showing signs of weakness. I would like to thank: my campaign manager, Sonia Burton, from Emerald; Ash Jensen and Val and Ken McInnes from Biloela; Hec Kilah from Monto; Dot Hamilton from Eidsvold; Mike Burns from Emerald; Kathy Duff from Proston; Don Waugh from Gayndah; Gil and Michelle Smith from Wondai; Arthur Dingle from Mount Perry; Marg Morris from Gladstone; and Oz Blacker from Biggenden. Thank you all.

Richmond Fellowship Tasmania

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (13:48): Richmond Fellowship Tasmania has been operating for 30 years offering mental health service provision in Tasmania. Just this year it created a shell company, Richmond Futures, and through that shell company it is offering staff their jobs back on fixed term contracts and lower pay. It has done this with no consultation, which is a breach of the law under the EBA. It took a union, the Health and Community Services Union, to step in and sort this out.

What are we talking about here? What we're talking about is a pay cut of $150 a week for workers who provide mental health services. They are already low paid. These are already low-paid workers, and Richmond Fellowship Tasmania is expecting them to cop a $150-a-week pay cut. One of the workers said they feel like they have been lied to and that the organisation has a 'caring facade'. How are they going to cope on less money? They say having a fixed term contract seems like a bad joke when they are told that the company will just re-sign the fixed term contract when it expires. This is Work Choices by another name—have a fixed term contract on low pay and then redo it again in a few years time. It is an absolute disgrace, and Richmond Fellowship should be condemned for it.

Coal Industry

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:49): The author Charles Mackay in his book Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds noted that men go mad in herds, while they only recover their senses slowly, one at a time. Therefore, I am very proud to announce to the House that the parliamentary friends of Australian coal exports now has four members from the opposition, including the member for Hunter. I hope, as time goes on, more and more will come to their senses. After all, our coal industry contributes more to taxpayer funds than any other industry in our nation. So, if you are in favour of more spending for Australian hospitals, if you are in favour of listing more goods on the PBS, if you are in favour of more spending on education and more infrastructure for this nation, you must also therefore be in favour of, and support, Australian coal exports. State governments obtain something like $6,000 million in royalties from coal exports, not to mention the many billions that the federal government obtains. It's a good start—four members from the opposition. Let's hope, as time goes by, we can get close to at least 97 per cent.

Conservative Political Action Conference

Mr BURNS (Macnamara) (13:51): In nine days time, Australia will host its first Conservative Political Action Conference, sponsored by the Liberal Party think tanks, the Menzies centre and the IPA. I note that the member for Hughes will be putting in his little knapsack his photo of himself with the former member for Warringah taken on that beautiful night at The Lodge when they spoke about getting rid of renewable energy in this country. This wouldn't be such a problem except for the fact that the keynote speakers for this conference include Raheem Kassam, a far Right activist with a history of racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia, who made appalling comments about the Scottish National Party Leader Nicola Sturgeon after she suffered a miscarriage. Other speakers include American gun fanatics like Matt Schlapp, who has been called out for racist dog whistling by American conservatives and former Republican Chair Michael Steele.

Australians should be alarmed at the constant cosying-up to far Right extremists that the Liberal and National parties constantly engage with. We ought not forget that this government has continually had to be shamed into denying visas to some of the most notorious and far Right racist extremists. They had to be shamed into denying Milo Yiannopoulos a visa because many of the government MPs wanted to have a selfie with him. I had to campaign for months to make sure that the Holocaust denier David Leck didn't get a visa after the minister for immigration granted him one. We haven't forgotten that they all voted with Pauline Hanson in the 'It's okay to be white' motion. Australians need to make sure that Australia doesn't become a destination of choice for extremists.

Infrastructure: Roads

Unemployment

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (13:52): Road congestion is a vice in the major cities and eastern seaboard of Australia, but it is out of control in Queensland, and the HILDA survey pointed that out yesterday. The ABS tells us that the longest commute in Australia is in Brisbane. We've got a state Labor government too busy building up
the bureaucracy, the water bubblers and the public servants to care about it. In my area of Redland, we have an 800-metre stretch of road to be duplicated—that's the legacy of state Labor—and, in the meantime, the other state MP promises an on-ramp to the M1. You need a road that functions to get to the on-ramp. They're beyond understanding the importance of investment in infrastructure in Queensland Labor.

And, despite the nation's figures getting better, unemployment in Queensland and in my area has gone from 4.4 to 5.8 per cent under the Labor watch. It's out of control in Queensland. Queenslanders have lost patience with Jackie Trad and her troupe. And I want to say one thing very clearly: there are around a thousand Redlanders in my city who are unemployed—they shouldn't be, but they are—because of our state Labor government's inability to deliver in my home state the very good providence of economic management that there is in Canberra. We will stand up against this abrogation of their responsibility. They are building up public servant multistorey high-rise buildings in the city, hoping they will vote for them, but they are forgetting about the locals who just want a job a little closer to home and a road that gets them there. (Time expired)

Economy

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:54): Australians are under enormous financial stress, and the release of yesterday's Household, Income and Labour Dynamics Survey confirms their worst fears. Australians' living standards are actually going backwards under this coalition government. The number of Australians living in poverty in Australia has increased under this government, yet it refuses to countenance an increase in the Newstart allowance. The median household income has declined by $500 under this government; it's actually lower now than it was when the government came to office in 2013. Yet this government supports cutting penalty rates for workers who work in vulnerable industries. Young Australians are staying at home longer than ever because they can't afford housing. They can't afford to get into the housing market, yet this government continues to support the most generous tax concessions for housing investors in the world. Pensioners, families and small businesses are struggling with skyrocketing electricity costs; they've increased by 18 per cent in the last three years. Yet, after six years, this government still does not have an energy policy, and it has left climate change to the climate change deniers in its party. Australians are facing the longest ever commute times to get to work, but this government will not bring forward investment in roads infrastructure.

Australians are going backwards under this Morrison government, and the government's only answer is to blame Labor. They are asleep at the wheel. They need to wake up. The economy is floundering, incomes are stagnating and Australians are going backwards under the Morrison government.

Vantari VR

Mr LEESER (Berowra) (13:55): The greatest initiatives that move us forward as a nation are never created by governments. Across Australia, it's entrepreneurial work that's quietly happening each day which will shape the future of our country in extraordinary ways. Our job is to make sure the opportunities exist to allow people to create, to solve problems and to make creative proposals to help us move forward as a nation.

Some people who are doing this work include Dr Vijay Paul from my electorate and Dr Nishanth Krishnananthan, the founders of Vantari VR. This company has developed technology to convert medical images from 2D into virtual reality so patients can see and more clearly and meaningfully understand what is happening to their bodies. They have now turned their attention to improving medical training. They saw the opportunity that virtual reality provides to have doctors deepen their knowledge and skills. Vantari VR are developing a sophisticated, realistic virtual cadaver which will give doctors more time and tools for deepening their skills, ultimately meaning an improvement in patient outcomes. I'm so proud to be able to say that the Morrison government has given them an opportunity to take their great work forward. Vantari VR have been named as a recipient of an Accelerating Commercialisation grant through Minister Andrews's Entrepreneurs' Program. The grant will allow them to complete the development of their new technology and get it ready for widespread use. I want to commend the Vantari team for the fantastic work they're doing. It's a privilege to be part of a government that's encouraging entrepreneurship and encouraging a company that pioneers and takes forward advances in medical training. (Time expired)

de Vulder, Mr Ivan

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney) (13:57): This month the world got a little bit dimmer with the passing of a dear friend of our Labor family, Ivan de Vulder. An unsung hero, Ivan was Labor to his bones. He knew the value of social justice, reform and the promise of a better tomorrow. Ivan didn't just communicate Labor's values; he lived them every single day of his life, relentlessly kind and relentlessly supportive of Labor comrades. On the booths or through his longstanding connection with Labor's Environment Action Network, or even when he returned to university as a mature-age student and stood for the student council, Ivan was always there fighting for fairness. He was a man of boundless energy, never failing to make you smile when you ran into him. Quite often I would
run into him in Sydney at a Labor function one day and in Canberra at a Labor function the next day. Through the

crowd, you'd see his smiling face, and he would always be there to support our cause. Life wasn't always easy for

Ivan, but that's what made him so uniquely Ivan. He wore his heart on his sleeve. He did so unapologetically. He
touched the lives of everyone he met. Even when sitting phone banking during election campaigns, he would
always be there to reach out to offer support and a helping hand. He'll be sorely missed.

**Forde Electorate: Logan Hyperdome**

**Mr VAN MANEN** (Forde—Chief Government Whip) *(13:59):* A lot has changed since the Logan Hyperdome
shopping centre first opened its doors 30 years ago. There were a water park and a zoo at the present site and,
sadly, I had a lot more hair. The centre was opened by then National Party Premier Mike Ahern, and I can
remember that back then the locals, including me, were amazed at the state-of-the-art centre. Back then, there
were statues from Expo 88 throughout the centre. There were even a rock pool and a large water feature. I have
many fond memories of the circus theme there and the old playground opposite the food court. My kids were quite
unimpressed when they took it away. I am sure many people in Logan would have vivid memories of the
Hyperdome, and it is encouraging to see that the centre is still open for business today. On opening day 144
retailers lined the central hallway, and many of the original shops still call the centre home today, including
Sizzler, Prouds, Stefan and Coles. It now features over 220 retailers and continues to enjoy strong trade and
support from the local community. To celebrate this milestone the centre will reward 30 locals nominated for their
community work and feature an in-house exhibition showcasing their stories and contribution to Logan. I look
forward to coming back to the community and celebrating this great anniversary and enjoying a slice of the
famous cheese toast at Sizzlers.

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

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Morrison Government**

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) *(14:00):* My question is addressed to the Prime
Minister. The Prime Minister said that tax cuts would be legislated before 1 July, he said that the member for
Durack would remain environment minister and he said that the government would create a national integrity
commission. Were any of those commitments true?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) *(14:01):* I'm very thankful to
the Leader of the Opposition for raising the issue of our commitment to tax cuts, which not only provide tax relief
today but provide tax relief for Australians out into the future as well. The harder they work and the more they
earn, the more they keep of what they earn. That's what we promised to the Australian people and that's what we
delivered, and the Labor Party sought to oppose us every single step of the way. They remain opposed to tax relief
and, if they're elected into this place at a subsequent election, they will roll back the tax relief that has been
legislated for the Australian people. Even now, some several months after the election, the Labor Party continues
to tear itself apart about its $387 billion of higher taxes. They have members over there who are clinging onto
those taxes for dear life. They worked so hard to put that massive tax burden into their election platform to take to
the Australian people. Now they know they have to make a choice: are they going to tax Australians more or are
they going to follow the government's approach and ensure they get their expenditure under control so that the
government can live within its means and deliver the essential services that Australians rely upon? That's what my
government is delivering.

**Mr Albanese:** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** The Prime Minister has concluded his answer.

**Pensions and Benefits**

**Mr PITT** (Hinkler) *(14:03):* My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister inform the House
how the Morrison government is on the side of Australians who want to get off welfare and into work and create
stronger communities?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) *(14:03):* I thank the member
for his question. He knows that, if you want to get people off welfare and into work, you have to make sure your
welfare system is supporting people to get into work. Our government has seen that, in four years, 230,000 people
are now no longer dependent on income support welfare payments from the government. I'll tell you why; it's
because they have jobs. In the last 12 months to the end of June, 296,000 Australians got a job, and over 80 per
cent of those jobs were full time. We have the lowest level of welfare dependency in the working age population
for more than 30 years. That's what we're seeing under this government. We're seeing people get off welfare and get into work. That is the best form of support any Australian government can provide to the Australian people.

But you also have to make sure your welfare system does the right thing by those who are receiving it and the communities in which they live. That is why we have put in place the Cashless Debit Card. In particular in the member's electorate in Bundaberg and Hervey Bay from 29 January this year that trial commenced, quarantining welfare support from the purchase of alcohol or gambling products, where those purchases have caused drug and alcohol misuse and problem gambling. On 25 March this year we said we would be continuing trials at the existing sites in Ceduna, East Kimberley and Goldfields, and, of course, continuing those trials in Bundaberg and Hervey Bay.

This is an initiative of our government that is getting results and is changing communities, and the evidence backs that up: falls in drug and alcohol use; decreases in crime, violence and antisocial behaviour; improvements in child health and wellbeing; improved financial management; and ongoing, and even strengthened, community support for the very initiative. We went to those communities and said, 'We want to partner with you in terms of how we deliver welfare support in your communities.' It wasn't just in indigenous communities; it was in all communities where there was disadvantage. There were communities who wanted to get people off welfare and into work and to get the right supports. The independent evaluation released on these cases found 41 per cent of participants drinking less frequently, 48 per cent of participants using drugs less frequently and 48 per cent of those who gambled before the trial now doing it less often.

We are on the side of communities that want to change their communities for the better and to not have a welfare system that holds them back, but a welfare system that lifts them up, strengthens their communities and enables them to get more and more of their people into jobs. Under this government we're creating jobs. Under this government we're running a welfare system which is a hand up, not out...

Ms BURNEY (Barton) (14:06): My question is to the Minister for Government Services. On Monday night, when speaking on ABC television about the robodebt program, the minister said:

… the department won't be going back after seven years in terms of recovering that …

Why did the minister say that when he knew at the time it was untrue?

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services) (14:06): I thank the member for her question. The government is moving forward on collecting or seeking income compliance debts from 2013-14. There are still existing debts where customers have been sought to respond from prior to that year. But when it comes to the issue of income compliance it's important to understand where this all began. I refer to Rick Morton's article on 6 January 2017 in The Australian. He wrote: Labor's leadership team of Bill Shorten and Tanya Plibersek pioneered the "robo-debt" data-matching system …

It turns out the member for Sydney and the member for Maribyrnong are the virtual godparents of robodebt.

Now, where would Rick Morton have got that from? He got that from a media release dated 29 June 2011. It was a joint media release issued by the member for Sydney and the member for Maribyrnong. The media release says, 'New data matching to recover millions in welfare dollars.'

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

Ms Burney: On relevance. The question is absolutely about why you misled the public on 7.30 on Monday night.

The SPEAKER: I'm listening to the minister. He's, at this point, relating his material to the question that has been asked. I'm listening very closely. The minister has the call.

Mr ROBERT: It says:

A new data matching initiative between Centrelink and the Australian Taxation Office is expected to claw back millions of dollars from welfare recipients who have debts with the Australian Government.

Minister for Human Services Tanya Plibersek—

And the assistant Treasurer, Bill Shorten—

said the new initiative will enhance Centrelink’s debt recovery ability and is expected to recover more than $71 million over four years.

Beginning on July 1 this year, Centrelink and the ATO will automatically match data on a daily basis as a way of cross-checking former welfare recipients who have a debt with the Commonwealth.
"But if people fail to come to an arrangement to settle their debts, the Government has a responsibility to taxpayers to recover that money."

Can I say to the former leader and deputy leader: We agree. We absolutely agree.' Can I say to the godfather and the godmother of income compliance from 2011, from the media release—and I'll table it, just for the efficacy and good memories of the Leader of the Opposition and the deputy leader—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr ROBERT: Income compliance data matching on a daily basis was started by those opposite, and now they seek to stop it in some faux degree of indignation that the income compliance love child of the godparents isn't what they'd hoped it to be. Well, we've got news for the opposition: what they began we will continue to move forward in the interests of the Australian taxpayer.

Rural and Regional Australia

Mr HOGAN (Page—Deputy Speaker) (14:10): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development. Will the Deputy Prime Minister update the House on who is on the side of Australians in rural and regional Australia who want to see their local communities grow and create more jobs?

Mr MCCORMACK (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of The Nationals) (14:10): Just for the member for McMahon's reference, we're on this side and you're on that side—and get used to it.

Drought notwithstanding, there are jobs in regional Australia. There are success stories in regional Australia. It's a vibrant, happening place of inventive, innovative people. Far too often country Australia is portrayed as being broken—far from it. There are good, hardworking people and they're creating jobs, they're creating employment opportunities and they're creating investment. The people of rural and regional Australia know that The Nationals and the Liberals are on their side.

More than 8.8 million people now live, work and raise families outside of our capital cities—and we want to increase that number. There are now more than 600 government initiatives focused on creating jobs and driving economic growth in our regions, because, as the member for Page knows and the member for Lyne often says, when our regions are strong so too is our nation. Since we came to government in 2013 we've committed almost $33 billion to economic and social infrastructure programs which specifically benefit rural and regional Australia. That's a remarkable figure. It's a good figure and an appropriate figure. We've increased investment in the regions, reinforcing regional Australia as the engine room of the economy. It's being driven by our $60 billion agriculture sector, which we're hoping to grow to $100 billion by 2030. We have a plan to do that. Our resources and energy exports are forecast to reach a new record level of $285,000 million this financial year—and this screams jobs.

The member for Page knows how to create jobs. In his electorate we've invested $4.7 million under the Regional Jobs and Investment Packages in expanding Whiddon Group's Kyogle aged-care centre. This project created almost 100 construction jobs and another 15 permanent roles for people living in the area. Whiddon Group CEO Chris Mamarelis said that the funding is helping to keep people in the local community near their loved ones, near their support groups, near their friends. He said that 'older Australians can access quality aged care in the communities they know and love, keeping them connected to the people that enrich their lives'. That is so true.

Under the government's $272 million Regional Growth Fund, we're investing almost $15 million in extending Norco's Lismore ice-cream facility, which is also in the member for Page's electorate. This program is going to help secure the jobs of 830 employees across the whole of the Norco business and ensure the sustainability of the cooperative's 200 farmer members. It's great news for the region. It's great news for the dairy industry. We're funding thousands of job-creating opportunities. Mr Speaker, I'm not sure about you, but I'm pretty partial to Norco's mango and vanilla.

The SPEAKER: I thank the Deputy Prime Minister. I might take that one on notice.

Economy

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:13): My question is to the Treasurer. Why did the Treasurer say yesterday that Australians were certainly better off than in 2013, when the data shows that, since 2013, wages have been stagnant, household debt has risen, growth has slowed and median household income has declined in real terms?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—The Treasurer) (14:14): Australians are better off than they were in 2013 because we've created 1.4 million new jobs. 'Thank you for that dixer' I say to the member for Corio. When we came to government, unemployment was 5.7 per cent. Today, it is 5.2 per cent. When we came to government, the
gender pay gap was 17.2 per cent. Today, it is 14.2 per cent and a record low. When we came to government, employment growth was around 0.7 per cent per year. Today, it's 2.4 per cent. The other reason why Australians are better off today is that tax cuts have passed this parliament. Thirteen million Australians are getting tax cuts because of what we have done on this side of the House. Because unlike 'Sir Tax A Lot' over there—and I knight him today 'Sir Tax A Lot'—we are not promising $387 billion of higher taxes. We are not telling the people of Corio and the people of Grayndler and the people of Rankin and the people of McMahon that we're going to put a retiree's tax on them, but they are. We're not telling them there's going to be an increased tax on superannuation, but they are. And we're not telling them that we are going to burden family businesses and income earners with higher taxes because, on this side of the House, we want Australians to earn more and to keep more of what they earn.

Water: Infrastructure

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (14:16): PM, with lowest ever interest rates and Reserve urging infrastructure, surely it's time for money-making projects, not pleasing, eye-catching, vote-winning, debt-making projects. Would you not agree that it's time for your Hells Gates proper Bradfield stage 1, providing protein for our VIP markets, 1½ per cent of our electricity, seven per cent of our petrol ethanol, eight per cent of our beef, with new ag technology or clean, cheap renewable forever? Was Bradfield right: dead heart or now Girraween, the land of flowers?

The SPEAKER: I call the Prime Minister to address himself to the questions contained in that statement.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:17): I thank the member for Kennedy for his passion for ensuring that we move forward with the vital water infrastructure projects that our country needs—not just the north of Australia but how that can support the rest of the country, which I know motivates him as well. He will know that we worked closely with him to establish the North Queensland Water Infrastructure Authority in March of this year, and that is taking forward a number of major projects of which he's very familiar. Those include the Hells Gate Dam, which includes the Big Rocks Weir—and that's a $54 million commitment at this point—and, of course, the Hughenden irrigation scheme, which is a very significant project in the member's electorate. There is $182 million committed to it. There's the Rookwood Weir of $176 million. There's the Mareeba Dimbulah Water Supply Scheme and the Nogoa Mackenzie Water Supply Scheme.

The Hells Gate Dam is a critical piece of infrastructure. In April this year, the Hells Gate project took another step forward, with Townsville Enterprise Limited selected to start the preconstruction and planning work on that project. The coalition is also investing up to $24 million in that part of the project, and there's $30 million to fast track the construction of the Big Rocks Weir. This is coming out of the $500 million expansion of the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund. That fund, together with further work being done by the Deputy Prime Minister, is to bring forward the National Water Grid, and the National Water Grid is Bradfield for the 21st century. That's what is necessary in this country. And, as the National Water Grid is brought together by Deputy Prime Minister, working with communities—working with agricultural communities—and all of those who are so essential to the success of this project, we will be bringing forward that National Water Grid to deliver on the very initiatives that the member has determined.

We have a policy to ensure that our agricultural sector reaches that $100 billion mark by 2030. And that means ensuring we have the water infrastructure and the soils to produce that so that we can become, and continue to become, the food bowl of the nation for nations like Vietnam and Indonesia and the Philippines, which you've referred to. But not just them—all around the country. So I want to thank the member for Kennedy for his commitment to this project and many other projects, and thank, particularly, all of my members on this side of the House who are so keen to see us get on with those water infrastructure projects, and that's exactly what my government will do.

Budget

Mr YOUNG (Longman) (14:19): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer inform the House how the Morrison government is on the side of all Australians by returning the budget to surplus and getting more people into work? Is the Treasurer aware of any alternative policies?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—The Treasurer) (14:20): I want to congratulate the member for Longman, because in his first speech today he talked about owning a couple of golf shop franchises, and his first speech was a hole in one! It was a brilliant speech about his personal experiences, his ideals and what he wants to do for the people of Longman, and his first speech explained why Longman went from being on that side of the House to being on this side of the House.

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer can just pause for a second. It's entertaining, but 30 seconds of it is a bit long.
Mr FRYDENBERG: The member for Longman knows that the fundamentals of the Australian economy are strong and that Australia is in its 28th consecutive year of economic growth. As the Governor of the RBA has reminded us, the foundations of the Australian economy are strong. We have a AAA credit rating. We have had 17 consecutive months of trade surpluses and we will be delivering a budget surplus for the first time in more than a decade. We have done that by responsible and targeted spending.

The rate of spending growth is around half of what we inherited. There are more people in jobs and fewer people on welfare, and the proportion of working-age Australians on welfare is around the lowest level in 30 years. We inherited from those opposite $240 billion of accumulated deficits, an unemployment rate which was at 5.7 per cent, an employment growth rate of only 0.7 per cent and a gender pay gap at 17.2 per cent. On all indicators, we have strengthened the economy. It's a strong economy because we're on the side of hardworking Australians, and a strong economy allows us to deliver tax cuts for more than 13 million Australians.

We know that those opposite, and the Leader of the Opposition, have had every position under the sun. He was against the tax cuts, then he was for the tax cuts; he wanted to change the name of the bill, then he wanted to wait for those in the upper house. But I tell you what, today we got the real explanation in The Australian newspaper when he was explaining his position on tax cuts. Wait for it—he said, 'We will agree with measures we disagree with. This is exactly what happened with the tax cuts.'

The reality is that the Leader of the Opposition doesn't know whose side he's on. We, on this side of the House, are always on the side of hardworking Australians because we want Australians to earn more and to keep more of what they earn.

Medicare: Magnetic Resonance Imaging Licences

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:23): My question is to the Minister for Health. Why did the minister yesterday claim that the granting of an MRI Medicare licence to Sound Radiology was 'done through an independent process' when, in fact, they were signed off by him in his ministerial office?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:23): That is not an accurate representation of what I said. As I confirmed in the House, final decisions were made by—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Just pause for a second. The minister is being completely relevant but I'm struggling to hear him. The member for Ballarat is preventing me hearing the Minister for Health. I think the member for McMahon wants to listen to the answer and I need to, so if she can stop interjecting that would assist everyone.

Mr HUNT: Final decisions were made by the minister, as they were made by the member for Sydney sitting right next to him.

Mr Bowen: But you claimed it was an independent process!

Mr HUNT: Well, there are two parts to this. As I said yesterday—no—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr HUNT: Each application was assessed by the department against the mandatory and substantive criteria outlined in the ITA documentation, and all MRI licences allocated under the expansion round met the department's criteria. And, as I said in the House yesterday, the final decisions were signed off by the minister. This is very interesting—absolutely. This is very interesting, because I've been doing a little bit of research into historic processes in this space, and—

An honourable member interjecting—

Mr HUNT: I was hoping he might intervene! This morning the Leader of the Opposition gave an interview in South Australia, where he referred to what the Labor Party did. He made four errors in one minute, in one answer on this. Apart from misrepresenting what we said yesterday, he said that Labor went through a process and these matters were determined as they were. But, in fact, we have gone back, and we know from the ANAO report that they were determined by the minister. He also said: 'People weren't making a profit by definition of an MRI machine in a hospital. Labor awarded these licences to public hospitals.'

I go to the member for Sydney's media release of 1 November 2012. The member for Sydney announced 11 licences in South Australia. I will list some of them: Dr Jones and Partners, Tennyson Centre; Adelaide Diagnostic Imaging, Adelaide area; Adelaide Diagnostic Imaging, Woodville; Dr Jones and Partners, South Terrace; one in North Terrace, in Adelaide; Benson Radiology, Salisbury; and Benson Radiology, North Adelaide. All of these show that what the Leader of the Opposition said this morning on this was absolute bunkum. He said that the difference is that Labor awarded these licences to public hospitals that went through processes, so people
weren't making a profit by definition. That may be why the ANAO looked at what Labor did and slammed the member for Sydney to not only—

Ms Catherine King: Let's see what the ANAO has to say!

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Health will pause. The member for Ballarat will leave under 94(a).

The member for Ballarat then left the chamber.

Mr HUNT: Indeed, the ANAO's overall conclusion was:

As a consequence, the cost impact of MRI expansion has been significantly greater than advised to government, with long-term implications for the Commonwealth Budget.

Labor never could manage health, and they've been caught out— (Time expired)

Manufacturing

Mr STEVENS (Sturt) (14:27): My question is to the Minister for Industry, Science and Technology. Will the minister update the House on how the Morrison government is on the side of all Australians who believe in the future of manufacturing in Australia to grow and create jobs?

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Minister for Industry, Science and Technology) (14:27): I thank the member for his question. What a wonderful member for Sturt he is!

Australia will always be a manufacturing nation. That's why our government is unashamedly on the side of our manufacturers and those Australians who work in and believe in manufacturing. This morning I hosted a manufacturing roundtable. We had a number of representatives from industry there, our researchers were there and major manufacturing businesses were clearly there today. It was a very productive discussion on what we could do to support manufacturing businesses into the future, to make sure that we are working with our competitive strengths as we build a future for manufacturing in this country. There was a real confidence around the table that Australia's best years of manufacturing are ahead of us. Currently, manufacturing supports about 850,000 jobs in this country and contributes about 5.8 per cent of GDP, and we plan on growing that. The good news is that the value of our manufacturing exports has already grown by around 23 per cent since 2013.

I acknowledge that the manufacturing sector has faced many transitional challenges, including under Labor when one in eight manufacturing jobs were lost. Those transitional challenges are being overcome, and congratulations to our manufacturing industries for what they have managed to achieve through innovation.

Mr Brendan O'Connor interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Gorton is now warned!

Mrs ANDREWS: What they're doing is focusing on their need to compete on value rather than on costs. Manufacturing isn't only about production. There are many parts to the manufacturing spectrum: it includes research and development; it includes design; it includes sales; it includes service. What we are seeing is our manufacturing businesses innovating every single day so that they can become more efficient, so that their products continue to be of high value, not just in Australia but right across the world. It's very important, for our manufacturing businesses to grow, that we develop the export markets that they need now and into the future.

We're working very proactively, very positively, with our manufacturing businesses here in Australia. We're making sure that they will have the skilled workforce that they need to produce the right products that they need. Let me say this: under the Morrison government we are making manufacturing great again.

Workplace Relations

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations. Why did he advise the House that the former Labor government cut funding to the Fair Work Ombudsman by 17 per cent when, in fact, it increased funding by 96 per cent? Why did he also claim that staff were cut by 20 per cent when, in fact, staffing rose by 97 per cent?

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (14:31): I advised the House that when Labor were last in office they cut funding to the Fair Work Ombudsman by 17 per cent and their staffing by 20 per cent, and the reason I advised the House of that is that it's true. What happened with the funding is that it grew over time and reached a peak, and then, when you were struggling around for your four surpluses to be delivered in one night, you chopped the feet out from under them. That's what you did. The funding went radically down, the staffing went radically down and the number of investigations went radically down, and Australian workers who wanted a robust organisation to investigate underpayment were left in the lurch. That's what happened, and that's why I informed the House of that.

The reason that you raise this now and the reason that you raised it yesterday is that we have two bills before the House today that are there to demonstrably help workers. How are they going to do that? They are going to
establish basic rules of transparency around workers' benefit funds. They are going to ensure that there is lawfulness on worksites. What is really interesting is that last year the Australian Building and Construction Commission recovered $1 million worth of underpaid wages for workers, and what do the members opposite want to do to that? They want to get rid of it! They cut the funding of the Fair Work Ombudsman, which investigates underpayment, and the other great organisation that is recovering underpaid wages—they want to scrap it entirely. So the reason we are informing the parliament and the people of the truth is that it's a truth they need and want to know.

Indigenous Australians

Mr LLEW O'BRIEN (Wide Bay) (14:32): My question is to the Minister for Indigenous Australians. Will the minister update the House on how the Morrison government is on the side of Indigenous families who want their children to get the best start in life?

Mr WYATT (Hasluck—Minister for Indigenous Australians) (14:33): I thank the member for Wide Bay for his ongoing interest in the journey that young Indigenous Australians take not only through education but through their life, and for the work that he does within his electorate. The Morrison government is committed to delivering better futures for our Indigenous children and youth across this nation. The journey starts in the early childhood years and continues through to higher education. The Morrison government is investing around $230 million through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy in the 2019-20 budget to consolidate this important journey, because we know that the early years of a young person's life experience shape their journey in later life.

I just want to cite a couple of figures off the document I have in front of me. We are investing a record level of funding in schools, with $310.3 billion from 2018-19, including a $5.2 billion loading for Indigenous students, and $81.5 million for the Remote School Attendance Strategy, from which we are seeing outcomes occurring. We're ensuring that mentoring and residential facilities and pathways to complete secondary education are augmented with the Abstudy program—and you would be familiar with the $200 million Indigenous Youth Education Package that the Prime Minister announced in February.

Creating pillars for adults and young people into a journey is often manifested. Last night I had the privilege of being with the British High Commissioner when she announced three young Indigenous women who are heading off to the United Kingdom to study at Cambridge and Oxford. Those three are studying in fields that are very particular to their interests and what will make a difference when they come back to their communities and to Australia. We have been operating this program for 10 years. The journey is demonstrating the capability of young people. They become role models within their own communities when they come back. We are also investing a further $35 million to support Indigenous women and families experiencing violence and $2.5 million for e-safety.

There have been some important outcomes from all of this. As a result of our record investment, there has been a 60 per cent increase in retention rates from year 7-8 to year 12 in 2018 compared to 48.7 per cent in 2011. The other figure is an 8.1 per cent increase in the number of Indigenous students enrolled in university courses in 2017. That's a great outcome in the journey that will build the capacity of our communities. But more importantly is the 54 per cent increase in the number of Indigenous students taking VET pathways. This weekend I am going to Garma, along with many others, and I'm looking forward to hearing the voices of young people in what they express as the desires that they have as aspirations.

Health Care

Ms KEARNEY (Cooper) (14:36): My question is to the Minister for Health. The Minister for Home Affairs said that Australians who were in waiting lines as public hospitals would be, 'kicked off those waiting lines because people from Nauru and Manus are now going to access those health services'. Minister, did that happen?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:36): The significant thing that has happened is this government took steps through the Prime Minister to make sure that there wasn't a list of people coming to the mainland. That was what the Prime Minister did when he opened up Christmas Island. That was a significant step in making sure that we did not encounter the very problem that the Minister for Home Affairs warned about. The Minister for Home Affairs identified the problem and the Prime Minister solved it.

Trade

Mrs ARCHER (Bass) (14:37): My question is to the Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government and Assistant Minister for Trade and Investment. Will the minister update the House on how the Morrison government is on the side of Australian exporters by opening up new markets across a range of industries, helping to build a stronger economy and create more jobs?
Mr COULTON (Parkes—Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government and Assistant Trade and Investment Minister) (14:38): I thank the member for Bass for her question. I know the member is on the side of exporters in northern Tasmania. I got a chance to meet those exporters late last year when I was down there hosting a free trade seminar. It is certainly a very productive and innovative area.

This government is getting on with making it easier for our exporters to connect to the rest of the world, selling our produce and our services. The latest data shows that there are nearly 52,000 businesses that export from Australia. That's a 16 per cent increase. Over the last five years, this government has created an additional 240,000 trade related jobs. So that's 240,000 Australians that now have a job thanks to our commitment to increasing jobs and boosting the economy by making it easier to connect our exporters to the rest of the world. Trade is critical.

Mr Bowen interjecting—

Mr COULTON: I'm pleased that the honourable member is interested in trade, because I don't think in their term of government they managed to sign one free trade agreement. So they will be interested to know that this government has delivered free trade agreements to China, Japan and Korea and, the gold standard of them all, the TPP-11.

Indeed, I was honoured to be in Tokyo in January to represent Australia at the inaugural ministerial meeting for the TPP-11 countries. This agreement not only connects countries in the local area but also gives preferential access to Canada and Mexico. This means that Australian exporters now have access to 2.8 billion consumers from around the world. These agreements are opening up our export opportunities for manufactured goods, education and financial services, as well as agricultural technology.

This weekend, Senator Birmingham will be in China to represent Australia at the next round of negotiations for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and, at the same time, our negotiators are working with the European Union and the Pacific Alliance on future trade agreements.

Trade has now contributed to a quarter of Australia's economic growth over the past five years. That means we now have a stronger economy which provides essential services which Australians rely on. But there is more to come. Australia has now signed FTAs with Indonesia, Peru and Hong Kong. There is an opportunity for those opposite to show interest in these agreements, as they will shortly be coming to the House for ratification. It is an opportunity for this House to support Australian exports— (Time expired)

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (14:41): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Trade and Investment. In his last answer the minister said that Labor didn't sign a trade agreement in its last term of government. Is that true?

Mr COULTON (Parkes—Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government and Assistant Trade and Investment Minister) (14:41): I will reiterate that in this term of government our government has signed—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr COULTON: They did not sign the agreements that his government has done.

The SPEAKER: Members on my left will cease interjecting. I just have to point out again that it was a very specific question based on the minister's previous answer. The minister needs to address the question.

Mr COULTON: I can say that, when this government came to power, 30 per cent of our trade was covered by free trade agreements. It is now 70 per cent.

The SPEAKER: I was about to ask the minister to resume his seat. Has he concluded his answer?

Mr Coulton: Yes.

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

Mr Albanese: I might just give the minister the opportunity to correct the record. There are forms of the House which will have to be used otherwise, because that is a misleading of the parliament. He can fix it up.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition, as much as he might like to, can't give the call to anybody. I am going to make that very clear. The question's been asked. I made it very clear the minister wasn't been relevant in his answer. He has now concluded his answer, which is his right. If there are other issues at other times in the House, that is a matter for members; it is not a matter for me. My job is to enforce the rules, which I've done. I just made it very clear. I asked the minister to be relevant and, in the few sentences that followed, he wasn't. But he has concluded his answer, which is his right.

Mr Albanese interjecting—
The SPEAKER: No, we are not going to break into a daylong dialogue on the subject.

Defence Industry

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (14:44): My question is to the Minister for Defence Industry. Will the minister update the House on how the Morrison government's record investment in the defence industry is delivering Australian jobs and opportunities for small business and ensuring that our Defence Force is well equipped?

Ms PRICE (Durack—Minister for Defence Industry) (14:44): I thank the member for Dawson for his question and his strong passion for creating jobs and opportunities in the Australian defence industry, especially in northern Queensland. The Morrison government is on the side of Australians who work in our defence industry, like those whom the member for Dawson and I recently met in Townsville when we visited Cubic Defence Australia along with the member for Herbert. Cubic Defence provided the essential training, support and technologies used by all nations participating in the Talisman Sabre exercise. Cubic continues to play a fundamental role in the defence industry by providing realistic simulation training to the ADF. Cubic is also a major employer of defence veterans. I take this opportunity to congratulate them on that. I know this is an issue that the member for Herbert is also particularly passionate about. It is businesses like Cubic that the Morrison government is backing every day, because they are the backbone of the Australian economy.

Just last night, I, together with the Minister for Defence, hosted an event for small businesses in the defence industry and outlined our plan to deliver more opportunities and more jobs for them. Tonight I have the pleasure of addressing the Defence Industry Awards, where I will be able to recognise the outstanding achievements of small businesses in our Australian defence industry. These small businesses play a crucial role in delivering the capability that our men and women in uniform rely upon each and every day.

The Morrison government is on the side of Australian workers in the defence industry, unlike those opposite. Under Labor the defence budget was cut by $18 billion. During the time that Labor occupied these benches, those long, dark six years—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I have to say that the minister needs to pause. There is a problem with the area where she is now going. If members can cease interjecting I will address the area. She is now going to alternative policies but, unfortunately for her, this question did not have that phrase, 'Are there any alternative policies?' so I can't permit her to do that, because she is seeking to answer a question she wasn't asked.

Ms PRICE: This government is very committed to creating thousands of jobs with our $200 billion defence white paper. While those opposite were sitting on this side they lost thousands of Australian jobs. We have a plan for the future. They had no plan for the future. The Morrison government is on track to secure thousands of future jobs in the Australian defence industry and, just as importantly, to ensure our nation's defence capability.

Defence Procurement

Mr KEOGH (Burt) (14:48): My question is to the Minister for Defence Industry. Why did the government say that 90 per cent of the work on the submarine project would be Australian when it won't be?

Mr Conroy: Ask Siri.

The SPEAKER: The member for Shortland is warned.

Ms PRICE (Durack—Minister for Defence Industry) (14:48): Back in 2016 we announced a $200 billion Australian defence white paper. Included in that is our $90 billion naval shipbuilding program. There will be thousands of opportunities within that naval shipbuilding program with respect to jobs for Australians and small businesses. There is an enormous supply chain with respect to shipbuilding and we aren't done yet.

Environment

Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (14:49): My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Will the minister update the House on how the Morrison government is on the side of Australians concerned about reducing our waste, increasing our domestic recycling capacity and keeping plastics out of our ocean?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for the Environment) (14:49): I thank the member for Higgins for her question, congratulate her on her outstanding start in this parliament, and note, as many members do, that she is a paediatrician by qualification. And I met one of her patients at the Melbourne zoo recently—Estela, a spider monkey who had had some early feeding problems. The member for Higgins is also a very keen conservationist, and she is often seen, with her communities, cleaning up along the banks of the Yarra, particularly around Gardiners Creek.
We're taking national leadership on waste and recycling. We've appointed the first ever assistant minister for waste reduction, the energetic member for Brisbane. We've invested $20 million in a cooperative research centre—and I thank the minister for industry—to look at innovative solutions to plastics recycling. But we've really come to the table with $100 million for a new recycling investment fund. This is about bringing good ideas to us for manufacturing energy-efficient recycled content.

We're working with our Pacific neighbours. There is $16 million to the Pacific Ocean litter project. This is about plastic in the ocean. By 2050, there could be more plastic in the ocean than fish, which is a horrifying statistic. We need to take that neighbourly and international leadership.

We have given, recently, $1.6 million to Planet Ark, an organisation well known to many members of this House, and what they do is to match a recyclable with a business that needs that recyclable. If you've seen their amazing floor tiles that are made out of recycled ground coffee and plastic cups, you will know exactly what I mean.

I met with representatives of local government today. They are encouraged by the agenda that we're setting in this space, because we do need all levels of government on board.

Waste is not a problem. We shouldn't see it as a problem. We should see it as an economic opportunity, not a problem to be solved. And that opportunity can mean that the kerbside litter—the glass and plastic—you put in your bins today can be in the roads we drive on tomorrow. Australians want to see that. We want to see waste in the real economy as part of a supply chain for a product that is demanded, that is part, as I said, of that circular economy.

We're on the side of Australians who want to do the right thing and who want to have confidence that their government, like them, cares about the environment, both locally and nationally. We're on the side of Australians who know that this circular economy can be part of the jobs of the future.

Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services

Mr CLARE (Blaxland) (14:52): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Families and Social Services. Why did the assistant minister for homelessness claim that the rate of homelessness is 'not ahead of population growth' when, in fact, homelessness is growing at nearly double the rate of Australia's population?

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts) (14:53): I do thank the shadow minister for his question. Our Morrison government has a very strong track record when it comes to housing, including very significant funding of over $1.5 billion under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement to support homelessness services, and, under that agreement, $125 million is set aside for homelessness services in 2019-20.

The states are matching this funding and have a focus on women and children affected by family and domestic violence, and of course the Prime Minister earlier this year announced that hundreds more women and children escaping domestic and family violence would have a safe place to sleep, with a $78 million investment by the Morrison government, forming part of our $328 million investment to support the fourth action plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, and I would certainly hope that there is acknowledgement on all sides of the House of the bipartisan commitment to the importance of government action in this area, under the fourth action plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.

Of course, as part of that, one of the very practical ways in which we are responding to the challenge of homelessness is $60 million in grants to eligible organisations to provide new or expanded emergency accommodation facilities as well as $18 million to support the Keeping Women Safe in their Home initiative. So we have a strong program and commitment when it comes to homelessness—$1.5 billion, which is, of course, funding which can be provided thanks to our strong management of the economy.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs is warned.

Infrastructure

Mrs McINTOSH (Lindsay) (14:55): My question is to the Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure. Will the minister please update the House on how the Morrison government is on the side of all Australians frustrated at getting a car park to catch the train to work?

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure) (14:55): I thank the member for Lindsay for her question. She, like so many people on our side of the House, understands the immense frustration that commuters have when they want to take the train to and from work each day but can't get a car
park at the local train station. Often that means that when they go to the train station, instead of being able to get there at 7 am, find a car park and jump on the train, they're searching around and perhaps have to park illegally or go to the next train station to try to find a car park. There are even many people who end up giving up and driving all the way into town to their destination, adding further congestion to the roads in the process.

There are three train stations in particular that I know the member for Lindsay is very concerned about—in particular Emu Plains train station, which she's very familiar with. It's one of those ones that fill up at seven o'clock in the morning, creating frustrations for commuters. It's a train station that people from all around the area go to to try to find a car park, including from the Lower Blue Mountains, yet they are unable to find car parks after 7 am.

This is happening right across our big cities, and we've got a plan to fix some of these things. We've got a plan to address those three key car parks in the member for Lindsay's electorate, which she has advocated for. That includes the Emu Plains one. Of course, it includes St Mary's train station car park, as well as Kingswood Station. We'll be adding more commuter car parks to those train stations so that commuters can find a car park, jump on the train and get to work more quickly, sooner and more safely.

Our plan, in fact, funds 47 commuter car parks right across our big capital cities. All up, this will make it easier for everyday residents to be able to take the train to work and back every day. Not only does it make it easier for them but it has a direct impact, as well, on addressing congestion on our major roads, because, by doing our plan for 47 commuter car parks, we will take almost 17,000 cars off the roads in the process—17,000 cars that otherwise would have been on those major freeways or the major roads, adding to congestion, which people get so frustrated about.

Of course, we're also doing those local pinch point roads, including in the member for Lindsay's electorate, such as Dunheved Road, which is a really busy road. We're going to be fixing that one and Mulgoa Road as well, which is one of the busiest roads in Western Sydney. Of course, we're doing other city-shaping roads to support people in Lindsay, including WestConnex, a road which the Leader of the Opposition says is a road to nowhere.

(An\*

**Pensions and Benefits**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong) (14:58): My question is to the Minister for Government Services. The government has given an absolute undertaking that debt recovery in the Townsville area hasn't commenced. Why was that absolute undertaking given when people in Townsville are currently receiving debt recovery notices as recently as this month, including this $2,000 robodebt issued on 8 July?

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services) (14:59): I thank the member for his question. We as a government are committed to supporting people impacted by natural disasters, and the Far North Queensland floods are no different. During natural disasters such as cyclones, bushfires or floods, it's routine practice for the Department of Human Services to temporarily suspend all compliance activities within an affected local area. This occurred in New South Wales and Victoria after the devastating bushfires earlier this year, as well as in previous natural disasters under governments of all persuasions. I think we'd all agree it's the right thing to do. As a general rule, this suspension is in place for six months, unless extended. I have asked the department to extend the absence of debt recovery in Northern Queensland for the foreseeable future until I am satisfied that the region has recovered.

For the benefit of the House, when the department sends a notification to a citizen, this is what the notification says, and I will table it so we're all clear exactly what communication is sent to Australians. It says: 'We need you to check and update your past income information. We need to make sure that you received the right amount of payments from us in the past. The ATO has given us information about how much income you earned from work in the past. The information from the ATO is different to the information you've reported to us. We need your help to check and update your information. You need to do this even if you haven't received any Centrelink payments for a while.'

It then has a nice big black box: 'What you need to do.' 'You have 28 days from when you receive this letter to update your information. Over the page, you'll find the information we have received from the ATO. Please check this carefully and then go to humanservices.gov.au/confirmincome, select start here, or go to myGov. Documents like bank slips or bank statements will help you do this. We understand you may not be able to get to these quickly. That's okay, you can ask for more time if you need it. If you don't check and update your information, we'll use the details we already have, including the information from the ATO. This might mean you have to pay back money. If you need help, go to humanservices.gov.au/checkpastincome or call us' on a specific number.

I table that document for the benefit of the House so everyone can be quite clear as to the type of information that the department sends out. It is sensitive. It doesn't seek to raise a debt in the first instance. It simply says to
Australians: 'There is a discrepancy between what your assessment is and what the ATO has told us, and please call us. I reiterate to all Australians, if you receive a letter like that, call the department, because the department is here to assist.

**Trade Unions**

Ms FLINT (Boothby—Government Whip) (15:02): My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations. Will the minister inform the House how the Morrison government is on the side of Australian workers and is endeavouring to protect their benefit funds from the actions of militant unions? Is the minister aware of any other approaches on this important issue?

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:02): I thank the member for her question. Of course, workers' benefits funds are meant to keep capital amounts safe and sound for future needs like severance payments. We have a bill before the House that would require proper transparent public recording of what goes into the funds, what comes out of the funds and what the money is distributed on.

We know from last week that Protect transferred $32 million to the Electrical Trades Union. We know that $10.4 million went to the employer organisation NECA. We say that is precisely the type of transaction that should properly be accounted for. It should be transparent. It should be knowable to workers whose money it is. Members opposite say, 'Don't worry about this'. We had the ultimate 'Don't worry' yesterday from the shadow minister, who went on radio explaining that he'd looked into it over the weekend. He's explained that $32 million transaction this way: 'Instead of distributing the earnings, interests and things like that each year, for the sorts of programs I've described, they waited a few years before they did it. So, technically, the previous years' earnings get recorded as though they were capital, but what was distributed out was simply three years of earnings. The money that is required for entitlements is still there.' So it's a technical $32 million accounting mistake. That's what it is. Are we feeling comforted?

I see a few problems with that. Problem No. 1 is: if they 'waited a few years before they distributed the earnings', you might expect that the earnings distributed out in the previous years would have been close to zero. Wrong. In 2014, it was $971,000 to the ETU. In 2015, it was $1.5 million. In 2016, it was $975,000. Then it was the whopping $32 million in 2017.

The second problem is: the ETU accounts don't just say it's capital once; they say it's capital twice. They record it as capital and then say:
The ETU has entered into a Facility Agreement with Protect to loan back the capital distributed to the ETU if Protect needs to recall the distribution to meet ongoing expenses.

That leads to the third problem. But the shadow minister says, 'Don't worry; the money that is required for entitlements is still there.' If it's still in Protect, why do you need a loan facility to loan back the money in case it's needed by the members of Protect for severance payments?

The fourth problem is: if it wasn't capital but, rather, accumulated earnings for several years, you'd probably expect that the next year would again be a low amount—just a lazy million dollars. But hot off the press are the 2018 accounts. Do you want to know how much money was sent by Protect to the ETU in 2018? Twelve million dollars. That is a whopping $45 million in two years, which leads to this ultimate question. If we suspend all disbelief and believe that this is an accounting mistake, and accept that it's actually accrued earnings, surely this question is relevant: what is the $45 million being spent on? What accounts for how that money is being spent? That's what we want to know.

**Environment**

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (15:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. In May the Prime Minister said that his government had 'introduced and passed legislation' to deal with the threat of wildlife extinction—legislation which at the time didn't exist and still doesn't. Why does the Prime Minister just make stuff up?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (15:06): I thank the member for his question on wildlife extinction. Our government is committed to taking action on the concerns of Australians when it comes to protecting the local quality of our environment. I particularly want to commend the member for La Trobe, now the assistant minister. The member for La Trobe, during the last election and in the lead-up to that election, mounted a campaign amongst his local community to ensure our government was taking action to protect species. That's what our government has been doing, and that's what we will continue to keep doing.

*Mr Wilkie interjecting—*
The SPEAKER: I just ask the member for Clark to resume his seat. The call alternates. I've made this point. We have this sort of difficulty at the same time every day. I think I've made the point several times, but perhaps I'm just dreaming it! I think I have made it several times.

Queensland: Floods

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (15:07): My question is to the Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management. Will the minister please explain to the House how the Morrison government is on the side of Far North Queensland primary producers following the tragedy of the Queensland floods earlier this year?

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management) (15:08): Can I thank the member for Leichhardt for his question and his leadership during that trying period. The sheer scale of that event was unimaginable. I was given the opportunity to see it firsthand as it unravelled. It's something I've never seen before, and I hope I never see it again. I know the Prime Minister also made himself available to be there as this unravelled and then revisited after being re-elected, because this is something that has really touched over 100,000 Australians. We lost half a million livestock in this event. It's one of those events that we as a nation can take some solace out of—that when these events do happen, we come together and we work collectively together.

This government, along with the Queensland government, announced a $242 million recovery package. We made sure we were able to get boots on the ground as quickly as we could, because we work collectively together. That was around putting a disaster allowance into households that were impacted, $1,000 per adult and $400 per child, to help in the clean-up. We also made sure that we understood the unique nature of this event on the agricultural sector. We tasked Shane Stone with heading the recovery task, and I think this parliament and this nation owes him a debt of thanks for what he is doing and continues to do. What we didn't want was a Canberra solution; we wanted a local solution. We wanted people on the ground listening, kitchen table to kitchen table, and understanding farmers' needs.

Proudly, we acted swiftly in terms of the disaster rebates, lifting them from $25,000 to $75,000 with the stroke of a pen straightaway. We understood the magnitude of this event on those farmers. We also lifted it for small businesses, because they have also been impacted by this. We've lifted that to $50,000. I announced today that I have extended the period for application for that program out till November. We do not want anyone to self-assess, but we do not want anyone left behind. I encourage those that were impacted by this flood to reach out and to actually ask: are you eligible? It's important that we help you recover. Therefore, the state government and the federal government are going to extend it out to November.

We've also made sure that we've, for the first time, given one of the largest grant programs to primary producers—a $400,000 grant program for restocking and replanting. They lost their income in one event. This is about giving them a leg-up to restart and to rebuild, and to rebuild their communities. We will also work with the Regional Investment Corporation to undertake agri-rebuild loans—$5 million to eligible farmers at concessional rates to help them reconstruct, to rebuild their businesses and to rebuild their families. This was a major event that we will not forget. Those Queenslanders are not forgotten, and this government will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with them.

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

Mr Wilkie interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I want to make this really clear to the member for Clark, because we're not going to keep doing this. The Prime Minister can end question time at any time. It's written up in the Practice. He can end question time partway through a question, partway through an answer or, indeed, at the beginning of question time. It's been that way the whole time. There's no point in the member for Clark getting agitated about that fact. That is just a fact that's written up in the Practice very clearly.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Trade

Mr COULTON (Parkes—Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government and Assistant Trade and Investment Minister) (15:11): on indulgence—Mr Speaker, I seek your indulgence to add to an answer I gave earlier. For the information of the House, those opposite did conclude several trade agreements that had been initiated by the Howard government, but in reality they did not start and conclude a single trade agreement while in government.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members can cease interjecting, or I'll start ejecting.
STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Speaker

The SPEAKER (15:12): I've got a statement that might be of interest to members, which I wish to make very quickly just so all members and the wider press gallery hear it. It's just a few comments on an opinion piece published in The Australian today by Professor George Williams about the office of the Speaker. I want to point out at the start, of course, that he is entitled to all of his opinions and views, and I would never enter into discussion on those. However, I do wish to correct some factual errors in the piece that give a misleading impression. There's one very minor one: membership of this House is 151, not 150. That's minor.

The reason I'm raising this, though, is that, more importantly, Professor Williams states on Speakers that:

In the event of a tied vote, they should adopt the British convention of favouring further debate rather than supporting the government position.

Just to clarify, the convention in fact has a number of principles, which are:

- the Speaker should always vote for further discussion, where this is possible;
- where no further discussion is possible, decisions should not be taken except by a majority; and
- a casting vote on an amendment to a bill should leave the bill in its existing form.

In fact, Speakers in the House of Representatives have consistently followed this Westminster tradition. I wish to point out that I've exercised the casting vote six times, and I can assure you I remember every occasion. On each occasion I've exercised it according to the Westminster convention. In addition, some of my recent predecessors who I also wish to mention—Anna Burke and Harry Jenkins—exercised the casting vote on 14 occasions. On each of these, they exercised it according to the Westminster convention precisely. Since 1901, the casting vote has always been exercised in accordance with the Westminster convention, with the exception of a few occasions between 1910 and 1920, which are regarded as anomalies.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:14): on indulgence—Given that the impartiality of the chair was challenged in that article, it's important for the opposition to say something. On the occasions when you have exercised that casting vote, Mr Speaker, you have followed those conventions to the letter and on occasions when points of order have been raised where we thought that you had not followed the conventions, you've considered it and, in your final decision, have followed them to the letter, including in particular the final vote of the last parliament. The opposition hopes it's not too long before you are exercising the casting vote again, Mr Speaker.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (15:15): I wish to make a personal explanation. Today in question time, the Treasurer purported to quote from The Australian, which he didn't, about our position on tax cuts and statements I made before the caucus. His statements were incorrect. What I said very clearly was that we always supported stage 1 of the tax cuts and, indeed, argued for it at the election campaign.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck—Minister for Indigenous Australians) (15:16): I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER: Do you claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr WYATT: Yes, I do.

The SPEAKER: The minister may proceed.

Mr WYATT: An article published in The West Australian today stated there is a plan being considered by the government to put economic ratings on Indigenous communities. This is wrong. I want to place on the record that there is no such plan, nor did I ask for one to be prepared.

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie—Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services) (15:16): I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

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

Mr HOWARTH: Yes, I do—most grievously.

The SPEAKER: The member may proceed.

Mr HOWARTH: Today in question time the member for Blaxland misrepresented me—as did the ABC about a week ago—in relation to the growth in homelessness versus population. Both claimed I referred to the period from the 2011 census to the 2016 census. That's untrue. I was very clear that over a 15-year period from 2001 to 2016, three levels of homelessness reduced despite a 20 per cent increase in the Australian population.

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (15:17): I seek leave to make a personal explanation.
The **SPEAKER**: Does the member claim to have been misrepresented?

**Dr GILLESPIE**: Yes, most grievously.

The **SPEAKER**: The member may proceed.

**Dr GILLESPIE**: Today I was reported by a media outlet as playing down sexual assault allegations as a beat-up following a story aired earlier. As I entered parliament this morning, I was asked by a journalist about bullying in the Liberal Party. I indicated that I was not a member of the Liberal Party, rather, a member of the National Party, and that the National Party had just had three more talented women elected in this House and in the other place. I also added that the same occurred in the Liberal Party, with many more talented women entering the House of Representatives and the other place. Unaware of the stories being reported earlier in the day about sexual harassment allegations, I thought the question asked of me, which I thought was quite reasonable, related to matters that were raised after a change in the Liberal Party leadership last year. This is what I was referring to as a beat-up.

I practised medicine for 33 years, caring for women of all ages and some of them were victims of sexual assault and violence—

The **SPEAKER**: I just say to the member for Lyne, he can point out where he's been misrepresented. I appreciate what he's trying to say, but he—

**Dr GILLESPIE**: I hope this clarifies my position to the reporter who wrote this.

**AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS**

The **SPEAKER** (15:18): I present the Auditor-General's performance audit report No. 4 of 2019-20 entitled *OneSKY: Contractual Arrangements: Air Services Australia, Department of Defence*

Document made a parliamentary paper in accordance with the resolution agreed to on 28 March 2018.

**DOCUMENTS**

**Presentation**

**Mr PORTER** (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:18): Documents are tabled in accordance with the list circulated to honourable members earlier today. Full details of the documents will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**Health**

The **SPEAKER** (15:19): I have received a letter from the honourable member for McMahon proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Government's failures on health policy.

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

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

**Mr BOWEN** (McMahon) (15:19): The health policy failures of the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government can perhaps be best summed up by two key facts: after six years of Liberal government, out-of-pocket costs for health care have never been higher, and waiting lists for hospitals have never been longer. The Liberals will never understand—or will the Nationals—that those two key facts are very clearly linked.

But in relation to out-of-pocket costs, I do want to say this: this is not an unintended consequence of the government's policies. Some people would say the Minister for Health is incompetent. In this regard, I would disagree—he has set out to achieve a policy outcome, and he has achieved it and he's achieved it quite competently. The Liberals have been trying, as a matter of deliberate policy, to increase out-of-pocket health costs for six years. It started in the 2014 budget with the $7 GP tax. There is one reason that that $7 GP tax is not the law of the land today, and that reason is this side of the House, who blocked it in the other place. Members opposite wanted a GP tax and they couldn't get it through the House. So then they set about a cunning plan to achieve it in a different way. They achieved it in a way which doesn't require the approval of the parliament: the Medicare freeze. I say this: they've achieved their aim. They've increased out-of-pocket costs of health care via the Medicare freeze. They've been at it for six years and, to give them their due, they've got it done. The member for Flinders has done what the member for Dickson could not achieve—increase out-of-pocket costs substantially. The government's own data shows the average out-of-pocket cost to see a GP is now $39.55, up 36 per cent since this government came to office!

It's not just general practice. It's even worse, much worse, when we think about specialists. Out-of-pocket costs to see a specialist on this government's watch have gone up 58 per cent since this government came to office! This

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is having a real impact, not just on the wallets of Australians but on the health care of Australians. Each year, 1.3 million Australians delay or avoid medical treatment because of the cost! We pride ourselves in Australia on universal healthcare. It's not universal while that's happening. It's not universal while 1.3 million Australians are missing out. While this government is in office, 660,000 Australians skip seeing a GP because of the cost, and 538,000 of our fellow Australians avoid seeing a specialist, care that's recommended to them, because of the cost.

On this side of the House, we understand that the impact of this is not equal across the country. People in regional areas are 25 per cent more likely to skip or avoid medical care because of the cost. People who live in the most socially and economically disadvantaged areas of our country are 33 per cent more likely to skip medical care because of the cost. Women are a staggering 66 per cent more likely than men to skip or avoid medical treatment because of the cost.

There is not one Medicare Card which says your Medicare Card is what you need, next to your credit card. You shouldn't have to reach into your wallet for your credit card when you need urgent medical care. You shouldn't have to travel from one end of Sydney to another. You shouldn't have to travel into Adelaide from regional South Australia to get an MRI. You should get the treatment you deserve, as your birthright as an Australian. That is what the Labor Party believes. That is what the Labor Party believed when we created Medicare. That is what we believed when we created Medibank, against the vociferous opposition of those opposite, who abolished it when

People who skip primary health care don't get better—they get sicker. This is what we were talking about at the beginning—the link between those two policy outcomes—they get sicker and they go to hospital, because eventually they have to. Almost a million more people now than when the Liberals were elected are presenting at public hospital emergency departments. Of course, the Liberals promised to fund 50 per cent of the growth in hospital costs, and they were lying when they promised it. They were lying when they promised it and they have breached that promise. We are seeing the impacts of this in hospital after hospital across the country. We are seeing waiting times and waiting lists the highest they have ever been.

There were some recent figures from Tasmania—talking about the members for Bass and Braddon—in relation to waiting times. I'll just share with the House one of those figures. People who present at Royal Hobart Hospital emergency department with mental health concerns have an average waiting time of 19.4 hours. The longest wait is 183 hours. That's seven days—more than seven days—that people are waiting to be admitted to the hospital when they present at the emergency department of Royal Hobart Hospital with mental health concerns. This government thinks that's okay. This government thinks that it's acceptable in Australia in 2019 for that to be the case. Well, it is not acceptable and Australians deserve better than that.

Another thing Australians are waiting to access and are paying more to access is MRIs—MRIs across the country. That's why the Labor Party went to the election with a commitment for Medicare licences for MRIs—an extra 20 MRI licences. Every single one of those commitments we took to the election was for a public hospital—every single one. In relation to MRIs, the government eventually caught up with us. They delivered five MRIs in their first five years in office—just five. But they eventually caught up and started committing to MRIs. They didn't commit to the people of Macquarie. I was talking to the member for Macquarie this morning about MRIs. There is not one Medicare licensed MRI in her electorate. We committed to Katoomba Hospital. The member for Macquarie knows her constituents are having to travel to the inner city, to the North Shore of Sydney, at inconvenient hours and times to get an MRI treatment. We said that's not good enough.

The government didn't match us in Macquarie. What the minister did do is deliver an MRI in Parkside for Sound Radiology. There are nine MRIs within five kilometres. He didn't deliver one for Victor Harbor or Gawler, where there are no MRIs. He delivered one for Parkside and then said, 'I didn't know the CEO was the Vice-President of the South Australian Liberal Party.' After being found out he said, 'Oh! That Liberal Party! That vice-president!' Apparently, if you are a radiologist vice-president of the Liberal Party, if you 'have a go you get a go'. If you have a go at the minister, you get an MRI, if you're the Vice-President of the Liberal Party of South Australia. We know whose side the minister's on. He's on the side of vice-presidents of the Liberal Party, not the side of patients in Macquarie, in Victor Harbor, in Gawler, in regional Australia, who are travelling for miles and miles to get an MRI. No, they miss out—on this minister's watch. But, if you're connected, if you're a senior office holder of the Liberal Party, you pick up the phone, you have a handy, cosy, little meeting with the minister, then you get an MRI licence—a lucrative MRI licence—on this government's watch.

The Australian people deserve better than this. The Australian people deserve truly universal health care. They deserve a healthcare system which says your Medicare card is what you need, not your credit card. You shouldn't have to travel from one end of Sydney to another. You shouldn't have to travel into Adelaide from regional South Australia to get an MRI. You should get the treatment you deserve, as your birthright as an Australian. That is what the Labor Party believes. That is what the Labor Party believed when we created Medicare. That is what we believed when we created Medibank, against the vociferous opposition of those opposite, who abolished it when
they came to office and who opposed Medicare at every step of the way, and have sought every day to dilute Medicare, to reduce Medicare.

We invented Medicare, but we recognise more needs to be done. We recognise that until Australia has truly universal health care we are diminished as a country and we are diminished as a society. We, as the people who invented Medicare, as the people who fought for Medicare, will grow Medicare, will protect Medicare and will nurture Australia's universal healthcare system. We will recognise that Australians, regardless of where they live, deserve to have that health care as a birthright—not at the whim of the minister, but as a right for all Australians.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (15:29): I am delighted that the member for McMahon has become the opposition shadow health spokesperson, because it's going to be a lot of fun. Let me begin with what he just said. He made a false statement before this parliament. He said not one of their licences was to anything other than a public hospital. St John of God Midland hospital is not a public hospital. He just made that statement up. He made stuff up. He also talked about Mount Barker hospital. It is delivered by Dr Jones radiology, a company that is very familiar to the member opposite. I know this as a fact. I just want to quote from something Dr Jones in relation to Mount Barker.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): The member for Sydney is warned on props.

Mr HUNT: Dr Jones said: 'Mount Barker has grown immensely. The population needs support. As a business owner partnered with three sites—Mount Barker, Goolwa and Victor Harbour—it is difficult for our clients without an MRI licence.' He went on to say, 'Labor and Rebekha Sharkie have both recognised this and promised a licence to Mount Barker.' They have promised a licence to Mount Barker, the private provider which provides services in town—that is not a good look for somebody who just made a false claim before this House.

But he's not the only one. There was the leader of the Opposition this morning on Adelaide radio. I'm just dealing with the false claims that we've already heard. The Leader of the Opposition on Adelaide radio this morning said: 'When Labor was in office, the decisions were made under the same process. The difference is that Labor awarded these licences to public hospitals. That went through processes.' In question time I named just a sample, but I can run through even more, whether it's Sunshine Coast Radiology, Queensland X-Ray, Qscan Redcliffe or CitiScan Radiology. These are all private. There's I-MED in Hurstville, Queensland. In South Australia there's Benson Radiology in Salisbury and Benson Radiology in North Adelaide. We had Dr Jones's partners in South Terrace, Adelaide. We had Adelaide diagnostic imaging in Menindee, Adelaide diagnostic imaging in Woodville and Dr Jones's partner Tennyson Centre in Kurralta Park. All of these are private.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

Mr HUNT: The Leader of the Opposition attempted to say across the table, 'No, I was talking about what he promised this time.' Well, he was wrong about this time and when he said this morning that he was referring specifically to when Labor was in office. That's what he said on the public record and that's what his own transcript shows. What all this means is that Labor makes stuff up in this place.

But let's go to the essential questions here. On our health record compared with Labor's, let me start with a fundamental point that was made by them. The shadow minister talked about people's access to doctors. Guess what? The bulk-billing rate for people to be able to go to the doctor for free is up from 82 per cent under the previous government to 86 per cent under us. That means more people than ever before, not just in numbers but as a percentage of services, are accessing a doctor without having to pay anything. There were 133 million free GP services delivered in the last year—27 million more than in Labor's last year. So they're the facts. It's not just an increase in numbers but an increase in the percentage of Australians who are able to attend the doctor for free.

In terms of hospital funding, this is very interesting. We have seen an increase in federal hospital funding from $13.3 billion under Labor in 2012-13 to $23 billion to $24 billion to $25 billion to $26 billion during the course of this budget cycle. Most significantly, I had a look at Labor's costings, conveniently put out by the now shadow minister for health, the previous shadow Treasurer. We remember that one. He said, 'If you don't like it, don't vote for it,' and they didn't. It was a very, very helpful intervention, may I say. There were two things to really talk about. I wanted to talk about Medicare. I went to Labor's costings and it was very interesting. On ending the Medicare freeze, here are Labor's costings. I looked in the columns as to how much they had for this because I thought we'd done that. In 2019-20, there were zero dollars. In 2020-21, there were zero dollars. In 2021-22, there was were dollars. The total was zero. They actually said they were ending the Medicare freeze and then put zero dollars in their costings. My advice would be that, if you are going to do that, you probably don't want to pretend you are ending something and then allocating nothing.
The other thing, of course, is: what did this set of costings show in relation to additional funding for hospitals? It had nothing under the target of 50 per cent that they talk about—nothing for the current agreement, which ends in 2020. When you go to Labor's costings, there is nothing in terms of the additional hospital funding under the National Health Reform Agreement. There is nothing for those out-years through the entire next five-year agreement. But nor was there anything in the budget allocated for the five years beyond that. Out to 2030, their costings, this gentleman, this member of parliament, had zero. So for ending the Medicare freeze he had zero, zero, zero. We'll call him Audi! On their side, there was not just one year, but 11 years of nothing in the costings for additional hospital funding under the National Health Reform Agreement. That is almost a world record in terms of achievements. Under us, we have an extra $30 billion over the course of the current agreement. That is real funding that will deliver real outcomes for the states. And that will mean increased opportunities for people to have services in hospitals, on top of the record GP bulk-billing.

But then we come to medicines. Medicines is an area of particular shame for the ALP. Under us, one of the signatures of our government has been the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. We have listed over 2,100 new or amended medicines. Of most significance is the commitment to list everything that the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee recommends. I go to the 2011 Labor budget because, helpfully, they put their policy in the budget. It says that, due to fiscal circumstances, the listing of some medicines will be deferred until fiscal circumstances permit. That includes medicines to treat the formation of blood clots, to treat deep vein thrombosis; severe asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; endometriosis and in-vitro fertilisation; and schizophrenia. All of these things have occurred as a moment of shame.

Opposition members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members opposite!

Mr HUNT: There were 50 groups that came out and criticised and campaigned against the then government for this fundamental breach of faith: for the first time, when the PBAC made recommendations, they declined to pursue listings.

We will list everything that is recommended.

Mr Bowen interjecting—

Mr HUNT: Let me give you an example—

Mr Bowen interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): The member for McMahon is warned!

Mr HUNT: Kalydeco begins from 1 August—tomorrow. We have seen Orkambi. All of these things represent the difference. Most interestingly, why did they stop the listing? Due to fiscal circumstances—they ran out of money. And what was behind it? Above all things, what was behind the fiscal mismanagement? They had a massive $5.2 billion blowout in the cost of services due to people smugglers and the flow of people associated with them. I seem to recall that there were 398 boats when the shadow minister for health was the Minister for Immigration. There were 24,000 people and a blowout of $5.2 billion. That's why they actually ran out of money. To put it very, very simply, he could not stop the boats but he did stop the medicines. This is the man who stopped the medicines. His border failures contributed to a massive budget failure, and that in turn was why Labor stopped the medicines. Those are the fiscal circumstances. That is why Labor had a horrific record in government and we will never trust them to manage health in Australia.

Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (15:39): That was the most pathetic defence of the government's health system I have ever heard. We got one minute of stats that proved they had cut hospital funding and then he spent nine minutes talking about the Labor Party—nine minutes of the 10 minutes! That's because they don't have an agenda for health reform and it's because they're a third-term government looking for an agenda and something to do. Something to do, Minister, would be to fix the health system!

In my home state of Tasmania the health system is in crisis; it is crumbling. It is so bad that the health minister had to be sacked just a few weeks ago. Even his own side called for his sacking, it was so bad! We have ambulances ramping at the Royal Hobart Hospital and they have been ramping for 10,000 hours—10,000 hours! Sometimes in Hobart at the moment, if you call an ambulance for a major emergency one is not available. That's what is happening in our health system in Tasmania today. The health system has been cut by state and federal Liberals so badly it is failing. It is failing Tasmanians. We see this across the country, with other hospitals failing Australians.

The other really interesting data about the Royal Hobart Hospital that shocked me was that the Royal Hobart Hospital, in the last nine months, was experiencing bed block 93 per cent of the time. For 93 per cent of the time there were no beds available at the Royal Hobart Hospital to admit new patients. This government has failed
Tasmanians and their health; it's failing Australians and their health, and for the health minister to get up here and ramble on about how bad Labor is! You are in government! You won, you know! You're actually supposed to fix the health system. That is your job.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Franklin will address her comments through the chair!

Ms COLLINS: Sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker. We all know the impact that is happening. Of course, the health workers in the Royal Hobart Hospital system are really struggling to meet demand. They're doing their absolute best but they are under enormous stress. It's got to the point where the AMA has said:

Cuts to hospitals' budgets will see patients not receiving the care they need when they need it and elective surgery patients having to wait longer for their operations, putting lives at risk.

Simon Judkins, the ACEM president has said:

This is pushing the hospital and its patients to the edge of a cliff.

The current state government has told the Royal Hobart Hospital staff to brace for $50 million in further cuts. How can Tasmania possibly sustain this? It is not okay. I see the health minister walking out of the chamber; he's not even going to stay for the rest of the debate about the health system! I can't believe that he would just walk out like that. This is outrageous.

We've seen the higher out-of-pocket costs which the member for McMahon talked about. This really impacts on areas like Tasmania, where people are on lower-than-average incomes. If you can't afford those out-of-pocket costs you put them off. You simply don't go to the doctor. You don't do it; you wait until you are really, really sick and then you end up in an emergency department. We can see that that's what's happening in Tasmania all the time.

It's the same with specialists. Specialist waiting times in Tasmania are outpatient waiting times through the Royal Hobart Hospital because people can't afford to go to a specialist and pay the out-of-pocket costs. To give the House an idea: for a neurology outpatient waiting list, the average wait is 202 days. In gynaecology, the outpatient waiting list is an average of 154 days. This is just before you see the specialist; you then have to wait for any surgery on top of that. This is just for getting in to see a specialist. How, in Australia, when we are such a wealthy nation, is this allowed to happen, particularly under what is supposed to be a universal healthcare system?

It is not universal when people are making decisions not to access services because they simply cannot afford them.

When this government talks about, 'If you have a go, you get a go,' that's clearly not happening to those Tasmanians who want to access the health system. It's clearly not working for those Tasmanian workers in our health system who are struggling with the demand, who are struggling with underfunding and who are becoming more and more stressed as the system becomes more and more stressed, as the hospital is put on high alert and codes almost daily because of what is happening in the hospital. It is simply not okay.

During the campaign, we had the members for Bass and Braddon, while they were candidates, going out there and talking about how they were going to do more for health in Tasmania. Well, it wasn't true; they were not telling the truth. They should come into this place and explain to Tasmanians exactly what is happening to the health system in Tasmania and how they're going to fix it.

Mr GEE (Calare—Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister) (15:44): Don't they love the big lies about health on that side of the aisle? The very poor contributions we've heard from those opposite today reflect the fact that they have learned absolutely nothing from the recent federal election. They still now in this place seek to peddle the same lies and deception they peddled during the federal election campaign, which have been repudiated and rejected by the electorates of Australia in the country and in the cities.

What was endorsed and backed at the last federal election was record funding for public hospitals right across Australia, including in country Australia and in Central West New South Wales. It has gone from $13.3 billion in 2012-13—that's record spending for our public hospitals and real results on the ground—up to $21 billion in 2018-19 and rising to $26.2 billion in 2022-23. That record funding for our public hospitals was overwhelmingly endorsed at the last federal election in the face of the big lies and the big scare campaigns. Remember we had the Mediscare campaign. Then they tried to run a big scare campaign on health, where they said funding to public hospitals had been cut, but this record funding was endorsed right across New South Wales and Australia.

Indeed we saw terrific results in all country seats, particularly in New South Wales, where the margin in Calare rose to 63.29 per cent on a two-party preferred basis, a great increase in the margin. In Riverina it rose to 69.48 per cent; in Lyne, 65.17 per cent—wasn't that a terrific result!—in Parks, 66.91 per cent; Cowper, 56.79 per cent and a great new member; in Page, a terrific result, up 7.51 per cent to 59.45 per cent; and, in New England, a very
healthy 64.36 per cent. But, in spite of all those increases, we need to make mention of the gold medal performer in the last federal election, the record breaker

**Mr Tudge:** Who was that?

**Mr GEE:** It was our very own member for Hunter. The member for Hunter was a record-breaker. He was the face of country Australia for those opposite and he actually recorded the highest swing against any sitting member in the current parliament. It went down to 52.98 per cent, a drop of 9.48 per cent. I think that shows that those opposite took policies of lies and deception to the last federal election, which were repudiated by electorates right around Australia, but particularly in country Australia, where on the one side of the ledger the National Party, with all these healthy margin increases and our record spending on hospitals, was endorsed, yet those opposite, including the member for Hunter, suffered what I would have to say are pretty embarrassing swings against them.

Against this we have some wonderful projects happening right across country Australia including, for example, the Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network. In the seat of Calare it was $22 million for the school that's going to be operated by CSU and WSU. Folks in this House know all about it. It's going to be training doctors for practice in the bush for generations, building the next workforce for country Australia. We have the $18 million world class medical research facility which is going to be built in Orange, which, again, is going to be operated by CSU and WSU. That facility is going to bring together the best researchers in rural health and rural medicine.

Let's not forget mental health—very important for people in country Australia and particularly so in the face of this devastating drought. The government has boosted mental health funding by $73.6 million, with $46.1 million focused on addressing youth mental health and suicide prevention. In the wonderful city of Lithgow in our seat of Calare we're just about to open a new headspace facility to support better mental health outcomes for young people. That was following an investment of over $1 million by the government, spearheaded by the Minister for Health, who really understands what country Australia is all about. Those opposite have perpetuated lies. They seek to do it again now, and those lies have been repudiated.

**Ms McBRIDE (Dobell) (15:49):** The member for Calare has just done a victory lap, spruiking the margins of his colleagues in their electorates. What does that have to do with regional health care? Have you looked at the figures in regional health care—the delays in seeing services and the delays to access? Have you seen that? I worked at Wyong Hospital in a regional community in my electorate in my area for over 10 years. I worked in the inpatient mental health units. I invite the Minister for Health, Minister Hunt, to come with the opposition health spokesperson, Chris Bowen, and me to visit Wyong Hospital and see the conditions of people's lives and why they end up in emergency departments waiting before they end up in mental health inpatient units. In my electorate of Dobell on the New South Wales Central Coast, people are doing it tough under this government. We have over 21,000 age pensioners and a youth unemployment rate sitting at 18 per cent. It is young families and older people that most need health care. And where is funding being ripped out of health care? In regional Australia.

What people in regional Australia deserve is good, strong representation and a minister who cares about them and our community, not about spruiking PBS listings. One thing about spruiking PBS listings that particularly disturbs me as a pharmacist is: what about people delaying or avoiding filling prescriptions? You can spruik listing any drug on the PBS, but what if people can't afford to fill prescriptions? That is particularly a problem in regional Australia. According to ABS data, one in 14 people—seven per cent of people—avoid taking prescribed medicine due to cost, and we know the rate of people skipping prescriptions is twice as high in the most disadvantaged areas as in the least disadvantaged; it is 10 per cent of people in the most disadvantaged areas. This means that the cost of medicines is contributing to healthcare inequality in Australia. You can spruik listing PBS drugs, but if people can't afford them then someone will delay or avoid filling a prescription. I've been there in an outpatient clinic, where a mental health patient said to me, 'Which medication can I do without?' These are real people with major mental health problems who need proper support, and they're having to make this decision that no-one should have to make: 'Which one can I skip? Which one can I delay?' People are sometimes taking medication every second day, or they might get one prescription filled one month and another prescription filled another month. This is the state of health care in regional Australia. This minister just does not get it or does not care, and I haven't even got to vaccines, the national immunisation program and the outbreaks that are happening in communities yet. This minister is neglecting regional and rural Australia.

I'd like to give you an example. The minister was spruiking MRI licences yesterday. The hospital in Wyong, where I worked, has a shell in the new redevelopment plans. The Liberals tried to privatise this hospital. First they tried to sell it off. Now they're going to introduce paid parking when there is no public transport. We know that in the redevelopment plans there is a shell for an MRI machine but no Medicare licence for an MRI machine. Elizabeth Polson from Tumbi Umbi wrote to me about a recent emergency trip to Wyong Hospital, and I say this with respect to the staff who work there; it is the strain they're under. She had to have a CT scan at the hospital but needed further scans. She was waiting, and she had to be transported by patient transport to another MRI provider
because she couldn't have it at the hospital. While she was waiting, this is what she witnessed. She was saying that people were in dire circumstances. Another person, Linda, sent an email to me while she was sitting waiting in an emergency department:

I'm currently sitting in the emergency waiting room at Wyong hospital, we are now into our third hour here, my daughter just had an X-ray for her leg, we were put back out into the waiting room because 'there's no doctors to see her X-ray we don't have one to look at it yet.

She further describes 'outrageous treatment sitting here near whilst a grown man lays on the floor vomiting for more than two hours of this time'. This is what this government thinks is acceptable. I repeat my invitation for Minister Hunt to come and visit regional hospitals like Wyong—emergency departments or mental health inpatient units—and see the circumstances of people's lives and the results of the government's policies not just in health care but in education, transport and housing, which lead to people being in crisis and ending up in emergency departments or having long stays in public hospital inpatient units that are under strain and are not properly resourced, with staff who are ending up at risk of burnout. The government must do better.

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (15:54): The topic of today's matter of public importance is as short on words as it is on substance. It's as short on words as it is on fact. The previous speaker spoke about the so-called state of health care in the regions. Now, I come from regional Australia—I come from the Sunshine Coast—and I think I'm fairly well placed to speak about health care from a user's perspective.

Yesterday, today and tomorrow, each and every single day, eight Australians will take their own lives. Usually, on average, five men and three women will take their own lives. For every one person that takes their own life, 24 will attempt it. This is an absolute scourge on our society. In fact, I'm sorry, I've inadvertently misled the House: it's not 24; it's 32. Thirty-two people will attempt to take their own lives for every one person that does take their life. We, as members of this House, must always remember that mental health should be above politics.

I want to commend and set out some of the things that this Minister for Health has done in relation to mental health. In my own electorate, because that's the one I understand the most, he's done some incredible things. He's provided $7½ million of funding for the Thompson institute, a neuroscience research centre that conducts research and provides clinical care for people who suffer from dementia and for people who are in youth mental health and suicide prevention programs. The Commonwealth has funded that, through this health minister, for three years. He's provided funding of $12 million to build a residential facility for families of people having to be treated at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital. He's provided $6 million for the construction of Australia's first residential eating disorder facility.

I see the member for Sydney raising her eyes there. Australia has not had one residential eating disorder facility. When you look at other countries around the world, we know that the best form of treatment for people with eating disorders is a dedicated residential facility.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): The member for Sydney on a point of order?

Ms Plibersek: I'd like the member opposite to withdraw his reference to me. I was not listening to him or responding in any way to what he said. I was not even facing him, so I don't know how he would have seen my face.

Mr WALLACE: I'll withdraw. I thought I saw her raise her eyes at the sky, but I'm happy to withdraw that.

EndED Butterfly House is building Australia's first residential eating disorder facility. Eating disorders are a scourge on our community, and, for the first time, the federal government is really stepping up to the plate and providing funding to address that scourge. The Sunshine Coast is becoming the epicentre for the treatment of eating disorders. A $3.2 million pilot for the treatment of eating disorders commenced there.

The federal government rolled out a program for treating eating disorders and listed it on the Medicare Benefits Schedule, giving it a benefit number. It's providing 20 psychotherapy sessions for less complex eating disorders and up to 50 psychotherapy sessions for people with anorexia nervosa or other complex eating disorders. This government will invest another $110 million to roll out these programs right across the country. So it's not just a matter of what's happening in my electorate; it's happening right across the country.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (16:00): The health system is failing Australians and the facts don't lie. On 15 March this year, one of my residents wrote a five-page letter to the health minister, in which he referred to the failings, incompetence and blunders relating to medical treatment for himself, his wife and his two adult daughters. I'm happy to make that letter available to the minister if he needs it. I don't know whether the minister has responded to that letter, but it clearly articulates and outlines everything that is wrong with Australia's health system. Sadly, his youngest daughter has died.
I understand that the responsibility for health services in this country is shared between state and federal governments, but the reality is that the buck stops with the federal health minister if we're going to get national changes to the services available to people. I heard the minister talking about Medicare bulk-billing rates. Minister, there is a vast difference between the rates, in terms of the services that are billed, and the number of people, in terms of the percentages that are being bulk billed for their treatment. Indeed, I refer the minister to an article written by Jennifer Doggett on 17 July which clearly outlines what the real situation is.

I turn to my own home state of South Australia, where elective surgery waiting lists have blown out to, in many cases, over two years. I regularly get people from my electorate coming to me for assistance to try to speed up the wait for surgery they need, because they are getting desperate. The South Australian state government, now desperate, wants to outsource elective surgery to the private system because the public system simply cannot cope. If that doesn't tell you exactly what's going on, then nothing else ever will. The reality is that that is happening right around Australia. We could go to the public dental services as well. The same applies there, where waiting lists are simply unreasonable and people have to wait for months and months before they get the treatment they need. I haven't even touched on the mental health services, both in South Australia and across the country, which are exactly the same when people are wanting to get the services they need.

I want to turn to another critical issue: that hospitals, because they cannot cope, are discharging patients before they should be getting discharged. There was a case in South Australia only a couple of months ago where a person died as a result of being discharged when they shouldn't have. That case is now before the state coroner for investigation.

I'll turn briefly to rural health in the time I have left. The front page of Adelaide's *Sunday Mail* last weekend talked about, effectively, the crisis in getting health professionals into country South Australia. There is a shortage, with 60 doctor positions that are unfilled and have been unfilled for months and months. It is unlikely that those positions will get filled in the near future. Again, that means that the people in those areas are not getting the services they need. They are predominantly in the electorate of the member for Grey, who is in the chamber. I'm sure he would be well aware of what's going on in his electorate.

One of the solutions to all of that was presented last night by a refugee who came to this country, Aseel Yako. He came from Iraq as a refugee and was a practising doctor in Iraq for 20 years. He had experience and expertise but had to navigate an absolute minefield just to get his credentials recognised in Australia so that he could go and practise. After a long, long period and after going through all the obstacles he needed to go through, he finally got work at the Warragul hospital in the electorate of the member for Monash, who, I'm sure, spoke beautifully about this person at the launch of the book *Refugee Stories: In Their Own Words*.

The whole argument is that if there are people out there who are willing to work in the country areas, why don't we do something about making their pathway a lot easier? Can I say to the members opposite who keep talking about their response to rural health needs: you've been in government for six years. Your 10-year plan means it will be 16 years at best before anything is really done for the people in country Australia. Quite frankly, none of the ministers who are making that claim will even be here to be held to account for promising the people in rural Australia the services they need.

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (16:05): This is an important motion. We should be debating the level of services in Australia.

I think those who have brought the motion forward don't have a great record in this area. They were, of course, the party that brought us the 'Mediscare' campaign in 2016, when they said that those on this side, the government, were going to sell off Medicare. In fact, we've lifted the funding by 75 per cent, and we've guaranteed the future of Medicare. So that was completely misleading.

But it is an issue. As our population expands and ages, the demands on our health services become greater. That is why I am so very pleased that the government is up to the task, because we are lifting the taxpayers' contribution to health, and we are undertaking many innovative things within the system to bring about a better outcome.

In fact, from when we came to government in 2013, the hospitals budget has risen from $13.36 billion to a projected $26.2 billion by 2022, which is a doubling—a doubling of money for these services. That's well, well in front of CPI or even medical inflation. So we are making a significant contribution. It is about actually getting value for money, where we have to concentrate.

As to bulk-billing, I heard conversation coming from the other side about the ever-increasing size of the gap. But they should be very pleased, at least, that the number of people paying the gap is falling, because 86 per cent, up from 82 per cent, of Medicare charge items are being bulk-billed.
I also want to speak a bit about mental health, and I'm indebted to the former speaker who spoke about mental health issues. This is a very important thing. We are lifting expenditure in the mental health field over the forward estimates by $736 million.

In my electorate of Grey, mental health services are delivered by the primary healthcare network. I've told this House before—and it's something I'm very proud of—that when the former Minister for Health, Peter Dutton, was the minister there was a proposal that there be one primary healthcare network for South Australia, and I put the case that I thought that, under any circumstances, a dedicated country primary healthcare network would be far better. I'll always trust people in the country to make decisions about things in the country, far more than somebody making decisions about the whole system. In fact, that has put more than $31 million back into the electorate of Grey since the 2015 start-up, largely dedicated to mental health.

In 2013, when we came to government, there was one headspace unit in Grey. There are now four. Since that time, we've managed to get funding for a unit in Whyalla and another in Port Lincoln, and we now have a flying headspace, operating with the flying doctor out of Port Augusta. It's a wonderful outcome.

I now want to touch on doctors and the member for Makin's comments before. He is quite right: we have a crisis as to rural doctors in South Australia. We are more than 30 short in my electorate of Grey. It is something that I have been waxing on ever since I got to this place, because I had been, as a member of hospital boards and hospital associations before I got to this parliament, dealing with the issue of trying to get doctors to work in the country for many years before I came here. There are no easy answers, Member for Makin. And I'm thankful that the government is actually recognising the issues and providing $550 million for the rural health strategy, and delivering a dedicated string of rural medical school networks to try to increase that supply. But the problem, with doctors in the country and doctors generally, is that it's like trying to turn the Queen Mary around—it really takes a long time. Once you start putting things in the pipeline, you're talking 10 to 15 years before you get the results, and we've got a crisis now.

I've spoken many times about this issue in the parliament and have put forward the proposal that we need to move to postcode-specific Medicare provider numbers in Australia. Why we allow people to set up business virtually wherever they like, when 90 per cent of their income or thereabouts is coming from the taxpayer, is beyond me. In fact, I warn now, and I have warned before—and I think we're already in that case—where we are seeing—(Time expired)

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (16:10): I know quite a lot about health and health care, and this is indeed a matter of major public importance. In my maiden speech, I spoke about the difficulties of access to health care and what drove me to want to represent my community in federal parliament—to try and improve access to health care. I can speak for hours about this. There is no doubt that there is a crisis. Issues Australians face in accessing health care are getting more and more difficult. Gap costs are rising exponentially, such that many people—many working class people, many people on moderate incomes—cannot afford to access good health care in my electorate.

I'll just give you a couple of examples. Recently I was approached by a constituent, Alan, an elderly gentleman who required an MRI scan of his abdomen because of an abdominal mass. He had an implantable pacemaker present and required an MRI scan to be done at Liverpool Hospital, a public hospital. He was going to be charged $900 for this—no refund. He couldn't afford it and wanted me to contact the health service to see if we could change anything. They refused. He had to borrow $900 from his son to pay for it.

I was contacted recently by Mary, a lady who sustained a spinal injury in a severe motor vehicle accident and was incontinent. There is no public urological clinic in my public hospital, Campbelltown Hospital. So she had to see someone privately and could not afford the $500 fee. She wanted me to ring the urologist to see if he would bulk-bill her. He usually never bulk-bills anyone but he was able to do this because I rang him. I was also contacted by Daphne, an elderly lady with chronic heart failure. She couldn't get in to see a private cardiologist because, once again, we have no public cardiology clinic at my public hospital. She had to see someone privately and she couldn't afford the $600 gap fee for an ultrasound and consultation.

As you can see, everyday people are facing these huge access issues, with huge gap costs to get in to see doctors, general practitioners and specialists. Gap costs for specialists have absolutely skyrocketed. I can tell the House, as a doctor, that I'm ashamed to see people in the 21st century in Australia struggling to access good health care. We're heading towards an American style health system, and that is a huge shame. This government and this health minister seem to be quite glad to allow this to happen.

We've even seen huge cost-shifting exercises in New South Wales by the state government, with a gradual deterioration in public outpatient clinics—indeed, the public outpatient clinics should be seen as being in palliative care because they're so run down and it's so difficult for people to access public hospital care. Waiting
lists are getting longer and longer and longer. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, a staggering three million Australians are putting off going to see a GP or specialist or getting tests done because they can't afford the costs. That is a great shame.

Recently I saw a pregnant lady—her doctor thought she may be pregnant with twins—but she was putting off getting the obstetric ultrasound until she could get in to the outpatient obstetric clinic, which would be when she was around seven and a half months pregnant, which is really far too late to be getting an obstetric ultrasound performed. It was a great shame.

Another area where we're struggling is private health insurance costs, which are beyond the reach of many Australians. More and more people are dropping out of private health insurance. It is indicative of the conservative politics in both state and federal systems, and particularly in New South Wales. The New South Wales government's answer to this is to privatise everything. The federal government's answer is to want to try and introduce a GP fee for every consultation, which will further punish those on low incomes. People are waiting longer than ever for elective surgery. For cataract surgery in my electorate, the wait is close to two years; for ENT surgery, it's about 18 months; and for even a simple test like a colonoscopy, it's over a year. It's a great shame. Public hospital outpatient clinics are just about dead. People are forgoing treatment. They're not getting the care they need, and it's this government's responsibility. (Time expired)

Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (16:15): I'm delighted to stand here after my first speech to speak on behalf of the fact that we as a government are delivering on health care. We're delivering in so many ways, and I'm very proud of the fact that Minister Greg Hunt has made some fantastic announcements in the lead-up to the most recent election. We've made a record investment in hospitals and in bulk-billing, and we have a Medicare guarantee. With regard to record hospital investment, the federal funding for public hospital services under the Liberals and Nationals government has increased from $13 billion in 2012-13 to $21 billion in 2018-19 and to $26 billion in 2022-23. Those are the facts. The facts speak for themselves. This means more hospital services, more doctors and more nurses.

We on this side of the House understand that investment in health is so important, but we also understand that Australia has one of the best healthcare systems in the world. It is true that we can always do better. In fact it's important that we do better, and we are doing that with record health investment and record investment in bulk-billing. With an increase of four per cent in bulk-billing in the period of time that we've been in government—with over 133 million free GP services delivered last year; 27 million more than in Labor's last year in government—I can proudly say that we've increased our GP bulk-billing rate to 86 per cent from 82 per cent in Labor's last year in government. These are important facts that speak for themselves. We've also delivered the long-term future of Medicare. This is incredibly important for those who need a Medicare Guarantee Act and ensures that we have sufficient funding to reduce the cost of diagnostic services, including ultrasound and x-rays, for patients. If you can't manage the economy, you can't manage health. But I'd like to say that I'm particularly delighted with the increased attention that this federal government has given, in this term of government, to two areas. The first of those is mental health. The second is something that's very dear to my heart, and that is medical research.

We all know someone who has been deeply affected by mental health issues. Mental health is such an important area to invest in. The government is boosting mental health funding by $736 million, with $460 million focused on addressing youth mental health and suicide prevention. Yesterday in my first speech, I talked about how mental health had touched my family very deeply, and I know it has touched so many lives in Australia and around the world. But the high rate of suicide, particularly among young people, is a national tragedy. We need to recognise the causes of suicide and that they are complex and extend into social services and finances. Our Prime Minister has recognised this and he has made suicide prevention a key personal priority by creating a suicide prevention coordinator in his department to coordinate suicide prevention initiatives across the whole of government. This is a very, very welcomed initiative. The $460 million that is committed to youth mental health and suicide prevention includes investment in headspace networks, including one in Higgins, I'm delighted to say, which will be very important since we have a very large population of young people. We also have a very large population of the LGBTI community who, unfortunately, are a vulnerable population when it comes to this particular area. I'm also delighted to say that $152 million will be used to reduce wait times at headspace centres around the country; $2 million will be invested in the Young Ambassadors for Mental Health project; and $110 million will be used to continue the Early Psychosis Youth Services program at 14 headspace centres. These are very important initiatives which are really seeking to address what is a particularly important problem for our young in our community. Our government is leading the world in addressing eating disorders, with a $115 million announcement in December, for the first time, for centres for severe eating disorders. This really is an international first.
In my remaining few seconds I'd like to say medical research is such an important area to invest in, and I'm incredibly proud to be part of a government that has delivered the Medical Research Future Fund, which is a world first.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): I thank the member.

COMMITTEES

Law Enforcement Committee
Public Accounts and Audit Committee

Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan) (16:20): I've received a message from the Senate informing the House that Senator Fierravanti-Wells has been discharged from the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement and that Senator Antic has been appointed a member of the committee, and that Senator Patrick has been appointed a member of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit.

BILLS

Health Insurance Amendment (Bonded Medical Programs Reform) Bill 2019
First Reading

Bill received from the Senate and read a first time.
Ordered that the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting day.

Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Ensuring Integrity) Bill 2019
Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
to which the following amendment was moved:
That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:
"the House:
(1) declines to give the bill a second reading; and
(2) notes that:
(a) this Government has not proposed legislation to deal with important workplace relations matters, such as wage theft, flat lining wages growth, or deaths in the workplace;
(b) this bill and the Act it seeks to amend represent an inconsistent approach by the Government to responding to Royal Commissions; and
(c) the Government's entire approach to workplace relations laws is to attack workers' organisations with the specific intention of weakening the capacity of those organisations to combat wage theft, achieve wage growth, and ensure that workplaces are safe".

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan) (16:21): The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (16:21): We were at the point in the second reading debate where we were discussing the issue of automatic disqualification and moving on to the discretionary qualifications that are amended by this act. One of the issues that had been raised erroneously was this contention that some very minor conduct could give rise to a discretionary ground for disqualification. The examples given by members opposite included mistakenly giving the wrong notice under a workplace law. What was said was that that threshold would mean that the legislation could be misused. That argument relating to the discretionary ground for disqualification to apply is wrong. For a discretionary disqualification, the provisions clearly require that a finding by a court is required. The designated finding requires that there is a finding in a court process that either a person has committed a criminal offence against a workplace law or a person has contravened a civil penalty provision in a workplace law.

Using the example of someone who has mistakenly given the wrong notice: that would need to be the basis of a formal finding before a court. If someone had truly mistakenly given the notice, they would argue that as a reason why there should never have been or there was a defence to a formal finding by the court as to the contravention of a civil penalty provision in a workplace law. Absent an actual contravention of a civil penalty provision—that is, a knowing wrongful giving of notice—this circumstance just would not arise. If someone did such a thing by mistake, that'd be the basis for a defence in civil court proceedings and the conviction wouldn't arise, the designated finding wouldn't exist and the process wouldn't conclude, let alone be started. Even if you had a
ground existing— that is, the ground that a person committed a criminal offence against a workplace law or that the person had clearly contravened, and there was a court finding of a contravention of, a civil penalty provision in a workplace law— the court still needs to go on to a second stage where it would have to be satisfied that the disqualification was justified in all the circumstances. So this example is just wrong. It's plainly wrong, and I think it can be determined as plainly wrong from a clear reading of the act.

The third issue that was raised during the second reading debate was with respect to the insertion of a fit-and-proper-person test so that a court could make a determination after a trigger event that someone was or was not a fit and proper person. The contention from members opposite is effectively that, somehow or other, the insertion of a fit-and-proper-person test is undemocratic; I think the words used were that it hands power to unelected courts. Courts regularly make determinations as to whether or not an individual is a fit and proper person to hold certain positions. This was a ground recommended by the royal commission. The criteria that the court will need to consider when deciding whether a person is a fit and proper person to hold office in an organisation are directly relevant to whether a person is actually suitable to be in a position of trust, responsibility and, indeed, privilege, as you are if you are in a public official position in a registered organisation.

It's also notable that there is already a fit-and-proper-person test in the Fair Work Act for a person to be granted a right-of-entry permit. If you have a fit-and-proper-person test for somebody to be granted right of entry, why would you not also require someone be a fit and proper person to hold high public office in a registered organisation? Of course, that entry permit test has been there for many years. A person who is found to be dishonest, violent or unfit to exercise rights of entry to workplaces is, I think, very arguably, not a person who should be in charge or in high office in a registered organisation, nor should they be trusted to act in the best interests of the members of that organisation.

Whether disqualification should be actually ordered by a court will ultimately be a decision for an independent court, and that's where that decision, as to referencing and determining whether someone is a fit and proper person, should lie. The court will look at all of the surrounding circumstances to make a final determination as to whether someone is a fit and proper person. I also note that fitness and proprietary tests also apply right across the corporate sphere—for instance, some of them permit relevant decision-makers to take into account factors that are much broader than in the test set out in this bill. One example of many is that, for any individual to gain an Australian Financial Services Licence from ASIC, ASIC must take into account the individual's fame, character and integrity, which is in effect a fit-and-proper-person test. This is not new to the law. It's absolutely required and clearly a sensible amendment in this space.

The fourth issue I want to raise is with respect to the cancellation of registration. This is the layered, cautious, appropriate process set out in this bill for making an argument in a court that a registered organisation should have its registration cancelled or be deregistered. What I want to make absolutely clear is that the contention which has been run to media and by some people in this place—that you would have single or isolated instances of unauthorised industrial action giving rise to a court decision to deregister a whole organisation—is not correct. It is just fanciful. The examples that have been given are of bus drivers in individual instances not checking tickets, of a fast-food worker protesting conditions by refusing to ask customers if they want fries and of nurses in a nursing union protesting patient-to-nurse ratios.

The idea that this bill, as it is drafted and presented to this parliament, would allow for deregistration for such minor or isolated instances of unprotected, unlawful industrial action is patently absurd. It's untrue. To use those absurd examples, which would never lead to deregistration, shows that there aren't really proper arguments against the reforms that we have brought to this place. There has not been a union of nurses in the federated history of this country that has engaged in the level of unlawful conduct that you would need to show to allow for deregistration. Not in the 120-plus years of federation. Not even close. Very, very few union organisations would have ever met that threshold, which is the whole point of this legislation. I use the descriptor of minor—(Time expired)

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

The House divided. [16:33]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ....................66
Noes .....................76
Majority.................10
AYES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBratney, EM
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
O’Neill, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM (teller)
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakinou, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Coleman, DB
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
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
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Sharma, DN
Stegall, Z
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Haines, H
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Liddleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharkie, RCC
Simmonds, J
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
Question negatived.

The SPEAKER (16:35): (In division) The member for Watson on a point of order.

Mr Burke: I'm just seeking your guidance, under page 280 of Practice, on the requirement to vote in a certain way during divisions. Given that, when this amendment was put to the vote, the Leader of the House voted yes, does that create a requirement for him to now vote with us, which I believe this amendment would be worthy of?

The SPEAKER: Well, I wasn't here to see any of that, but we've already begun the division.

Mr Burke: There is a requirement in certain circumstances where the Speaker will demand that people vote a particular way based on what they have said. That's why I'm just seeking your guidance.

The SPEAKER: Well, how much guidance do you want and for how long?

Mr Burke: I reckon I've probably peaked, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: If a member was being deliberately obstructive or wilful, I might have a certain view. I'll just refer the Manager of Opposition Business to a very valid point he made the other day, and that was that, once members have taken their seats and the vote is being counted, no-one can move.

Mr Burke: That would have meant that you had to name him. I am on for that.

The SPEAKER: I could name anyone. The question now is that this bill be read a second time.

The House divided. [16:39]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ..................... 75
Noes ..................... 67
Majority ............... 8

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Coleman, DB
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeson, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O'Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharkie, RCC
Simmonds, J
Stevens, J

NOES

Van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
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
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Sharma, DN
Steggall, Z
Sukkar, MS
AYES
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
Van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Young, T

NOES
Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliott, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, L
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Katter, RC
Kelly, MJ
Khil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Burne, AS
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Clare, ID
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreysus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Haines, H
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM (teller)
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakoumou, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading
Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (16:43):
by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Multinationals Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill 2019

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

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (16:45): Labor will be supporting the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Multinationals Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill 2019. For the 92 years since he
said it, people have been quoting US Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr when he said that taxes are what we pay for a civilised society. This is as true today as it was 92 years ago. But the difference, of course, is that the structure of the global economy is almost unrecognisable today compared to when that well-known and often quoted remark was made. Today the global economy is more interconnected than ever before. For the first time in human history, companies themselves are mobile, with only very limited concepts of a fixed base of operations.

As we know through the work of the Australian tax office, and through the good work of the OECD and various other international organisations, aggressive tax practices and tax evasion by both individuals and companies have become rampant across the world. The OECD estimates that governments worldwide are missing out on anything between four and 10 per cent of global corporate income tax revenue every year. In US dollars, that is about $100 billion to $240 billion each year. In Australian dollars, it is something like $145 billion to $348 billion every year. That is a remarkable leakage in the revenue base of this country.

This is crucially important because the price of a civilised society, as Justice Holmes spoke about, doesn't fall just because a company or an individual shifts a dollar offshore, it just has to be paid by somebody else. It is paid by the small business owner. It is paid by the shelf packer at Woolworths, who works an eight-hour day or longer. It is paid by the cleaners, the kitchen hands, the brickies and the teachers of this country. For every dollar that is avoided by a multinational corporation, a dollar has to be paid by somebody else if we are to maintain the level of services that people in our society have a reasonable expectation of. It is be paid by somebody else when a company dodges its tax responsibilities to a nation like ours.

This is a range of follow-on effects, two of which I would particularly like to highlight in my contribution today. The first is that it squeezes government revenue. This means the government cannot adequately invest in the infrastructure, health services, education services and social security that our economy needs to ensure that we continue to prosper. The second one is that it erodes people's faith in our institutions. Over the last five years or so, we have seen a glimpse of how that leads to the broken politics that we are observing right around the world.

So Labor is very supportive of action to crack down on multinational tax evasion, and we do welcome these bills in that light. But we shouldn't kid ourselves that the passage of this legislation means we have done all that can be done on multinational tax avoidance. I think it is true that one of the best ways we can help fix the mess that the Liberals have made of the budget and the economy is to make sure that multinationals do pay their fair share of tax.

It is worth reminding colleagues in the House that, under those opposite, net debt has more than doubled, gross debts is at record highs, the economy is growing at its slowest pace in the 10 years since the GFC, and the Reserve Bank is having to do all the heavy lifting by cutting interest rates to record lows. This underperformance, this mismanagement, is because of a whole range of factors, particularly when it comes to the budget itself. One of the factors in net debt more than doubling under those opposite over the past six years is that they have failed to crack down sufficiently on multinationals who aren't paying their fair share of tax here in Australia.

When it comes to cracking down on multinational tax evasion or avoidance, I think the problem is that it's true the hearts of those opposite are just not really in it. They say the things that are necessary to get them through and they do the minimum that they can, but, at the end of the day, I think it is true that, if their hearts were in this and they genuinely wanted to make multinationals pay their fair share of tax, they'd be doing more than what they're doing in this legislation before us today.

They were relatively silent on it during the election, and they're not doing enough on it now. They don't understand that closing down tax loopholes means that more money stays in Australia to fund schools, hospitals and the productivity-enhancing investments that we need when the economy is floundering, as it is—productivity going backwards in the last four quarters is such a big part of that story. So I think this bill goes some way to addressing the issues that have been there for some time, but it doesn't go far enough.

There are three measures in the bill: The first one is to tighten the thin capitalisation rules, the second is to ensure offshore sellers of hotel accommodation in Australia calculate their GST in the same way as local sellers do, and the third is that it removes the luxury car tax on reimported cars refurbished overseas.

I think it's important to remind the House that a similar bill lapsed at the dissolution of the House before the last election, but it had two other measures in it: it had changes to the R&D tax incentive, and it had some amendments to the definition of 'significant global entity'. We are advised that the significant global entity amendment was removed for technical reasons but, I think much more significantly, the R&D tax incentives were removed after a government-controlled Senate inquiry last term recommended that the government itself should not proceed down the path that it was attempting to legislate. That's a pretty big deal—that government members on a committee that they controlled knocked over the government's own proposals on the R&D incentive. That is
a significant and humiliating development, even by the low standards of the Morrison, Turnbull and Abbott governments.

Cracking down on multinational tax avoidance is fundamentally about fairness, but it is also one of the important ways that we address the mess that has been made, whether it be the doubling of the debt or the failure to invest in productivity and growth in our economy. As I said, net debt has more than doubled and gross debt is at record highs. What's not often appreciated is that both kinds of debt, net debt and gross debt, are growing faster per month on the Liberals' watch than they were under the previous Labor government, and Labor, of course, had the global financial crisis to contend with.

The state of the economy more broadly is just as concerning as the state of net and gross debt in this country. We do have the slowest economic growth that we've had in this country for the 10 years since the global financial crisis. Australia is now in a per capita recession—the longest one since the 1982 recession. The national economy has fallen from the eighth fastest growing in the OECD in 2013 to the 20th fastest growing today. We've got stagnant wages that are growing eight times slower than profits; rising underemployment and youth unemployment; slowing employment growth; five years of weak productivity growth—productivity growth has actually fallen every quarter for the past year; weak household spending; falling consumer confidence; weak business conditions; a sluggish retail sector; business investment at the lowest level since the 1990s recession; and living standards, as we saw yesterday in the release of the HILDA data, that are growing slower under the Liberals than they were growing under Labor. They've actually gone backwards when it comes to incomes. This is an extraordinary list of economic data. Really, it's a report card on those opposite and the last six years of economic mismanagement.

We do have below-average growth from a below-average government and, because of that, the Reserve Bank has had to do all the heavy lifting. It's now got interest rates at one per cent, a third of what they were during the global financial crisis—quite remarkable. Joe Hockey was wondering around saying that interest rates at three per cent were at emergency levels. Now we have interest rates at a third of that, because the economy is underperforming so badly and the Reserve Bank is not getting the assistance that it needs on fiscal policy from this government.

Now, I think it's true that the failures that I just ran through, which is quite a stunning set of facts—not opinions, but facts—are not all a result of a failure to deal with multinational tax avoidance, but a failure to deal with multinational tax avoidance is a part of the problem. It's a problem for the budget and our society because it's about being able to fund essential services. It's a problem for our economy because every dollar of tax that isn't paid here is a dollar that could have been spent on services, repairing the budget, or investing in productivity to get the economy growing strongly again and in a sustainable way.

Mr Chester interjecting—

Dr CHALMERS: It beggars belief, despite the interjections of the minister at the table, that those opposite aren't doing more about multinational tax avoidance. They have refused to act for some time now. Remember, and I think the Australian community remembers, that the main policy the government had when it comes to multinational tax—and it will be back at some point—was to give an $80 billion tax cut to multinationals and the four big banks. Much of that would have been sprayed around overseas in the form of executive bonuses and share buybacks and the like. That's been their main contribution to tax. They have actually tried to make multinationals pay less tax here in Australia. We think, and the Australian community thinks, that multinationals should pay more tax here in Australia.

Now, whatever else one might say about the policy offerings, or the opinions that people have about various competing policy offerings in this place, I think any objective analysis would show that Labor has been serious about cracking down on multinational tax loopholes and making sure that companies pay their fair share. During the election campaign we announced a tax haven crackdown. We went to the election with 19 measures to crack down on loopholes and tax havens: tightening debt reductions; closing public reporting loopholes; increasing capacity for the ATO; public reporting of AUSTRAC data; whistleblower protections—the list went on and on. That's what a serious attempt to crack down on multinational tax avoidance actually looks like.

As I said at the very out set of this contribution, we will support this bill, but we don't think it goes far enough. We think that if the government were serious about dealing with this important issue then they would have gone further. They need look no further than the policy proposals that we worked up. If they pick up and run with any of the proposals that we worked up over the years and put them forward then we'd vote for them, and we could get the Australian people the tax revenue needed to fund their services, to repair the budget, which has deteriorated badly, and to invest in productivity so that we can help turn this floundering economy around.
Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Chief Government Whip) (16:57): As much as I like the member for Rankin—and he's my electoral neighbour in Queensland—I have to say that there's not much in his contribution that I could agree with. But I'm sure he won't find that surprising. We've had a litany of complaints, as usual, from those opposite and nothing of substance. I find it interesting that he talked about impacts on the economy. Well, he failed to acknowledge that, in the recent election, those opposite proposed to hit our economy with a sledgehammer of $387 billion of new taxes. So his arguments in his contribution for the last 10 or so minutes ring rather hollow given the policy suite and platform those opposite took to the last election.

It's worth reminding the House that it was this government in 2016 that passed the first tranche of multinational tax legislation, and the result of that has been at least $7 billion—I believe the figure's actually a bit higher now at about $13.1 billion—of additional revenue that this government and, importantly, the Australian taxpayer have received. But what the member for Rankin failed to tell the House is that that side over there voted against it. They voted against it. So he can come in here and speak all he likes about multinationals' tax avoidance, but the end result, as it always is in this place, is that you look at what Labor does, not what they say, because there's always a vast difference between the two. And this piece of legislation and the litany of excuses that the member for Rankin just trotted out are no different.

I recognise, as I walk around my electorate and talk to businesspeople and the community more generally, that there are, very rightly, questions asked about whether large multinationals pay their fair share of tax. I think that is a very valid question. Just like ordinary everyday Australians who pay their fair share of tax, multinationals should do exactly the same. We've heard various reports and evidence during committee hearings and in the press about how companies structure their affairs to minimise their tax liabilities. It is a barbecue stopper for many people. The foreign multinationals structure themselves to minimise those liabilities, and, rightly, people are disappointed.

As all good governments do, we've listened and we've acted, and our tax integrity laws are some of the strongest in the world. As I've already touched on, since 2016, we have raised close to $13.1 billion in additional revenue through closing loopholes and ensuring that the tax on profits generated here in Australia is paid here in Australia. Why is this important? It's important for this simple fact: the more money we receive as a government as a result of multinationals paying the tax that they are due to pay here, the more money we have to invest in education, health, defence and infrastructure. We can see from the recent budget that that's exactly what this government is doing. It is delivering record funding for education, health and infrastructure, and it is delivering record funding for community projects across my electorate and every electorate in this place. It is ensuring we have the funds to defend our country, and, most importantly, it is ensuring that everyone is paying their fair share of tax.

When companies arrange themselves to avoid tax, it places an unfair burden on the rest of the Australian taxpayers, other companies and small and family businesses in this country that do the right thing. Whether it's setting up a shell company in Singapore, running services on a hire basis or just directing profits offshore to avoid tax, the government is cracking down on these practices. Let me run through some of what the government has already done in this area. We introduced a multinational anti-avoidance law, the diverted profits tax and country-by-country reporting. We have implemented all of these measures, and we'll continue to further refine measures to clamp down on multinational tax avoidance. We've also created the Tax Avoidance Taskforce within the ATO to focus on tax avoidance by these same multinationals. We've increased the resources of the ATO to go after multinationals and ensure their fair share of tax is paid. A strong cop on the beat will go a long way to ensuring that big multinationals will be made to do the right thing and pay their fair share.

The principle is simple: the profit is earned here and it should be taxed appropriately here. We're closing loopholes that companies like Google and Apple use to minimise the tax they pay. We're working with our international partners to define tax avoidance and ensure the agreed definition is applied globally. Most recently in the 2018-19 budget, the government announced further measures to strengthen our tax system. We will limit the interest deductibility to stop companies shifting profits offshore and broaden the scope for large multinationals to be subject to the multinational anti-avoidance law and the diverted profits tax. Australian taxpayers quite rightly expect all taxpayers in this country to comply with the law because the quiet Australians and the mum-and-dad small-business owners across the country do exactly that each and every day. It is the law of the land and therefore it is the appropriate thing to do. After all, these tax receipts fund the essential services that people demand and expect.

Let me deal briefly with some of the specifics of this bill. The bill amends a number of tax measures, to close loopholes that multinationals use to reduce their tax burden, such as the R&D tax incentive, with it being better targeted to gain the most from the R&D dollar. And there is the use of thin capitalisation as a way of devaluing...
assets for tax purposes. This bill will also ensure that multinationals cannot structure themselves to avoid our tax integrity rules.

The proposed reforms respond to the 2016 review of the R&D tax incentive. It found that the program was poorly targeted, failing to meet its objectives and leaving Australian businesses unable to spend as much as they would like on R&D and, in doing so, stay competitive. This bill will address the underinvestment in R&D by the private sector. Larger companies will get higher incentives the more intensively they undertake R&D, while smaller companies will continue to receive the refundable incentives of up to a yearly cap of $4 million.

With more than 15,000 small and medium businesses in my electorate of Forde, I believe this amendment will guarantee equal opportunity and provide sustainable research and development capabilities to all Australian businesses, creating jobs and economic opportunity not only in my electorate of Forde but across the entire country. These reforms will apply from the 2018-19 financial year and are expected to have a net gain to the budget over the forward estimates of some $2 billion to 2021-22.

Schedule 4 of the bill deals with thin capitalisation. The changes will mean that companies must use the asset pool reported in their financial statements rather than a different value when undertaking thin capitalisation tests, which are being abused to increase debt and to shift profits overseas to avoid tax. There are a number of tests available to determine whether the entity has a thin capitalisation exposure. These rules vary, depending on the thin capitalisation classification of the entity. This schedule will result in approximately $240 million in revenue over the forward estimates period.

Schedule 5 of the bill deals with online hotel bookings. Currently, rules exempt offshore sellers from including sales of hotel accommodation in their GST turnover calculation. This means that they are often not required to register for GST or charge GST on their mark-up over the wholesale price. Announced in the 2018-19 budget, this bill will remove a carve-out in GST law so that online hotel bookings made through offshore companies for hotel stays in Australia will attract GST and increase revenue. This schedule levels the playing field for Australian hotel bookings by ensuring that offshore sellers of Australian hotel accommodation calculate their GST turnover in the same way as local sellers. This will apply from 1 July 2019 and will see $15 million in revenue and an increase in GST payments to the states and territories over the forward estimates period. For my electorate, which represents the northern part of the Gold Coast, I'm sure the tourism operators will be very pleased to hear of these increased schedules that we're putting in place to ensure that GST is collected appropriately from overseas sellers. And importantly, again, the increased GST payments to the states provide the states with greater capacity to provide the services that they need to provide.

Schedule 6 removes the luxury car tax on cars reimported into Australia following refurbishment overseas, effective from 1 January 2019. And schedule 7 of the bill will ensure that the rules addressing multinational tax avoidance, such as the diverted profits tax and the multinational anti-avoidance law, apply to all relevant entities. This will prevent multinationals from manipulating the values of their assets to increase their debt deductions and reduce their tax payable in Australia.

As I said earlier, the ATO has now raised over $13 billion in additional tax liabilities through our suite of multinational anti-avoidance laws since July 2016. This bill further demonstrates that the government is continuing to identify loopholes and, importantly, to close them, and that it's making sure multinationals pay their fair share of tax. Around the electorate I've heard complaints of, 'Why are you letting big multinationals avoid paying tax?' I'm glad to say we are not letting them off; we are ensuring the people of Australia receive tax from entities whose profits are earned in Australia when it is due. Integrity measures are an important part of preserving our tax structure. While we definitely have strong anti-avoidance laws, we still will continue to build on those to ensure the integrity of our tax system. Importantly, as part of this we're also working with our international partners. It's important that everybody pays their fair share. The old adage that there are two certainties in life—death and taxes—is still true.

The coalition government is proud of its commitment to the Australian economy, to Australian businesses and to the Australian people through this package of measures. We are a government that is creating a plan for a stronger Australian economy with more jobs and guaranteeing the essential services that we rely on. The foundation for that is ensuring everybody pays the appropriate level of tax. In my electorate of Forde, small and medium sized businesses provide thousands of jobs for people in my community and are the essential building blocks and foundation of our local economy. However, to ensure government is able to fund infrastructure like the upgrades to a number of roads, intersections and sporting clubs across my electorate, as I've discussed many times in this place, we need to ensure Australian companies and multinationals pay their fair share of tax.

In closing I say that this government is doing exactly what it said it would do—that is, making sure multinationals pay the tax they owe. As always, this side of the House is delivering on its commitments and
promises to the Australian people. All those on the other side do is talk and all they want to do is tax you out of existence. On this side of the House, through ensuring multinationals pay their taxes, we can ensure low- to middle-income Australians have their taxes lowered and their education and health services guaranteed for the future of this country. We will continue to focus on delivering for Australians now and into the future.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (17:12): We often hear from businesses that they feel they're being overregulated and that there's too much red tape in the Australian system and the Australian economy. But this particular bill, the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Multinationals Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill 2019, is one of the reasons that regulation is needed—that is, that big businesses often use accounting tricks and restructures to avoid paying their fair share of tax in Australia. As soon as a government regulates, you can bet your life that a big business will use accountants, lawyers and financial advisers to find a way around that and minimise their tax into the future.

Australian companies are no different. Because they make large profits, and their profits have been increasing in recent years—at a much faster rate, I might add, than the average Australian workers' wages—they're always a step ahead of government. This bill represents the Australian government catching up in some respects, although it doesn't go far enough—and I'll deal with that in a moment—because this is a half-hearted approach to tackling the issue of corporations using accounting tricks to avoid paying their fair share of tax. The measures in this bill seek to tighten the thin capitalisation rules to ensure offshore sellers of hotel accommodation in Australia calculate GST in the same way as local sellers and to remove the luxury car tax on reimported cars refurbished overseas.

Labor supports these measures. Thin capitalisation rules are a way for companies to deduct for debt financing expenses to an extent that the entity's debt exceeds a prescribed level where the level of adjusted average debt exceeds a maximum allowable debt in an income year. Debt financing expenses are costs associated with taking on debt such as the fees and commissions paid to investment banks, to law firms and to auditors. An entity is generally required to comply with accounting standards in calculating the value of assets and liabilities in Australia, and the thin capitalisation rule allows an entity to recognise certain assets and revalue assets in a different way in certain circumstances.

Recently, there has been a significant increase in the use of asset revaluation by companies to generate additional debt capacity and claim greater deductions. That's one of the accounting tricks that I mentioned earlier. This represents the government catching up. Some of these companies have been exploiting a loophole that exists in our tax laws to claim a greater level of debt and use that as a deduction to reduce their amount of tax liability. This bill will amend the Income Tax Assessment Act to tighten the thin capitalisation rules and require a company to use the value of the asset liabilities, including debt capital and equity capital, that are used in its financial statements, and it will remove the ability for an entity to revalue its assets specifically for thin capitalisation purposes. Labor supports this reform, although we believe it doesn't go far enough. We believe that the best way to clean up the budget and make sure that multinationals pay their fair share of tax would have been to adopt some of the policies that Labor took to the last election, where we were proposing to close down many of those tax loopholes that have existed in our tax laws for companies for many, many years.

Teachers, nurses, tradies and others that work in our economy pay their fair share of tax. They don't have the luxury of being able to fund solicitors, financial advisors and accountants to find loopholes in the tax legislation to minimise their tax, and it's time that multinationals did the same thing as well, particularly when we're facing a budget with finite resources and increasing expenditure associated with an ageing population and the additional impost of funding health and aged care services as that population ages. But also we are dealing with the effects of climate change and other issues that are a drag on the Australian economy and they will require additional dollars within the budget. It's not fair that the burden of funding those programs relies on a greater extent on low to middle income workers rather than large corporations and multinationals. Closing down tax loopholes can mean more taxpayer dollars stay in Australia to fund critical services such as hospitals and schools, and productivity enhancing investments. While this bill is a start, which is why Labor is supporting it, more needs to be done.

It's fair to say that the Liberals are half-hearted when it comes to making sure multinational corporations pay their fair share of tax and disclose the amount of tax that they pay. We should never forget that it was this government that teamed up with the Greens. They don't like this; they don't like the fact that members of the Liberal and National Party got into bed with the Greens in the Senate to water down the tax disclosure laws that Labor put in place when we were previously in government. These are the laws that require the big Australian companies to disclose on an annual basis the amount of tax that they're actually paying. Those companies didn't want to do that. No, they didn't want to do that at all. I recall some of the ridiculous reasons put forward by members opposite for why those companies shouldn't have to do that. I can remember the previous member for Reid saying that families would be threatened by these laws. When it came to an inquiry and the Liberal Party were asked to produce evidence of this, that evidence was not there.
So it should never be forgotten that those opposite teamed up with the Greens to water down Australia's tax transparency laws so that the amount of tax that big corporations are paying in Australia would not be known by the Australian public. That is their record. That is their approach to tax reform: 'Give Australians as little information as possible because we don't want them knowing the truth about how much tax large corporations in Australia are really paying, because we know that Australian workers would be outraged by the fact that many of these large corporations can use tricky accounting procedures to increase their deductions and reduce the amount of taxable income they have—some with billion dollar turnovers paying no tax at all in Australia.' And those opposite think that's all right. When it comes to clamping down on that sort of behaviour, this is a pretty half-hearted attempt.

Net debt in Australia has doubled and economic growth is at its slowest in 10 years, since the global financial crisis. Yet the Liberals and Nationals have shown no stomach at all to stop multinationals avoiding their tax obligations. During the last election campaign, they were silent on multinational corporations and tax havens and refused to close down tax loopholes, meaning that working Australians have been footing the bill for those unfair tax loopholes. Who could forget the Liberals' signature policy when it came to multinationals: the $80 billion tax cut for multinationals and big banks that flowed overwhelmingly to companies offshore in the form of executive bonuses, share buybacks and inflated dividends.

The Liberals point to revenues raised by the Tax Avoidance Taskforce but never admit that most of those revenues are based on Labor's transfer pricing laws that were opposed by those opposite in 2013. It was Labor laws that the Liberals and The Nationals opposed that underpinned the tax office's $300 million win against Chevron. It was Labor laws that the Liberals and the National Party opposed that delivered the tax office's $529 million settlement with BHP. Only Labor has been serious about cracking down on multinational tax loopholes and making multinational corporations pay their fair share of tax.

During the election campaign we announced further laws to clamp down on tax avoidance. It was a crackdown that would have made it fairer and would have meant that companies that do the right thing would have been helping to fund better healthcare services and better education services. We went to the election with 19 measures to crack down on multinational tax loopholes and tax havens. They were measures such as tightening debt deductions, reporting of country-by-country reports, increased capacity for the ATO, public reporting of AUS TRAC data, closing loopholes of certain trusts that make payments to nonresidents to artificially get a tax rate below the 30 per cent company tax rate and, of course, the whistleblower protections that we put in place.

The Liberals need to do more than just claim credit for Labor's previous reforms. If they were serious about dealing with multinational tax avoidance, they'd take real action and seriously look at some of those proposals that Labor was proposing before the last election. The government need to do more to tackle multinational corporations and ensure that they pay their fair share of tax. Every dollar that this parliament and this government let slip overseas is another dollar that Australian workers and taxpayers have to fork out to fund critical services and investments—and that's not fair. That is not fair to the people who are building the Australian economy and working hard every day. We shouldn't allow corporations that have the funds to use tricky accounting procedures to avoid paying their fair share of tax.

This bill does go some way to closing some of these tax loopholes, but it is a half-hearted attempt. The government should get serious and adopt Labor's reforms that we took to the last election if they are going to be serious about closing tax loopholes for multinational corporations.

Debate adjourned.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH
Address-in-Reply

Consideration resumed of the motion:

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

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

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Georganas) (17:24): The question is that the address be agreed to. Before I call the honourable member for Moncrieff, can I remind the House that this is the honourable member's first speech and I ask the House to extend to her the usual courtesies.

Ms BELL (Moncrieff) (17:24): I congratulate the Speaker, actually, on his re-election as the chair of this House. I also pay tribute to retiring clerk David Elder, who made the transition for 27 new members in this class
of 2019 such a pleasure and who, without doubt, will be sorely missed. I congratulate also Claressa Surtees on her role as the 16th Clerk in this place.

As one of the 1,203 members since Federation 118 years ago, I'd like to take the opportunity to acknowledge every parliamentarian who has served before me and congratulate the newest members on their first speeches. In particular, I congratulate the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister for earning the confidence of the Australian people. What an honour it is to be part of a great coalition team as a proud member of the LNP. Thank you to former member and minister, the Hon. Steven Ciobo and his family, for 18 years of dedicated service. Before him, the first member for Moncrieff, the Hon. Kathy Sullivan AM, served 17 years in this House after 10 years in the Senate.

In Kate's maiden speech, on 26 February 1985, at the start of my last year of high school, she outlined that, when Moncrieff was formed, it was an electorate of some 3,000 square kilometres, including Beaudesert, Albert Shire and Gold Coast city, with a population increasing by around 35 per cent per year. Today, Moncrieff covers just 92 square kilometres of pure paradise, known to the rest of the world as the fabulous central Gold Coast. With a population of just over 606,000, and Australia's sixth-largest city, we're projected to grow to almost a million in the next two decades.

Moncrieff shares boundaries with the electorates of Fadden to the north, McPherson to the south and Wright to the west. Can I take this opportunity to thank the honourable members who represent those electorates for their support before, during and after the recent election campaign that saw the people of the Gold Coast support the LNP in these key seats. We stand united, working together for the Gold Coast.

Can I pay special mention to the member for Fadden for his unwavering support since we first met some six years ago. My journey began in this place as his guest. On that day, I experienced a great inspiration, and a great aspiration unfolded. I met a number of ministers whose dedication to the country stirred something deep inside me. Their passion to improve the lives of Australians touched me so profoundly that I dared to believe that a girl like me, from humble beginnings, could and should try to make a difference alongside them. After that day—and a semester studying economics 101, can I say—I believed in the Liberal Party and what it stands for. I joined the Liberal National Party and stepped onto the path which has led me to this place today, to represent the wonderful people of Moncrieff.

Our home stretches from its central Gold Coast southerly boundary at Sixth Avenue in Miami, past the North Burleigh headland, along the iconic coastline featuring the Q1 to Main Beach and the Spit to the north-east corner, then westward toward the hinterland, through Nerang, Highland Park and Gilston, and south-west through Worongary and back to the coast. It includes the suburbs of Ashmore, Benowa, Molendinar, Broadbeach, Broadbeach Waters, Bundall, Carrara, Main Beach, Mermaid Beach, Mermaid Waters, Southport and, of course, famous the world over, Surfers Paradise. We are proud to make this our home, along with many who have journeyed far to live in Moncrieff. Almost one-third were born overseas and came to weave their threads into the rich tapestry of social inclusion that adds to a community spirit beyond description.

What a great place the Gold Coast is to live and work! Our lifestyle is the envy of Australians nationwide, and, indeed, of visitors from across the globe. The harmonious melting pot is made up of New Zealanders, people from the UK, China and India, Italians, Hungarians and other Europeans who emigrated to Australia in the fifties and sixties.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent 1.5 per cent of our population, and, as well as acknowledging the Ngunawal people on whose land our parliament meets, I acknowledge the Yugambeh people, traditional owners of the land in and around Moncrieff. I pay respects to elders past, present and emerging. With the friendliest permission from Borobi the Koala, the indigenous language ambassador who shone at the 2018 Commonwealth Games, I say jingeri jimbelung—or ‘g’day, mate’—to all in this place and to those who may be watching from afar. Borobi serves the noble cause of preserving Aboriginal languages in South East Queensland schools.

What else does it mean to be a Gold Coaster and to belong in Moncrieff? I'm truly delighted to live in and serve the city of opportunity, the home of the entrepreneurial spirit; of self-made people and families, of iconic surf brands and sporting greats, of developers and real estate tycoons; the mecca of tourism and the natural home of small business. In fact, Moncrieff has over 30,000 small businesses, who are the backbone of our economy and who now enjoy the tax cuts and benefits the Morrison government is delivering.

Tourism is driven by visitor numbers, and visitor numbers are assisted with airport connectivity to our very special linear city. My vision is for the Gold Coast to be the premier domestic destination and to improve the international numbers to our city so that small business thrives and so that families flourish. In the last year, we
welcomed 13 million visitors to our great city. Tourists come to experience our lifestyle, and they stay to enjoy the spectacular beaches and attend the many iconic events held in Moncrieff.

We’re spoilt by choice for an embarrassment of riches, which among others includes the Magic Millions, Polo by the Sea, the Gold Coast 600 V8 supercars, the Gold Coast airport marathon—which I might run one day—Australian Surf Life Saving Championships, the Gold Coast Triathlon, Australian Open Bowls, the Australian university nationals, the PGA Championship, Eurovision, the Logies and art and music events, including Sand Safari, Bleach* Festival, Blues on Broadbeach and, just this past weekend, the Groundwater Country Music Festival. I’m sure you all want to move to the Gold Coast. If that’s not enough, we now have our very own Home of the Arts, HOTa, as it’s known, with its soon-to-be-opened Green Bridge, linking Surfers Paradise via Chevron Island. I give credit to a hardworking Gold Coast City Council that gets the job done. What a place.

As a Queenslander for half my life and a Gold Coaster for 18 years, training as a surf lifesaver at Mermaid Beach Surf Club was a highlight. I commend and congratulate the contribution that Moncrieff’s nine surf clubs made to last years record of zero deaths on our beaches. Today we are also the home of national teams the Gold Coast Titans and the Gold Coast Suns. A premiership for one or both is surely only a matter of time and something to look forward to in the future.

Moncrieff, via the expanding Gold Coast Airport, is the magical home of our iconic coastline, world-class surf breaks, red hot cafe and restaurant dining precincts, Sea World and, of course, the gateway to theme parks and the hinterland experience. It is indeed a splendid and beautiful place to call home. With the lasting legacy of the 2018 Commonwealth Games sporting facilities, I’m proud that the coalition government is working towards a South East Queensland Olympic bid that will further benefit our city with continued improvements to infrastructure, strength for our local economy and, importantly, the opportunity to amplify our tremendous grassroots sporting culture, which will impact our next generation of youth.

I’ve taken care to choose policy committees that will best represent the lives and aspirations of the people who live in Moncrieff. As I begin my service in this place, I’ll be focused on making a sensible and effective contribution to committees on health, aged care and sport; small and family business; employment, education and training; communication and the arts; foreign affairs and trade; tourism and investment, defence and veterans affairs; Indigenous affairs; and family, disabilities and social services.

Moncrieff is named after light opera singer Gladys Moncrieff, known as ‘Our Glad’, who settled in her latter years with her companion, Elsie, on the Isle of Capri. Our Glad was well known and loved for her personal support of the tourism industry—well ahead of her time and clearly a woman who understood the Gold Coast’s potential as a tourist destination. I’m pleased to note that Canberra also honours our Glad, with a suburb named after her. While, sadly, I never saw her perform, my grandparents did. Her last public performance was in 1962, some six years before I was born.

As someone with strong personal connection to the Australian Defence Force, I’m proud to say that Moncrieff is home to a large veteran community. Nerang, Southport and Surfers Paradise RSLs are all very active clubs on the Gold Coast that provide services and important support for our service men and women.

Like many Australians, my own family has a history of service to our nation. As a young girl, I remember my great-uncle Maurice Bell, or Uncle Mott, showing me the shrapnel lodged in his gnarled hands and the eye that was replaced with glass after he survived stepping on a landmine while serving as a Rat of Tobruk. Great-Uncle Frank served as a light horseman. For his 80th birthday, some 40 years ago, my family helped him to realise his dream of mounting a horse once again. My Uncle Harry Alderson, my mother’s brother, served in the Royal New Zealand Navy as a submariner, with both his children, my cousins, serving as cadets. Today, my young nephew, Isaac, who is in his final year in high school, is here in the gallery from Adelaide. He is an award-winning air cadet who aspires to serve in the Royal Australian Air Force. These many stories of service and sacrifice remind us of those who pay the greatest price to protect our precious democracy and way of life. I acknowledge all those who have served and who serve today to keep our nation and our families safe.

Although I will not face the same risks to life and limb as our soldiers, this office is one I do not take lightly. Members of parliament have a great responsibility to put our fellow citizens first, and when we serve them, informed by the sum of our collective life experience, we serve the Australian people well. As a young woman in my 20s, the personal experience of losing my mother to cancer was a difficult time for my family—the pain imprinted in our hearts forever. As part of my service in this place I hope to have some input towards the advancement of cancer cures and the growth and success of the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct at Griffith University, my own alma mater, which sits in the north of the Moncrieff electorate. I’ll also advocate for all those in my electorate and across the country living with homelessness, domestic violence, drug and alcohol
challenges, child sexual abuse, mental health and eating disorders. These are all problems that people don't want to talk about but which touch so many Australians.

I'm proud to say that our government is working hard to reduce the terrible effect of these afflictions on individuals and, subsequently, our nation. I'm deeply humbled to be a part of the Morrison government, which is on the side of all Australians to improve the serious issues that affect so many each and every day. I believe in an Australia where if you'll have a go you get a go! Under the Morrison government, that's what happens, and that's why I stand on this side of the chamber.

I'm a proud member of the Liberal National Party because I believe in a better future underpinned by responsible economic management; open markets; freedom of conscience and association; stronger families; a sustainable environment that we must work hard to preserve; reward for effort; and equality of opportunity. I believe in standing up for what's right and what's good—standing up for what makes a difference for the people in my electorate and across Australia.

It's time to talk about firsts. I'm proud to say that the Liberal Party was the first party in Australia to welcome a woman to parliament and to cabinet—Dame Enid Lyons. A former member for Moncrieff, Cathy Sullivan, was the first woman to serve in both the Senate and the House of Reps, and only one of four women elected in May 1974. It's wonderful to see an increase in women in the 46th Parliament and in cabinet. My view is that it's important that our parliament is diverse, to represent all Australians.

My good friend, the jazz legend Don Burrows, told me when I was just 14 that I was the first young woman he saw playing the tenor saxophone in high schools. He inspired me to dream of great heights. In 1985 I was the first from Gawler High School to win a music scholarship, a life-changing opportunity for which I owe a great debt of gratitude to Rotary International. Recently, Rotary inducted me as an honorary passport member, which allows me to attend any Rotary Club in the world. My incoming district governor tells me that I am one of only a few who have stood in this place as a former Rotary International exchange student.

I thank my dearest friend, Melanie, from Sydney, who is sitting in the gallery today, for our 33-year friendship—through ups and downs—since our scholarship together all those years ago, for your guidance and love for so many years. I also thank the four families I lived with for teaching me so much about language, culture and another way of living. To Tim Young and the Rotary Club of Gawler, and Heining Sunter in Denmark: a thousand thanks for giving me the opportunity. In Danish, of course: 'Tusen takk skal du ha de va sa god!'

After my exchange I attended the Adelaide Conservatorium of Music, studying jazz, saxophone and voice. As a young person I was blessed to find a passion that gave me rare opportunities. Music was my road map to success and education the vehicle. I commend the high quality of work that our schools, teachers and training organisations undertake to make a difference for the youth of Moncrieff, and I flag my passion for education as one of the keystones to the future of our country. As a professional musician for some 35 years, I was lucky to travel the world performing in, and visiting, 23 countries. I worked in business during the day as a merchandiser, sales rep, estate manager, a retail consultant in my own business, a workplace trainer and assessor, and a national business development manager where I learned a lot about people and enjoyed helping thousands of small businesses. My work took me across all states and territories and I feel confident in saying that I have visited most electorates in Australia. I thank the Paint Place group of stores and their wonderful members for the privilege of working with them for the last decade. Their chairman, Mishi, and his wife, Rachel, are in the gallery today.

In my early 40s, I returned to study business and marketing at Griffith University and I wrote a book to help small business in the area of rebranding and marketing. I remain as a mature age student who deferred from the last two subjects of a masters to run for preselection, and it's entirely possible that it will remain that way for some time. At 45, I was the first in my family to join a political party, and not just any political party but the country's most successful political party—first, the Liberal Party founded by Sir Robert Menzies and later of course, the broad church that is the LNP in Queensland. Across three generations of factory workers, my family helped to build the automotive and clothing manufacturing industry that South Australia enjoyed for so many decades. I'm proud that they all now understand that it's the Libs and the Nats who stand for workers keeping more of what they earn and that we are the party that supports Australians having a go to get a go. This is why I entered politics. I want to preserve equality of opportunity and reward for effort, particularly for young people into the future.

Those who know me are well aware that I was also the very, very first to start the trend of sausage dog worship on the Gold Coast, long before they became popular on our beautiful beaches. But it is true that I am also the first openly gay woman in a major political party in this place. I'm pleased to say that, when I fact-checked this statistic with the Parliamentary Library, the response was that the library does not collect information on the sexuality of parliamentarians as part of its biographical information database, and so it should be. While I do not consider this my highest achievement to date, nor my defining quality, I appreciate that, for many in the community and in the
party, it is indeed a special milestone. I celebrate that achievement with them and stand with the LGBTIQ community and other minority groups to celebrate diversity. I acknowledge that, in a world where in some countries your sexuality can have you imprisoned, persecuted or even killed, it says a lot about Australia that our tolerant, free democracy can be fully and openly represented in our nation's parliament.

As my new friends the members for Chisholm and Wentworth expressed last week in their first speeches, I hope the work I have ahead of me is not interpreted through a narrow lens and that I, as a true liberal, am judged only on my achievements and contributions to modern Australia. I am proud that my partner and I have built a wonderful life together over the last 18 years. I thank Ros, who is here today, for her two decades of inspiration, unwavering support and, frankly, patience. It's largely due to her dedication and enthusiasm as a teacher and a university lecturer in education, sport and health and the contribution her PhD body of work made for gaining equal pay for women in sport that I myself was inspired into lifelong learning and, consequently, find myself in this place. She is a wonderful mother, grandmother and supportive partner—and golfer, by the way—and I'm proud of our family with her four adult children and our two beautiful grandsons. To our family No. 1 son Sam; darling Emma, whose family is here today in the gallery as Canberra natives; little Archie Bear who calls me Biba; Gilly, Johnno and little Freddy moving home from the UK next month; Timma, we are so proud of you and your career; and Fiona—the world is your oyster, with so much talent, warmth and intellect—thank you for all you have taught me as a stepmother about family, life and love for the last two decades.

Members, most of all, I'm proud that our friends, our neighbours, our community and our party all stand behind and with us and I'm proud that Australians far and wide support families like mine that might look a little different. Modern Australia is about celebrating diversity and equality of opportunity for all, especially our youth. I hope that my presence in this place will remind those around me and across the country that in Australia there is no place for discrimination.

Just as the law protects us from discrimination based on race, religion and gender, sexuality too must be shielded from harmful and hurtful deeds and words. Modern Australia needs a responsible and respectful approach to those who are different from traditional norms, while still protecting all of the other rights that we so enjoy. I hope that my presence in this place reminds young people and all Australians that sexual preference is no barrier to career aspirations or life goals. You can do anything in Australia; we are a great country that offers so much opportunity. Our choice of partner is only one very private facet of the sum of who we are as Australians; in each of us, there is so much more. The vast majority of Australians contribute to the most successful multicultural society in the world because we understand that inclusion, respect and tolerance are the building blocks of a stronger and better nation.

Many parliamentarians have referred to 'true liberalism' in their maiden speeches—and I am no exception. When referring to the father of modern liberalism, John Locke, from 1689, one such parliamentarian, my friend and mentor Joe Hockey, said that the first principle of modern liberalism is the recognition of the inalienable rights of the individual and that, with these rights, come some community responsibility. With this sentiment I wholeheartedly agree.

Mr Speaker, I stand before you today on the shoulders of many giants. I thank my wonderful late mother, Barbara, for her love and warmth, her tolerance and her generosity. I stand at the beginning of my parliamentary career at the same age she was when we lost her. I pay tribute to her parents, Harry and Ellen, for their decision to emigrate to this great country in 1957 with a view to a better future for their children—June, Barbara, Harry, Pauline, Stephen and, later, Tracey. Yes, my grandfather was Catholic! They all built a great life in Australia and New Zealand, and their children have all had the opportunity their grandparents imagined for them. I thank my father, Roger, whom my mother adored—a hard worker, an aviator, an artist and an intellectual. He is sitting in the gallery today. He worked hard for his family and made sacrifices for me so I could achieve my goals. Thanks, Pop. Your reward today is to be in awe of our great country where your youngest daughter has been given the same opportunity as many others from humble beginnings. Today you have enjoyed your first visit to our nation's capital, to the War Memorial to remember your uncles and to the National Gallery to see the fine art that you admire so much. You have even witnessed live in the chamber the revelation that is question time—I hope you'll be back! I also pay tribute to my late grandmother, Doreen Bell, for her tireless work for the Church of Christ and countless charities, particularly the blind, well into her 80s. I'm pleased to say that my older sister, Cher, now 54 and also in the gallery today, has just recently enrolled in higher education—and her sons, Jack and Isaac, have attended higher education and will achieve success in their own fields of Asian languages and airmanship. I pay special mention to my brothers Stephen Cairns and Glen in Adelaide and their families. My thoughts are with them. My family are aspirational Aussies. They are inspirational Aussies. They are Aussies who understand the value of hard work and perseverance. They have never had it easy but they keep fighting to get ahead. They are the quiet Australians.
I thank the many colleagues who have, in one way or another, contributed through their time, enthusiasm, confidence and sometimes just a kind word when needed. Ambassador Hockey, you inspire me with your leadership style, your mateship and approachable manner that I hope to emulate. I thank Trevor Evans, Karen Andrews, Michaeala Cash, Peter Dutton, Mathias Cormann, Bert Van Manen, Nicolle Flint, Paul Scarr, Linda Reynolds, Andrew Wallace, John McVeigh, James McGrath, Michelle Landry, Jane Prentice, Larry Anthony, Queensland LNP Leader Deb Frecklington, Rod Mulhook, Sam O'Connor, Graham Quirk, Vicki Howard and Tracy Davis. And to the many new colleagues in this place who have supported me over the last weeks: thank you.

Having been a volunteer for some years, I understand that sometimes the only thing you get back is a thank you. So I am going to be brave and name a few very special people. But I will preface that by saying thank you to all the volunteers in the LNP and particularly in Moncrieff. I have had encouragement from great women in the party—in particular, Theresa Craig, Julie Tancred and Leone Campbell, who have done so much to support so many women and have worked tirelessly for the last five years to see more women in the LNP in Queensland. I say thank you to Penny Williams, Kate Zegenhagen, Amanda Byrne, Deirdre Ford, Fran Ward, Deb Richardson, Sam Connery, Therese Feagan, Tanya McLaughlin, Pinky Singh and Casey Scott. These women are the sparkling stars and true champions who volunteer to ensure the future for our country is bright. To the wonderful Vice-president of the Liberal Party, Fay Duda, for your warmth and support, to the federal Liberal Women's executive, Helen Kroger, Victoria Opitz, Robyn Nolan and close friends Georgia, Natalie, Ange, Kate, Trudy, Kathy, Amelia, Megan and Sally—thank you for so many years of support.

It's no secret that good women need good men to support them in life and in business. Again, I congratulate the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister for earning the confidence and support of the Australian people. I have very many special men in my life and, for their support, I thank them. Uncle Eric, Uncle Steve, Cousin Reece, Mark Meelan, Rod Watford, David Corbett, Greg McNamara, Mark Sutton, Bruce Sutton, Peter Leather, Roger Emerson, Viv Grayson, Ben Niday, Chris Anderson, Simon Troeth and Robbie Bennetts—you have all helped me along my journey, and I thank you.

I thank the LNP state executive, state director and campaign director, staff at LNP HQ and the party members throughout Queensland for their ongoing support and for preparing me well, through the office of LNP Women's president for two years and vice-president before that. I thank the Moncrieff federal divisional council, wider membership and Moncrieff women for their support and assistance with campaigning and for their belief in me. To the state members and SECs, the Chinese Heritage Branch, Mermaid-Robina branch and some outstanding, dedicated individuals, although few among many, who went the extra mile: Frances, Di Grayson, Maggie Myers, Raz Azoli, Kirsten, Javal, Stephen, Peter Barlow, Ken, Andrew, Ben, Neil and Valerie Peters, Di and Clff, Alf and Robyn, Sally, Muriel Duncan, Daryl, Richard Wallace, Chris, Karen, Steve and Dudley Street, Yella Hdditch, Brooke Patterson, Karen Phillips, Barry Wang—and to every single person who spent their precious time on pre-poll and election day with very little notice—thank you. I also acknowledge John and Denise Collins who have made the trip from Earle Haven in Nerang today to be here in the gallery.

To our close family friends who stepped up to assist, to Ros Bates MP, the state member for Mudgeeraba and shadow minister for health in Queensland, for her support and guidance throughout the campaign, to Karen Embrie, now in my office with Sophie, for the volunteer heavy lifting that pulled together the campaign resources in the five weeks from preselection to election day: thank you all. A very special thank you to Helen Louis for her friendship and belief in me from the very beginning of this journey.

Most importantly, to you, the great people of Moncrieff: I thank you for choosing me as your representative and the LNP for choosing me as your representative. I remain deeply humbled by your support and I promise to shine a light on your needs and work with you for a better and stronger future for you and your families. It's my ambition to mark my time in office with a record of humble contributions to you, my wonderful community of friends, neighbours and family.

To finish, can I say to the people of Moncrieff and to my party, the Liberal-National Party, to whom I owe it all: I promise you a leader who listens and a leader who cares, a leader who will speak with vigour and courage on your behalf when national debates arise that affect your goals and aspirations, your trials and challenges—the person who understands your struggles and your disappointments, your blessings and your triumphs. But, most importantly, I promise to put your needs before all else. That is my pledge to you.

Debate adjourned.
Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (17:56): I would like to add my congratulations to the member for Moncrieff, who I've had initial dealings with. I have a lot of time for someone who appears already to be a very thoughtful contributor. I wish her and her family and friends who were here for her speech all the very best as they celebrate her first speech. Congratulations to her.

This bill, the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Multinationals Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill 2019, which is designed principally to ensure that multinationals pay their fair share of tax, reflects something that we on the Labor side have been focused on for quite some time, having recognised the challenges that are being posed by a number of companies, some of which are in the tech space, that have operations across a number of shores. The concern is that they are not paying their fair share because of the way they have set up their taxation arrangements and the organisational structures that they employ. It means that some countries are not getting what they would have anticipated to be a fair share of corporate tax revenue.

There are big differences between the two sides. Our side believes that a much more rigorous approach should be employed in the way we structure our tax law. Doing so would ensure that the taxpayer gets a much better deal. But importantly so would the tech firms that are often saying they want to be able to see, in particular, a greater stream of talent available, with people skilled up with the much more modern skillsets that are required to help those companies thrive. But where governments do invest in human capital there is a cost to that. If those firms expect to have greater access to talent, there will need to be an investment underpinned by a much better form of taxation arrangements to ensure that happens. So this is important.

What will also drive the growth of those firms is an investment by government in R&D. This bill has been before us in different forms. In fact, when it was first introduced, this bill contained some particularly hard measures that the tech sector believed would hurt them badly through the potential regearing of the elements of the R&D tax incentive. Those were removed.

But this isn't the only thing that's causing concern in Australia's tech sector. As has been observed since December last year, a number of start-ups have been very concerned about the way in which they have been required to pay back millions of dollars in research and development incentives as a result of a particularly strong interpretation of what is considered permissible.

A number of founders, investors and industry leaders have been saying that the qualification measures for this crucial industry support measure, particularly in relation to software development, financially rewards companies for investing in developing new ideas. But now the measures have been applied in such a strict way by the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, that some consider it almost impossible—in their words—for software companies to be able to achieve or qualify for the R&D tax incentive. Through the discussions I have with Australian start-ups, this R&D tax incentive is regularly cited as one of the principal or primary areas of support and something they highly value. They say that it keeps them on Australian shores instead of leaving for investment support offshore. From their perspective, they want to stay on Australian soil, they want to be able to create commercial value and wealth here in Australia and they do want to create jobs.

We often see a lot of the start-ups that are here on Australian soil go from a small number—maybe one or two people; the founders of that start-up—to hiring a dozen in a short space of time. I note the presence of the member for North Sydney, who is well aware of the employment generating capacity of start-ups on our soil. While he and I might have disagreements in terms of certain policies from time to time, I think we both, along with a number of people in this chamber, recognise that we have to have much more favourable policy settings and need to speak up for the value of start-ups in this country. I think he knows that, with full sincerity, I don't mean to put him in a difficult position, but I would not be surprised if he has had start-ups from his neck of the woods approach him raising concerns about the particularly strict way in which the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science has decided to interpret the rules around the application of the research and development tax incentive as it applies to software development.

This is something that is of genuine concern. It is not something that has just cropped up. It is not something that has disappeared. Based on my discussions with people in the sector, it is still a live issue. In fact, one person indicated to me that this has created huge uncertainty and it is undercutting the viability of a whole host of
promising Australian tech companies. It is a big issue. It is considered, as I said earlier, the backbone of government support for tech, and it has now turned into one of the sector's biggest risks. This is from people in the know. The way in which the R&D tax incentive rules have been interpreted has now become a big risk. In fact, for any start-up that receives this incentive or has this on their books, this incentive is now, I'm told, being treated as a liability by investors. This is an extraordinary development. The R&D tax incentive has been there and has been welcomed by our tech sector for quite some time—it has promoted software development for quite some time—and now there are people in the sector, investors, treating this incentive as a liability. This has gone off the rails and something has to be done.

I had previously raised concerns when this first crept in back in 2017. I had very productive discussions with the then Minister for Revenue, the former member for Higgins, Kelly O'Dwyer, who, to her great credit, took this on board and encouraged the ATO and AusIndustry to involve start-up representatives in the industry consultation group around this. A number of us operated under the belief that this had been sorted out, but we now have a new minister—and I'm just going to call it as I see it—who has done absolutely nothing on this issue.

I for one do not condone any abuse of this incentive. If anyone has abused this incentive, we should use the full force of the law against those people—no doubt. But now what is happening is the audits are going back years previous, and big companies that have grown from small ones in Australia, like Airtasker, for example, are now genuinely worried about the tax bill that might be brought up because of a much more strict interpretation. They operated under an interpretation they believed would be acceptable at one point in time and are now having to second-guess what has gone on. A perception has been conveyed to me that AusIndustry must have in its mind an operational belief that these software companies can just pay back the money at any time. This is not reflective of the reality that a lot of these firms operate within. They operate close to the bone for quite some time, hoping that at some point they'll do well. I am not saying Airtasker is necessarily operating on the smell of an oily rag—in fact it's a great success story for this country—but there would be a lot of other firms that would be feeling it.

Despite the fact that this issue has been rolling on for months, this minister has not been able to do anything to give people in the sector a sense of relief that (1) their concerns have been registered and (2) something is being done about it. During the election campaign the Labor Party said we would step in and we were prepared to test some of the decisions that were being made to determine whether or not a heavy-handed approach had been used, and we were criticised by the minister. The minister at the time thought this was outrageous. I was staggered to see that type of response, because some of those opposite put themselves forward as champions, particularly for entrepreneurialism and start-up activity in this country, and I genuinely regard that some believe this absolutely to their core, but the people in positions where they can make a difference on front bench aren't doing that at all.

Why is it that, since this matter was raised fairly prominently in December last year, this has been dragging on—a festering sore that has created uncertainty in the minds of start-ups and their investors? Why has the government, particularly through the industry minister, not stepped in and sorted this out? They have been able to do it previously and they're not doing it now. New ideas developed on home soil are at risk. Firms will potentially look offshore for a new home, denying us jobs and growth in our own economy. Frankly, this is why I am using the opportunity of this speech to speak up and ask—actually, no; demand—that the minister give some reassurance to Australian start-ups that they are not going to cop a heavy-handed interpretation of the tax incentive, which will work in a way that will potentially cruel some of these firms.

As I said earlier, I don't think anyone on that side or this side believes that, if shonks or consultants have given bad advice to start-ups to set themselves up in a way just so they can qualify for the tax incentive, we should not burn those people out of the system. No doubt that is a shared view, but a lot of other good firms should not feel the heat or have a situation where their investors are treating the incentive, which has done great work over many years, as a liability. Again, I think we have some new firms that we should be encouraging. We should see the emergence of these firms using technology in a way that is helping other businesses grow.

I have to say that in this country we do not have rates of R&D that we can brag about. We are being left behind in this country, particularly if you look at the application of artificial intelligence and the way in which countries and companies are prepared to invest in this. PwC has suggested that potentially $15 trillion in value can be generated through the application of AI, 70 per cent of which will accrue to just two countries: the US and China. Australia is dragging its feet on this.

If we are not seeing investment at a high level in this research and then we take a particularly heavy-handed approach in the application of the R&D tax incentive that means we see smaller firms that could potentially grow into bigger ones crushed, what happens to this country? All we will be is effectively a vassal state to other countries whose economies have gotten a lot more efficient because they've had the smarts to invest in smarts and to make sure they are not left behind.
If this government is fair dinkum about making sure that we see that spirit of entrepreneurialism grow, it will absolutely get on top of this issue and make sure that start-ups aren't left in any doubt about their ability to access the incentive for software development and finally deal with an issue that the sector's been crying out to see fixed for over half a year. I'll leave my remarks at that.

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (18:10): The problem of multinational profit-shifting is a massive one. Globally, around $600 billion of profits are estimated to be shifted to tax havens. That's almost 40 per cent of multinational profits. We see in Australia significant multinational profit-shifting affecting our tax base. You can see this in a variety of different statistics. One curious figure is a new dataset released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics last year which shows the operating profits and taxable profits of multinational firms operating in Australia and in different jurisdictions. You can ask the question: what's the gap between operating profits and taxable profits for firms from different countries? If you're a typical Australian firm, the gap between operating profits and taxable profits is about 30 per cent. That's true, too, for firms in the United States, at 28 per cent, in the United Kingdom, at 27 per cent, and in Japan, at 29 per cent. But then you get to the curious ones. Bermuda owned multinationals operating in Australia have a gap between the operating profits and taxable profits of 88 per cent. Those located in the British Virgin Islands have a gap of 92 per cent. In other words, if you start with $10 of operating profit, Australian firms will report $7 of taxable profit and the same with American firms, British firms and Japanese firms. In those cases, $10 of operating profits means $7 of taxable profits. But if you're a firm located in Bermuda or the British Virgin Islands then $10 of operating profits produces just $1 of taxable profits. That could have something to do with the fact that Bermuda and the British Virgin Islands effectively have a zero corporate income tax rate, no personal income tax rate and no capital gains tax rate.

Tax havens are the hiding grounds for plenty of crooks. Gabriel Zucman, an economist at the University of California, Berkeley, estimates that four-fifths of the money in offshore bank accounts is there in breach of other countries' laws. North Korea has used tax havens to hide the proceeds of its sale of nuclear technology and drugs, counterfeiting and projects using forced labour. Al-Qaeda have routed finance payments through tax havens to evade detention. Mexican narcotics kingpin Rafael Caro Quintero is just one of the many drug lords who park their profits in a tax haven.

Tax havens increase inequality. Offshore wealth held by Australians in tax havens is approximately six per cent of GDP, according to Gabriel Zucman's research. In today's prices, that would mean around $100 billion of assets are held in tax havens by wealthy Australians. We say 'wealthy Australians' but we're talking about the superwealthy. Indeed, when researchers have matched up results from high-profile leaks with existing taxation statistics, it looks like half the money in tax havens is owned by the top one-10,000th of the population. We talk about the top one per cent or the top 0.1 per cent, but this is the top 0.01 per cent of the population owning half the money in tax havens. That's not surprising given the funds tend to be the sort with million dollar buy-ins. So it's no surprise that you see multimillionaires dominating investment in tax havens. Indeed, tax havens mean that there is a race to the bottom in living standards and in sustaining a strong corporate tax base.

Australia should be engaged with the global project to tackle base erosion and profit shifting. That's a project which has been operating since 2013—a joint initiative of the OECD and the G20—with over 100 countries and jurisdictions to tackle multinational tax avoidance. Australia used to have a seat on the steering group but no longer does. In effect, we've shifted from the front seat into the back seat. We have seen the coalition government step back from its engagement with the problem of multinational tax avoidance, from this significant problem that faces the globe.

Labor took a suite of policies to the last election that would crack down on multinational tax avoidance. We said that we would crack down on the abuse of royalty payments and so-called patent boxes. The arrangement of patent boxes is largely recognised as being an artifice which doesn't increase intellectual property but, instead, simply serves as a hidey-hole for tax avoidance. Closing the royalty tax loopholes, ensuring that multinationals are denied a tax deduction for questionable royalties, is a reform which has been advocated by many experts and which ensures that we will see multinationals pay their fair share.

We called on the government to implement public reporting of country-by-country reports. I was surprised to see the member for Forde talking about country-by-country reporting, given that the Treasurer and the Prime Minister have argued against the public reporting of country-by-country reports. They have argued against transparency of the amount of tax paid by firms in different jurisdictions. The government once said it was committed to a register of beneficial ownership, tackling the problem that Australia has an unusually opaque share registry. But, having announced that, Kelly O'Dwyer backed off from it prior to the last election. She did an exclusive with The Guardian newspaper, and then admitted close to the election that, actually, the government had killed the idea. It had no intention of improving transparency on who owns Australia's firms.
Ahead of the last election, Labor said it would institute whistleblower protection and incentives to ensure that, where whistleblowers' information resulted in more tax being paid, they could collect a share of the tax penalty up to $250,000. We also tackled debt deduction loopholes. This bill includes some very modest measures around debt deduction but nothing as substantial as Labor has been advocating for in the last two terms in parliament. We believe that the problem of debt shifting is significant. I'll return to the coalition's position on that issue at the end of my remarks.

Labor said ahead of the last election that it would tackle the issue of tax havens being used by superannuation funds and would work to develop guidelines on appropriate tax haven investments by superannuation funds. We would have required firms seeking large government tenders to disclose their country of tax domicile. We would have, had we been elected, required large listed firms to disclose to shareholders their tax haven dealings as a material tax risk. We said we would require more tax transparency by restoring our $100 million threshold for public reporting of tax data by private companies.

We also said we would work on the Tax Inspectors Without Borders program, a joint initiative of the OECD and the United Nations Development Program. This sees tax experts, often from developing countries, working in developing countries. It is on the model of Doctors Without Borders—Medecins Sans Frontieres. The program has so far returned an astonishing ratio of 100 to one in terms of revenue raised compared to donor costs. If anybody in this place knows of another program with a benefit-cost ratio of 100 to one, I am very keen to hear about. That is a return that would make Warren Buffett envious. Tax Inspectors Without Borders ensures that multinationals can't pull the wool over the eyes of developing country governments as a result of having more information than they do. It ensures that multinationals pay their fair share in vulnerable countries. As one commentator observed to The Economist magazine: 'Recently a team came back from meeting one company so excited. For the first time ever when dealing with a large taxpayer, our people did the talking and the multinational representatives on the other side sat dumb, struggling to answer the questions.'

Tax Inspectors Without Borders is a program which merits support by the coalition. I would urge the coalition to look at supporting this program in our region. Foreign aid under the coalition has been brutally cut. If the aid budget continues to follow its current trajectory, overseas development assistance would fall to a miserly 0.18 per cent of gross national income in 2022-23 and 0.16 per cent of gross national income over the medium term. If the coalition is really serious about tax fairness, they will not only adopt more robust policies to tackle multinational tax avoidance—such as a tax haven blacklist—but will also, through Australia's foreign aid program, consider supporting the Tax Inspectors Without Borders program.

I have one final point which is important to make in this debate. The coalition, in 2012, voted against laws to close a multinational tax avoidance loophole. They did so claiming that the measure was retrospective. It wasn’t—they were wrong about that—but they cast a vote against closing a multinational tax avoidance loophole. And then, in 2017, we saw that very same law being used to secure a $340 million judgement against Chevron. If those opposite had any decency, they would have come in here and said: 'We got it wrong. We're very sorry. We made a mistake. Had we had our way, the budget would have been $340 million worse off. But now we have seen the light and we'll do the right thing.' But they didn't do that. Indeed, they even patted themselves on the back. We even had the spectacle of the Prime Minister—then Treasurer—claiming credit for a court outcome based on laws he voted against.

But clearly they were a little wounded by this, so around that time began the lie that Labor had voted against the multinational anti-avoidance law. They began to come into this place and simply repeat time after time the mistruth that Labor had voted against the coalition's multinational anti-avoidance law. This bears focus and it bears a little bit of detail. But the high-level point is that we voted for the law in the House and the Senate but we voted against measures to water down tax transparency. Let me take the House through the key dates. On 9 November 2015, Labor clearly stated its support for the bill throughout the debate. The then senator Sam Dastyari said on that date, at page 8,044 of the Hansard, 'Labor's position is that we support this bill.' On November 11, 2015, Labor voted for the bill in the Senate in its third reading. That is at page 8,338 of the Hansard. On 12 November, the House disagreed with the Senate amendments—Senate amendments that would have watered down tax transparency. That is at page 13,042 of the House Hansard of 12 November. On 3 December 2015 the Senate debated amendments—a deal between the Greens and the coalition—to water down tax transparency. On page 9,906 of the Senate Hansard it can be clearly seen that Labor opposed the amendments to water down tax transparency but supported the re-amended bill. We did the same when the bill returned to the House. At no point did Labor vote against the multinational anti-avoidance law.

When they come into this place in this debate, the Prime Minister, the Treasurer, the member for Fadden, his successor as Assistant Treasurer—the member for Deakin—and the member for Forde have persisted in the mistruth that Labor voted against the multinational anti-avoidance law. We did not. We did not follow the
playbook of the coalition, who did indeed vote against loophole-closing measures of Labor in government in 2012. It is an absolute lie to say that Labor voted against the multinational anti-avoidance law. We believe that law should have been tougher, which is why we took to the last election the most comprehensive suite of multinational anti-tax-avoidance proposals that any opposition has ever taken to an election.

Mr GEORGANAS (Adelaide) (18:25): Even though Labor support the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Multinationals Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill 2019 and we've made many comments and statements in this place about cracking down on multinationals, we know that this bill doesn't go far enough. It is a step in the right direction, but it basically still lets the multinationals off the hook. We know that when you speak to people out in the community and discuss politics, as we did in the campaign that just took place, one of the major issues that keep on coming up over and over again is, 'Why don't you crack down on multinationals that don't pay their tax?' That's something that we hear in the community continuously, because Australians are outraged—and rightly so, because they pay their fair share of tax. If you're working, whether you're a public servant, an assembly line worker, a bus driver or a carpenter, you will pay your tax. People pay their taxes to help fund our schools and our health—our Medicare system. So it's right that they're outraged, and it's just not fair on average Australia.

We've seen reports in the media continuously. One not even a year ago said, 'Multinationals move $16 billion from Australia to tax havens each year.' We're not talking about a couple of million or a few million; they move $16 billion from Australia to tax havens each year. This is money that would fund our entire health system or our entire education system, and it is not on.

We know that one of the best ways to fix up the mess that this government has made with the budget and the economy is to ensure that multinationals pay their fair share of tax. Closing down loopholes means more taxpayer money will stay in Australia to be spent on the needs of the Australian people. We know that critical services, as I've mentioned—schools and hospitals—need this money. Instead of average Australians paying more than their fair share, we need these multinationals to pay their fair share.

As I said, while this bill goes some way to addressing the multinational tax avoidance, much more needs to be done. We know, as we heard the member for Fenner say, that the government's heart is not really in this. They've voted against proposals and motions that we've put up in this place, and we know that their heart is not in it. We also know that their heart's not in it because the biggest beneficiaries of the $20 billion tax cut will be these very multinational companies that are moving $16 billion from Australian shores to offshore places like the Cayman Islands to avoid their tax. We know that they pay millions of dollars every year to tax accountants and accounting firms at the big end of town to show them how they can avoid paying their tax and then get a tax deduction on that bill. That runs into the millions. During the last election campaign, we didn't hear much from the government on multinationals, corporations and tax havens, and they refused to close down tax loopholes. So we know that, under this government, working Australians have been footing the bill for the unfair tax loopholes that exist in this nation and benefit those multinational companies.

As I said, we've seen from time to time, again and again, articles that appear in newspaper reports. Another one that I dug out today was from ABC News, dating back to December of last year. It said that one third of large Australian companies paid no tax, and that was from the ATO data. They failed to pay the tax even though they made a gross profit. This is not on, because for every dollar that these multinationals aren't paying the bill is footed by an average Australian worker.

On this side of the House, Labor is very serious about cracking down on multinational tax loopholes and making multinational corporations pay their share of tax. As I said, during the election campaign the Labor Party, on this side of the House, announced a tough multinational tax avoidance and tax haven crackdown. This was a crackdown which would have made our system fairer. It would have been fairer for companies that are competing against these companies that offshore their money and pay no tax, and it would have been fairer for smaller businesses who pay their fair share of tax. It would have helped to fund better health services and better services in this nation. That's the reason we pay taxes, so our children can have the education that they deserve and so our elderly can have the services they deserve in hospitals and health care and many other things.

We went to the election with 19 different measures to crack down on the multinational tax loopholes and the tax havens that exist overseas. There were measures such as tightening the debt deductions, closing public reporting of country-to-country reports and increasing capacity for the ATO. We need to give the powers needed to the ATO to be able to investigate. We heard from the member for Fenner about giving tax inspectors the ability to operate without borders and to be able to go into some of these Third World countries where governments can be influenced by multinationals not to pay any tax and to set up tax havens. Closing those loopholes is a must for this nation. We know that there are certain trusts that make payments to nonresidents on artificial figures and they get a tax rate below the 30 per cent company rate as well.
We also need to give whistleblower protections. Whistleblower protections are so important. There are many people who have information and who would like to be heard. We need to give those people the protection that they require to feel comfortable enough to report previous employers that have been, basically, abusing the system—sometimes even illegally.

The government needs to do more than just claim credit for one of Labor's previous policies. We have made these announcements many times and the government wouldn't support us. If the government were serious about dealing with multinational tax avoidance then it would take real action. It would really come down tough and do everything it can to stop the loopholes that exists currently in our system which enable these companies to pay little or no tax. So the government needs to do more. Every single dollar that we let slip through is an extra dollar that average Australia has to make up for. Every million dollars that a multinational avoids paying is a million dollars that come out of the pockets of working Australian mums and dads, and that is not on. It is critical that we fund our services, and average Australians are funding the services and carrying the weight for many of these multinationals companies that are out there. We have foreign banks, for example, which pay no tax or very little tax here in Australia. We see that they turn over billions in lending and trading here in this nation and yet pay no tax. There are articles which, as I said, have appeared on the ABC and in many of Australia's papers about that.

One of the things that this measure will crack down on—and examples of this have been given—is the situation of hotel booking agencies that exist overseas, where you can set up an internet company anywhere in the world and service people here in Australia and the money is paid into an overseas account. The company doesn't appear here in Australia, yet uses Australian dollars to make a profit and then pays absolutely no tax. We know this is wrong. We know that we need to crack down on it. It is a small measure that is taking place through this bill. We need to come down tougher and be harder on these multinationals and we need to close the loopholes to ensure that companies paying their fair share of tax.

When you have one-third of Australia's largest companies paying zero tax, it's not on—because that tax is paid by everyday, ordinary Australians. As I said, every dollar that slips overseas is being paid for by a schoolteacher, by a nurse, by a police officer or by someone working in a factory, a storeman or a store woman—average Australians. They are carrying on their shoulders the weight of these multinationals who get away with paying no tax. These multinationals make billions of dollars, and their executives and board members are on millions of dollars. It is just not on and not fair.

So I am hoping that we will see more measures. We on this side of the House proposed 19 measures at the last election—measures that would have really tightened up those loopholes; measures that would have ensured that more money came into our coffers to pay for education, health and the services that Australians require.

Mr KHALIL (Wills) (18:36): I also rise to speak in support of the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Multinationals Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill 2019. This amendment bill only goes a very small way to addressing what is still a huge challenge for our country. Since the multinational tax avoidance law took effect in 2016, we have seen some improvements—that's true. The special Tax Avoidance Taskforce run by the ATO has recouped round $8 billion from multinational corporations, and the ATO has noted that the tax gap is showing an improvement more generally. The ATO has also stated that a behavioural change is underway, with multinationals now more careful with the amount of tax they pay. 'More careful' is an interesting phrase. But is that enough? Is it enough just to be more careful? Is it enough for multinationals to just be careful with respect to navigating our tax system?

The fact remains that, as of the latest ATO corporate tax transparency report, which was handed down in December 2018, for 2016-17, as the previous speaker mentioned, one-third of large companies operating in Australia and making a profit paid no tax on profit at all. There are some utterly damning statistics in this report. Here are just a few: Chevron paid zero tax on profit after making $2.2 billion in taxable income in 2016-17; Exxon Mobil made $18.6 million profit and paid zero tax on profit; and Fuji Xerox Australia made $1.1 billion in taxable income and paid zero tax on profit.

The fact remains that companies use a range of tactics and strategies to lower their taxable income in Australia and shirk what we think should be their responsibility to contribute to our society—something which this law has not been fully able to combat. In 2018, Uber reported an Australian revenue of $935.3 million, with a gross profit of $785.6 million. Uber claimed, however, $691 million as service fees, which cut tax payable down to $8.5 million. At least $499 million out of that $691 million was sent to other related parties in the Netherlands. And this was after Uber claimed, in their words, 'We are meeting all of our tax obligations in Australia.' Other examples, like IKEA and McDonald's, pay billions in franchise fees to drastically reduce their taxable income. IKEA's accounts also show that they are loaded with debt to their offshore parent company—$578.7 million to be exact. That's another tactic to minimise tax.
You have the big tech companies, Facebook and Google, which are paying more tax in Australia thanks to the multinational anti-avoidance law, but they are still offshoring much of their revenue to avoid the bulk of their responsibilities on tax here in Australia. We know that these tech giants will book advertising for clients here in Australia overseas so that the revenue appears not to be generated here in Australia, even though these ads are for local Australian clients and businesses. In 2018, Google earned $4.3 billion in Australia and Facebook earned around $500 million in Australia, mostly from advertising. Yet they did not pay their fair share of tax last year. Google paid—wait for it—$26.5 million in tax in Australia and Facebook paid only $11.8 million. Maybe that sounds like a lot to some people—it certainly is to people in my electorate—but that's actually a tax rate for Google of less than one per cent in Australia. It's 0.6 per cent, to be exact. How did they do this? Well, Google paid about $2 billion out of the $4.3 billion earned in Australia back to its parent entity in the United States. For Facebook, it's not much better. Their rate of tax in 2018 was just 2.36 per cent. If you're an average punter on the street this would be shocking to you, but it is also absolutely unacceptable. It just shows how much work needs to be done in this area.

So, while Labor supports this amendment and any effort that the government makes to crack down on multinational tax avoidance, we need to do more. Clearly, companies are still finding ways to avoid their tax responsibilities in Australia. As I said, if your average punters, ordinary Australians, are paying their fair share of tax, why shouldn't these companies and multinationals? Your average punter is paying 30c in the dollar, the dollar that they've worked so hard to get. Whether they work in a servo on a nightshift or are a cleaner, nurse, teacher or landscape gardener, they're sweating out there to earn that dollar and they're paying 30c or 37c—whatever it might be—in the dollar. It's not too much to ask that some of the biggest companies in the world pay their fair share in Australia, the country where they're making this profit.

Australians deserve a government that does everything it can to make sure that the large companies are paying that fair share. Australians should be able to have confidence in their tax system and the principle that everyone, from individuals to large corporations, both Australian and foreign owned, are contributing and giving back to the society from which they make that profit. Evasion and avoidance are not victimless activities. These activities actually undermine the rule of law and the primary purpose of our tax system—that is, it belongs to and should benefit the people of Australia. The whole community suffers when some members, individuals or corporate entities, wrongfully or artfully dodge making their fair contribution to the upkeep of a decent, civilised society.

Australia should be looking to the international community's efforts in tackling this problem. Over the last five years, there have been a number of significant international initiatives that have developed proposals and recommendations designed to support a collaborative approach to reduce multinational tax avoidance. The most notable of these is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's base erosion and profit shifting project—BEPS for short. The BEPS project represents an unparalleled effort by OECD countries and G20 countries to restore confidence in the international tax system. More than 60 countries worked together to deliver a comprehensive package of action items in just two years. It represents the first substantial renovation of the international tax standards in almost a century.

Of that 15-point action plan of recommendations, Australia has committed to only eight of them, excluding possibly the most important, which is bringing the international tax system in line with changes in the digital era. France is leading in this area. It has moved independently of the EU to create a three per cent tax on large tech companies' local income rather than the profits they make. French officials expect that the annual tax for these companies will amount to about 500 million euros or $563 million.

While President Trump is disapproving of this recent French tax, it does combat a sore spot seen international and domestically in Australia: avoidance of tax by paying taxes in EU countries where they have their headquarters, not where they make their sales. Often they have offices in Ireland or Luxembourg where they have extremely low tax rates. The UK, Spain, Japan and Singapore are all planning similar tax schemes of their own to tackle this problem. Once again, Australia is behind the eight-ball in regard to international efforts in this area.

We on this side took a plan to crack down on multinational tax loopholes and make multinational corporations pay their fair share to the last election. We had policies to target companies that use low- or no-tax havens to offshore funds and a range of other accounting strategies that they use to lower their taxable income in Australia. Some of this included tightening debt deductions, closing public reporting of country-by-country reports, increased capacity for the ATO, public reporting of AUSTRAC data, closing loopholes for certain trusts that make payments to nonresidents to artificially get a tax rate below the 30 per cent company rate, and whistleblower protections.

We took all of this to the last election because we know that every dollar that a company pays in tax in Australia is a direct contribution to Australia and our society. It is a contribution to our kids' education, to our health care, to protecting our natural environment, to looking after our older Australians in their retirement, and to
the NDIS. Every dollar that is lost through the tax avoidance that we've seen, through these tactics that these big companies use, effectively leaves us worse off as a society.

As shadow minister, Jim Chalmers said in his speech earlier this evening, it beggars belief that this government is not doing more to address this problem. It doesn't make sense. It doesn't add up, because it's up to the government to ensure that they're doing everything they can to close down these loopholes that are still being utilised, quite expertly, and still being exploited by many of these multinational companies. I want to know why they're not doing more. We're supportive of this amendment, as small as it is, but why aren't they doing more? It is clearly a problem. The statistics are in everyone's face. We can see it: billions of dollars in profit with zero tax paid or very minimal tax paid—0.6 per cent, 2 per cent. Go and explain that to someone in my electorate who works night shift and has to pay 30c or 37c in the dollar. Why are they paying that percentage for every dollar they make, and these multinationals that are making enormous profits in this country are walking off only having to pay two per cent or 0.6 per cent? There is just no fairness in it at all.

Unfortunately, even with this law that we are debating—operating since 2016—we are still losing money through offshoring and through loopholes that this government hasn't bothered to try to close down. So this bill does go some way to addressing the issue—it certainly does; and we support that small measure. But much, much more needs to be done before these companies start paying their fair share to Australia.

Ms STEGGALL (Warringah) (18:48): I rise to speak on the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Multinationals Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill 2019. This government is constantly repeating that it is on the side of hardworking Australians. It would seem that it is also on the side of big multinationals if it does not do more than what this bill proposes.

I too am on the side of hardworking Australians and small businesses. I fully agree with the broad principle, at explicitly stated in the title of this bill, that multinational companies trading in Australia need to pay their fair share of tax here. After all, the many small businesses in my electorate of Warringah have to pay their fair share. The government should be commended that additional transparency measures targeting multinational corporations introduced in the previous legislation are working. The ATO is collecting billions more in revenue that is going back to essential government services for the Australian public and the people of Warringah. I also agree with the bipartisan findings of the Senate Standing Committee on Economics. It reviewed the earlier version of this bill in the last parliament and found that ensuring the integrity of Australia's taxation laws is critical to ensuring an equitable society. I support 'programs delivered through the tax system', which result in substantial returns for taxpayers, and which demonstrate 'the government's commitment to continually strengthening our tax system'.

This bill, however, seems to be just fiddling around the edges of what is an enormous problem. The potential revenue gain for the measures is small and does little to address and resolve the issue. If we just concentrate on the first measure introduced, we can see clearly that luxury car tax rule changes and changes to the GST of booking operators will result in little tax revenue gain.

Schedule 1 of the bill, which deals with rules around thin capitalisation, will collect $120 million in additional revenue in the years 2020-21. This is just a fraction of the expatriated profits of just one tax minimiser. As it stands, we have some of the biggest companies in the world paying next to no tax in Australia. Let's take, for example, five of the top energy players over the last four years: ExxonMobil—$33 billion in total income in Australia, zero tax paid; EnergyAustralia—$30 billion in total income in Australia, zero tax paid; Peabody Energy—$12 billion in total income in Australia, zero tax paid; Chevron—$10.5 billion in total income in Australia, zero dollars paid; and Santos—$14.5 billion in total income in Australia, at least $3.1 million in tax paid. These numbers are from the Australian Taxation Office. This is $100 billion in income, and what is the Australian taxpayer getting? Only $3.1 million from Santos, which is only 0.0031 per cent on such income.

The hardworking small businesses all over Warringah want multinationals to pay their fair share of tax. Around half of major multinationals operating in Australia pay little to no tax. Their tools are practices like debt loading, profit shifting, base erosion and loss transferability, which require sweeping changes to transparency rules, reporting requirements and empowered and emboldened regulators to combat.

The proposed changes in this bill do little to address these practices. These practices are happening in my own electorate. There was a recent takeover bid by the Brookfield group, operating out of the Cayman Islands, acquiring 41 private hospitals owned and operated by Healthscope, including the beleaguered Northern Beaches Hospital, which services over 100,000 people in Warringah. The general advantages of purchasing Australian assets by Cayman Island entities is that it helps minimise tax and conceal information. We have not seen any legislation yet cracking down on this. The takeover by the Brookfield group should never have been approved by our regulators. The Foreign Investment Review Board—which looks at these transactions and is required to take
into account complex financial arrangements that encourage tax avoidance practices—waved it through, and the Treasurer could have stopped it but remained silent. We need our regulators emboldened and ready to aggressively stop tax minimisation transactions.

The Brookfield group is now eyeing off the Aveo Group, an Australian company based in Sydney who provide aged-care services, housing more than 13,000 residents in about 90 villages across the country. We cannot have more Australian assets providing important services transferring to the Cayman Islands. If it comes to a bid, I call on the FIRB and the Treasurer to reject it.

How is the Australian public supposed to know of the practices that are happening? Reporting standards don't do much to encourage transparency and availability of information, with statements dealing with multinationals being purposely opaque and incredibly technical.

If you do want to know about these transactions and business structures, you can pay up to $41 per search through an ASIC register for the records, and some of these companies purposely have intricate webs of incorporated businesses, often having several businesses dealing with various complex functions and transactions. That's potentially hundreds of dollars, and simply not available to everyday small business owners. Other countries provide this basic search for free. Why do Australians have to pay for such accountability?

So, while I commend the steps proposed in this bill—and I know this is an issue that came up a lot around the electorate of Warringah—the government must do more on this front. We need to ensure that multinationals pay their fair share of tax for business they conduct in Australia. To take an expression often used in this place, especially by the Prime Minister: 'How good is our tax system!'—well, with due respect, it could be better.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (18:56): I rise to support this bill, the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Multinationals Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill 2019. I have seen multiple attempts by the government to tighten up on multinational tax avoidance, and I applaud all of them. However, it is hard not to conclude that each of these measures really only nibbles away at what is a much bigger policy issue, and a very serious one at that. It's very serious because every dollar of tax that multinational corporations avoid in Australia shifts an ever-increasing burden onto Australian taxpayers, and they include both small businesses and individuals. Predictably, our government's ability to provide essential and non-essential services to Australia directly suffers as a result of multinational tax avoidance.

This is why I was so taken with the French government's recent implementation of a flat three per cent revenue tax on multinational tech giants that operate in France. The tax only applies to revenues earned in France and only upon tech companies that earn annual global revenue of more than 750 million euros, in addition to revenue in France exceeding 25 million euros. Time magazine states that:

The revenue threshold is supposed to allow more room for startups. France argues that tech giants are abusing their market dominance, notably through tax avoidance, and preventing others from a fair chance of competing.

I find it hard to disagree with that sentiment, especially when large tech companies pay very little tax in most of the jurisdictions in which they operate, including Australia. For example, in financial year 2016-17, Facebook paid only $12.5 million of tax in Australia, which was only 3.8 per cent of its Australian revenue of $331 million; Google only paid $33 million in tax, which was only 2.2 per cent of its Australian revenue of almost $1.5 billion; and, in combining Amazon corporate and Amazon web services, Amazon paid $10.4 million in tax, which was only 2.3 per cent of its $454 million in Australian revenue. And similar stories stretch back through multiple years of Australian taxation data.

I would encourage every member in this chamber to read The Great Multinational Tax Rout: How We're All Being Robbed by Martin Feil. Just to give some global context to this: multinational corporations have avoided trillions of dollars of tax over the past 25 years. Tax avoidance is legal, but it is a massive abuse by multinationals that has a devastating effect on governments around the world and has placed an unbearable burden on individual taxpayers and on honest local businesses.

What is interesting, though, is that there are four accounting firms—PricewaterhouseCoopers; Ernst & Young, now known as EY; KPMG; and Deloitte—and they are the global accountants and tax advisers for multinationals. They have been paid over $500 billion in the past 25 years to prepare annual accounts and to manage multinational tax affairs. The favourite tool of the big four accountancies to minimise tax for their multinational clients is transfer pricing, a complex and confusing array of methodologies and strategies that work to reduce tax or even avoid tax altogether.

So I would encourage every member of this chamber to read this book. It is certainly eye-opening and says that we have to do much more. Apple Australia paid just $80 million in income tax on revenue of $6 billion in Australia in the year 2013-14. How can our mum-and-dad businesses compete when that is the arrangement that Apple have through their complex web, as do all of the other multinationals?
So we really must act to clamp down on multinationals which are, perfectly legally but immorally, taking full advantage of the weaknesses in our taxation system and other nations' taxation systems. For Australia, this is of great detriment to our taxpayers. The French look to be leading the way, and I hope Australia will do all we can to follow.

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (19:01): I firstly thank all the members who've contributed to the debate this evening. As we've outlined, the government's committed to strengthening the integrity of our tax system, closing loopholes and ensuring taxpayers' dollars are spent prudently. The measures in the Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Multinationals Pay Their Fair Share of Tax in Australia and Other Measures) Bill 2019 build on this commitment.

As has been outlined, schedule 1 to the bill improves the integrity of Australia's thin cap rules. Australia's thin cap rules prevent multinationals from having unrealistically high levels of debt in Australia in order to claim excessive interest deductions. The bill strengthens the integrity of the thin cap rules by improving the reliability of asset valuations used to support debt deductions. Multinationals, in essence, will need to align the value of their assets for thin cap purposes with the value included in their financial statements. The bill will also ensure that all foreign-controlled consolidated groups are recognised as inward-investing entities. This will confirm that these entities are not able to use thin cap tests that are only appropriate for outbound investors. The changes in schedule 1 to the bill build on the strong actions the government has already taken over a period of time to combat multinational tax avoidance.

Schedule 2 to the bill levels the playing field for Australian hotel bookings by ensuring that offshore sellers of hotel accommodation in Australia calculate their GST turnover in the same way as local sellers, effective from 1 July 2019. This measure follows the government's decision to extend the GST to digital products and other services from 1 July 2017 and to low-value imported goods from 1 July 2018.

Finally, schedule 3 to the bill removes liability for luxury car tax from cars that are reimported following service, repair or refurbishment overseas. It ensures there will be equal tax treatment of car refurbishments regardless of where the refurbishment is performed.

I therefore commend this bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (19:04): 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 Tax Integrity and Other Measures No. 1) Bill 2019

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (19:05): The Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Tax Integrity and Other Measures No. 1) Bill 2019 contains seven separate measures dealing with various Treasury laws and tax activities. I foreshadow that at the conclusion of my remarks I'll be moving an amendment to the question before the House.

Schedule 1 of the bill prevents certain tax deductions from arising when newly privatised entities repay a concessional loan. Schedule 2 amends the tax law to prevent small business capital gains tax concessions from being available for assignments of the income of a partner and other rights or interests in the income or capital of a partnership that are not a membership interest of the partnership. Schedule 3 limits deductions for losses or outgoings incurred that relate to holding vacant land under certain circumstances. This would essentially end negative gearing in relation to vacant land. Schedule 4 extends anti-avoidance rules for circular trust distributions to cover family trusts. Schedule 5 allows the Australian tax office to disclose certain business tax debts to credit reporting agencies. Schedule 6 allows the Australian tax office to develop and administer a framework for electronic invoicing. It will surprise many that that does not already exist. Schedule 7 ensures that an individual's salary sacrifice contribution cannot be used to reduce an employer's minimum superannuation guarantee contribution.
We'll not be opposing the bill in the House. I will be moving a second reading amendment, and I also foreshadow that we will be referring the bill to a committee in the other place. I'd like to make a few important observations, particularly about schedule 3 of the bill, because it does deal with the politically hot topic of negative gearing on real estate. You would have had to have been living on another planet if you don't know that this was a very hot issue during the May election campaign. During the election, the Prime Minister said that Labor's policy on negative gearing would force a 'concrete landing' for Australia's housing market and 'erode the value of Australians' homes'. He said changes to negative gearing could drive up rents by 22 per cent in Brisbane, while prices could fall by 16 per cent in Melbourne. He also said that 30,000 jobs could be lost across the construction sector. This was all true—but how so much can change over a very few short weeks!

I'm absolutely astounded that a bill made it through the coalition's caucus to remove negative gearing arrangements on certain real estate. There'll be owners of real estate throughout urban and regional Australia who'll be surprised that a government that campaigned so hard against these measures is introducing such a bill in the second sitting week of its new term of office. There'll be tradies throughout New South Wales and other places who I'm sure are going to be saying, 'We voted for this government because we were concerned about negative gearing and here they are introducing a bill that abolishes the very rights they vowed to protect.' So I'm sure this is a matter that will get a bit of attention during the committee consideration of this bill in the other place.

I'd also note that there have been some significant stakeholder concerns with the measure included in schedule 5 of the bill. We broadly support the measure, but the disclosure of business tax debts to credit reporting agencies will be a sensitive matter—and I'm sure the Assistant Treasurer knows that. It will be a sensitive matter for many businesses, and it's worth careful consideration by all parties before we jump into it. We'd like to hear from some of those parties to ensure that we've got the details of the legislation right.

We note that concerns have been raised in relation to this matter by the Institute of Public Accountants, for example. They have made the points that there are likely to be difficulties in keeping the information stored by credit reporting bureaus accurate and up to date; there's a need, in addition to that, to put in place safeguards that ensure data is removed once debts are paid; and there's the need for privacy protections to be embedded in the legislative framework. We share these concerns while not taking away our general support for the provisions which would enable the ATO to disclose to credit agencies the nature of these tax debts. I'd expect these matters to be considered by the Senate committee as the bill is investigated.

We also note that schedule 7 of this bill would prevent employers from underpaying superannuation when an employee chooses of their own volition to salary sacrifice into their superannuation account. This is a loophole that's well past its due date, and we commend the government for finally getting around to working on this. It is actually the subject of my second reading amendment. We call on the government to act swiftly to close other loopholes that allow employers to get away with ripping off their workers, whether through underpayment of superannuation or through wage theft, but we won't be holding our breath on that.

This government has been asleep at the wheel when it comes to tax integrity. One or two bills that fiddle around the edges of our tax system are not going to change that. The Liberal's signature policy on tax so far, in their six years of flailing government, has been an $80 billion giveaway to the big banks and multinational corporations. Only Labor has been serious about cracking down on these loopholes and making multinational corporations pay their fair share of tax. It was Labor's laws that the Liberals opposed that underpinned the tax office's $300 million win against Chevron. It was Labor's laws that the Liberals opposed that delivered the tax office's $529 million settlement with BHP. But Labor is here to be constructive. We're keen to ensure that the integrity of our tax system is maintained. We're keen to ensure that the tax integrity bills brought before this parliament are the best bills possible. This is why we have referred this bill to a full and proper Senate inquiry. 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 calls on the Government to do more to combat superannuation theft and ensure that workers receive their rightful superannuation entitlements in full".

I'd hope this is an amendment that might enjoy the support of members opposite. With those remarks, I understand that the amendment is going to be seconded by the member for Cooper.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Wicks): Is the amendment seconded?

Ms Kearney: I second the amendment and reserve my right of reply.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this, the honourable member for Whitlam has moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.
Mr SUKKAR (Deakin—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (19:13): We don't support the amendment moved by the shadow minister. I'll get onto schedule 3 in particular, on which particular comments were made by the shadow minister. We welcome and thank them for their support for the vast majority of this bill. I'm very grateful to all of the members who've contributed to the debate. The Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Tax Integrity and Other Measures No. 1) Bill 2019 contains very important integrity measures which strengthen our tax base; save businesses time and money, through implementing an electronic invoicing framework; and, of course, improve the integrity of the super system.

Schedule 1 to the bill denies deductions that arise in respect of repayment of the principal of a concessional loan by a tax-exempt entity that is privatised and then becomes taxable. This measure applies to entities that become privatised on or after 7.30 pm on 8 May 2018. This will strengthen our corporate tax base by improving the integrity of the tax treatment of funds that are borrowed on concessional terms by tax-exempt entities, such as government-owned entities that subsequently become privatised. In addition, the government is ensuring that partners in partnerships can't inappropriately access the small-business capital gains tax concessions when dealing in rights that alienate the future income from that partnership.

Schedule 2 to the bill amends the act to deny access to the small-business capital gains tax concessions in those cases where the partners alienate their income by creating an assignee or otherwise dealing in rights to the future income or capital of a partnership. Partners will now only be eligible for the concessions when such rights make the assignee a partner in the partnership. This will implement an integrity measure announced by the government in the 2018-19 budget, and the amendments apply from 7.30 pm on 8 May 2018. The concessions themselves are not changing and will continue to be available for genuine disposals and transactions that affect the substance of the operation of the partnership.

Schedule 3 of the bill amends the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 to deny deductions for some taxpayers for expenses associated with holding vacant land. These amendments are simply an integrity measure to tighten the link between claiming deductions for holding vacant land and earning assessable income. These amendments will not apply to land held by the owner or related entities to carry on a business where there is a substantial building or premise on the land or where a property has been built on the land and it's available for rent. These amendments won't apply to corporate tax entities, managed investment trusts, superannuation plans other than self-managed super funds and unit public trusts. Expenses for which deductions will be denied that would ordinarily be a cost base element may be included in the cost base of the asset for capital gains tax purposes when sold, and these will apply to the 2019-20 income year and later.

On the shadow minister's folly in trying to in some way connect these to Labor's disastrous housing taxes and proposed abolishing of negative gearing: I know the shadow minister is new to a Treasury portfolio in opposition. Had he been paying attention during the 2017-18 budget, he would have seen a range of integrity measures, including limiting deductions for travel in relation to investment properties. This is another step in the plan of the government, ensuring integrity in our tax system without the associated higher taxes that the Labor Party proposed. To in any way liken these to Labor's very failed approach on abolishing negative gearing is factually wrong and clearly shows that the shadow Assistant Treasurer is trying to grapple with a new portfolio. We'll give him some time.

Schedule 4 to the bill amends the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 to extend to family trusts a specific anti-avoidance rule that applies to other closely held trusts that engage in circular trust distributions. This will implement an integrity measure announced by the government in the 2018-19 budget, and the amendments will apply from 1 July 2019. In essence, the amendments will better enable the ATO to pursue family trusts that engage in these arrangements by extending the specific anti-avoidance rule, which imposes tax on such distributions at a rate equal to the top personal tax rate plus the Medicare levy.

Schedule 5 to the bill amends the tax administration act to allow the ATO the discretion to disclose to credit-reporting bureaus the tax debt information of particular businesses that are not effectively engaging with the ATO to manage their debts. This will allow tax debts to be placed on a similar footing as other debts, strengthening the incentives for businesses to pay their debts in a timely manner and effectively engage with the ATO to avoid having their tax debt information disclosed. The reporting of particular tax debts will reduce the unfair advantage that is inevitably obtained by businesses that don't pay their tax on time, and contributes to more informed decision-making within the business community by enabling businesses to make a more complete assessment of the credit worthiness of those businesses.

Tax debt information may only be disclosed to credit-reporting bureaus where some very strict procedural conditions and safeguards are satisfied, including: the debt is for a taxpayer who has an ABN; the debt amount is at least $100,000 and overdue for at least 90 days; and the business is not effectively engaging with the ATO to manage that tax debt. It's only then, if those criteria are satisfied, that the ATO will make the particular businesses
aware that they are considering disclosing their information and afford them with an opportunity to engage with the ATO to prevent their debts from being reported. This will be supported by rigorous administrative arrangements that will also provide taxpayers with the opportunity to initiate a review process to any disclosure and the ATO consulting with the Inspector-General of Taxation prior to any disclosure. Once a business no longer meets the criteria, the tax debt information will be removed.

Schedule 6 to the bill amends the tax administration act to allow the ATO to implement an electronic invoicing framework, known as e-invoicing in Australia, and as I mentioned at the beginning of this speech. E-invoicing is the direct electronic exchange of invoices between suppliers and buyers of financial systems, and is an opportunity to streamline invoice transactions, saving businesses time and money. We know that e-invoicing can reduce processing times and errors, leading to faster payments of invoices. Deloitte Access Economics estimates that e-invoicing could result in economy-wide benefits of up to $28 billion over 10 years.

The Australian and New Zealand governments, it's worth noting, are working together to pursue common approaches to e-invoicing as part of the single economic market agenda. In February this year, the Prime Minister announced jointly with the New Zealand Prime Minister that Australia and New Zealand intend to adopt the Pan-European Public Procurement Online—PEPPOL, as it's more commonly known—an interoperability framework for invoicing. The PEPPOL framework is a secure network that enables government organisations and private enterprises to exchange business documents, such as invoices, electronically.

PEPPOL connects different electronic procurement and invoicing systems by establishing a set of common business processes and technical standards, and this provides a seamless exchange of information between trading partners who use different software applications. PEPPOL is currently used, it's worth noting, in over 30 countries in Europe, Asia and North America.

Schedule 7 to the bill will close a loophole that's being used by unscrupulous employers to short-change employees who make salary sacrificed superannuation contributions. There are instances where employees who enter salary sacrifice arrangements discover that their super has increased by less than they were expecting because the employers have used salary sacrifice amounts to satisfy their SG obligations, or have based their SG contributions on the lower post-salary-sacrifice earnings base. To prevent these practices, the changes in this bill will ensure that an individual's salary sacrifice contributions don't reduce their employer's SG obligations in any way. This amendment is crucial to ensuring that Australians continue to have confidence in the integrity of the super system by making certain that employers are paying workers their full entitlements.

Of course, full details of the measures are contained in the explanatory memorandum. I therefore commend this bill to the House.

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

The House divided. [19:28]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................... 65
Noes .................... 76
Majority ............... 11

AYES
Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ

NYES

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Burke, AS
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ

CHAMBER
AYES

Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
O’Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM (teller)
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakinou, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Coleman, DB
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Laming, A
Leeson, 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
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Young, T

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Haines, H
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
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
Thomson, P
Van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

Question negatived.
Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER (19:32): It being 7.30 pm, I propose the question:
That the House do now adjourn.
Federal Election

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (19:32): Earlier today, the Labor Party announced that it would not be challenging the result of the election in the division of Chisholm in Victoria. We were disappointed and frankly appalled by the tactics employed by the Liberal Party in the division of Chisholm and in the division of Kooyong, for that matter. In particular, the Chinese language signs used by the now member for Chisholm and by the member for Kooyong, who is also the Treasurer of Australia, were clearly designed to look like official voting instructions from the Australian Electoral Commission. Translated into English, the signs stated, 'Correct way of voting: fill in ‘1’ next to the Liberal candidate on the green ballot and fill in numbers in other boxes in ascending order.' Let me repeat that—'Correct way of voting: fill in '1' next to the Liberal candidate on the green ballot and fill in numbers in other boxes in ascending order.'

The signs used the same colours of purple and white as the Australian Electoral Commission. The signs were displayed next to the official AEC signs at the entrance of polling places so they would be one of the last things voters saw before they cast their ballots. The signs included no Liberal Party branding at all. The only evidence that the signs originated with the Liberal Party was a barely perceptible script of text at the bottom which indicated that the signs were authorised by the Victorian branch of the Liberal Party. Unlike the rest of the signs, the sneaky, near-invisible authorisation was written in English, presumably so the signs' target audience would not be able to read it. According to AEC and census data, there are approximately 13,000 voters who speak Mandarin or Cantonese at home in the division of Chisholm. The final two-party preferred vote difference between the elected member and Labor's candidate, Jennifer Yang, was 1,090 votes. That means if only 546 voters had changed their votes, Jennifer Yang would have been elected as member for Chisholm. We will never know whether the fake AEC signs in fact misled a sufficient number of voters to change the election result in Chisholm or how many Chinese-Australians were misled or insulted by the signs in the Treasurer's electorate of Kooyong, but there can be no doubt about the intentions of the Liberal Party in devising and placing these fake AEC signs. It should be a matter of great concern to all Australians that the now member for Chisholm, the Treasurer of Australia and the Liberal Party sought to mislead Chinese-speaking Australian voters with their shamefully deceitful signs.

Labor believes there is a strong case that the signs constituted a criminal breach of the Electoral Act; however, the cost and lengthy nature of a legal challenge means we will not be seeking to overturn the outcome of the election through legal action. Now is not the time for us to be looking back at the result of the last election; instead our focus must be on holding this tired third-term Liberal government to account and showing the people of Australia that Labor has the most positive, just and prosperous vision for our nation’s future and the best policies to get us there. That is not to say we do not think there should not be consequences for the member for Chisholm, the Treasurer of Australia and the Liberal Party for their disgraceful conduct during the election campaign. Regardless of whether the High Court of Australia sitting as the Court of Disputed Returns finds that these fake AEC signs were in breach of the Electoral Act, the Australian public can see clearly what the Liberal Party were up to. This parliament has a role to play in ensuring that conduct of this nature, where a political party masqueraded as the Australian Electoral Commission to deceive voters, is condemned for what it is. The parliament can ensure, through an inquiry of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters or by legislation if necessary, that it is never repeated. These are matters we will be raising over the coming weeks and months.

Sunshine Coast Airport

Mr LLEW O'BRIEN (Wide Bay) (19:37): During the election campaign I committed to making a speech on behalf of the people of Noosa’s coastal and hinterland communities, who were outraged by what they see as a lack of meaningful, effective and genuine consultation for a new flight path from the Sunshine Coast Airport. This upset could have been avoided if right from the beginning the key stakeholders and agencies had been more diligent in the way they executed their responsibilities and genuinely consulted with affected communities as they were obliged to do. None of the responsible entities, from the Queensland Coordinator-General's office to the Sunshine Coast Council to Airservices Australia, can walk away from this situation blame-free.

More than 250 residents from Noosa's coastal and hinterland communities have expressed to me their grave concerns about proposed flight paths. Their submissions present a damning assessment of the failure of all parties involved. Critically, constituents advised that they were not made aware, by the Sunshine Coast Council or those conducting the environmental impact study and process, of the proposed flight path changes and the impacts it would have on them. Affected communities north of Coolum advised that they did not receive communications during the EIS process and became aware of the process only in March and April this year. As a result they had less than six weeks to consider the information and provide feedback to Airservices Australia.
The Queensland government failed to ensure a proper consultation process was followed and rubber-stamped the project after a tick-and-flick exercise instead of conducting a rigorous examination of the flight path’s impact on those communities also. The people who live in the areas have a right to be fully consulted over the proposal, which puts jet engines over their homes and highly sensitive environmentally significant areas. These concerns are reflected by the thousands of people who raised objections, signed petitions and turned out, overflowing public meetings, to seek more information and make known their fears about noise pollution and the impact on the natural environment. It is clear that there is widespread consternation from the coast to the hinterland, as residents made more than 4,300 submissions to Airservices Australia to voice their concerns.

The limited and inadequate consultation has inevitably and rightly given rise to questions about probity and process, and I share the concerns of my constituents about whether due process was followed during the course of the government and Coordinator-General’s rubber stamping of the application. Many of these issues wouldn’t have come to light without the work of Flight Path Forum executive members, who I commend for their actions—navigating through multiple jurisdictions, departments and agencies, conducting a thorough analysis of local, state and federal policies and regulations, and making residents aware of what is being planned at Sunshine Coast and its impact on the Noosa communities.

During the election campaign, I committed to the calling of a review of the process, and I welcome the investigation that is now being conducted by the Aircraft Noise Ombudsman into whether appropriate consideration was given by Airservices Australia to potential noise impacts of the proposed flight path, the adequacy of information provided to affected residents and community consultation and the complaints handling process. I’m on the record in support of a mandatory curfew to be imposed on the Sunshine Coast Airport. That is the only way residents can be assured of some peace from aircraft noise. But, as the airport is owned and operated by the Sunshine Coast Regional Council, the implementation and enforcement of a curfew is within the jurisdiction of the state and local governments. I call on them to act.

The people of Noosa deserve to have their voices heard. They have worked hard to identify multiple flaws in path selection process. They have worked hard to identify alternative flight paths, and they have worked hard to ensure that proper process is followed. They have justifiably condemned the bungling by the Queensland Coordinator-General, the Sunshine Coast Regional Council and Airservices Australia. I seek leave to table their submissions to me as a document.

Leave not granted.

**Stubbs, Mrs Rosemary Frances (Romey)**

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (19:42): Everyone in this House is well aware that every political party has its ups and downs, but we all know people who stick with and work for their party of choice through the good times and the bad and always embrace and embody the values it holds. I want to talk tonight about one such person, Romey Stubbs. Earlier this month I was pleased to attend a memorial service in Bangalow for Romey, who died just a few months after her 80th birthday. In this House in December 2015 after Romey's husband John Stubbs died, the former ALP national secretary and member for Brand, Gary Gray, paid tribute to him. It is an honour to now place on record a small tribute to Romey, because she and John both lived and breathed the Labor Party and had an unflinching commitment to social justice.

Wherever Romey was, she maintained her Labor Party membership—in the ACT, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales. While living in Canberra, John worked as a press secretary for Whitlam government minister Clyde Cameron. After Whitlam's dismissal and defeat in 1975, the Stubbs moved to South Australia, where Labor Premier Don Dunstan was leading the nation in social reforms, and Romey began working for Premier Dunstan in his electorate office. As every MP knows, good electorate staff are vital. At her memorial service, stories were told about Romey's invaluable work for Don Dunstan in the electorate. They included the story about her first day, which saw her dealing with a series of bomb hoaxes to government offices, a constituent threatening to hang himself in her office and a conspiracy plot—all before lunchtime.

After the defeat of the South Australian Labor government, John and Romey moved to Brisbane. Romey worked for Queensland Labor Senator John Black and was widely regarded as an invaluable staff member. Then Wayne Goss led the Labor Party to office after 32 years of National Liberal Party rule. Romey's generosity, kindness, warmth and wisdom were legendary as well as her sharp judgement and sense of humour. She became a senior policy adviser and later chief of staff to Queensland cabinet minister Paul Braddy in the Goss and Beattie governments when he held the portfolios of education, police, corrective services, fire and emergency services and training and industrial relations.

In the Goss and Beattie governments, Romey had a reputation for her sound advice and valuable insight. She mentored and mothered a procession of young advisers. Romey was known as a velvet glove. At her service, a
story was told of the time Romey was having a smoke in the stairwell of Forbes House, where senior officers of the Queensland Fire Services were headquartered. None other than the tough and tattooed Queensland fire commissioner himself opened the fire escape door and caught sight of Romey, but all he could say was, 'Oh, Romey, I do beg your pardon,' and then shut the door.

In 2017, Romey's service to the Labor Party was recognised when she was made a life member. In supporting the award, Gary Gray described her as 'a grassroots activist, a Labor romantic, and a Labor stalwart' who would 'make us all feel good when things were not working right' but also had 'the knack of bringing us back to earth when things looked too easy'.

In supporting her nomination, former Queensland ALP state secretary Mike Kaiser said the Goss government was often criticised for having too many young and inexperienced staffers, but Romey stood out. 'Romey was the wise one,' he said. 'While government was new to everyone in Queensland after three decades in opposition, Romey had seen it all before. Never one to assert herself arrogantly, if asked she would always provide honest, sensible and perceptive advice.' Mike Kaiser said Romey had always maintained an active involvement in Labor Party affairs—an involvement motivated 'simply from a deeply held conviction that Labor was best to bring about social justice'. He said: 'She backed her conviction with hard work in a voluntary capacity in her branches and at party forums like state and national conferences. Whenever and wherever she was needed, Romey was there.'

Former Beattie government cabinet minister Robert Schwarten said Romey was a woman of great conviction and always displayed party loyalty and solidarity but also a capacity for community campaigning and leadership. The word 'community' is important in the story of Romey and John Stubbs. The sense of community that both Romey and John generated through their work was an enduring element in their lives which touched all those who knew and loved them. Their rural property, Morningside, in the town of Federal was a symbol of that sense of community. Friends and colleagues were always welcome, and many stories were told at the memorial service of the fun and friendship that were a feature of life there.

That sense of community was also there when John was incapacitated with a stroke in 2008. That community of friends was also there to help Romey in her final years. We often talk in this House about the communities in our electorates. I've had the opportunity to see the real love and commitment that the community in Bangalow and beyond wrapped around both Romey and John. That support was there for them as they had supported others in so many ways throughout their entire lives—those like Romey Stubbs whose own life and work set an example for us all as she affected the lives of so many for the better, and those like Romey whose political beliefs and principles and wider commitment to Labor values and social justice made a real difference in the wider Australian community.

My sympathies go to Romey's many friends and former colleagues and especially to her family: her children, Will, Susie and Sasha; their partners, Merrki, Jamie and John; and Romey's grandchildren, Audrey, Jude, Darcy, Siena, Rosie and Arian. Vale Romey Stubbs.

**Morrison Government**

Ms LIU (Chisholm) (19:46): A strong economy, more jobs and less taxes—I must have said it more than 12,000 times in the last three weeks of the election campaign and countless times before. Liberal volunteers heard it so much that at the polling booths they too were repeating it. The voters heard it, and it resonated, and they voted accordingly.

Not only do we have a plan but we have already set about delivering. To ensure a stronger economy for our future, the government is fixing the budget, backing small businesses and lower taxes, and investing in infrastructure. The Morrison government is investing $100 billion in transport infrastructure. We are investing $5 billion in the Melbourne Airport Rail Link. Following the 2014 Victorian state election, the Andrews Labor government actually cancelled this project. The only reason we will have a train line to the airport is our government.

Talking about cancelling things, let's talk about the East West Link and the Victorian Labor government wasting $1.3 billion to cancel a road that everyone knows needs to be built—and it will be built. I'm confident of that because the Morrison government has a plan to deal with the traffic congestion in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, and we are prepared to pay the $4 billion that is needed to get it done. To Labor and the Victorian government I say, as my electorate of Chisholm has said: just build it.

We are investing locally in the Chisholm community through a number of local grants, something we are able to do because of our strong budget. I recently spoke in the Federation Chamber about the Local Schools Community Fund and briefly mentioned the Communities Environment Program. Further to these two, there is also the Stronger Communities Program, which supports the Morrison government's commitment to deliver social benefits in communities across Australia. Round 5 of the program will open soon and will provide $150,000 to
fund small capital projects in the Chisholm electorate. Round 4 saw investment in projects like toilet facilities at 1st Bennettswood Scouts and the installation of a shelter at the Waverley District Netball Association. I look forward to presenting trophies to the grand final winners in a couple of weeks' time.

These project are aimed at bringing our communities together, strengthening social connections, building community participation and creating vibrant and viable communities into the future. We are delivering on the promise of more jobs, with the unemployment rate at 5.2 per cent; and last financial year over 100,000 jobs were created for young Australians, more than any year in history. In fact, the government's 2013 promise for one million jobs to be created within five years was delivered ahead of schedule, and the rate of welfare dependence is now the lowest it has been in 30 years.

And then there are the tax cuts. In the first sitting week, we delivered the promised tax cuts in full—as a result 71,469 taxpayers in Chisholm will benefit from tax relief in 2018-19, with 26,273 taxpayers receiving the full tax offset of $1,080. We have provided these tax cuts and, while keeping the surplus, we are creating more jobs and investing in infrastructure. We have a plan, we have a government that is capable of delivering, and that is exactly what we are doing not only in Chisholm but across the country.

Live Animal Exports

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (19:51): The MV Awassi Express affair exposed terrible cruelty in the live sheep trade. It shocked the majority of Australians. Some government MPs—in particular, the member for New England—responded by accusing animal activists of paying the ship's crew to create acts of animal cruelty in an attempt to undermine confidence in the industry. So it was all a trick! The government responded by asking the Department of Agriculture to investigate these allegations. When the final report found the allegations were without foundation, government MPs were quick to reject the department's conclusions—a view promoted most by the member for New England who, in January 2019, told 2GB that 'workers on live export ships were reportedly offered thousands of dollars to provide footage of animal abuse' and 'it is believed some offered to cut off ventilation to sheep to make them look more distressed'. The member for New England should apologise to those workers, given the department's conclusions.

The Minister for Agriculture stands condemned for not offering any defence of her department's report and their conclusions. Think about it: we have government backbenchers freelancing, attacking the department's report, but the minister is yet to defend her own department. She can belatedly do so by releasing the report as industry leadership, including ALEC, has called upon her to do. I have no doubt that the report will show that the investigation was robust and, therefore, would or should restore some confidence in the regulator—a confidence which was undermined by the culture the member for New England created in the department when he was the minister. I have already started the FOI process and we will pursue this document. But the government can save us all a lot of time and effort and simply release that report in the morning, and I call upon the minister to do so. This is very alarming because, at the moment, there are rumours circulating around this building that the government is diverting much-needed resources out of biosecurity to prop up the live sheep trade. Have a think about that. Our biosecurity system is the most important thing to the future of our agriculture sector. It protects our image as a producer and as a provider of clean, green, safe, high-quality food. If we ever lose that reputation, the agriculture sector will be in a lot of trouble.

The review into our biosecurity system, headed by Wendy Craik, belled the cat, told us that the system is underfunded, and recommended that a new levy be struck on inbound containers to raise more money to properly fund our failing biosecurity system—I shouldn't say failing; it's a system which is under pressure and at risk of failure. The government accepted that recommendation and promised to have a container levy—or a more general levy, actually, which I won't have time to explain—in place by 1 July of this year. Guess what? No surprise; we have no levy to fund our biosecurity system. The government has now said that it will come into place on 1 September this year. If you have a look at the sitting pattern, it's pretty clear—given that we haven't seen any legislation and rumours continue to circulate that the government still has no idea how this levy is going to be designed—there is Buckley's to none that we will have a levy in place by 1 September next year.

Already, we've lost $20 million out of the system because of the delay between 1 July and 1 September. We cannot afford any more delays, and the government has even identified where that money will be going. Things like Indigenous biosecurity rangers programs, border clearance, priority pest and disease planning and response, international sea and airport supplementary funding, environmental biosecurity protection and the biosecurity innovation program. All these things are not going to be funded because this government treated the recommendations as an opportunity to grab some money and didn't focus on the main game, and that is properly funding our biosecurity system. (Time expired)


Lindsay Electorate: Employment

Mrs McIntosh (Lindsay) (19:57): Last week I welcomed the first school from our community of Lindsay to Parliament House, St Marys North Public School and today I welcome St Nicholas of Myra. We had a Q&A with St Nicholas, and one of the students asked me: 'How will Western Sydney infrastructure cope with population growth?'—a question good enough for question time. The Morrison Liberal government is delivering congestion-busting infrastructure, with projects such as Dunheved and Mulgoa roads. We're investing $63½ million to upgrade Dunheved Road and providing funding for extra commuter parking at Kingswood, Emu Plains and St Marys stations.

There was another question from a student today relating to astrophysics and jobs in the space industry. As part of the development of Western Sydney Airport, the construction of the Sydney Science Park will be a $5 billion integrated science, research and residential facility. And we have the aerotropolis, creating local jobs—in agriculture, local produce exported to Asia and the world, in tourism and advanced manufacturing; and world-class space manufacturing capability that could boost and transform our national space industry. This was delivered to the delight of the kids today. Our bright young students of Lindsay are thinking about their future, and that is why I am committed to creating more local jobs for today and for the future.

By 2026, the airport will have opened, and the students I met today will be 18 and 19, entering universities, training and the workforce. Ensuring our education institutions are educating our kids in the jobs of the future is what I'll always fight for. Meeting those students and having that connection with our local community even in Canberra is important for any member of parliament. Everything we do is for our local communities and for our local people because they're the reason why we are here.

Our job is to look after hardworking families. That is why I was proud that in my first week of parliament we passed legislation to provide tax relief for over 77,000 hardworking people in Lindsay. In Lindsay, nearly 15,000 small and medium sized businesses are benefiting from tax relief, legislated by the Morrison government and taking advantage of the instant asset write-off scheme to invest in machinery and equipment.

These measures help businesses such as Emu Plains Automotive Repairs, Bubbles Florist, Kingswood Florist and cafes in Penrith—all of those I mentioned in my maiden speech—The Natural Choice, Thor's Café, Bethany's, and Ratha's Place. All of these businesses that I mentioned are run by local families who employ local people in our community. These are people who spend most of their lives, sometimes seven days a week, working hard to contribute to make our society better and to provide the services and products that we rely on.

The Morrison Liberal government is investing in community services and infrastructure to support and encourage healthy and active communities in Lindsay. The Penrith Whitewater Stadium will receive funding to transform its high-performance centre with new athlete and visitor facilities, and the Penrith Valley Regional Sports Centre will undergo much needed refurbishment. These local facilities are accessed by our families, our kids and tourists. The Chapman Gardens Sports Precinct transformation in Kingswood includes amenities' upgrades to the softball and football fields and to the cricket pitch. We're investing in the Nepean River to help with native revegetation and weed management so that our local families can enjoy our beautiful river and the natural environment. When I asked students today if they took time out to enjoy the river on weekends with their families, every single child and every single teacher put up their hand and said yes. It is very important. It is the heart of our Lindsay community.

Our Community Safety Package will fund lighting on the Great River Walk between Jamison Road and Nepean Avenue and provide CCTV cameras in St Marys, Kingswood, Werrington and Penrith CBD. Local families and small-business owners deserve to feel safe, and this investment will promote a stronger community. I spoke recently about the Cranebrook breakfast club. They'll get a new 12-seater bus. We know that each week this community service provides 500 breakfasts to kids and families who might otherwise not have something good to eat.

I want the students I met today—our young people of the future—to have the opportunity, as they become adults, to stay where they live and access employment and lifestyle opportunities. I thank the students for being so passionate and look forward to welcoming more schools to parliament.

House adjourned at 20:02

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Frydenberg to present a Bill for an Act to amend the Corporations Act 2001 in relation to grandfathered conflicted remuneration, and for related purposes. (Treasury Laws Amendment (Ending Grandfathered Conflicted Remuneration) Bill 2019)
Mr D. J. Chester to present a Bill for an Act to amend the law relating to veterans' affairs, and for related purposes. *(Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Partner Service Pension and Other Measures) Bill 2019)*

Mr Porter to move—That:

(1) a Joint Select Committee on Road Safety be appointed to inquire into and report on steps that can be taken to reduce Australia's road accident rates, trauma and deaths on our roads;

(2) the committee present an interim report on or before 30 March 2020 and its final report on or before 31 July 2020;

(3) the committee consist of nine members, four Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, two Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips or by any minority group or independent Member, and one Senator to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, one Senator to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, and one Senator to be nominated by any minority group or independent Senator;

(4) participating members may:

   (a) be appointed to the committee on the nomination of the Government Whip in the House of Representatives, the Opposition Whip in the House of Representatives, the Leader of the Government in the Senate, the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate or any minority party or independent senator or member of the House of Representatives; and

   (b) participate in hearings of evidence and deliberations of the committee, and have all the rights of members of the committee, but may not vote on any question before the committee;

(5) every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(6) the members of the committee hold office as a joint select committee until presentation of the committee's final report or until the House of Representatives is dissolved or expires by effluxion of time, whichever is the earlier;

(7) the committee may proceed to the dispatch of business notwithstanding that not all members have been duly nominated and appointed and notwithstanding any vacancy;

(8) the committee elect:

   (a) a Government member as its chair; and

   (b) a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee;

(9) at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee, the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting;

(10) in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote;

(11) three members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include one Government member of either House and one non-Government member of either House;

(12) the committee:

   (a) have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of three or more of its members, and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine; and

   (b) appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only;

(13) each subcommittee shall have at least one Government member of either House and one non-Government member of either House;

(14) at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee, the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting;

(15) two members of a subcommittee constitute the quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include one Government member of either House and one non-Government member of either House;

(16) members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum;

(17) the committee or any subcommittee have power to:

   (a) call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced;

   (b) conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit;

   (c) sit in public or in private;

   (d) report from time to time; and

   (e) adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the House of Representatives and the Senate;

(18) the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of any former committee on related matters;

(19) the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders; and

(20) a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.
Mr Georganas to move—That this House:

(1) notes:
(a) the 74th anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki occurred on 6 and 9 August 2019 respectively, causing suffering which continues to this day;
(b) the ongoing impacts of nuclear weapons on survivors of nuclear testing worldwide, including in Australia;
(c) that successive Coalition and Labor Governments have joined all other treaties prohibiting inhumane and indiscriminate weapons;
(d) that nuclear dangers are increasing worldwide, with no significant progress on nuclear disarmament in sight;
(e) the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons is an urgent humanitarian imperative;
(f) the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) outlaws the world’s worst weapons of mass destruction, strengthening the international legal nuclear disarmament framework; and
(g) the TPNW complements and strengthens Australia’s existing commitments under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty; and (2) urges Australia to work towards signing and ratifying the TPNW.

Mr Dreyfus to move—That this House:

(1) notes:
(a) the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General announced on 13 December 2018 that a Commonwealth Integrity Commission would be established;
(b) on 13 December 2018, the Prime Minister said on 2GB the decision to establish a Commonwealth Integrity Commission ‘was something I had to resolve by the end of the year’;
(c) on 26 May 2019, the Attorney-General said a Commonwealth Integrity Commission was a ‘priority’; and
(d) the Government has not established a Commonwealth Integrity Commission; and
(2) calls on the Government to keep its promise to establish its Commonwealth Integrity Commission.
Wednesday, 31 July 2019

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan) took the chair at 10:00.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Homelessness

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10:00): Next week is Homelessness Week. It's a week during which everyone is encouraged to pause and reflect on our attitudes towards, and raise awareness of, people experiencing homelessness. Homelessness is often an unexpected difficulty caused by a multitude of reasons, and it often affects those who never thought it could happen to them. While there are common misconceptions about homelessness, the government's own data demonstrates that rough sleepers represent only seven per cent of people experiencing homelessness. The data fails to account for the majority of those who are hidden away from the public eye, taking refuge on friends' couches or in a shelter or in a car or living in a crowded dwelling. On the night of the 2016 census, more than 116,000 people were counted as being homeless in Australia, up by 14 per cent from the previous census in 2011, and this growing trend is cause for concern.

I recently met with Rebecca Callahan, a coordinator at Barwon South West Homelessness Network. This network of agencies in the Barwon and south-western region of Victoria works collaboratively in an integrated system that provides support and accommodation to people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness in our region. They do important work by helping to ensure that the most vulnerable in our community have the dignity of a safe place to sleep at night, because, unfortunately, Geelong is not immune to the horrors of the homelessness epidemic. I'm alarmed but not surprised that, in the City of Greater Geelong, the number of people experiencing homelessness grew from 630 to 750 between 2011 and 2016—an increase of 120 people. The causes are complex; there's no single trigger. But we know that family and domestic violence and housing instability are the most common reasons that people sought homelessness assistance during the 2015-16 year.

Despite the good work of many organisations, such as the Barwon South West Homelessness Network in Geelong, while the number of people facing homelessness increases, the government needs to demonstrate leadership to take real action on combating this issue. Instead, what we've seen from those opposite is funding cuts to services seeking to make a contribution. In my community, local support service Diversitat is facing cuts this December to its emergency support services, which go towards helping Geelong's most disadvantaged. Diversitat is doing critical work to reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness and helping those at risk by providing emergency food parcels. They should be supported in providing services for communities and not be forced by this federal government to spend their time fighting for funding.

The government needs to show leadership and act. Instead, what we've seen from the Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services is a suggestion that we need to focus on the positives of homelessness. I say to the minister: there are no positives. There are now more homeless people across the country and in Geelong than ever before. I therefore call on the government to immediately renew the emergency funding to Diversitat so that they can continue to provide the much-needed services to the Geelong region to support the most vulnerable in our community.

Boyd, Mr Warwick Paul

Mr GEE (Calare—Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister) (10:03): I wish to mark the passing of Warwick Paul Boyd. He was a great supporter and my oldest friend. Warwick was born on 17 July 1968. I first met him when we were year 7 students at Newcastle Grammar. He was a leading figure in our year, a great sportsman with a dry and irreverent sense of humour—a quality that remained with him for his entire life. After leaving school, he railed for years against the injustice of consistently being given 14 out of 20 for economics assignments, regardless of the extremely high quality of his work.

After Warwick left school, he started working with Qantas, a job that took him all over the world. He certainly enjoyed it and always had great stories about his travels. But, after several years and having started a family, Warwick turned his attention to two of his many other talents: building and business. He built exquisite homes and units in the Newcastle and Port Stephens areas. I marvelled at his creativity and also his extraordinary work ethic. Much of what he knew was self-taught. His buildings were synonymous with quality. Although Warwick was a highly talented builder, he was to find his true calling as a restaurateur—more particularly as a McDonald's owner-operator. His friends all remember how he had had a passion for those restaurants since his school days. He would go on to own restaurants at Industrial Drive and Mayfield in Newcastle, and he loved every facet of the business. As with the rest of his life, he set high standards and his restaurants thrived. He didn't have many regrets, but one was that he didn't become a licensee sooner.
He had an avid interest in politics, coming to Orange to help my first campaign and attending my inaugural speeches. He met the love of his life, Leanne, at the Delany Hotel in Newcastle, and they married in 1995. They would have two wonderful children, Madison and Mason. To Warwick, his family was everything. He could not have been prouder of Madison and Mason and the people they grew up to be. He loved them dearly.

Warwick was first diagnosed with bowel cancer in 2013. He was determined to face it with positivity and a will to live life. All was going well until 2015, when the cancer came back. It was a heavy blow. He had a second major operation that year. While he was recovering, an accident at the hospital nearly cost him his life. Warwick went into cardiac arrest and was declared dead for about seven minutes. Incredibly, and as only Warwick could, he came back but had to be taken to a hyperbaric chamber at Prince of Wales Hospital to recover. The next few years were difficult for Warwick, Leanne, Madison and Mason. They were filled with treatment and trials, and through it all he was sustained by the love of his family. He just kept defying the odds, coming back time and time again with grit, determination and an extraordinary endurance. He inspired us.

Warwick passed away on 9 April 2019. I'll be forever grateful that I got to spend some time with him in his final days. He was a man of strong ethics, hard work, enterprise, great humour, warmth and love for his family. On election night, I dedicated my win in Calare to him. My condolences go out to Leanne, Madison, Mason and the rest of his family. Farewell, old friend. It's not the same without you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): I thank the member for that heartfelt tribute.

Australian Capital Territory: Energy

Australian Capital Territory: Poverty

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (10:06): Thirty-year-old Cameron Van-Lane and his three housemates in Dickson have taken to putting bubble wrap on their windows in order to keep the house warm. As Mr Van-Lane told the RiotACT:

… it is an expensive heating system to run and as soon as you turn it off, the house quickly loses its heat and gets cold again.

According to a report called Baby it's cold inside: energy efficient ratings in the ACT, over two out of five rental properties have an energy efficiency rating of zero. As Joel Dignam, the executive director of Better Renting, said, seeing how poorly insulated some Canberra homes are is 'confronting'.

The challenges of living in a city like Canberra come particularly in the middle of winter. Michael, 45, is a former systems engineer who suffers from mental illness. He has been sleeping rough and told The Canberra Times:

I slept in a cabinet someone had left in a car park the other night—but I draw the line at a skip!

Next week is Homelessness Week, and it will be a time when many Canberrans are acknowledging the hard work that's been done but also the scale of the challenge. I pay tribute to the many organisations and individuals within the ACT who work to tackle poverty and disadvantage, including Kathy Ragless at Companion House, Susan Helyar at ACTCOSS, Barnie van Wyk at St Vinnie's, Mandy Green at Belconnen Community Service, Torrien Lau at YWCA, Bruce Papps at Northside Community Service, Jeremy Halcrow at Anglicare Canberra and Goulburn, Lee Maiden at Communities@Work, Julie Blackburn at Karralika, Caroline Odgers at GIVIT, Richard Griffiths at Safe Shelter, Neil Harrigan at CatholicCare and Carmel Franklin at Care Financial Counselling Service.

The ACT government is working hard to tackle the challenges of deprivation, but, since the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government came to office, life has become harder for many Canberrans. Yesterday the HILDA report showed that median equivalised household income in the ACT has fallen from $74,394 in 2012-13, when the Liberals came to office, to $66,230 on the most recent figures. That's an 11 per cent fall in median household income, more than twice the size of the drop in household income in Perth at the end of the unprecedented mining construction boom. It's come as a result of the decimation of the Public Service and real wage cuts for many public servants. It's made it harder for Canberrans to make ends meet and posed challenges for many of those living on the breadline. It is vital that we recognise the real challenge of poverty and deprivation here in the nation's capital.

Danger Close: The Battle of Long Tan

Mr PIT (Hinkler) (10:09): I rise to advise the chamber of the 8 August release of Danger Close: The Battle of Long Tan, a movie which I understand was previewed here at the parliament on Monday night and, of course, will be released just ahead of the 53rd anniversary of the battle. I've been very privileged in this role to come across any number of veterans from Delta Company who were at the Battle of Long Tan, many of whom have now passed on, unfortunately. I particularly want to note some of the comments from actors Luke Bracey and Travis Fimmel during an interview:
I hope there's no—
parliamentary language, I'm afraid, that I can't quite use—
... that make it some political thing.

... ...

This is about a group of brave Aussies that really deserve our respect.

... ...

We want it to be a statement about ordinary blokes doing extraordinary things and mateship. It is a very Aussie film in that way, it is a simple thing mateship.

I look forward to seeing the film.

I want to pass on some of my local experiences. I was very privileged to witness a conversation between the late Buddy Lea, one of the main proponents in the film, I understand, and the APC driver that rescued him after he was shot at the Battle of Long Tan. It was a conversation that occurred at a commemorative service. I was sitting with Buddy, and a gentleman came over and Buddy called him every name under the sun. I thought, 'This is interesting.' He said, 'You ask this'—once again, unparliamentary term—'what he said to me when he picked me up in the APC.' I played along, and I asked, 'Okay, mate, what happened?' Halfway through this, I realised that this was an annual event, and it had probably happened every year for almost 50 years. The gentleman described when he pulled up next to Buddy, who had been shot, I think, twice and was lying on the ground badly injured. He jumped out of the APC and said: 'Buddy'—I hope I get this almost right—'mate, you can't lie around on the ground bleeding. We've got work to do. You've got to get up and get in the back of the truck.' I think that probably describes how they dealt with such horrific circumstances. It was, quite simply, terrible.

This is one of the largest battles that our forces have been involved in, so I'm very pleased that it has been put into film, particularly for Harry Smith. Harry can be a very persistent and forthright individual, I have to say. I know that all of his troops have the greatest respect for him. The thing that I remember about Harry is that at Buddy's funeral he gave a very brief address. I think he summed up how these gentlemen had moved on in the time since Long Tan. He said of Buddy Lea: 'When I first met Buddy—he came into Delta Company—he called me sir. In later years, in the regular army, when we left Vietnam and we continued to stay and work in the armed forces, he called me boss. Afterwards, when we'd retired to Hervey Bay'—Harry has now moved back to the Sunshine Coast—'Buddy called me brother.' I think that is such a wonderful description of the relationship between those who have served.

**Mayo Electorate**

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (10:12): With the redistribution of the South Australian federal electorates in 2019, Mayo has the great pleasure of welcoming a number of new areas into our community. A couple of those areas which are adjacent to Blackwood are the communities of Hawthornedene and Craigburn Farm, both in the Mitcham local council area. Through my local community surveys and forums, Hawthornedene and Craigburn Farm have raised issues and concerns that are common across many communities in Mayo, as well as raising issues that are unique to their own areas.

Like the rest of Mayo, residents of Hawthornedene and Craigburn Farm are concerned about access to affordable health care and the state of our environment, especially the management and retention of big, beautiful trees in our area; about lagging infrastructure; and about pressure on the cost of living. From Craigburn Farm there are particular concerns about traffic congestion and the lack of road infrastructure to meet the needs of increased population pressures. Improvements to railway crossings are also being sought. The Blackwood roundabout is just outside of Mayo but it is an infamous area of local concern. It's pleasing to know that the state government is undertaking an upgrade, which should go some way to addressing this notorious traffic choke point. A related issue is the design of the Blackwood shopping centre. I've met with the Mitcham council, and they have this issue on their radar. I'm looking to support them and looking forward to working with them on this local issue.

Being in the transition zone between Adelaide and the bushfire-prone Adelaide Hills, residents of both Craigburn Farm and Hawthornedene are increasingly concerned about the lack of multiple escape routes should there be an unexpected bushfire emergency. I'll be raising these safety issues and infrastructure issues with the state government. We need to ensure there is adequate bushfire planning, emergency planning, in our region, because we need to make sure, with a growing population, that we have the safety of our residents first in mind.

One last issue that has featured very strongly from residents of Craigburn Farm is the lack of facilities to complement the highly popular tree park playground at Blackwood Park. There is a compelling need for barbecues, shelter facilities, upgrading public toilets, and water fountains. It is about creating the right amenity and the right living space for our young families and communities. I look forward to working with governments of
all levels on behalf of the Hawthornedene and Craigburn Farm area to make sure that we can make this the best it can possibly be.

**Curtin Electorate: Sculpture by the Sea**

**Ms HAMMOND** (Curtin) (10:15): Earlier this year I had the pleasure of attending the Sculpture by the Sea exhibition at Cottesloe with the founding director, Mr David Handley AM. I had the privilege of announcing the winner of the Andrea Stretton Memorial Invitation Award. This award was rightly awarded to WA artist Janine McAulley Bott for her fabulous work entitled *Vintage Bush Truck*. The Sculpture by the Sea exhibition first started at our iconic Cottesloe Beach in 2005. There is no doubt that it has since become one of Western Australia's premier cultural and artistic events. David Handley deserves enormous respect and praise for his vision and tenacity in founding this event and ensuring that it has developed into such a beloved Western Australia event. In addition to being a great promotion and celebration of incredible works of art, it brings together the community from young to old, and it has a strong educational program. It's a huge boost to tourism and the economy.

This year, more than 210,000 visitors attended the exhibition. Close to 3,000 of the visitors were from interstate and close to 1,000 from overseas. In addition, some 140 international and interstate artists participated in the exhibition. Over 2,000 primary and secondary school students from 58 schools across Perth took part in the various educational programs offered, making a total of 28,000 school students who have participated over the 15-year history of this exhibition. The educational program is superb and has led to a number of schools incorporating their own mini sculpture competition within their curriculum.

A recent OECD report evaluated the exhibition held this year and confirmed the overwhelming positive benefits to both Western Australia and the town of Cottesloe. The 2019 exhibition has been estimated to contribute $6.8 million in direct visitor spending and $13.7 million in total spending in Western Australia. As a result of the event, approximately 175,000 people visited Cottesloe, with a direct visitor spending contribution of around $5.3 million for food and beverages alone. I know from talking to local businesses in the community how much they benefit from the exhibition and how important it is to them.

Unfortunately, one of the consequences of the increased popularity of the event is that the costs of producing it continue to rise—now to the tune of approximately $2.2 million. Although there are many corporate and annual sponsors who have been involved for years, and new donors and supporters have been found this particular year, the sculpture exhibition has only been guaranteed for 2020. The funding uncertainty needs to be addressed. *(Time expired)*

**Brand Electorate: Volunteers**

**Ms MADELEINE KING** (Brand) (10:18): I would like to draw the attention of the Chamber to all the volunteers in my electorate of Brand. I know National Volunteer Week was in May—not that far away—but given how much our community relies on volunteers, quite frankly every week could be National Volunteer Week, where we spend time thanking volunteers for their hard work for communities right around our country.

I was very pleased recently to attend a volunteer thank you event organised by the City of Rockingham. This event, hosted by Deputy Mayor Deb Hamblin, was to recognise the vast array of advisory committees, working groups, emergency services groups and other volunteers across Rockingham. They included the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, the Rockingham-Kwinana SES, the Rockingham Volunteer Sea Rescue Group, the Rockingham branch of the Salvation Army, the Secret Harbour Surf Live Saving Club, the Secret Harbour Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, the Singleton Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, the Baldivis Volunteer Fire & Emergency Services, St John Ambulance; and there are so many more that I'm unable to continue going through the list. I would particularly like to mention the advisory committees that advise the councillors, the mayor and the deputy mayor of the City of Rockingham.

I'd like to single out the Rockingham Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, who that night celebrated 30 years of dedicated service to the organisation by their star volunteer, Mr Barry Stagg. I'm very pleased to acknowledge in the parliament of this nation Barry's years of service, provided humbly and in good humour. Congratulations once again, Barry. I know you adore all the attention you're getting from the community and from me now, and I really hope you enjoy serving and continue to serve our community, as you have done for so many years.

As many in this place would know, volunteers are at the heart of the democratic process of Australia. They make an invaluable contribution to whichever field they choose to help in. In our case, of course, it's politics, and in many ways it can be difficult during some of the more passionate and sometimes absurd clashes of ideas that happen out in the community, particularly during an election campaign. Political volunteers help out their chosen party or candidate through the strength of their conviction and their commitment to helping make the world a better place through engagement at a grassroots community level. I'm very grateful to have the volunteers I do
have in Brand, many of whom have helped out on countless federal and state campaigns. They're a fantastic bunch of people. Lois Robinson, our star doorknocker: rain, hail or shine, she was out there spreading our message. She shows age is no barrier to enthusiasm. Brian Preston, master of all things pre-poll and phone calling: his sense of humour across the campaign was a great antidote to all the tougher days that a campaign can have. Owen Farmer: I don't think Owen missed a single campaign event the whole time. His work with the homeless community in Brand is something of great pride to me as his federal member. And Margaret Sweeney: always reliable and always effective. Thank you to you all.

**Wide Bay Electorate: Morrison Government**

**Mr LLEW O'BRIEN** (Wide Bay) (10:21): I offer my heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped support and encourage me through the 2019 election and to the people of Wide Bay, who put their faith in me to represent them. It's a great honour to be entrusted with the responsibility of being their representative, and I'll continue to provide strong representation to achieve results for Wide Bay. These are exciting times for Noosa, Gympie, Maryborough, Murgon and all towns in between. I'm pleased to have secured significant commitments from the Morrison McCormack government to projects that will create jobs and improve services throughout the region.

We're delivering a new off-stream water storage supply to sustain Maryborough's sugar industry and support 600 local jobs, a great win for MSF Sugar and the Maryborough canegrowers.

I'm looking forward to continuing work with Rheinmetall Nioa to create 178 new jobs at Maryborough munitions forging factory. The investment will put Maryborough on the defence industry map, and everywhere I go throughout Wide Bay there's genuine excitement and enthusiasm about this economy-transforming program.

We're tackling road safety with construction on the Bruce Highway, including Cooroy to Curra Section D. The Coondoo Creek Bridge replacement is finally getting under way as well as new safety improvements, flood mitigation projects and overtaking lanes on the Bruce Highway at Chatsworth, Tiaro and Maryborough. The Queensland government must get cracking on fixing the Bruce Highway intersection at Bells Bridge.

I'm continuing my fight for better mental health and aged-care services. We've delivered a new headspace service in Gympie and another will be arriving soon in Maryborough. There are more beds for aged-care homes and more funding for home packages to help older Australians stay at home longer, and the first tranche of funding has been delivered to Gympie's Little Haven Palliative Care.

We're helping sporting clubs, like the Noosa Dolphins Rugby Club, the Tewantin-Noosa Cricket Club, the Noosa Tigers AFC, the Maryborough Softball Association, the Granville Hockey Club, the Kandanga Country Club and the Pomona Bowls Club. We're improving opportunities in local communities by funding upgrades to the Maryborough Military and Colonial Museum, Independent Riders, Sherwood Hall at Gympie's Avenues Lifestyle Support, Maryborough's Riding for the Disabled Association, Sunshine Butterflies, the Tin Can Bay Fishing Club and the Peregian Beach Digital Hub, and we're delivering a new veterans drop-in centre at Murgon. It's great to be part of the Morrison McCormack government team, which is creating jobs and funding the infrastructure and services to build a better Wide Bay and a stronger Australia.

**Indigenous Flag**

**Ms KEARNEY** (Cooper) (10:24): Today I rise to acknowledge a petition that was created by Spark Health, trading as Clothing the Gap, two fantastic Indigenous organisations in my electorate of Cooper. Over 46,000 people have signed the Pride Not Profit petition, which is calling for a change to the current licensing agreement around the Aboriginal flag, with the common goal of freeing the flag from copyright. The Aboriginal flag has been an important symbol to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians alike since its creation in 1971. This week Laura Thompson, the cofounder of Spark Health; Olympic gold medallist and ex-senator Nova Peris; and artist Michael Connelly are here in parliament to advocate for changes to that copyright.

First Nations leaders and business operators are expressing their grave concerns about the existing copyright arrangements that relate to the current Aboriginal flag and the licensing agreements that have been made by the recognised copyright owner, Harold Thomas. In June this year Spark Health, along with other businesses, including several sporting codes, were issued with a cease and desist notice from WAM Clothing for celebrating and displaying the Aboriginal flag on clothing. Currently WAM Clothing holds an exclusive worldwide licensing agreement with the flag's copyright owner, Harold Thomas, to produce the Aboriginal flag. I ask this: should WAM Clothing, a non-Indigenous business, control the mark and profit from the resistance, resilience and perseverance of Indigenous people?

Labor is calling on the federal government to do more to protect the Aboriginal flag, which, as some say, is being held hostage. Most flags, including the Australian flag, have their copyrights owned by the government and remain in the public domain, free for all to use. The copyright of the Aboriginal flag is valid for Harold Thomas's
life plus another 70 years, so potentially we're looking at another 100 years until the rights of the flag can enter the public domain. In terms of the nation, the most public pieces of public property are flags. Logically, there is an inherent contradiction when the Aboriginal flag is privately owned. Importantly, the government also recognised and proclaimed the Aboriginal flag in 1995 and again in 2018 under the Flags Act. Therefore, there is a legitimate expectation of free use of that work as a flag.

The Australian and Indigenous people want no more and no fewer rights to the Aboriginal flag than we do with the Australian flag or the Torres Strait Islander flag. The government can and should use all available resources to find a fair and equitable resolution to ensure the Aboriginal flag remains just that: a national flag. I commend the work of Spark Health, Dreamtime Kullilla-Art and each and every organisation and individual who has added their voice to the call to free the flag. In the words of Laura Thompson, 'The flag represented a struggle and a resistance movement, and now it just feels like a struggle to use it.'

Wieland, Mr Ned
Jelic, Ms Claudia
Secret Men's Business

Mr SHARMA (Wentworth) (10:27): I rise to congratulate several high achievers in my electorate of Wentworth excelling in areas of sport, music and philanthropy.

I would like to highlight Ned Wieland of Waverley College, who has been named the Young Conversation Champion at the R U OK? awards. Ned is the youngest male to complete the Triple Crown of Open Water Swimming, having swum the English Channel, the 42-kilometre Catalina Channel in California and the 20 Bridges Swim in Manhattan, a 52-kilometre swim around the island of Manhattan. He puts my own modest efforts of the Bondi to Bronte swim to complete shame. Ned completed these swims in support of R U OK?, raising close to $45,000 in funds and generating significant awareness through his swim efforts. Ned is an outstanding young person who has delivered an exemplary contribution to the community. I look forward to seeing him achieve greater things whilst inspiring other young people to support philanthropy and mental health initiatives.

In music, I wish to acknowledge Paddington's Claudia Jelic, a clarinettist who is currently touring Europe and China with the Australian Youth Orchestra. Claudia studied at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music for four years and, through countless hours of practice and hard work, she has demonstrated that her skill and passion for music is worthy of being on the international stage. Claudia is performing in Beijing today with the Australian Youth Orchestra and will finish the tour in Australia with a final concert being held next Monday at the Sydney Opera House. I wish to congratulate her as she embarks on a journey into the professional orchestral world.

Finally, I'd like to put on record the tremendous efforts of the Secret Men's Business annual dinner, which was held at the end of June and raised more than $160,000 for the Royal Hospital for Women in Randwick. These vital funds will mean more beds and equipment for the Royal's newborn intensive care unit, which cares for more than 1,000 critically ill and premature babies from all over New South Wales. They will also help fund the Royal's maternal fetal medicine unit, which provides specialised care for complicated pregnancies. Over the years, the Secret Men's Business annual dinner has raised close to $1 million for the Royal Hospital for Women, the only dedicated women's hospital in New South Wales.

The Wentworth electorate is full of people with big hearts and fighting spirits. I thank them for their contribution and wish them the best in their future endeavours.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough): In accordance with standing order 193 the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.

**BILLS**

**Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2019-2020**

**Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2019-2020**

**Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2019-2020**

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms O'NEIL (Hotham) (10:31): I really appreciate this opportunity to speak today on the appropriations bill. Labor has made the decision not to block supply, so I'm speaking in support of the bill. This is really my first contribution to parliamentary debate since the election, and I wanted to use this opportunity to speak a little bit
about my community and what happened around the time of the election and to say my thankyou to the people of Hotham for bringing me back to this chamber.

It is really an incredible thing to be given the opportunity to speak for others in this parliament. I think all of us in this chamber feel such a deep sense of a relationship with our communities that is built on trust. It was an amazing thing to fight in this election campaign for the Labor values that we on this side of the chamber are so committed to. During the election campaign we knocked on thousands of doors, we made thousands of phone calls and I spoke to thousands and thousands of people on pre-poll. I really want to thank each and every person in my community who took the time to have a conversation with me.

I think a lot of people don't realise that we spend so much of our time talking to people. The people that we represent are so generous in the way they share their stories with us. There aren't many jobs in the world where you can knock on someone's door, ask them how they're going and then five minutes later be talking about their child who can't access the National Disability Insurance Scheme or another kid with learning difficulties who is not getting the help they need at school or an aged parent who isn't able to get a healthcare placement that they need. These are the stories that are shared with us so openly and so honestly. It was an incredible thing to have all of those conversations during the election campaign.

I'd like to thank my amazing team of volunteers for the work that they did during the election campaign. We would never have been able to speak to even a tenth as many people as we did without the support of this dedicated group of people who, out of the goodness of their hearts and their belief that our country can be bigger and better, decided to contribute their time to our campaign in Hotham. We probably had about a dozen people who were with me most nights of the week working the phones and talking to people and who were coming out every single weekend—we would do two doorknocks a day, sometimes on both days of the weekend. The commitment that these people have to the Australian Labor Party is incredible. Some of them were branch members and some of them we hope will join up. I really want to say my thankyou to them.

I pay tribute to my incredible staff, who worked with us during the campaign. My staff are the most amazing people. I am always telling people that I reckon I've got the best team around the parliament. I really want to say thankyou to my staff for their support and for the commitment that they show to our cause.

I can absolutely make the commitment today, as I did during the election campaign, that, despite all the things that go on in this building and all the hifalutin business that goes on in politics, my first commitment to being in this parliament is to represent the people of Hotham. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to do that again. I will do everything I can to make sure I'm speaking for you faithfully and that I push the issues that you raised with me during the election campaign.

I'd like to touch on some of the issues that came up during the campaign. As I mentioned, I really did speak to so many thousands of people, and there really were some big themes raised that I thought were worth bringing back and relaying to the chamber here today. I want to say something about the National Disability Insurance Scheme to start with. I think families that aren't touched by disability are probably not always conscious of the profound effect that this has on families that have been touched by it. It's amazing how many doors you knock on where the person inside has got a brother or a sister or a parent or a child with a disability, and that really is the main thing in their life—how are they going to provide safety, security and a life of value for the person in the family who is affected by this issue?

The National Disability Insurance Scheme has the potential to change the lives of almost every single one of those families. When we look back on what this parliament has achieved in the last 15 years, this is the big thing. This is the big opportunity for us to do something that is life-changing and life-shaping for millions of Australians who are either affected by disability or have a family member who is. We are not getting this right at the moment. It was quite rare during the election that I spoke to a family who is having a smooth and really positive experience working with the National Disability Insurance Scheme. There are some families, I know, who are receiving support that weren't getting any before. I'm really, really grateful for that. But to hear of families where you have issues like a child with a permanent disability who's being asked to reprove their disability—reprove that they have Down syndrome. What an offensive thing to ask of someone. There are issues where we see families with a child with a serious disability who is waiting months to get appointments with the NDIS for their initial assessment. Once they're told that they'll be eligible for certain types of supports, they're waiting again for six months or longer for those supports.

This is not the vision that Labor had for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Our concept was an insurance model, which I see is being adopted, but one that is properly funded. There's no point having an insurance model if the money's not there to give people the help when they need it. We were intensely disappointed, frustrated and angry to see that just prior to the election the government trumpeted around what they
considered to be a brilliant notion of having a government surplus when, in fact, billions of dollars of that are coming from underspend on the NDIS, when we know that in my community and in the community of every single person in this chamber there are people who are waiting on supports because they can't get the resources that they need. Something is very off here, and it's brilliant to see that we've got the member for Maribyrnong who is now going to be front and centre in this discussion in keeping the government to account. One thing I do know, and I can certainly say this to the people I represent in Hotham, is that we will not stop until this scheme meets the vision that Julia Gillard, that Kevin Rudd, that Bill Shorten and that Jenny Macklin had for this scheme. We will not stop until that vision is met and until the people in our community who deserve and need those supports get them at the appropriate time.

I want to also just address some of the issues around health and education that came up during the election campaign. Labor made a commitment to some pretty significant increases in expenditure in health and education that were so desperately needed. I have to say, the doorknocking I did during the election really confirmed to me that this is a very important thing for us to look at again as we go forward into this next term of parliament. I spoke to so many people who are on waiting lists in public hospitals for elective surgery, to people who are paying enormous out-of-pocket expenses, and even to people who are not taking the medication they need that their doctors are advising them to take, because the out-of-pocket costs associated with it are so significant that they're not looking after their own health. In fact, they can't afford to provide for their own health care.

I say again: in the case of the NDIS and in the case of Medicare this is not what a world-class universal public healthcare system is meant to provide. The whole point of this is that we provide brilliant, First World health care for Australians at a price that they can afford. No-one in this country should be not taking medical treatments that they need because they can't afford to. Yet that's what we see and that's what we hear in a lot of households around the country, and that has to change.

I had so many incredible conversations in my electorate with people who are mums and dads of school-aged children. There are, I would say, a lot of anxieties in this parent group at the moment—and I certainly share some of them myself—about what the future looks like for these young people. I think parents absolutely get that our economy has changed in very significant ways since the time they were at school and they were entering the workforce. It's much harder for young people today to move from study into a job that they can rely on, a job that they can count on. I think they're also aware that technology is changing so fast that the kids who are in primary school today are probably going to work in jobs that don't even exist at the moment.

Labor talked a lot during the election campaign about education. We talked about early learning, this crucial opportunity that we face in the first three years of the life of a child to set them on the right course and how we were going to make sure they got the proper education that they needed at that time. But we also talked about making sure that we improve the performance of our school system. The data points we have tell us that although our system is really good—it's very high quality—there are lots of countries around the world that are improving the outcomes in their education systems much faster than we are. If we want our kids to get the great benefits of growing up in the Australia that I grew up in, we're going to need to make sure we start to make some big improvements to that system, and more funding is inevitably a part of that question.

Climate change is a crucial issue for the people in my community. I heard during the election campaign a lot about disengaged voters and whether people are paying attention and that sort of thing. I have to say, when I was doorknocking, especially in the weeks before the election, I would knock on people's doors and they would literally say, 'Claire, it's so wonderful to see you. Here are the five issues I'm thinking about going into polling day.' In that type of engaged community, climate change was almost always on the list of things people are very worried about.

It's honestly quite gut wrenching and disappointing to see we're going through another term of parliament where the understanding of the Australian people about the issues facing our climate and about solutions is going to be so far ahead of this parliament. It's very worrying for me that it's obvious that we're going to go through three more years of not taking action on climate change. Governments come and go, and Labor wins elections and we lose elections, but there are some issues where delaying and not having that time we need to make big policy change is actually really costing us, and climate is one of those. The longer we take to take action on climate change, the more expensive it's going to get for the next generation to deal with it. My community really gets that. I hope that this parliament is able to wake up to those issues and that those on the other side of the chamber pay attention to the scientists and the rest of the world, try to wake up a little bit and take some action on these issues.

I'd like to just finish up talking about the economy, because that's obviously crucially important for whoever is in federal government. One of the great mistruths of Australian politics is what's consistently put forward by those on the other side of the chamber—that somehow the Liberals are better at managing the economy than the Labor Party. We absolutely know that's not true and history is the best evidence of that.
We're now entering our 28th year of economic growth in our country. I mean, isn't that an incredible thing, Deputy Speaker Wicks? If you are under 40 in this country, you really have never worked through a recession and we're so lucky to have that privilege. But that didn't happen by accident. A big part of that was good policy and most of that good policy that has created 28 years of economic growth has come not from those on the other side of the chamber, who like to talk themselves up so much about their economic management, but in fact from things that Labor prime ministers and Labor treasurers have done.

When Hawke and Keating came into government in 1983, our economy was calcified. It was slow-moving. We were not getting productivity growth. Inflation was out of control. The big reforms that they took were difficult, they were hard, they had often quite significant short-term costs, but what they led to was a period of unprecedented economic growth. That was followed up by the truly remarkable work that was done by the Rudd and Gillard governments in their management of the global financial crisis. For Australia to be the only advanced economy to get through that period without a recession is something we should be so proud of—something that we should be trumpeting all over the world. Indeed, when you go to global forums and talk to international economists, they are staggered, really, at the speed and the effectiveness of the Australian response. People can denigrate that or sneer at that if they want to, but the truth is that the way Labor handled the global financial crisis kept literally hundreds of thousands of people off the dole queue. Hundreds of thousands of people would have lost their jobs if we had not gone down the path that we did. We're rightly very proud of that on this side of the House.

I think the economy is going to be a very important issue of debate over the coming three years, because the truth is we've got some big issues facing our economy at the moment. We've got interest rates at emergency levels. We've got a government that has no plan for the economy—in fact, no plan for anything much at all. Indeed, for the first time in Australia's history, we've got an economy that's growing, but ordinary Australian households are going backwards. That is an extraordinarily significant thing for our whole history so far. The way we have provided a better quality of life for Australians has been to improve the overall performance of the economy, and ordinary Australians have benefited from that through various other social programs and education programs that we've had. Now we've got this very important difference in the way that our economy operates, and yet those on the other side of the chamber have no ideas for it and no idea about what to do with the incredible privilege of running this country. So we really look forward to taking the fight up to them over the coming three years, and I'll do that proudly as the member for Hotham.

Mr SIMMONDS (Ryan) (10:46): It's a great pleasure to stand up and support this bill, Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2019-2020, because this bill goes to the very heart of what we were talking about in the previous election, which is that without delivering a strong economy and sensible economic management you can't deliver on anything else, like all the services that are required for your local area—things like health and education. It's a great pleasure to follow on from the member for Hotham, because you can see that they're still trying to revise history. They're trying to convince their local residents that, in fact, the residents just didn't understand the Labor Party's policies—that they were actually very good policies and it was just the voters who couldn't quite understand their genius.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SIMMONDS: The Labor Party are still lauding the previous opposition leader. They are still talking dismissively about a surplus as if a surplus is no big deal, when, in reality, we know that an economic surplus is hard work. It's an economic surplus that helps achieve the rest of that funding for services that they would like to do.

Instead, the Labor Party are still focused on having a tax-and-spend agenda. They'll take your money. They'll take $387 billion worth of new taxes, and they'll try and spend your money better than you can. Well, that's not what we believe on this side of the chamber. It's not what the LNP believe. We believe in the strong economic management that this bill delivers so that we can then provide more funding. We spoke about this a lot in the Ryan electorate during the last election. For example, over the average of the next 10 years, education funding in Ryan will go up by 50 per cent per student. That's only achievable because of strong economic management.

My Labor opponent tried this at the last election. They tried to claim that education funding had gone down under this government. That's just another Labor lie that they like to trot out. What they couldn't do, though, was explain their high-taxing policies. What was their carbon policy and their climate change policy going to cost the people of Australia? My Labor opponent, himself, could not explain their capital gains tax policies at our local candidate forum, and I made the point then, and I make it now: if the Labor Party can't explain their own policies, then why would Australians trust them?
This bill is important for all residents of the Ryan electorate because it endorses the plan that we took to the last election and that the Australian people endorsed, and that is an economic plan to deliver strong growth for our economy to deliver jobs and to deliver the first surplus in a decade, and that is no small feat at all. The Labor Party like to dismiss it—we saw that from the member for Hotham—but they couldn't achieve it. They announced it, they announced it numerous times, but they couldn't achieve it. In fact, it will be the first time that we've paid down Labor's deficit and the first time we're back in the black in 12 long years.

The result of the recent election was a clear rejection of Labor's plan for more debt, more taxes and less in the pockets of the hardworking Australians, who work so hard to be rewarded. If the Labor Party had won the last election, they would have put—and they are still planning to—$387 billion in new taxes on retirees, on housing, on income, on investments, on family business, on electricity and on cars. Labor's plan to increase capital gains tax by 50 per cent would have hurt Australian investors and given Australia one of the highest capital gains tax rates in the world. They still support their militant union mates, who demand more power to strike, more control over industries and businesses, and more deals to entrench their power, which is restricting jobs and ruining small business.

This appropriations bill clearly enshrines the ethos of this government that if you have a go, you'll get a go. And let's go to the heart of what was the economic plan that we outlined before the last election, and that we're enshrining in these bills today. We are creating 1.25 million more jobs over the next five years, because the best form of welfare is a job. The opportunity to have a job, to contribute, to look after your family: that is what all Australians aspire to.

These bills will maintain budget surpluses and pay down Labor's debt. Thank goodness for that! They'll deliver tax relief for families and small businesses, and we have already done that for 10 million Australians in the first week of parliament. It was so great to be on site in Mitchelton, in my electorate, talking to a young family, Sam and Vanessa with their three young kids, about what this tax relief will mean to them. It means more money in their pockets so that they can spend it the way their family needs, for their family's priorities—not the Labor Party's priorities; not so they can give it to a Labor government to spend as a Labor government sees fit. It goes back in the pockets of families so that these families can look after their own priorities.

These bills will guarantee increased investment for schools, hospitals and roads. As I said before, this is something that the Labor Party don't like to acknowledge. They like to maintain this fallacy that somehow this funding is decreasing, when it's not. In Ryan, for example, funding for all public schools in the electorate will increase by around 50 per cent per student in the next 10 years. And we can do that, we can provide better and extra services in education for our kids to have strong and resilient families, without reaching into your pocket for $387 billion worth of new taxes. We've recently established the Local Schools Community Fund, which I know is going to help schools in my electorate as they nominate projects that they can put together, projects of up to $20,000, to help them support students and their families and improve their skills.

The other thing this appropriation bill is going to do is help us invest in infrastructure. It is so important for connected and strong communities to invest in infrastructure. The $100 billion investment that this government is making in infrastructure is going to be significant and a game changer for our nation, particularly the quadrupling of the Urban Congestion Fund from $1 billion to $4 billion. I've spoken previously in this place about how important these small projects can be to a local community. Recently, in the last couple of weeks, I was on site for the opening of a relatively small project, but an important one, in my electorate. Federal funding of $3 million has enabled us to upgrade a facility at Indooroopilly State School. Upgrading the drop-and-go facility means we have reduced the congestion around that school from approximately 30 to 45 minutes, depending on the day and how bad it was, down to just seven minutes, and that's because we've got the traffic moving and flowing. We've made it safer around the drop-and-go facility for students and for parents so that those parents worry less about their kids waiting for the pick-up, particularly if they're stuck in traffic.

Mr Wallace interjecting—

Mr SIMMONDS: That's no small thing. I take the member for Fisher's interjection. It's no small thing. But, for Labor, education and supporting families are simply about taking money out of your pocket and spending it 'better.' Normally that's by giving it back to a Labor state government so that they can put it into their education department, when we know that there has to be a holistic approach to supporting families that includes not only increasing education funding per child—which we will do—but also investing to reduce congestion so that parents aren't stuck in congestion for the Saturday sport or when they're trying to pick their kids up from school and they aren't worried about their kids' safety.

As well as all those things that I've just spoken about that we can achieve with a strong economy, we can also invest in health. That's what you get when you're able to create a surplus, when you're able to pay down debt. As
the son of two pharmacists, I know the difference that affordable and accessible health care makes to the lives of all Australians. It was one of the great privileges of the last election to move about in the Ryan electorate and talk to people, but particularly to talk to some people who have benefited from the new listings on the PBS. Since we have come into government over 2,000 medicines, worth $10.6 billion, have been listed on the PBS. That is extraordinary, particularly when you compare it to the fact that the Labor Party froze—

Ms Ryan interjecting—

Mr SIMMONDS: I take the interjection from the Labor member who said that it was a bipartisan approach. Yes. They couldn't fund it. It's always been bipartisan, but Labor had to freeze it because they couldn't afford it. They simply couldn't afford it. They were too busy trying to find out how they could take taxes from people. They were too busy running up a deficit. They couldn't afford to list medicines that are saving people's lives. Let's face it: when it comes to the point of needing these drugs, it is truly life or death. These are drugs that are only used by a small number of people, because they are for unique or rare diseases. When it comes to people needing these drugs, it is a life-or-death decision. When the Labor Party were in charge of the finances of this nation, they could not find enough in the pockets of Australian, or the pockets of government, to save those people's lives, whereas this government is committed to listing more medicines on the PBS. We will do that as part of these bills. That is a great thing for Australians and the Ryan electorate.

More Australians are seeing the doctor without having to pay, thanks to the strong economic plan that is in this appropriation bill. More Australians are seeing the doctor, with 133 million free GP services delivered last year—27.3 million more than in Labor's last year. Let me just say that again: 27.3 million more than in Labor's last year. In my electorate alone, the bulk-billing rate is up 72 per cent. Last year over 613,868 GP visits were bulk-billed in the Ryan electorate—171,000 more than in Labor's last year in government. That is how you make a real difference to the healthcare system of our nation, when you deliver a strong economic plan that enables those kinds of outcomes, as opposed, again, to the Labor plan of simply ripping out $387 billion worth of new taxes and trying to spend it better than the taxpayers would.

I also want to speak a little bit about how we can support older Australians better because of this strong economic plan. A record $21.6 billion will go towards ensuring older Australians can access higher quality and safer aged care in 2019-20. It is an increase of more than 50 per cent since 2013-14. The government is also providing $282 million to support older Australians who wish to stay at home for longer through an additional 10,000 home care packages. This will bring the number of new packages announced by this government over the last 18 months alone to 40,000.

This is so important with an ageing population, and we have an ageing population in the Ryan electorate as well. I spent some time as a councillor talking about how we can improve aged care and provide new retirement opportunities in our suburbs. We want older Australians to be able to retire in the suburbs that they know, that they love, where their support networks are and where their families are. We don't want to see a situation where they have to go further afield in order to find affordable and appropriate care because of development in Brisbane or a lack of services.

So working with this funding that is provided in this appropriation bill is going to be an important part of what I do in the Ryan electorate to make sure that older Australians are able to age within our community and stay within our community. They are an enormous asset, and this is where their support networks are. In order to create these stronger communities, I want to particularly commend the Stronger Communities round 5 grants, which will be opening very soon. This will allow our local organisations who are supporting our older Australians and our community in general to apply for grants which will allow them to improve their facilities and bring our communities together better. I will be working with them specifically on the projects that have been allocated within the appropriation bill. At Bardon Latrobe Football Club there is $500,000 for new change facilities, and there is another $500,000 for new change facilities at the Toowong Football Club to promote female participation. This is the kind of great work that we can do in the Ryan electorate with a strong economy, and only the Morrison government can deliver that strong economy.

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (11:01): Yesterday a report came out from the Melbourne Institute: the annual HILDA statistical report. It ought to be a wake-up call for the Morrison government, which has been asleep at the wheel when it comes to tackling Australia's serious economic challenges. It showed that when the Liberals came to office under Tony Abbott in 2013, median household annual disposable income in Australia was $80,573. In the most recent year available in the report, 2017, median household income was $80,095. In other words, in the time that the Liberals have been in office, the median household has gotten poorer. So when Australians ask themselves: 'Am I better off or worse off under this government?' The answer is, after inflation, they're worse off.
We've seen significant falls in median household incomes, adjusting for household size, in Adelaide, in Perth, in regional Western Australia, in regional New South Wales and right here in the ACT. In the ACT, the drop in median equivalised household disposable incomes has been the largest of any region in Australia—11 per cent—a direct consequence of the decimation of the Public Service and the cuts in real wages for many Canberra public servants.

We've also seen troubling statistics about poverty and inequality. When the HILDA researchers looked at five-year income, a measure that economists refer to as permanent income, they saw a rise in inequality in that metric. As they point out:
… this is not a good development for people with low incomes, since they are more likely to have persistently low incomes. The HILDA researchers looked, too, at poverty and found that relative poverty, as measured by the benchmark of the share of the population that is below 50 per cent of median, had increased to 10.4 per cent. The researchers noted that poverty is consistently high among the elderly, particularly elderly single persons. They noted:
… poverty is considerably more prevalent among children in single-parent families than among children in couple-parent families. In all years, the poverty rate for children in single-parent families is over twice the poverty rate for children in couple-parent families.

We are not doing a sufficiently good job of looking after children in single-parent families. The report also noted the collapse in male full-time employment, falling from 73 per cent a decade ago to some 68 per cent in the most recent year. These are troubling figures on the share of men who are holding down a full-time job. This is men aged 18 to 64, so it is particularly surprising that, for that cohort, full-time work is becoming rarer still.

We've had reports of people receiving Newstart skipping meals because they can't afford to eat; people chased over alleged robo-debts while government ministers who rack up internet bills in excess of $30,000 are able to simply repay them; and cuts to penalty rates while those opposite refer to penalty rates as a 'gift' to young people. Many of those receiving penalty rates would disagree. They would see penalty rates as being essential to paying the bills. We've had job hunters having their support payments suspended for alleged inappropriate behaviour, while government ministers are able to break marble tables in this place with little consequence.

We've had workers reporting outrageous levels of wage theft. What is the response from the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government? It's to go after workers' representatives, to bring bills into this place attacking unions, who have, in many cases, been the bodies that have called out wage theft. None of us in this place believe it's appropriate that workers are paid less than their legal entitlements, but some of us in this place are committed institutionally to trade unions—the organisations that didn't just bring us the eight-hour day and the weekend, didn't just campaign for sick pay, but are also responsible for raising pay and conditions. Unions campaign for workers' safety on dangerous sites, such as construction, and unions deliver a wage premium to their workers which is well in excess of the cost of union dues. As Senator Ayres said in a terrific first speech yesterday, there is a public good benefit in having trade unions. So it's particularly surprising that, with trade union membership lower than it has been in a century, the approach from those opposite is, again, to bring anti-worker laws into this place.

Let's be clear what it means when you reduce unionisation in Australia. That means we see more inequality, a higher gender pay gap, a higher pay gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and more wage theft. Those are the direct consequences of having fewer union members in Australia.

We've seen across the chamber calls from members of the coalition to cut away superannuation, to have superannuation not apply to low-income Australians. That's Senator Bragg's suggestion, but there is a backbench ginger group pushing hard on the Treasurer to delay the increase in compulsory superannuation. It's so ironic that people elected to this place, with their 15 per cent superannuation, think that 12 per cent is too good for low-income Australians. Rather than trying to undermine universal superannuation, it would be terrific if those opposite would support superannuation and support the best performing sector of the superannuation industry—the sector set up by industry funds. Industry funds aren't union funds; they're set up as a compact between unions and employers. Anyone who is serious about increasing retirement adequacy for Australians ought to support the sector, which has consistently had lower fees and higher returns than its retail counterpart. Yet the government's sole focus seems to be on fighting the old battles between industry and retail funds, rather than focusing on the new agenda of reducing costs within the system, as the Grattan Institute has called for.

Under this government, we've seen an economy which is now in the third quarter of a per capita recession, where retail sales are in the doldrums, where new car sales are going backward, where engineering construction is down, where unemployment is a full percentage point higher than it is in Britain, New Zealand, the United States or Germany. We've got an economy in which wage growth isn't delivering, in which productivity growth has been lacklustre. As I argued in a piece in Inside Story this week, productivity growth is, according the Productivity
Commission, 'mediocre', running at some one-tenth of the level that it has been running at on a historical average. But without the investments in individuals, institutions and infrastructure, we won't get the turnaround in productivity growth that the nation so sorely demands. And even given that lacklustre level of productivity growth, we've still seen a decoupling of productivity and wage growth. We've still seen workers not getting their fair share of the gains.

That matters from an inequality standpoint and a fairness standpoint. Workers shouldn't be seeing this continual decline in the labour share. But it matters, too, in terms of the incentives to invest in productivity-boosting investments. Why should workers be a part of productivity-boosting gains in the workplace if they're not going to share in that productivity growth through their pay packets? It would be like saying to employers that they were not to get any of the productivity growth through the profit share but were nonetheless expected to invest in productivity-boosting investments. That wouldn't be reasonable either.

In the 1970s we had a real wage overhang. We now have a real wage underhang, with the real wage sitting stubbornly below productivity growth. We have poverty which is, in Australia, too high. One of my mentors was Tony Atkinson, whose last book, *Measuring Poverty Around the World*, has been published posthumously, put together by John Micklewright and Andrea Brandolini, and with afterwords from Nicholas Stern and Francois Bourguignon. This is a really important contribution from one of the world's great thinkers about inequality, who was, sadly, taken from us too soon. In his opening, Tony Atkinson asks the rhetorical question, 'Why did I write this book and why should you read it?' He answers:

I became an economist in the 1960s on account of reading *The Poor and the Poorest*, a landmark study of poverty in the United Kingdom by Brian Abel-Smith and Peter Townsend … and of my earlier personal experience of working with deprived children in Hamburg. My first book (Atkinson 1969) was about poverty in Britain and the need for urgent action. Some half a century later, I remain deeply concerned that, in countries that are many times richer than in the 1960s, poverty has become more, rather than less, entrenched.

He goes on to say that his intention is to shine a light onto the issue of poverty, recalling the importance of John F Kennedy's campaigning in the Appalachian region of West Virginia, of Lyndon B Johnson's unconditional war on poverty, of the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals, which have catalysed action at an international level on poverty and disadvantage. Key works on inequality, including Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* and Martin Ravallion's *The Economics of Poverty* have focused the attention of the economics profession on tackling poverty and disadvantage, recognising that we need crisp measures that can sum up the challenge to a lay audience: the share of the population living on less than $2 a day, and the share of incomes going to the top one per cent or top 0.1 per cent.

It's vital that we understand that poverty and climate change are intertwined. As Nicholas Stern notes in his afterword:

... it is the poorest who are most vulnerable and who suffer the greatest impacts. Tony recognised very clearly the double inequality here. The poorest of the world, wherever they are, have contributed least to the causes of climate change, but they suffer the most.

He goes on to say:

... the transition to the low-carbon economy offers us an alternative and dynamic growth agenda. Developing relevant new growth models in theory and practice is a key and urgent task for economic theorists, applied economists and economic decision-makers, in both the public and private sectors.

There is an optimistic story to be told here, one in which we decarbonise the economy and create many more jobs in the renewables energy sector, and ensure that those jobs are well paying, sustainable and inclusive. As Nicholas Stern notes:

Strong, sustainable, and inclusive, it is the only lasting growth story on offer ...

So we need to do more on tackling climate change but, unfortunately, this government has its head in the sand. It has an energy minister who refuses to acknowledge, in question time, that Australian emissions have been rising under this government and that the government has no plan for ensuring that Australia meets our internationally agreed targets, which were settled in Paris for a very good reason. Countries came to the Paris climate meetings saying what they would do to keep climate change below the two-degree target. This is our contribution to a policy agenda which would save the Great Barrier Reef and ensure that we don't see a massive increase in catastrophic climate events caused by unchecked climate change. Despite the huge tourism gains from the Great Barrier Reef, despite the risks to the economy of unchecked climate change, the government seems unwilling to do its part. The cost isn't just rising emissions; it's rising energy prices, which have gone up markedly under this government, as my colleague the shadow minister for energy and the environment has noted.

I'd urge those opposite to engage with some of these critical issues around poverty and disadvantage. They can increase Newstart. It's not too late for them to do a backflip on Newstart. Just as Tony Abbott dropped his $7 GP
co-payment, just as Malcolm Turnbull backflipped on same-sex marriage, so too Prime Minister Morrison can do the right thing and increase Newstart to decrease poverty in Australia.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (11:16): It's my pleasure to rise to speak on Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2019-2020 and the associated appropriation bills. The federal Morrison-Liberal-National government is investing very heavily in a range of different environmental measures, notably on the Great Barrier Reef. When we do that, we try to work with industry to see that there can be improvements in environmental outcomes—for instance, with the agricultural sector—and, at the same time, drive growth in profits as well. When you get that double whammy, it is a great impact for the environment and a great impact for the bottom line of farmers. That's where you get real change, real sustainable, meaningful change, that's going to last for the long term, not just until the funding that might be on offer dries up.

A different approach is taken by the state Labor government. Just as we've seen the mining industry demonised by the green Left and blamed for everything from the destruction of the Great Barrier Reef to bushfires, cyclones and floods, we're also witnessing the demonisation of our farmers, both graziers and, more particularly, sugar cane farmers. The judge, jury and executioner, in the form of the Queensland Labor government and its Department of Environment and Science, are determined that it is, indeed, farmers who are guilty of just about every evil that afflicts the reef and that, in particular, they are responsible for the quality of water which flows into our water catchments. They make their pronouncement and outline their prescribed course of punishment with no conclusive or extensive data or studies on water quality. Although some monitoring of water does go on, it is piecemeal and it varies from catchment to catchment. So in the absence of data, the department does modelling, it makes predictions and it determines that the evil farmers are guilty and they must be held to. It's akin to a witch-hunt. This is the treatment growers face after the vast majority of them, about 70 per cent, have spent the last six years or so changing their farming practices and taking ownership for the land their families have farmed for decades—and, I've got to say, they treat it with great respect.

I'd like to step through the process of the Queensland Labor government deciding to introduce yet another set of regulations on an already heavily regulated industry. In February this year, the Queensland Labor government introduced the Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. They wanted to meet a reef water quality target. However, the Queensland Labor government had already introduced regulations in 2010 which essentially required farmers to become scientists, chemists and bookkeepers in order to grow their own cane.

While we all understand that industries develop and refine their processes and practices, the requirements are now extensive and time consuming. Cane farmers are already required to do the following: they have to undertake soil testing within one year of planting; they need to use the results of those soil tests to calculate the optimum amount of nitrogen and phosphorous in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act; they have to keep the soil test reports and records of the calculation of the optimum amount of nitrogen and phosphorous for a period of no less than five years; they've got to apply no more than the optimum amount of nitrogen and phosphorous according to those tests; they have to keep records of all the agricultural chemicals—fertilisers and soil conditioners—applied, including the amount, the product analysis, and the date and method of application, for a period of no less than five years; and they have to have a map showing the boundary of each block where soil testing, and fertiliser and soil conditioner application has occurred.

Naturally these tasks are more difficult for some than others. We don't all enjoy juggling chemical calculations and record keeping, and those practices will probably come more readily to some. We must remember that we are already asking people to change a lifetime of practices to abide by new regulations—quite heavy-handed regulations. Despite the difficulties and challenges, eight years on we've got about 70 per cent of growers going through the process of meeting the requirements which have been set before them. They have become involved in a number of industry led initiatives such as the Smartcane best management practice and the Reef Alliance project.

In November last year, I joined other innovators in the cane industry—130 of them, from Mossman, in the north, through to Koumala, south of Mackay—who were in Parliament House being congratulated for their efforts under Project Catalyst, which was celebrating its 10th anniversary. Project Catalyst was founded by Coca-Cola and by a group I don't normally commend in this place, the World Wildlife Fund. It was designed to reduce the impact of agricultural run-off. Through working together, sharing information, developing farming processes and practices, and boosting crop production, they've improved 150 billion litres of water quality. These are growers that have done this. They're very proud of what they are achieving, and rightly so.

I stood with Canegrowers Queensland chairman Paul Schembri, along with the then Minister for the Environment, in March this year for an announcement of further Morrison Liberal-National government funding for 11 programs which are all about practical initiatives and a collaborative approach of working with landholders.
and farmers to improve soils, protect land and protect waterways. That funding was coming through the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. One of those programs is the Project Cane Change. It is based on mutual respect and recognition of growers' achievements.

Sadly, this is not what our growers get from the Queensland Labor government. What they are faced with is more rules and regulations, further uncertainties and downright fear about whether, once again, they might be put in situations where they're scared to farm because they might break the rules. As Paul Schembri explained to committee members holding an inquiry into the state government bill: 'The current act provides for requirements such as environment risk management plans, soil testing, nutrient calculators, record keeping, the prescribed use of chemicals, chemical accreditation, mandatory setback areas and grower audits. We are very confused and perplexed as to why a high threshold that now exists is to be superseded by an extremely high threshold.'

If the Queensland Labor government's proposed bill is passed, this is actually what awaits our cane growers—an invasion of privacy, the introduction of big brother as the people that farmers work alongside. The agronomists, the extension officers, the resellers of chemicals and fertilisers, are going to be required to keep records of who buys what, and they'll be required to produce those records—or, essentially, dob in a grower. Sugar mills that growers supply to are also going to be required to hand over data on request from the government: 'Dob in a grower'. It is treating them like criminals. The bill will also give a public servant—the head of the environment department—the power to simply go ahead and change the rules and move the goalposts on regulations, with limited requirement to consult and absolutely no accountability on the impacts that rule changes will inflict on farmers and their communities.

Could it get any worse? Yes it could. Growers will also need to obtain an 'environmental authority licence' to grow cane on their own land if that land has not been cropped for three of the previous 10 years, including one of the previous five years. The avenue then for growth of the sugar industry is pretty much zip. The labor then for growth of the sugar industry is pretty much zip. Where a licence is required the grower will need to show they can manage water quality risks through farm design and practice standards. The degree of dictatorship here is simply unbelievable. So a bureaucrat in a city office who reads the Green Left Weekly and has probably never stepped onto a cane farm in his or her entire life is going to have the power to tell farmers how they can farm their own land and even what land they can farm on. That is just an insult.

The next insult to growers is that the state Labor government wants to expand the number of regions of Queensland which will fall under these draconian reef regulations. The department, in their infinite environmental wisdom, have determined that the southern cane-growing regions of Bundaberg, Isis and Maryborough, which are already struggling with drought conditions and soaring electricity prices, are going to face these reef regulations for the first time. CANEGROWERS, which represents 80 per cent of growers in the country, believes that this southern expansion is a low priority and an unjustified expense to the public purse and to growers in the region.

It appears that there is a push to get the bill through the state parliament as soon as possible. One can only assume, considering that a state election looms in a little over 12 months time, that Queensland Labor wants to get this nasty attack on the autonomy of farmers over and done with in the mistaken belief that growers and others in their communities might lick their wounds, and that all will be forgotten come October 2020. I certainly doubt that, and they should too.

After this bill was introduced in the Queensland parliament on 27 February, it was referred to the Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee. The committee planned to hold just one hearing, and where did they decide to have that hearing? I'll give you a couple of guesses, but you probably won't need to take too long, Mr Deputy Speaker McVeigh, because you come from a region in Queensland as well. Guess where the state government decided to consult on this agriculture bill, a bill that would affect rural communities.

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In the interests of the cane farmers in the biggest sugar-growing region in the country, and also on behalf of our cattlemen and cattlwomen, I would like to raise some of the concerns and objections that they have shared with me and that were raised in those hearings. The CANEGROWERS organisation in their submission to the inquiry said:

It is not reasonable that a growers' ability to farm profitably will be at the whim of a government department, with no explicit consideration of economic and social impacts, no process for independent review and no recourse for appeal by affected industries and individuals.

Cattlwoman Josephine Angus said: 'We are under pressure. I have many quality assurance manuals on my desk. I would love to be out riding a horse or driving a grader and doing some earthworks that might actually stop a bit of sediment to the reef instead of checking lists and ticking boxes.' CANEGROWERS chairman Paul Schembri said: 'Australian cane farmers are acknowledged as being world class in terms of innovation and in terms of embracing technologies and farming practices that are second to none. I make the observation that we are lauded and applauded as being perhaps the best in the world when it comes to environmental sustainability. It is somewhat irritating that when we come back to Queensland our environmental prowess is considered to be second-rate.' Manager at the Invicta Cane Growers Organisation, Michael Kern, said: 'A lot of our growers have questioned the science and questioned the testing results and have employed independent, peer reviewed testers to come onto their properties and undertake testing. It might come as a surprise, but they have found different results to that of the government's testing. They are satisfied themselves, particularly around nitrogen coming in off the properties.'

Russ McNee from BRIA, the Burdekin River Irrigation Area Irrigators, said: 'The proposed amendment bill confirms irrigators' longheld concerns that government will continue to raise the compliance bar despite the commitment and best effort of irrigators to improve water quality and minimise irrigation run-off.'

Anyone who feels strongly about supporting our traditional industries and curtailing the green left push to impose regulation after regulation on our farmers and other industry groups should call state members of parliament and ask them to take a stand against the demonisation of the agricultural sector and farmers. People can also sign the National Farmers' Federation #RejectTheRegs petition, which notes this push by Queensland Labor:

... puts farmers at risk of bureaucratic intrusion into their everyday business decisions for no guarantee of water quality benefits.

As the NFF rightly states in their petition about these regulations, they're 'a grab for private business data' and 'will give government the power to shift the goalposts again and again,' and they're simply 'not needed'.

The Palaszczuk Queensland Labor government should get serious about listening to the concerns of our farmers. The bureaucrats are fond of saying the industry knew it was coming. They state they've been in discussions since 2016, but discussions are not an agreement. The Queensland Labor government's idea of consultation is this: 'We meet, you talk, we don't listen and then we do whatever we want.' This is how they've dealt with farmers. It is an appalling way to do businesses with any constituent, and it's particularly appalling to do this sort of business with the people who put food on our tables, the farmers who, in total, generate $10 billion of output for our state's economy and employ hundreds of people up and down the Queensland seaboard. This is a disgraceful way. Farmers will remember it, if the state Labor government goes ahead with these onerous regulations, and they will take it out at the ballot box.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (11:32): In the appropriation bills, which are basically the platform for the federal budget, we had a federal government go and spruik how much money it was spending on infrastructure over a period of years when the spend won't actually be felt by communities for some years. The government talk a big game on infrastructure, but their spend will not be felt by communities for years. And, in my part of Western Sydney, people do feel the con that was referred to just a few moments ago by the member of Oxley, because there is high residential growth in greenfield areas and people know that the infrastructure has to keep pace with that growth, but they can see it failing miserably to do so. There are also many established suburbs in the electorate of Chifley where people rely on things like public transport or roads to get to work and are let down significantly by the federal government.

But it's a tag team between the federal and state governments. For a lot of infrastructure, you do need to have federal and state governments working closely together, and that's simply not the case. I have to say that I was surprised recently when, at an Australian Financial Review summit on infrastructure, the New South Wales transport minister floated the idea of resuscitating asset recycling. Asset recycling is a fancy name for the privatisation of state assets which then get used to fund infrastructure instead of governments doing it themselves. The New South Wales minister was urging the federal Treasurer, Josh Frydenberg, to embrace asset recycling again. What got me was not just that a lot of people know that privatisation effectively rips off communities,
because all it sees is a transfer of public assets through the creation of private wealth for organisations that do not maintain the same standards or commitment to local service, but that Andrew Constance, the New South Wales transport minister, who I think takes the prize for being one of the most out-of-touch ministers in the country—and that is a highly contested field—said:

... federal government needed to take a bolder approach to reducing urban congestion—

So get someone else to do their work—

than getting involved in small-scale projects such as commuter car parks—

which he said should be left to state and local governments. So the New South Wales transport minister believes that state governments should be responsible for what he calls small-scale projects. Then you look at his record. He can't do it. He doesn't do it. On public transport, where there are upgrades needed, yesterday in the House I spoke about the poor bloke from Doonside who had his ribs smashed when his mobility scooter lost control down one of these long ramps at an old railway station, in Doonside in Western Sydney. We've been campaigning for ages to get lifts in to help the disabled and elderly access public transport. The New South Wales transport minister reckons that small-scale projects should be left to the state government. For the entire time of this state Liberal government being in power, they have refused to fund this upgrade. The minister tells the federal government: 'Get out of these small projects. We'll do it.' And then, when you rely on the state government to do it, they don't do it.

Let's look at other areas in the Chifley electorate where people have been let down. A busway was supposed to be connecting the suburb of Bidwill, in my area, to a booming industrial estate called the Sydney Business Park that is creating roughly 60,000 direct and indirect jobs. There are a lot of people in Bidwill who have cars. A lot don't. They rely on public transport and buses to get them where they're going. There is a high rate of unemployment in that area—in some cases, double or triple the national average. Being able to connect people in suburbs where they want jobs to suburbs that are providing jobs is important. We don't even have a busway connecting up from Luxford Road through to the Sydney Business Park. Why? Because the state government hasn't got its act together to get that busway created. The easement is there. It's been talked about. We're still waiting for it to occur.

In the meantime, Richmond Road, which runs to the north of Sydney Business Park, congests and congests and congests because, again, we do not have the commitment to provide other infrastructure, like an M9 that would run parallel to the M7 and A9 to take some of the pressure off our area, where 150,000 residents will be moving in. Again, the state government are letting people down. They are not putting in the investment but are telling the federal government, 'Get out of small-scale projects, because we can do them,' and then not doing them themselves.

In the south, commuters on Sydney's busiest rail lines are regularly unable to get home on time during the evening peak on weekdays. Particularly on the Western Line, especially at that point between Penrith and Parramatta, people find that, during the evening peaks on three out of five weekdays, the trains do not meet their performance targets. They don't meet them whatsoever. There is no plan to improve the performance or ease the congestion on the Western Line. No-one is talking about it.

We have a state government saying they'll build a Metro. I'll give them credit. The New South Wales government have done a great job on the Metro Northwest. I doubted, but I stand corrected. They've done a really good job on it. It is a great rail line. They are looking to extend that rail line in south-western Sydney, but purely to connect the airport to Parramatta. A whole swathe of people, from Penrith through to Parramatta, are forced to catch a rail line that is running late, does not perform and is not being upgraded to deal with the needs of people who want to get to work on time and don't want to be crammed like sardines or be forced to used relics of railway stations. The New South Wales government will upgrade railway stations in marginal seats or closer to the city but fail to meet the needs of Western Sydney residents in areas like Doonside, because they're not rich enough or they're not close enough to a marginal seat close to the city. This is an unacceptable way to make investments in infrastructure. As I said, that western rail line needs a massive upgrade. We do not need to see billions of dollars poured into an alternative rail line that connects Parramatta to the Western Sydney Airport or have the rail line going from the south connecting up to St Marys just funnelling more people in. I had sneering from Sydney media when I said one of the big problems with the Western Sydney Airport would be that, if infrastructure wasn't invested in, it would just fuel more congestion in the area. When I first raised this, about four or five years ago, you could literally hear the sneers from people, but more and more we are finding that congestion on Sydney's roads and in our major capital cities is increasing phenomenally. Even this week it was suggested there's an increase in congestion and delays of between 60 and 70 per cent. This is a serious problem.
MPs in the regions try to raise these issues and are ignored by Sydney media. I regret to say *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph* continually ignore the needs of Western Sydney on these vital bread-and-butter issues of trying to make sure that infrastructure is keeping pace with the people in our area, largely because most journalists on these papers live in the eastern suburbs. They don't live close to the heart of the action. These journalists have no concept of the types of pressures that are put on people living in the outer regions of our major capital cities. It's a disgrace. When you try to get these things mentioned, they don't do it. I notice the upgrades to the lifts in Redfern in Sydney get massive coverage, but if you go out 40 minutes or so to the outer regions, there's nothing. I'm sure there are representatives in this place, including the Deputy Speaker or other people, regardless of politics, who would find that our media is increasingly inner-city focused and does not necessarily represent the concerns of the people living in our outer suburbs or in regional Australia who are struggling to get resources or to see the infrastructure actually meet their needs. That is wrong. It is simply wrong.

So in our area, as I said, we need to see an investment in public transport that makes sure people get there on time and are not in crowded services themselves, and that roadways are upgraded to deal with this growth. A lot of people like to think that we'll create the 30-minute city. I know there have been arguments for that, and that would be terrific. The reality is it's a long way off. We don't necessarily see it in our part of Sydney. The reality is that most of the jobs in most capital cities get generated closer to the CBDs, and you do need to have effective links. You are simply going to take the steam off the growth by maybe getting some jobs put into local areas. The reality is, as has been found by groups like the Grattan Institute, the closer it is to the CBD, the more you will see people gravitate towards it. We need to not have governments defer investment because they've got some pipedream that they're going to create the 30-minute city and then do nothing to actually invest in it.

So priorities are clear. We need to see decongestion of the western line. We need to see the opening up of new public transport routes, like I said, for example, between Bidwill and the Sydney Business Park industrial estates that are creating jobs to allow the people in our areas—the machine operators, the drivers, the clerical assistants—who want to be able to get from suburbs like Bidwill and Shalvey to those jobs. We need to see the upgrade of public transport infrastructure as well so that we have functioning lifts in places like Doonside. We need to see investment in the M9 motorway that will run parallel to the M7. We need to see the use of the spare capacity on the M7, opening up public transport options in the median areas between the two carriageways on that motorway. Why isn't that being done? There are bottlenecks, for example, where the M7 and the M2 join, where we want to see people be able to get onto Windsor Road more smoothly. That type of stuff needs to be fixed up as well. We need to see metro services that connect existing suburbs rather than create huge new investments in areas where people won't necessarily see the same benefit.

The other thing I'd urge my party to do in the review of election policies that were taken to the last election is to reconsider the $3 billion that was going to be extended to the New South Wales government to invest in what was called the Sydney West Metro Project. Syd West was going to take people from the CBD to Parramatta. Western Sydney has grown so much that Parramatta, as I jokingly say, is in the eastern suburbs of Western Sydney now. Calling it the 'Syd West project' is not, in any shape or form, going to cut it. At the federal level, $3 billion is being provided to improve the connectivity between Parramatta and East Sydney. That $3 billion should be invested in creating a metro extension from Parramatta to Penrith to help people be able to travel there easier.

There are things that can be done where the federal and state governments can work closer together. But where we don't see a state government stepping up, why should we have a federal government leaving it to supporting the privatisation of assets just to fund this infrastructure? If the federal government reckons it's got $100 billion invested in projects, why aren't we seeing that investment actually impact on people now in this term of parliament and getting things happening? In my part of the world, I will not only stand up for our areas to ensure that, as I said, public transport and private transport keeps pace with growth, but I will also make sure that people who are keen to have jobs, particularly those who want to be able to rely on public transport to get to those jobs, can do so, and do so much better.

Finally, if I can say to the Greater Sydney Commission: stop spending a lot of time trying to come up with fancy catchphrases for different parts of the city. There's the three cities proposal that they've talked about, and they've described our part of Sydney as 'part of the central city initiative'. No-one in Western Sydney thinks that they're part of a central city whatsoever. Instead of spending time on logos and catchphrases, why don't they actually make sure that they're directing the attention for infrastructure investment in parts of Western Sydney and north-west Sydney? There are 150,000 people moving in. The government can't get the trains, the roads or the buses working in the way that they should. For example, I know that the residents in Marsden Park have been saying that the bus connections are just a joke when it comes to getting them to the public transport that they need. We need to have that investment. We need to have it now. We don't need spin. We need substance to deliver better communities in our part of Western Sydney.
Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Chief Government Whip) (11:47): It's with great pleasure I rise today to speak on the government's appropriation bills and once again articulate the great story that this government has to tell about the delivery of funding, services and infrastructure to my electorate of Forde, all predicated on building a stronger economy for future generations. Importantly, what we're seeing in this budget is that the budget is being returned to surplus. But, at the same time, we're delivering the record investments into health and education that Australians need and want, all at the same time as lowering taxes and delivering record investment in economic and community infrastructure.

We've done this without having to resort to the sort of policies that those opposite articulated during the election campaign, where they were going to hit the economy with a sledgehammer of $387 billion of new taxes. But that's the difference between us and those opposite: they like to tax you; we like to back the Australian people. It is this coalition government that is backing the dreams and aspirations of Australians, and our budget continues to support the individuals, families, retirees, and small and family businesses that work hard each and every day to make Australia the economic envy of the world, resulting in 28 years or more of continued economic growth.

We seek to ensure that Australians will have a strong foundation to grow their families, their businesses and their communities. We'll continue to invest record amounts into health and education and into our local schools and universities to ensure teachers have the support they need to prepare our children for the future. Public, independent and Catholic schools across my electorate of Forde will also benefit from the coalition government's record $292 billion in education funding over the next decade. Locally, schools in Forde will benefit from some $30.2 million investment in the Local Schools Community Fund to help fund school activities and new equipment. The school community fund will support over 40 schools in my electorate of Forde to deliver projects that will support the learning outcomes of our students, projects like the PA system for deaf and hard-of-hearing students at Eagleby State School, air conditioning in classrooms, rebuilding the vegetable gardens at Edens Landing State School, or Shailer Park State School's recycling program. These are local projects for our local schools to deal with the local needs of that school community.

The government is also setting about getting things right for job creation and supporting businesses that want to take on apprentices. Our policies that we took to the election focused on ensuring that our business community has the incentive and the capacity to employ an additional 80,000 apprentices over the next five years. Far too often in this place we speak about the need for people to go to university, and I also see it in my community; we talk constantly about kids going to university. But we seem to forget the importance of trades in our community and in our economy. I look at my brother, who is a ceramic tiler, as was my father. I look at the electricians, plumbers and builders in our community. We all work in a wonderful building, but this building wouldn't have been built without trades, and those people who had those trades did apprenticeships. It is a critically important part of our economy, and we should never underappreciate the importance of skills and trades in building the buildings, the factories and the things that we need to continue building our economy. Yes, university education is important, but our trades are critically important because they build the things that the graduates of our universities work out of.

I'd also like to reflect on the strong track record that the government have in delivering for health in my electorate of Forde through our local hospitals, despite the constant mistruths perpetuated by those opposite during the election campaign. We have delivered a record 65 per cent increase in funding to the Logan Hospital and we will work with the state government to deliver on the new $33.4 million urgent specialist care centre to ensure residents of Logan have access to world-class hospital care. On the Gold Coast, the residents are also benefitting from the coalition government's record investment in health and hospitals, with funding for Gold Coast University Hospital doubling since Labor was last in government, an achievement those opposite could only ever dream of. It is only our record investment into health that will strengthen and ensure affordable access to quality health care for residents across Logan and the Gold Coast.

We are also ensuring the provision of local health services with the delivery of our 53 new MRI licences nationally, but particularly for my electorate of Forde for a new Medicare funded MRI licence for Qscan at upper Coomera. Upper Coomera is one of the fastest growing areas in Queensland, let alone in Australia, and these local health services will be extremely well received. We are always looking to ensure that the residents of the electorate, not only in the Logan part but also in the northern Gold Coast, have access to those services they need.

Additionally, we're committed to guaranteeing mental health services across Australia by providing some $737 million over seven years to ensure people living with mental health receive the support they need. We are also reducing waiting lists for headspace and building more centres to support young people, again especially for those in the northern Gold Coast who will benefit from a local headspace centre. I would like to give a shout-out to the team at headspace in Meadowbrook for the wonderful work that they do. In the lead-up to the election campaign,
we made a number of additional funding commitments to headspace at Meadowbrook to continue the service they currently provide.

Because we on this side have worked hard over previous parliaments to ensure the government is in a strong financial position, we have been able to deliver tax cuts for hardworking Australians. In my electorate alone, over 73,000 people have started to benefit from those tax cuts, which were passed in the first sitting week of parliament. At the same time, despite the opposition from those opposite, we have sought to ensure that multinationals in our country pay their fair share of tax. The package that we passed in 2016 has resulted in an additional $13.1 billion of tax revenue by ensuring that multinationals pay their fair share. Why is this important? Because it allows us as a government to ensure that households across Logan and the Gold Coast will have the services they require through this extra tax revenue.

Importantly, too, we have a large veterans community across the electorate, and our putting veterans and their families first program, which is investing $278 million towards improving the wellbeing of veterans and their families by providing early access to services and simplified access to treatment, will greatly improve the lives of our veterans' community. You're never left wondering what David Draper and the whole team at the Beenleigh RSL think of various things that are going on when you go down for Diggers Day, but they're a great bunch of guys.

We'll also support the environment by taking responsible action on a changing climate while maintaining a focus on lower energy prices, with older Australians benefitting from this budget with a record funding of $21.6 billion—representing an increase of more than 50 per cent since 2013-14. As we can see, there are a range of measures that we've taken in this budget to support a broad cross-section of our community across my electorate of Forde. I'm looking forward to my annual Forde Seniors Expo, in September. I'm looking forward to catching up with more than 400 constituents who normally come along to that. We'll have a great day, with a great range of services and exhibitors that provide services to the seniors in our community.

We're also looking to ensure that we continue to protect our borders, and that the policies and processes we've put in place ensure that the people who have come to this country are the people that we feel confident about and that we know are going to continue to contribute to and build our economy and our society. We have a rich tradition of migrants in this country. My family were migrants in the mid-sixties. In Logan, I represent a community that has people from more than 216 different nationalities and cultures. It's the rich tapestry of those migrants that make our communities such a wonderful place to live in.

Other great community organisations in my electorate are the sporting clubs. Through major investments across a range of sporting clubs in my electorate, we're looking to reduce the barriers to women participating in sport. We're providing nearly $600,000 to Ormeau Shearers Rugby League Club and $600,000 to Logan Lightning Football Club to upgrade their change rooms to encourage more women into their sports. I know at Logan Lightning Football Club, with their women's national premier league team, how important those new facilities will be—equally as important to the successful women's program at Ormeau Shearers Rugby League Club.

We are also seeking to restore trust in the Australian financial services system by ensuring consumer protection by strengthening the regulators and increasing accountability. We've committed to taking action on all 76 recommendations from the banking royal commission. It is this coalition government that is continuing to deliver for the Australian community, but again, and as I've said a number of times, it's without raising taxes, while ensuring that we provide the necessary services that Australians expect.

One of the opportunities we have in this place is to touch on local issues that concern our local communities. In that respect, I want to particularly touch on an issue facing the Eagleby community at present, and that is a proposal by the Queensland state Labor government for the Coomera Connector—in particular, the third stage that surrounds Eagleby; the current northern alignment that will greatly affect the Eagleby community. This is a community that's rich in history, having been first settled in the 1860s. Through the hasty gazettal of that third stage without any community consultation, we have seen an enormous degree of community concern. This proposal will pass very close to existing residential properties, schools and a retirement village. It will also pass through some very productive farmland. There have been no community consultations to this point.

I would like to particularly thank the work of the Eagleby Community and Wetlands Group for the work that they are doing to bring this issue to public notice. This group of concerned residents have stood by each other to advocate and be a voice for their community, and I wish to commend the members for the terrific work they are doing to raise awareness of this project. The members are all volunteers, and I'd like to recognise them in this House today. Gerowyn Jensen does a terrific job with social media, John Larkin is busy looking into the environmental impacts, Rob Carter is looking into the social impacts and legal obligations of the state government, Robert Livingstone is researching the alternative routes, and Marilyn Goodwin is responsible for
media engagement. They are an asset to our community, and I will continue to support them in their endeavours to see the route for the northern part of the Coomera Connector changed to minimise the impacts on the Eagleby community.

I urge the state government to ensure that proper community consultation processes are in place. It is important to recognise the impacts this road will have on Indigenous heritage and on the natural heritage of the Eagleby Wetlands, which are world-renowned for migratory bird breeding and transitory visits. It is incredibly important that we get this project right because it is going to have a tremendous impact on the Eagleby community if it's not done properly. I call on the state government to ensure they do the community consultation properly.

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (12:02): Speaking on Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2019-2020, Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2019-2020 and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2019-2020, I would like to start by saying that the HILDA survey yesterday adds to the wealth of evidence that we've had in recent years that will dispel the myth that Liberal governments are good economic managers. I know this will generate a crisis of identity over there on the other side, because, if they're not good economic managers, then what's the point of them? Every election they peddle this falsehood about their economic credentials. They go out there beating their breasts about what good economic managers they are and what a strong economy they preside over, despite the wealth of evidence to the contrary. They've been peddling it for so long they actually believe it.

HILDA, the household income survey that came out yesterday, is for a period of over 10 years. It wasn't a fly-by-night survey; this is a very comprehensive survey of 17,000 Australians. What it found was that people are actually earning less now than in 2013, when this government came to office. Think about that: after six years of being told what great economic managers they are, Australians have less money in their pockets to spend than they did when the government came to office. What an absolute indictment of their economic record in government. There were two increases of disposable income in the survey period. Do you know what? They were under the former Labor government. The only meaningful increases in disposable income over the period of this HILDA survey—more than $4,000 in a single year in 2009, and another increase in 2012—were under Labor governments. Those opposite will talk about their economic credentials and say what great economic managers they are, but the facts are that Australians do better under Labor governments.

There have been 28 years of economic growth. It is unparalleled in modern world history. We've not had a recession in this country—knock on wood—for 28 years. As we know, the genesis of that was in the Hawke-Keating years—another great reforming Labor government. What have we had for the past six years? Six years of treading water—either doing nothing or going backwards. That's the legacy of this government. It is probably worse than the legacy of the Fraser government back in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when nothing happened. The HILDA data shows that people are getting poorer in this country under the Liberals. We've just had the election result. We acknowledge the election result. Of course we live by it and we are disappointed in the result. Australians had their say and they decided to return this government, but we will spend every day for the next three years reminding this government that they need to do a better job managing this economy, because the job they've done for the past six years has been absolutely appalling.

Let's look at some of the data about the economy. This is a report card on the past six years. Economic growth is the slowest it's been for the 10 years since the GFC. Those opposite like to pretend the GFC never happened, like it was some bad dream, like a Dallas episode. Just forget it ever happened. The GFC was real. It absolutely smashed economies all around the world. They were smashed by the GFC, but it was a Labor government here in Australia—with partnership from business, it must be said—that saved this country from going into recession. Labor, in partnership with business, stopped this country going into recession. People were kept in their jobs to prevent mass unemployment and the terrible results that can occur from mass unemployment.

What we've had since then, of course, is relatively good economic times. Things have been bouncing along. What we've seen over the last years since the GFC is that our international competitors—the US, the UK, Europe, Asia—have all been barrelling along quite nicely. Their growth is going up and their unemployment is coming down. But six years of this mob opposite, and it is just absolutely flattlining. Australia is flattlining under the Liberals.

Here is another indicator: the national economy under the Liberals is falling from the eighth-fastest-growing economy in the OECD to 20th today. We have fallen 12 spots. Where is the justification for this? Those opposite will say what great economic managers they are, but they've dropped 12 spots. We are now in the longest per capita recession since 1982. Wages growth has been stuck on or around record lows under the Liberals. There is weak consumption. Productivity has actually fallen for four consecutive quarters. I don't believe that the current Treasurer, who is in love with his own reflection, has seen one-quarter of productivity growth under his so-called economic leadership. Household spending is weak. Unemployment's up. I think the national unemployment rate is around 5.2 per cent, but in Tasmania it's 6.7 per cent. There is 6.7 per cent unemployment in Tasmania under six
years of Liberal government in Tasmania and six years of Liberal government in Canberra. Youth unemployment nationally is 12 per cent, more than double the national average. As we know, in regions, certainly in regions in my electorate, youth unemployment is sometimes even double that.

The cash rate is just one per cent. Anybody with a mortgage is not going to complain too much about low interest rates—let's be clear about that—but pensioners who rely on income from deeming rates rely on higher interest. The signal of low interest is that the economy has flatlined. It needs a boost. Interest rates can't go any lower. What is this government going to do about supercharging the economy and getting it going? They've done nothing for six years. Whatever they've been doing for the last six years hasn't worked. They need to try something else.

So we've got all these failures. All this data is about the macro economy. As for the budget figures, they've doubled net debt. They went into the 2013 election talking about a budget emergency. In six years they've doubled net debt. They are the only government in Australian history to have a gross debt of over half a trillion dollars, yet they would like us to believe that they are the economic wunderkinds of the world. They believe their own hype on the economy, but they just can't be believed.

Not only are they not good economic managers, they are poor stewards of society in general, particularly of those elements of society designed to protect the most vulnerable: health, fail; education, fail; aged care, fail. They talk a lot about regional development, but it's a fail. Nowhere are this government's failures on the economy, health, education, aged care and regional development starker than in my home state of Tasmania. In Tasmania and nationally, unemployment is the worst that it's been for a long time. The unemployment rate in Tasmania is 6.7 per cent; the national average is 5.2 per cent. The participation rate in Tasmania is 60.2 per cent; the national average is 66 per cent. Compare those to our closest neighbour, the Labor-led state of Victoria, where the unemployment rate is just 4.7 per cent—better than the national average—and the participation rate is 66 per cent. So whenever the Treasurer gets to his feet in this place to boast about his credentials and whatever economic record he's talking about, he can thank Dan Andrews in Victoria and Anastasia Palaszczuk in Queensland, because they are holding him up. It is their economic prowess and their economic results that are holding up the national average. The member for Kooyong has got nothing to boast about. He should be thanking every day the Labor premiers of Victoria and Queensland and, indeed, of Western Australia for the national figures, because the Liberal states are certainly not holding up their end of the bargain.

The economy in Tasmania is so bad that the state Liberal government is preparing to slash $450 million in expenditure and has warned that the health system will not be spared. This is a health system that after six years of Liberal government is on its knees, with people dying—literally, not figuratively—in emergency waiting rooms, with ambulances ramped for hours and with family members of patients being asked to drive the ambulance so the single crew member can try to keep their loved one alive in the back of the ambulance on the way to hospital. That's how bad it is in my state of Tasmania. They're not crewing the ambulances enough, and family members are behind the wheel of the ambulance. It's just farcical. This is a health system where nurses and doctors are staggering on their feet, exhausted from the overtime, and the government stubbornly fails to employ enough staff on wards. They always promise 'more nurses are coming, we promise'. They're 'gunna, gunna, gunna'. They're the 'gunna' government: they're gunna do this, gunna do that. The health system in Tasmania has the worst code 1 ambulance response time in the country, with response times for category 1 patients at 34.4 minutes. We also have the slowest triple 0 answering times in the country. And this is the health system that the Tasmanian Liberal Treasurer says can afford more cuts.

In Tasmania we have people sleeping under bridges in the depths of winter because there's nowhere else to stay. Government failures to plan for and provide affordable housing are markedly changing the face of homelessness not just in Tasmania but nationally. Homelessness is no longer the preserve of people at the margins—the mentally ill or those suffering from addiction. People with jobs, with kids in school, are sleeping in cars and in parks because they can't find somewhere affordable to live. People who should be enjoying a life of retirement are finding themselves in poverty and out on the streets. And increasingly they are women. The ABS reports there has been a 42 per cent increase in people over 65 paying unaffordable rent since 2011. Do you know what happens when rent's unaffordable? You lose your home. The 2018 Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot reveals that less than two per cent of available housing stock is affordable for a single person on an age pension. Women over 55 are the fastest growing category of people experiencing homelessness in Australia. People live from pay cheque to pay cheque these days. There's not much capacity in saved income. We know that to be true. Any of us who lives from pay cheque to pay cheque, who doesn't have savings in the bank or a good deal of equity in property is but one or two pay cheques away from being on the street ourselves. Anybody in this building who thinks they're on a good income and in a good job is one or two pay cheques away from that themselves. There but for the grace of God go we. I don't think that's the sort of society we should be living in.
There are more than 3,500 Tasmanians on the state's public housing list. Some of them have been there for years and have little prospect of getting off because there are people with more urgent needs who are always getting in front of them. Where is the political will and the money to fix this? The state government's response to this crisis has been to offer $5 million to expand crisis accommodation. That will help 70 people. There are 3,500 people on the housing list, and they government are going to help 70. It's not enough. It's not nearly enough. Temporary crisis accommodation for 70 people does not fix a housing crisis. It's not even a bandaid.

Let's talk about infrastructure in Tasmania. There's the airport roundabout on the border of my electorate and the electorate of the member for Franklin that was promised in 2016. They haven't turned the first sod. It hasn't happened. It's not happening. Where is it? Just this morning, the Kentish Council in my electorate was saying that they've been left hanging for the $3.4 million irrigation rollout that they were promised by this government in the election. There's been no word from the government about the $3.4 million for their vitally needed irrigation rollout. There's the Bridgewater Bridge, which I asked the Deputy Prime Minister about. When will that start? He doesn't know. This is a government that governs by slogans and spin. 'Have a go, you'll get a go.' 'Whose side are you on?' 'How good is it?' It's laughable. Those opposite are seeking to govern by an advertising jingle, and little wonder when an ad man is in charge—a bloke who spits in your face and tells you it's raining. It's not good enough. I commend the bill to the Chamber.

Mr CONAGHAN (Cowper) (12:17): I rise today to speak to Appropriation Bill (No. 2) and the 2019-20 budget measures. This is being done without raising taxes. In fact, it is being done by lowering them. The 2019-20 budget is a strong budget. It's a building budget, and it's a budget that invests in our communities. More importantly, it's a surplus budget.

This Liberal-National government and the budget are focused on building a stronger economy to lower taxes and help hardworking Australians keep more of their own money, to provide opportunities to get a head start or start a business, to guarantee essential services and provide better health outcomes, and to invest in our communities—communities like Cowper and, importantly for me, our regional communities. There is infrastructure, development and support that will unlock the opportunities and the potential of our regions.

This budget will deliver $158 billion in tax relief immediately by doubling the low- and middle-income tax offset through long-term structural reform for all taxpayers earning between $45,000 and $200,000. That will mean that 94 per cent of taxpayers will pay no more than 30c in the dollar. In my electorate of Cowper, over 57,000 taxpayers will benefit from this tax relief. Many of the more than 21,000 people eligible for the full tax offset of $1,080 have already benefited. For those who are on modest incomes and a tight budget, this tax relief is so important—$1,080 for an individual or $2,160 for a couple is a significant contribution to the household budget and is great news for individuals and families to spend on their own priorities.

In particular, it's important for regional communities where money is spent in the local community, in retail or building services, and will support our local economy, local businesses and employees into the future—businesses like Ball's Butchery in Kempsey, Macksville Mowers & Auto Centre in Macksville, and the aptly named Moorebeer Brewing Co. in Port Macquarie. Going forward, these budget measures will mean that hardworking Australians who are looking to earn a little more, take an extra shift or pursue a promotion can do so without the government taking more of their hard-earned pay. I am pleased to be part of a coalition government that is delivering on its promise to the Australian people.

The budget will also deliver for our small and medium sized businesses. They are the engine room of the Australian economy and the backbone of the regional communities. This government's economic plan means lower taxes for over three million small and medium businesses, helping them invest, grow, employ more people and give back to the communities. There are nearly 19,000 businesses in my electorate of Cowper who will benefit from the government's instant asset write-off scheme, which enables businesses to invest in machinery and equipment up to the value of $30,000—businesses like Eagle Copters in Coffs Harbour, another decentralisation success from Queensland, employing a number of people in the Coffs Harbour area and growing significantly.

The budget will also provide an additional $60 million to support small and medium sized businesses to access overseas markets through the Export Market Development Grants scheme. This scheme provides opportunity and support for our regional businesses to market, promote and export products and services, and to build business and create local jobs. I am proud that this government's economic management means that this funding can be restored to the scheme, providing opportunities for a number of small and medium businesses across the mid North Coast to enter the export market or expand into new markets.

I was recently in Japan on the Shinkansen, or the bullet train, and I was very happy to see that they were serving Cassegrain Wines. Cassegrain Wines come from Port Macquarie. They are a second-generation business and a classic example of how this government helps small and medium sized business into new markets. There is
also C2C, a clothing-manufacturing business in Port Macquarie, who recently supplied the uniforms and merchandise for the Netball World Cup.

Backing small and medium sized businesses is part of our plan for a stronger economy and stronger communities. People in our regional communities deserve all the opportunities for employment that our cities offer. I am pleased that this government has a plan for developing the skills of our workforce now and into the future. This budget provides a skills package that is so important for the people of Cowper.

Under our landmark skills package, up to 80,000 additional apprenticeships will be created over the next five years, in priority skill shortage areas, assisted by the new apprenticeship incentives. Youth unemployment will be targeted, with an offering of 400 scholarships in regional Australia, to the value of $8 million. This cannot be underestimated in Cowper, with 20.3 per cent youth unemployment. With this initiative by the government, along with our intended youth employment summit, we hope to address significantly this issue not just in Coffs Harbour but through the entirety of Cowper.

I stated earlier that this is a budget for all Australians, and I am proud to say that it is a budget for regional Australians. A key focus for the Nationals and this Morrison-McCormack government is our agenda to promote a stronger economy and better-paying jobs in regional Australia. My electorate is soon to benefit from this government’s decentralisation agenda, with the relocation of 50 positions from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority to a new regional headquarters in Coffs Harbour. This does not just mean 50 jobs. It means up to 50 families into the Cowper electorate, it means more kids going to schools in our area, it means shopping at family owned businesses and eating at locally owned restaurants, and it means using the sport and entertainment facilities, whereby all money is recycled back into the local economy to benefit regional growth and future stability.

This is also a budget for essential services. With a record investment of $104 billion in 2019-20 into patient-focused health initiatives, this investment will make medicines and services more accessible and affordable. It also strengthens primary care and mental health services and supports medical research. Medical funding will increase by $5.8 billion over the next four years. This is great news for my electorate, where the GP bulk-billing rate in Cowper is 90 per cent. Last year, over a million GP visits were bulk-billed in Cowper, 141,000 more than in Labor’s last year in government. This means that more patients will not have any out-of-pocket expenses when they visit their GP.

This budget also delivered increases to Medicare rebates and important medical diagnostic services, including ultrasound and X-ray imaging, to reduce costs for patients. The government will also invest $151.9 million to expand the number of fully Medicare eligible MRI machines, adding to the more than 50 newly funded units in the last 12 months. One of these is Highfields Imaging at Port Macquarie. I had the pleasure of attending the opening with my colleague who was instrumental in its planning, Dr David Gillespie, the member for Lyne. This is a comprehensive diagnostic imaging facility equipped with world-class technology, including ultrasound, high-end CT, digital X-ray and OPG, nuclear medicine and, importantly, PET, which is an enormous benefit for oncology patients undergoing treatment. The new Medical Benefits Schedule services for MRI breast screening will help diagnose an estimated 1,400 breast cancer patients. I’m pleased that these services will be able to be offered in my electorate.

The coalition is committed to supporting older Australians and focusing on delivering quality aged care. This coalition government has provided a budget which will see funding for aged care increased by $7 billion, up to $20.5 billion in 2019-20 and up to $25.4 billion in 2022-23. We are supporting older Australians who want to stay home for longer by providing an extra 10,000 home care packages, taking the number of packages from 60,000 in 2012-13 to over 157,000 in 2022-23. We’re also extending the Home Support Program, which provides access to home services like Meals on Wheels. In Port Macquarie alone, over 27 per cent of residents are over the age of 65. This figure is growing at 1.2 per cent per annum. In the next 10 years it is estimated it will be close to 40 per cent of residents over the age of 65 in Port Macquarie. This government has taken serious steps to providing compliance and quality services to cover those people. An additional $7.7 million will also be used to help ensure that the use of medication in residential aged care is appropriate and in line with best practice and community expectations.

A stronger economy is also delivering for our schools, with record funding for education. This budget delivers needs based funding for students, providing more support for rural and regional students and programs for literacy and numeracy. This budget will see $310 million in needs based funding provided through the Quality Schools Package. The 93 schools in my electorate of Cowper will see Commonwealth funding per student more than double over the next 10 years. Importantly, this funding is tied to reforms that will boost education outcomes for students, who are the future of our nation. This is the job of the Australian government, with the National School
Reform Agreement coming into effect in January this year to ensure our schooling provides access to high-quality education for all students.

This Australian government is investing $100 billion in infrastructure over the next 10 years in rolling programs to get Australians home sooner and safer. This includes an additional $23 billion of new funding to ease congestion, to better connect our regions, to improve safety on the roads and to meet our national freight needs. The Australian government is committed to improving road safety. This includes a major boost to the Black Spot Program, targeting safety issues on urban and regional roads, in addition to funding to the Roads to Recovery Program, which provides vital roads maintenance in local government areas. Since 2013, the government has committed over $33 billion in projects in New South Wales, including over $24 billion in New South Wales through the Infrastructure Investment Program. In the Cowper electorate, the Liberal-National coalition government has committed $971 million of the $1.2 billion project for the Coffs Harbour bypass. The residents of Coffs Harbour have patiently waited for the final case study and the environmental impact study for this project. I commend the government for its continued commitment to this project.

With the Local and State Government Road Safety Package, the coalition government has committed an additional $50 million per year to the Black Spot Program. Having in my time as a police officer in New South Wales attended serious and fatal accidents, I'm acutely aware of the significance of this initiative and funding, and, again, compliment this government on its commitment to road safety.

This is a budget that builds on the hard work and commitment of the coalition government during the past years and, most importantly, it provides economic security—(Time expired)

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (12:32): I rise today to speak on the appropriation bills and I appreciate the opportunity to speak today on a wide range of topics. I would like to start by thanking my electorate of Brand that covers the cities of Rockingham and Kwinana for once again electing me to the service of them as the federal member for Brand. It's an honour I take very seriously and I look forward to another three years of work in their service.

If I can reflect on the previous term starting in 2016—my first—some of the relationships I have formed and the friendships I have made with MPs and senators, many of whom have now retired or were ultimately unsuccessful at the last election. Politics is a tough business and it can be even tougher when, despite the best efforts, things don't go your way. But the voters decide on election day, and I will always respect the decision of our voters. Australian democracy is such a wonderful thing but, as members opposite know, it can be equally as heartbreaking, particularly in tight contests. In this light, I would like to acknowledge some of my friends and colleagues I was elected with on 2 July 2016 who did not return to this place this time around.

Susan Lamb, the former member for Longman, was a true warrior for her community in Longman. In one three-year term, she fought day in and day out for the interests of her electorate and for all Queenslanders. Susan chaired Labor's Australian jobs task force to call out the Turnbull-Morrison government on its lazy and uncaring approach to employment in Australia. In a time of rising insecure work and record levels of unemployment, Susan and other colleagues spoke with Australians around the country about their concerns. She worked hard every day in this place for hardworking Australians, and I thank her for the work she's done.

Justine Keay was the member for Braddon and, although she did not hold that seat in May, Justine remains a fierce advocate for the people of Braddon and for all Tasmanians. Justine was a wonderful colleague who served with great humour and also such passion for the causes she fought for. She also worked on Labor's Australian jobs task force as its secretary and held the Turnbull-Morrison government to account for failing to protect the penalty rates of over 700,000 workers and for failing to do anything about the stagnant wages growth in this country. In fact, as it happens, Susan, Justine and I, along with the member for Fremantle, shared the front of the Daily Telegraph once. Hopefully, that was my first and last time ever in that position. Susan, Justine and Josh fought hard in the by-election caused by the citizenship restrictions in the Constitution about a year ago. As we know, each of them won those by-elections, and I pay tribute to my friends Susan and Justine for their efforts in those by-elections. Those efforts were exhausting and placed extraordinary pressure on their personal and private lives.

Sadly, Ross Hart was not re-elected as the member for Bass. Ross was an active participant in one of the most important yet underrated and sometimes misunderstood parliamentary committees. I speak, of course, of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, chaired very ably in the 45th Parliament by Senator Dean Smith with his very able deputy chair, the member for Bruce, Julian Hill. I served on this committee with Ross and, despite the sometimes overwhelming amount of paperwork, Ross would consistently put insightful questions forward and would raise matters important to good public administration for the benefit of all Australians. He was another exceptional Labor advocate for the state of Tasmania. The former member for Bass was a good and hardworking colleague in this place, and I wish him all the best in the future.
I was also elected in 2016 with the former member for Lindsay, Emma Husar. Emma is a rare and exceptional woman who would always stand up for causes close to her heart and for vulnerable people whose plight it is important to bring to the attention of this parliament. Emma spoke often in this place and outside this place about the critical need for this nation to face up to the extraordinary tragedy of family and domestic violence, which kills, on average, one woman a week by a man who is their former or current partner. Emma was a good friend and colleague who refused to let her own personal experiences of domestic violence hold her hostage, instead speaking out and using her position in this place to highlight the terrible plight of many women and children in what, sadly, is a very violent Australia that is unable to protect its vulnerable from aggression, mental torture, harm, homelessness and death.

Cathy O'Toole was another extraordinary Queenslander who spoke out time and time again for her local communities in the electorate of Herbert. Cathy and I served together on Labor's First Nations caucus committee for three years. She was a tireless advocate for Indigenous Australians in Herbert and across Australia but especially on Palm Island. Very importantly, Cathy O'Toole called out the excuses and lies of that rip-off merchant Clive Palmer. When Clive Palmer dodged his responsibilities to his workers in Queensland and left them without pay while he laughed it off and kept showing off about his millions and billions, Cathy fought for Queensland workers and held him to account in this parliament and, indeed, in the courtyards of this parliament. I'll never forget it. I was sitting in my office; I had the news going on in the background and I heard Cathy's very distinctive voice coming over television, demanding of Mr Palmer, whilst holding a media conference in a courtyard here, why he wasn't paying the Queensland workers that he had sacked through the closure of the nickel refinery and why he was allowed to get away with this. I pay tribute to the former member for Herbert for her excellent work in standing up for workers of Queensland.

I hope the current member for Herbert advocates just as strongly, but he may be swimming against the tide, because the Liberal Party failed time and time again to call out the rotten, divisive and racist fearmongering lies of Mr Palmer during the recent campaign. He is anti-Queensland and he's manifestly anti-Western Australian. He ran misleading attacks on our biggest trading partner and everyone in this place needs to call out Clive Palmer for the charlatan that he is.

I would like to thank some of the amazing Labor candidates we had in Western Australia in the 2019 election campaign. Even though we will not see them here at present, I have no doubt this is not the last time we will hear from these very good and hardworking people. In Canning we had the wonderful Melissa Teede, a strong advocate for regional funding and her community at large. It was a pleasure to campaign with Melissa across the vast electorate of Canning. Everywhere we went—in schools, down at the local foreshore of Mandurah and at the Peel Health Campus—everyone knew Melissa and everyone was grateful for her keen advocacy. Like most of Western Australia, Canning and its people have long been taken for granted by the Western Australia Liberal Party. Melissa's commitment to this region and the community at large. It was a pleasure to campaign with Melissa across the vast electorate of Canning. Everywhere we went—in schools, down at the local foreshore of Mandurah and at the Peel Health Campus—everyone knew Melissa and everyone was grateful for her keen advocacy. Like most of Western Australia, Canning and its people have long been taken for granted by the Western Australia Liberal Party. Melissa's commitment to this region and the community at large. It was a pleasure to campaign with Melissa across the vast electorate of Canning. Everywhere we went—in schools, down at the local foreshore of Mandurah and at the Peel Health Campus—everyone knew Melissa and everyone was grateful for her keen advocacy. Like most of Western Australia, Canning and its people have long been taken for granted by the Western Australia Liberal Party. Melissa's commitment to this region and the community at large.

In Stirling, Melita Markey ran a fabulous campaign against a tough opposition. Melita is a vibrant and dedicated person who works hard to achieve social justice in her community. She remains a strong advocate for victims of asbestos-related diseases. I know we'll see Melita out in the public forum time and time again.

In Pearce, Kim Travers and her team knocked on just about every door. They pushed hard on infrastructure spending in the outer suburbs of Perth, particularly the Ellenbrook rail line. This is another community that was ignored by the former Liberal state government and had their promised rail line cancelled. This is just one example of how the Liberal Party of WA has taken the people of Pearce for granted in recent times. Kim Travers has assured that this will not happen again.

In Hasluck, the long-serving local government counsellor James Martin ran a strong campaign to advocate for working people right across Perth's eastern suburbs. Hasluck is a seat that has changed hands many times over the years, and it's always a hard fight to win. James and his team did exceptional work across the seat of Hasluck. I particularly want to mention his campaign manager, Brendan McShanag, for all the help he gave James in supporting him through that campaign.

In Swan, Hannah Beazley worked hard to promote the interests of small businesses and defend the Australian public health system that did no less than save her life. Her commitment to public policy in WA and Australia will endure, and she'll continue to make an exceptional contribution to the community. Swan is yet another seat the Liberals have taken for granted for a long time in Western Australia. Hannah and her team, alongside the larger WA Labor team, have changed that. I really want to thank Hannah and her family for all their efforts over that campaign. It was a long campaign for Hannah and all the other Western Australian candidates.

I want to thank again these candidates and recognise their sacrifices and those of their family and friends. Putting yourself in the public eye is a very difficult thing. It's challenging to the individuals and their family and
friends. The campaign is unrelenting and the media and public scrutiny can be entirely overwhelming. All of our candidates stood up, were strong and tried their very exceptional best. I'm sure we'll see many of these candidates in the public eye again making some important contributions to public life.

I'm sad that these fine Western Australians will not be joining me in this place, but there are many new Labor faces that will join the federal parliamentary Labor Party: Josh Burns, the member for Macnamara; Libby Coker, the member for Corangamite; Senator Nita Green of Queensland; Daniel Mulino, the member for Fraser; Peta Murphy, the member for Dunkley; Alicia Payne, the member for Canberra; Fiona Phillips, the member for Gilmore; Senator Tony Sheldon of New South Wales; Senator Marielle Smith of South Australia; Kate Thwaites, the member for Jagajaga; Senator Jess Walsh of Victoria; Anika Wells, the member for Lilley; and David Smith, the member for Bean, who has joined us from the other place. I wish all of them the very best. I encourage all MPs from all sides to open their doors to new MPs from across all sides of this place. As always, we retain the highest standards of respect that were shown to all of us when we were new.

I haven't heard all of the first speeches. I don't know whether the member for Bean has a second first speech coming up. The speeches we've heard from our new parliamentarians have been exceptional. I observe that many of the new Labor MPs have paid a great deal of attention to the great effects of climate change and how we need to address and take action to reverse those effects, and show enthusiasm and willingness to commit to recognising Indigenous Australians and fighting for a voice for them in this parliament.

I also want to briefly acknowledge some retiring MPs from the other side. While we may have disagreed one or 700 times, their commitment to public service cannot go unnoticed. The former member for Curtin, the Hon. Julie Bishop, served for 20 years in this place. The former Minister for Foreign Affairs, her commitment to Australia is unquestionable, and never more seen than in the downing of MH17. I acknowledge the former member for Stirling, the Hon. Michael Keenan, who served for 14 years. He is another Western Australian and served as the Minister for Justice in this place.

I acknowledge a former member from South Australia, the member for Sturt, Christopher Pyne, who served for an eternity in this place—well, 26 years! He was the former Leader of the House, and he clearly did a magnificent job in that role. It's a rare role to get, and a very difficult and challenging role. Of course, he did it with great humour. It was sometimes hard to keep a straight face during his work in that. I acknowledge his great work in many ministries, but particularly as Minister for Defence more recently.

I'd like to acknowledge the former member for Gilmore Ann Sudmalis, who served for five years. Her commitment to her constituents as a local member in a tough marginal seat is to be commended, and I really want to recognise Ann's work. She finalised the Report on the impact of inauthentic art and craft in the style of First Nations peoples by the Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs. Ann, along with other members of the committee, did a terrific job finalising this report, and it will serve as a testament to her effort in this place in the committee system. I really hope members and senators across the board have a read of this report. There are good things that our lawmakers in this place can do to protect the visual and other evidence of a 65,000-year-old culture in this place. Best of luck to Ann for her future. We travelled together too, and we had good times; she's great company.

There are, of course, former members from the Labor side that retired at the last election. I won't reflect on them now—how could I possibly in just over a minute—but, at the next opportunity I have, I'll reflect on the legacy of the great Wayne Swan and the former member for Jagajaga, Jenny Macklin. In the meantime, I really want to acknowledge all those who stood for parliament in the last election—all those, across both sides of the House, who stood and fought and lost. It's a very challenging thing to do. It's taxing on one's family and friends, and some members of the community find it taxing as well. I acknowledge that and I want to congratulate each of you on stepping forward, putting yourself in the public eye and taking that risk. It doesn't always pay off, but I hope all candidates that weren't successful and who have since retired will continue to contribute to our communities and participate widely in public forums.

Ms FLINT (Boothby—Government Whip) (12:46): I'm delighted to speak on Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2019-20 and cognate bills today because they really go to the heart of what we are doing as the Morrison government to deliver on our plan for a strong economy. There are a range of elements to our plan for a strong economy, which we took to the Australian people at the May 2019 election, and they're all really important things that we will be doing for the Australian people.

First of all, of course, is that we will be creating another 1.25 million jobs over the next five years. We have a really proud record on jobs creation throughout the terms that the coalition has been in government. We saw 1.3 million jobs created from September 2013 when we came to government. We know there's nothing more important than making sure every single Australian who wants a job can get a job and that every single Australian
who wants to have a go will get a go. That's why we're firmly focused on making sure that we are creating as many jobs as possible for hardworking Australians.

We also said that we would maintain our budget surpluses and pay down the debt that was left to us by the previous Labor governments. And we're certainly getting on with delivering our budget surpluses. We will deliver the first budget surplus in more than a decade. This is something that I'm incredibly proud to be a part of, and I just want to congratulate the Prime Minister and the Treasurer and all of our ministers for their hard work and for making this possible. As we announced in the federal budget this year, in 2019-20 we will deliver a surplus of $7.1 billion; in 2020-21, a surplus of $11 billion; in 2021-22, a surplus of $17.8 billion; and, in 2022-23, a surplus of $9.2 billion. This is all while doing a range of really important things for the community, like delivering tax cuts and guaranteeing investment in essential services like health and education, in our environment and in roads and rail infrastructure. We'll also, as always, make sure we keep Australians safe, because there is nothing more important than keeping our community safe and secure.

In terms of tax cuts, it was really exciting to come back to the federal parliament after the election and see that the first thing that we were doing—and the first thing that we delivered—were tax cuts for millions of Australians. These cuts are putting money back into the pockets of hardworking Australians. As I often say—I say it all the time in my community: I'm sure people are getting sick of hearing it, or maybe not—the money that hardworking Australians earn is their money, and I want them to keep as much of that as possible, because, at the end of the day, people are best placed to spend their money on what they want to spend money on. I would much prefer that people spent their hard-earned money than have governments spending it for them. That's why I am absolutely delighted that more than 10 million Australians will receive immediate tax relief thanks to the tax package that we passed as soon as we came back to the federal parliament. We know that millions of Australians have already put in their tax returns and are benefiting from this. Low- and middle-income earners with incomes up to $126,000 will receive up to $1,080 per individual, and dual-income couples will receive $2,160. This is all about, as I said, enabling hardworking Australians to keep more of their money that they have earned.

We're also making sure, through the tax reform that we put through, that we're delivering longer-term reform so that eventually 94 per cent of Australians will pay no more than 30c in the dollar. This was a really important part of our tax relief package, because the issue of bracket creep hasn't been addressed for some time. Again, we want to make sure that hardworking Australians are keeping as much of their money as possible.

In the last parliament, we delivered tax cuts for small and medium businesses. My electorate of Boothby is home to so many wonderful small and medium and family businesses. I'm delighted that we have already lowered the tax rate for these businesses to 27.5 per cent. We have fast-tracked tax cuts for small and medium businesses so that, by the year 2021-22, small and medium businesses will be paying only 25c in the dollar. That's what we have done so that we are supporting our small and medium and family businesses and making sure that they can reinvest in their businesses and can employ other hardworking Australians.

In terms of education, we are doing very good work in preschools, schools, universities and vocational education and training. When it comes to vocational education and training, we're investing over $525 million to deliver the skills and training that we need to help more Australians get a job in their chosen field. I'm particularly excited that, in my home state of South Australia, we're going to see so many defence jobs coming online. We're going to be training a lot of people so that they can take advantage of the offshore patrol vessel work that is coming online, as well as the work on the future frigates and submarines. We know we need to train up and grow a skilled workforce so that they can get a job in these areas, which will be wonderful.

In terms of our schools funding, I'm delighted that public schools in my electorate will receive, on average, a 60 per cent funding increase per student over the next 10 years. That's really important, as well as the funding we are providing to preschool, early childhood education, and universities.

Hospitals and health care are another thing that we are able to increase our funding for, thanks to our plan for a strong economy. We have increased Medicare funding. We have increased hospital funding. There is record bulk-billing. An issue that resonates so much with my local community, and probably with every single person around the nation, is that we have invested more than $10 million listing new medicines on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. I think it's well over 2,000 new or amended medicines that we have managed to now list. These are medications that might cost people tens of thousands of dollars if they had to fund them themselves, and, in so many instances, they are life-saving or life-changing medications. So I'm incredibly proud of the fact that the Morrison coalition government has managed to balance the books so we can afford to invest in the PBS and make sure that people are getting the medication and the help that they need in their moment of crisis and, often, distress.
In my local electorate, I'm incredibly proud that I worked with the Minister for Health to secure federal government funding to reactivate the Repat hospital site. The Repat hospital is a much-loved community hospital. It was established to look after and care for war veterans and it operated for just over 70 years, until the state Labor government made the very devastating decision to shut it down during their last term in government in South Australia. This caused enormous distress to my local veteran community and to my community more broadly, because so many people received treatment at the Repat. It was—and is—a place where people felt very safe. They felt loved and they felt cared for. So I worked very hard with the Minister for Health, and I'd like to acknowledge and thank him today for supporting me to secure funding to help the South Australian Marshall Liberal government reactivate the Repat hospital.

Federally, we have committed $30 million to establish a brand new severe brain and spinal injury unit. This will be a wonderful and very important addition to the treatment that's available to people who have had catastrophic brain or spinal injuries. This will be in a place that is easy to access, that's quite central for people across metropolitan Adelaide to access, and, as I said, the Repat precinct is a place where people have always felt safe and always felt very well cared for. I know that there are a lot of former Repat staff who are really keen to come back and work at the site, which is really exciting.

Federally, we are also placing one of the specialist dementia care units on the site as well, and the state Liberal government, the Marshall Liberal government, is going to establish a best-practice dementia care precinct on the Repat site, which is really important for our community, especially in light of the devastating Oakden scandal, which, unfortunately, happened under the previous state Labor government. People who most needed our care, our most vulnerable citizens, were not being looked after and cared for as they should have been. So, I'm just delighted that we will be putting these people, some of our most vulnerable citizens, in a place where they will again feel safe and secure and will never, ever again be out of sight or out of mind for the community or for governments.

In addition to that, we're also investing $5 million to establish a residential eating disorder facility at the Repat site and on the precinct as well. Again, these are people who are vulnerable and who need specialist care and attention in a place that is safe, caring and loving.

On top of that, we are making sure that we are bringing our veterans back to the site. Of course, some of them may need the services that we are adding to the site as well. But we are making sure that not only will we have an offering for our veteran communities—they can use the hydrotherapy pool and the new gymnasium facilities and also the new cafe that will go in there—but we are providing $5 million in funding to establish a Veterans Wellbeing Centre. This will bring more people into the site. It will mean that veterans who are using the hydrotherapy pool or the gym, or both, and are then having a coffee with their friends—which is exactly what used to happen on the Repat site before the Labor government shut it down—will also be able to access advocacy and other wellbeing services when they're on the site. So it's going to be, very much, a hub, and it's going to be a place where there will be a lot of people coming and going to get the care that they need. It will provide a really exciting and vibrant focus for my community, and everyone is incredibly excited about what's going on there.

The other day in this chamber I spoke about the infrastructure investments that are going on around my electorate. As I regularly say here and when I'm at home, the Morrison Liberal government is all about busting congestion in my community, and we've seen so many great projects already off the ground—some of them actually concluding. The Oaklands crossing grade separation, for which I managed to secure the first-ever funding commitment from a state or federal government when I was the candidate for Boothby and then increased that funding when I got elected, is pretty much entirely complete. There is now a train underpass, and this 40-year-old problem for my community is fixed. We've just seen the Flinders Link rail project commence. That's a $125 million investment that will attract something in the order of $1.5 billion of university and private sector investment to build new health infrastructure, new student accommodation and a retail precinct. It's really exciting that our small investment has leveraged very large additional investments that will mean more permanent jobs for our local community, will bring more students into the area and will also help out the hospital nearby.

The Darlington upgrade is well and truly underway. The state government has come on board to partner with us to deliver the Hove rail crossing grade separation, which is another really important issue. We've now committed something like $2.7 billion to the North-South Corridor. We will be fixing the Fullarton Road-Cross Road intersection, the Springbank Road-Goodwood Road-Daws Road intersection and also one of my local roads, the James Road-Old Belair Road intersection. So there are a lot of very exciting things going on in that space.

Our plan for a strong economy also means that we can afford to do the very best by our environment, both in a global sense and in a local sense. We've got a lot of really exciting programs that will support very important local environmental works. We are also investing $3.5 billion in our climate solutions package to reduce emissions.
across a range of industries. As I have said regularly, and I will continue to say: we will meet our target to reduce Australia's emissions to 26 per cent on 2005 levels by 2030.

Sitting suspended from 13:02 to 16:00

Ms STANLEY (Werriwa—Opposition Whip) (16:00): I rise to make my contribution to the debate on Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2019-20, Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2019-20 and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2019-2020 and to add the voice of my community, which would have liked to have seen much more support for the needs of the Werriwa constituents. The opposition will, of course, support these bills, but there are remaining concerns about what effect they will have to assist the economy and the constituents of the electorate that I represent.

The government, which is now in its seventh year, is presiding over an economy which is floundering, and they pretend there is no problem. The numbers show us that economic growth is at the slowest it's been since the GFC, with the national economy falling from the eighth fastest in the OECD in 2013 to 20th today. Australia is now in the longest per capita recession since 1982. Wages growth has been stuck at or around record lows for the last few years under this government and, with the further reduction of penalty rates on 1 July this year, there is little money left in people's pockets to do anything about spending and stimulating the economy, and that is what seems to be so desperately needed. The Prime Minister's and the Treasurer's fall back is blaming the Labor Party. It is time they realised it is they, the government, who need to provide the guidance and improve the situation.

We have weak consumption, and productivity growth has fallen in the last four quarters in terms of GDP per hours of work. Household spending is weak, slowing further from last year and contributing just 0.1 percentage point to growth. Unemployment and, more importantly, underemployment remain high too. I'm constantly contacted by constituents seeking support who are over 55 and have little prospect for work. The job network providers are little support, invariably sending people with disabilities or a lack of skills to totally inappropriate jobs and further demoralising and depressing them. These people want to work. They're happy to contribute, and certainly, with the low rate of Newstart, they would prefer to find a job. But barriers to them finding employment are so great, and I can see nothing in the government's current agenda that will change their terrible situations any time soon.

The latest ABS statistics for the month of June 2019 show 711,500 Australians are unemployed and more than a million are underemployed or seeking further hours at work. There are more than 1.8 million Australians looking for work or more work and unable to find it, and that is a tragedy. Under the Liberals, youth unemployment remains more than double of the national average, having increased to 12 per cent. That means more than 266,300 young Australians are unemployed.

These bills do not address the things that matter to the people who live in my community. Existing customers of the NBN continue to receive substandard service, and future customers face delays with an out-of-date copper network unable to provide the speeds that will improve Australia's standing in the world. It is unacceptable that Australia is now ranked 57th in the world in internet speed. At the end of 2015, Australia was ranked 48th; in mid-2012, 39th. It is the wrong way to go. This atrocious position puts the country behind Trinidad and Tobago, Panama and Moldova, and it's just a hair's breadth faster than Kosovo.

While it may seem cliche, our older Australians made Australia what it is today. They fought wars or sent their sons overseas to fight, they were frugal during recessions and poor economic times and they worked hard, but as the aged-care waiting list continues to climb they are not finding any comfort in their later years. Disproportionately on these waiting lists are women.

It is better for a person's wellbeing that they be able to stay in their own home, but it is also better for our society overall. It's disappointing that this is not being addressed. Centrelink is still letting my age pension constituents down. On several occasions we've been asked to assist when constituents' patience has run out. I don't blame them for that—their patience is quite amazing. Many of them have been waiting for over six months and up to 12 months for age pension applications to be processed. That is unacceptable. It further concerns me that these bills will see the surplus that is talked about by the government come from vulnerable people waiting for support promised by a properly funded and functioning National Disability Insurance Scheme. Many of my colleagues and I have detailed endlessly the frustration of our constituents when waiting for approvals, reviews and information from the NDIS. To understaff the scheme in order to prop up a bottom line is not acceptable—it's not fair. Worse, it's being done at the expense of my constituents and their families. Constituents are constantly contacting my office about these issues. Parents have been waiting for her nearly over a year for early intervention NDIS plans for a five-year-old autistic child. They are fearful that by the time the child's needs are addressed she will have turned seven and no longer be eligible for the early intervention. All the while, their daughter falls
further and further behind her classmates. That is just one of the many distressing stories from people who contact my office.

I'm very concerned about those members of my community who don't reach out but accept the information that is provided to them. A recent report from Settlement Services International, entitled Still Outside the Tent, found significant barriers to improving access to disability services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, such as those in my electorate of Werriwa. Sadly, this report adds weight to the fear that language barriers, digital literacy and a cultural aversion to government mean that, despite the horror stories that we were told before, we aren't even hearing the full extent of the failures of the government when it comes to these social services. As a nation we can and must do better.

While the government are focused on trying to quash backbench revolts, I am listening to the people of Werriwa. When they speak to me at mobile offices out in the electorate or at my electorate office, they tell me they want their schools and hospitals properly funded and resourced, they want the government to address the cost of living, they want to see their wages and conditions protected, they want a bigger and better spend on infrastructure and they want the climate crisis addressed and to have much cleaner and cheaper energy provided.

Every child, regardless of circumstances, should receive a world-class education. We took that policy to the last election. In contrast, since this government has come to power it has attacked our public schools. Funding has been slashed and, in the process, the kids who attend public schools in this country have been let down. The people of Werriwa are also suffering when it comes to health and hospitals. Under this government, the national average waiting time for elective surgery is the longest on record. The number of people presenting at emergency departments is the highest on record, and the number of hospital beds available for elderly Australians is the lowest on record. Yet this government and those of the prime ministers before the current Prime Minister continue to cut Medicare and from hospitals. When you or your loved one is sick you don't want to be worrying about whether your local hospital has enough beds or that you have enough money to cover the cost. And we definitely don't want an Americanised health system in this country.

The people of Australia deserve a world-class education system. They want their world-class health system protected. And they want world-class infrastructure. They need to be able to get to and from work without the hassle of finding a car park and without the hassle of overcrowded trains and congested roads. My constituents tell me they want to get home at a reasonable hour to see their children, take them to training and practice and help them with their homework. The latest report issued by the Greater Sydney Commission, The Pulse of Greater Sydney, confirms what my constituents are telling me. Western Sydney residents are being left behind by both state and federal governments, which are failing when it comes to addressing current issues and future planning. Sixteen per cent of Western Sydney residents still can't access major hubs within 30 minutes, compared to five per cent in most other parts of Sydney. Successive Liberal governments have built big-ticket infrastructure projects like the north-west metro, NorthConnex and the CBD and eastern suburbs light rail, all the while forgetting and ignoring the residents in my part of the world.

With the Western Sydney airport on the way, the people of Werriwa need roads, rail and improvements to commuter parking. They also need a fuel line to Western Sydney Airport. It's a public health issue. The people of Australia deserve a world-class education system. They want their world-class health system protected. And they want world-class infrastructure. They need to be able to get to and from work without the hassle of finding a car park and without the hassle of overcrowded trains and congested roads. My constituents tell me they want to get home at a reasonable hour to see their children, take them to training and practice and help them with their homework. The latest report issued by the Greater Sydney Commission, The Pulse of Greater Sydney, confirms what my constituents are telling me. Western Sydney residents are being left behind by both state and federal governments, which are failing when it comes to addressing current issues and future planning. Sixteen per cent of Western Sydney residents still can't access major hubs within 30 minutes, compared to five per cent in most other parts of Sydney. Successive Liberal governments have built big-ticket infrastructure projects like the north-west metro, NorthConnex and the CBD and eastern suburbs light rail, all the while forgetting and ignoring the residents in my part of the world.

And while we're on the topic of the Western Sydney Airport, the south-west rail extension from Leppington to the airport is the shortest and most cost-effective way to get rail into the new airport. The land corridor is there. The people want it. Local councils want it. I now ask the government to get on with that job. And when the people drive to these railway stations, they also need commuter car parks—not empty promises. In January before the last state election, the member for Holsworthy and the New South Wales Premier were at Edmondson Park railway station, committing to 1,100 parking spaces by mid-2020. But with the state and federal elections now out of the way, the recent New South Wales budget told a different story: $212,000 is allocated in the 2019-20 budget for planning of the new car park, so let's beware of the election promise.

There are quality-of-life issues and there are cost-of-living issues. My constituents continually raise with me the higher cost of power bills, while the government continues to flip-flop and fight amongst itself on energy policy. Is it coal? Is it nuclear? I heard yesterday the big stick is back. Government and business around the rest of the world are moving on, but Australian consumers continue to pay more for their power bills. What was once emerging technology mere years ago is now commonplace, and all the while this government has been in policy...
stasis. It has failed to capitalise on the growth of industries in the 21st century. Household batteries, for instance, are an example of this. They're proven to slash power bills, improve grid security and support new jobs and local industries. Another emerging technology that has become commonplace is community microgrids, such as those in New York. Again, they are proven to slash power bills, improve grid security and support new jobs in local industries.

Instead of fostering the new technologies of the 21st century and, in the process, creating new jobs and bringing down power prices, we seem to have a government stuck in centuries past. Nuclear power is not the solution and it's not green. It creates waste that no-one wants in their backyard, and that waste is radioactive for the next 24,000 years. This is not a government that looks to the future; it's a government that is focused on holding this country back and keeping it in the past. It has no clear reconciliation plan, no plan to address transport and congestion, no plan to make the NDIS work as it should and no plan to fight the rising cost of living for Australians. On this side of the House, we are committed to Australia and to the constituents in my electorate. We need to get Australia on track and moving into the future.

**Mrs MARINO** (Forrest—Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories) (16:14): I'm very pleased to be here to contribute to this debate on Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2019-2020. I particularly want to mention the $100 billion of infrastructure funding—as we know, this is an increase—that will be delivered over the next 10 years into Australian communities. Those of us who live in rural and regional Australia know how important infrastructure actually is. Building local infrastructure is an absolutely crucial step in connecting our local communities and creating local jobs. In my role as the Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories, I'm committed to ensuring that the Australian government continues to deliver the appropriate services and infrastructure to regional and remote communities. I'm actually very proud to be part of a government that is actually building vital infrastructure and providing essential services for people who live, work and retire in regional areas.

In the role of minister for territories, the appropriation bill presented to the House simply reaffirmed the Australian government's commitment to our external territories. We continue to invest in building the Norfolk Island economy and the Indian Ocean Territories' economies, and we continue to fund essential services and infrastructure. We've seen funding allocated in the actual budget to Norfolk Island in 2019-20. We are working very hard to support the local economy of Norfolk Island to be strong and vibrant, and there is support in the latest budget towards the Norfolk Island Regional Council's tourism strategy to increase visitor numbers and tourism income, as well as investment in Cascade Pier to improve the safety and frequency of cruise and freight ships. We're also continuing to support a range of programs through the Regional Development Australia program on Norfolk Island to support tourism, to attract investment and to develop grant applications. There are also supports in there from the Building Better Regions Fund that include an environmental strategy, upgrades to Banyan Park and replacement of the 2G network.

I continue to work with the administrator and will continue to work with the community to explore opportunities to strengthen and to support the local economy through the delivery of infrastructure and services. I've met with Mayor Adams, and I'm looking forward to meeting with many more members of the community in this role. As I said, we're continuing to support much-needed infrastructure in our Indian Ocean Territories. The service delivery is delivered, as the member for Curtin knows, by the Western Australian government, and these services include education, justice, community policing and environmental regulation. These are funded by the federal government, and we're going to be funding new repairs and maintenance to existing infrastructure, including a new crane and mooring system. There are services continuing to be delivered by the department, including power, health and public housing; and services and support provided by the private sector under contract, including managing the port and airport and delivering air services.

We'll continue to work on providing practical and long-term strategic projects, which are really important for the longer term to support the local economies. That includes strategic assessment of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, releasing commercial land and residential development opportunities, and a crown land management plan for the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. We're preparing heritage management plans and funding a regional investment officer to identify economic development and investment opportunities, and to attract investment.

We're also working to increase tourism numbers and the local training association to build local skills and capacity—something I'm particularly committed to. There is funding for a review into tourism and an action plan that will be driven by the administrator of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and the regional development organisations. It will be very powerful, very direct and local. And there's funding to update the Flying Fish Cove master plan to ensure that it remains a vibrant and attractive area. So there's ongoing efforts in our Indian Ocean Territories and in Norfolk Island.
Now, in the time that I have left to me, through the appropriation bill as well, I want to really talk about some of the things that are particularly important in my own electorate. One of the things that I think this government has done particularly well is the funding of health. I want to talk about the medications that have been listed on the PBS at a cost of over $10 billion. These really matter. I believe that what we are here to do is support the health and wellbeing of people in our electorates, and the focus on PBS listings has certainly done that. When you are out in your community and you listen to people, the issues that matter most to them are the health of themselves, their family members, others within the community and their friends as well.

I'm very proud of the first ever national plan for endometriosis, of which I've spoken previously in this place, and of the support from the health minister as well to actually make sure that we have a national endometriosis plan. Over 700,000 women in Australia that we know of are affected by this particular disease and there is no cure, so the funding for research, for management and for better education around it are really critically important.

We're also ushering in a new era for health care through funding for dementia research. In my electorate, Tuia Lodge at Donnybrooks, a fantastic new aged-care centre, received $1.45 million so that local people can stay in their local communities. This is really important to those of us who live in regional communities. The lodge is also going to receive recurrent funding to be able to operate an extra 11 aged-care places. To some people, that may not seem like a lot but, in Donnybrook, it's an awful lot and it means that so many more local people and their families can stay in their local community, and that is what we as a government are about.

We are also going to provide teenagers and young adults in Margaret River with access to free or low-cost youth mental health services. That injection of funds is particularly important. I've worked consistently since being in this place to get more headspace centres into rural and regional communities. There is one now in Bunbury, I secured another in Busselton and we now have Margaret River as well. Each one of these matters to people who live a distance from what perhaps people in city areas take for granted. They're not just around the corner or up the road.

I also want to focus on the 64,900 taxpayers who have received tax relief after we were able to pass that through this parliament in its first week. And another 18,652 amazing and fabulous small-to-medium businesses in my electorate have received tax relief. One of the things I've repeatedly said while out in the community is that one of the things that with our small-to-medium enterprises do well, particularly in regional areas, is give our local people their first job and often their last. They also support our local community service organisations, support our local amazing volunteers who work in emergency services and they support our sporting clubs as well. For almost anything that's happening, the local business gets the tap on the shoulder.

So everything we do as a government to support our local businesses, to me, is a real multiplier in our economy. We know that our small businesses actually employ nearly half the private sector workforce and that really has a massive impact right across Australia. We need each one of these businesses because each one of them supports local jobs that then has a knock-on effect for every other business in our electorate.

I know that the City of Busselton successfully applied to the federal government to accelerate Roads to Recovery funding—again, local jobs, local people. We've got a lot of what's known as roads of strategic importance in our part of the world as well, roads that connect so much of the economic activity. The south-west is a $16 billion GDP region. There's a lot that's not known about my south-west outside the area. There are people who are just can-do people—they get on with their job. And we have everything from agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism, retail—you name it—to construction in my electorate. That's why the funding for the Bunbury Outer Ring Road is so important. The federal government has committed $682 million for this infrastructure. Again, the $100 billion is getting right out into most parts of Australia and certainly into my electorate.

These are the sorts of programs, along with the Building Better Regions Fund, that deliver projects that matter in small communities as well. Sometimes it's the smallest amount of money that can make the biggest difference. That's something that we know. We know that our local volunteers really make the most of every dollar that comes their way, whether they're working with a men's shed—and we support the men's sheds—or in our emergency services. We saw some funding go into a new training centre for our St John Ambulance volunteers in Busselton. What a great result. We've also seen some funding go into aged-care facilities in Dunsborough. That will be a wonderful catalyst in the community, providing not only fabulous care but also local jobs. Sometimes these types of facilities in smaller communities can make the most difference and become a major employer and economic driver.

Connectivity for us really matters. The Mobile Black Spot Program has helped so many of those who live and work in my electorate, particularly some of our farmers and our tradespeople. A story I've told previously is that of a local anaesthetist who lived in the Ferguson Valley, which is quite hilly. When he was on call, he would have to go and park his car at the top of a hill if he was to receive a phone call to be able to get in and provide the
service at the local hospital. That was one of the first places that was successful in receiving one of the Mobile Black Spot Program towers. For the residents in rural and regional communities, the service that is provided by our emergency services—whether it's fire and emergency rescue, St John or right across the board—are critical. They also rely very much on connectivity. This can make a huge difference. We've had fires in recent times, and one of the critical issues is local people being able to get messages about what is actually happening in their communities.

I also briefly want to touch on the $1.1 billion funding that goes into Landcare. It's been said previously that our farmers are some of the best environmental stewards, and I would agree with that. It is the work they do on the ground, the simple things they do day in and day out. Inevitably they want to leave the land and the water sources that they use in better condition than they found them in. Many of those farms are intergenerational businesses, so they take it very seriously. They want to be able to continue to farm, to produce some of the best-quality food in the world from Australia and to maintain our capacity to provide the world—and perhaps some of the niche markets ahead of us, through the free trade agreements we've been able to achieve—with some of that fine-quality food. Everything we do to connect our producers in rural and regional areas and enable them to take advantage of some of these free trade agreements and the opportunities that go with them is what I really care about. Equally I really want to acknowledge the work that's being done on the ground by our farmers that is often overlooked and not well understood. They do a fantastic job, and I'll support them every day.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 16:29 to 16:47

Mr Byrne (Holt) (16:47): I rise to speak on Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2019-2020 and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2019-2020, which provide appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the annual services of the government for the remainder of 2019-20. In particular, I want to direct my remarks to the growing needs of my electorate of Holt, which is situated in the rapidly growing suburbs in the outer south-east of Melbourne.

Prior to the 2019 election, the federal electorate of Holt was substantially redistributed. Areas like Endeavour Hills and Doveton and Hallam, which had been part of that seat for many, many years—in Endeavour Hills' case, for about 28 years—were taken out. Holt lost about 42,000 voters. What happened was that the seat was then redistributed and incorporated suburbs like Blind Bight, Botanic Ridge, Clyde, Clyde North, Cannons Creek, Junction Village and Devon Meadows; the established existing suburbs of Lynbrook, Lyndhurst and Narre Warren South; and the newer suburbs of Pearcedale, Tooradin and Warneet. It changed the complexion of the seat quite dramatically. It also continued the consolidation of the seat in the City of Casey, which is one of the fastest-growing areas in Australia. For example, at the end of 2017, the Casey City Council had a population of about 327,000 people. It's going to continue that very rapid growth, and over the next 20 years it's going to become bigger than the population of Canberra—that's one city council on the edge of the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. With this massively growing and rapidly growing community, there have become major challenges in social infrastructure and physical infrastructure. The area, notwithstanding the investment that's been made by the Andrews state Labor government, is struggling to keep up, and demands for new essential services continue to need to be addressed.

At the end of 2018, particularly given the investment that the Andrews government had made in the period between 2014 and 2018, I was very pleased to see that Daniel Andrews was re-elected, particularly given that he had delivered the biggest and most successful infrastructure build in the state's history. Over the next four years, I will continue to look forward to working with Daniel Andrews and the state member for Cranbourne, Pauline Richards, in particular, to assist them and to also watch them develop—to build new schools, new roads, new public transport infrastructure, which they have been doing in my constituency, as well as developing health facilities and increasing the spend on two local hospitals, which are Casey Hospital and Dandenong Hospital.

It's important to note that, whilst the Victorian state government has delivered over recent years, unfortunately, over the six years of the Abbott, Turnbull and Morrison coalition government, the investment from the federal just doesn't match in any way, shape or form the investment that's been made. That counts given the growth and how it could benefit from the injection of federal government funding.

For our residents, one of the key priorities is to upgrade our roads in Holt given the rapid population growth; the suburb of Cranbourne East is the fastest-growing suburb this Australia. It's really quite amazing when you drive along Clyde Road toward Narre Warren just to see the massive growth of infrastructure and massive growth in housing estates. That's going to continue unabated notwithstanding some of the concerns about a slowing economy or an economy that some people say is at risk with the housing prices downturn. Given the population growth, there is continued impetus for people to come out and live in this area because there is affordable housing.
But the affordable housing, unfortunately, is not being matched by roads, hospitals and other services to match that—and also cars.

Data recently collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics has revealed more than 100,000 extra cars and trucks have hit roads in Victoria in the past 12 months. In the first time in the state's history, the number of registered vehicles has surpassed five million vehicles. In 2014, 4.4 million vehicles were registered. Cars in particular have continued to dominate the figures as Melburnians in the city's outer suburbs are left with no other way to travel, even though there is obviously substantial investment being made by the state government in public transportation—rail in particular.

At the last federal election, in recognising that, the federal opposition had a plan to address this growing problem by investing more than $850 million to upgrade these congested roads, create new jobs and slash travel times for residents in these south-eastern suburbs. In Holt, what did that mean? It meant that an extra lane would be added in each direction to Narre Warren-Cranbourne Road in Cranbourne between Thompsons Road and the South Gippsland highway. In addition, Labor had a plan to contribute $65 million towards the completion and duplication of the 10.7-kilometre stretch of Thompsons Road which is a major east-west feeding road in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, between Frankston-Dandenong Road and Berwick-Cranbourne Road. I guess I hope that, in a spirit of bipartisanship, the Morrison government will be able to match this proposal, because it is important that they do co-invest with the state Labor government. I'll be writing to the Prime Minister to ask, in the spirit of bipartisanship, for that co-investment.

It's also important to note traffic congestion. My constituency, depending on which part you're in, is between 40 and 48 kilometres from the city centre. There are a lot of people that work that need to drive into the city centre. We have a lot of tradespeople and a lot of construction workers, and they need cars. They need to drive their utes. They need to drive their trucks. They need to be able to drive from their work to their place of employment. So a proper investment in roads and rail is important. It's not just a political point I'm making; it's a point that improves the quality of life for our people and includes economic prosperity. For example, there's been some costing. Without a proper investment in roads and rail, the economic cost of congestion will triple to about $9 billion by 2031.

One of the key priorities on top of roads is broadband and telecommunications structure in Holt.

One of the disturbing parts of being in a major growth corridor not so far away from Melbourne is that, in some cases, in some parts of my electorate people can't get access to mobile phone coverage. We're encouraging people to shift out to these outer suburbs. That there are so many young families not being able to get mobile phone coverage in this day and age is astonishing and disturbing. We need new mobile phone towers and we need them sooner rather than later. I know that there is a complex process, where a company might approach a local council and seek to sort of position them. But when you have got areas where a woman trying to ring Cranbourne Police Station because someone is attempting to break into her home doesn't have a landline because the NBN wasn't installed and she can't get mobile phone access, it's pretty concerning. It's pretty concerning in this day and age, as I have said, that in a modern suburb with all this modern housing that you cannot have access to a phone. I think that's really disturbing. People say there are black spot funding opportunities—that's for sure—but there are still substantial and important areas in my constituency where you cannot access mobile phone services. That is incredibly important, and I'll be continuing to push the government and work with the government to ensure the people in those areas get those services.

I'm also looking forward to ensuring that my electorate receives appropriate federal funding and support for the two local hospitals that I mentioned, Casey Hospital and Dandenong Hospital. Both are located just outside of my constituency. We really do need, given the population growth, to invest more in hospitals and in mental health locally. For example, Casey Hospital does not have an MRI. That hospital is based in my friend and colleague's electorate, La Trobe. During the federal election, the federal government announced that there would be an MRI licence granted to St John of God but that's not in Casey Hospital.

Casey Hospital is a public hospital. I'm aware of the situation where the wife of a serving police officer was assaulted on the Packham line. It was suspected she had a brain bleed. She was taken by ambulance from Pakenham to Casey Hospital but there was no MRI, so in that emergency situation, she had to be transported to another hospital where there was an MRI. If people are familiar with Casey Hospital, the state government has made enormous investments because of the physical growth in that area. With the hundreds of thousands of people who have been coming into this area, Casey Hospital has turned into a major regional hospital but it doesn't have an MRI.

I will just counsel the federal government, again putting this forward as a suggestion, that it's crazy that a hospital of this size, which is just about to open an seven- or eight-storey facility to expand the services being
offered, doesn't have an MRI. As I understand it, there are no plans for an MRI and I don't think that's appropriate; I don't think that's satisfactory. People in our region, in Holt and in those areas, deserve an MRI. They pay their taxes. I do think it's a service they do need and they deserve and I'll be working to ensure that they do get that.

During the last election, I was at the Casey Hospital with our former Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, where we made a $22.4 million investment commitment to meet that rapidly rising demand for services not only to take the pressure off the hospital's emergency department because it is a busy hospital but also to create extra beds for a mental health facility. We do have a problem, given the growth rate, of adequately providing services for people with mental health challenges. Labor's plan would have been to ensure our people in the region with severe mental health challenges could access improved models of care in acute and high-dependency beds. That commitment of $22.4 million was made not just to meet the rapidly rising demand of services in the emergency ward but also for the acute and high-dependency bed services. I will again be asking, respectfully, that the Morrison government look at that because it is something that we absolutely need.

The other thing in talking about mental health is youth mental health. I commend the Morrison government on the commitments that they are making. I know that the Minister for Health has a commitment to youth mental health. I have worked with Professor Pat McGorry over a number of years on the issue. We had, in 2011 and 2012, a suicide cluster of young people in the south-eastern suburbs, and it was a horrible period of time for our community. Professor McGorry and Orygen Youth Health worked with us to bring that to the attention of the then-Gillard government, and we got an investment for two headspaces—the Narre Warren headspace and the Dandenong headspace. They've since been supplemented with the early youth psychosis service that is provided by Professor Simon Stafrace and the Alfred clinical psychiatric service. However, even though it is good that we have two headspaces, we need an additional headspace.

The other thing I'd like to point out—and I could go on and on—is the concerning feedback that I'm getting about the issue of youth migrant mental health. We know that there are some priority areas that have been put forward by Professor McGorry and those who offer the headspace service in terms of at-risk-youth demographics, but one of the things that have been concerning me is some of the stories about young people from migrant backgrounds—and we have a lot in my area—who are disinclined to access these services because they're not friendly. There is a story that I'd prefer not to go into, where one person of a particular cultural group turned up and she almost felt turned away from headspace. That young woman will not go back, and that is not satisfactory. We really need to be making sure that there are standard levels of clinical care that can be provided, and we need to encourage young people of migrant backgrounds to not be reticent about using these services, because in many situations they are most in need of the services.

I'm running short of time. I've given some indication of some of the priorities for the next term in Holt and some of the requests we'll be making of the Morrison government. But, in particular, in terms of youth mental health, this is an investment in our future, and we need to be paying more attention to putting more resources into providing appropriate levels of care for young people in my area.

Mr PEARCE (Braddon) (17:02): I appreciate the opportunity to speak today in support of the Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2019-2020 and the associated appropriation bills. In my electorate of Braddon, people are working hard. We have nearly 10,000 small businesses, a lot of them mum-and-dad businesses. We have thousands of equally exceptional people who get up every morning and go to work, with the expectation, quite rightly, that the government won't get in the way and will provide opportunities. During the election campaign, I spent a lot of time talking with these people. We chatted, and they told me about what was important to them. No matter where they lived—whether it was on the west coast, King Island, Burnie, Smithton, Devonport or Wynyard—what was important to the hardworking people of Braddon was things like providing for their families, having the opportunity to make their lives better and having the expectation that, if they work hard, they can achieve goals and achieve dreams. They spoke to me about accessing the health services that they need, the education requirements that they so desperately need, being able to travel around their region safely and keeping the cost-of-living pressures down.

I agree with all these things, because they are all important to me as well. The best way for government to help the people of Braddon—it's all about economic management. It has been shown over decades that a coalition government can responsibly provide the services that people in my electorate expect, because only a coalition government can manage finances. The people in my electorate get it. If they have to be responsible and balance their own personal budgets, they expect the government to be responsible enough to do the same. It's simple.

It was this government who restored the budget to balance. After years of Labor deficits, we handed down the first budget surplus in over 12 years. That is a significant turnaround in our nation's finances. We also reduced taxes, so the working people of Braddon could keep more of what they earn for them and their families. They have more in their pockets to deal with the rising cost of living. Nearly 40,000 taxpayers in Braddon will benefit
from tax relief in 2018-19 as a result of the government's enhanced personal income tax plan, with just over 16,000 receiving the full tax offset of $1,080.

I'm passionate about education. I want every person in my electorate to be able to access the type of education that's right for them, right for their time and for their lifetime. Whether it's at primary school, high school, university, TAFE or on-the-job training, everybody should have access to education when they need it. It doesn't matter whether you're eight, 28 or 80. It doesn't matter whether you live in the city or the bush. I know and my electorate knows the only way that governments can responsibly increase funding to education is if there is more money in the bank. Because the budget is now in surplus, we can now increase funding to all 49 schools in Braddon. That's a 49 per cent increase to all of Braddon's public schools over the next decade. But that is just the start of the good news. Earlier this month, the west coast regional study hub was opened, thanks to the Morrison government's commitment of $2.5 million. This will give those who want to live on the west coast greater choice and access to educational opportunities. It will allow them to study courses they want without having to move away from home, which often comes at a significant cost both financially and socially. If students want to stay with their family and friends, then they should be able to do that. That's why this is such an important investment. This Friday, I will be attending Marist Regional College in Burnie to open the new learning areas for grade 9 and 10 students thanks to an $830,000 fund from the Morrison government. A local schools community fund of almost $200,000 was recently announced. This wonderful initiative is for schools to fund small projects. I remind them that applications are now open, and they should get them in.

Having money in the bank means that we can afford to invest in health services. That is important to the people of Braddon. Funding of public hospital services in Tasmania has increased by 45 per cent since we came to office, from $294 million to $425 million. This government continues to commit to the PBS, providing affordable access to new medicines as they have become available. Since 2013, the Morrison government has listed over 2,000 new or amended items on the PBS. This represents an average of around 31 listings per month or one each day at an average cost of around $10.6 billion. I meet people everyday in my electorate. Time and time again they stop me and tell me their story about how some new drug that has been listed on the PBS is making their life that much better. Some of them tell me that the only reason a loved one is alive today is because some new drug has been listed on the PBS. The government is also providing record funding for the health system, including Medicare. In 2019-20 we will invest a record $104 billion in health. That is up from $75 billion seven years ago.

As I mentioned, reducing the cost of living is extremely important in my electorate of Braddon, so it's great news to everybody to hear that the Morrison Liberal-National government has a plan to achieve that. We're delivering a multimillion dollar injection into our region as well as thousands of jobs. What I'm talking about here are the Battery of the Nation project and Project Marinus. Tasmania's potential as Australia's newest renewable energy powerhouse is now recognised right across the nation. We have what the rest of the nation really needs—low-cost, reliable, clean energy—and we have plans to deliver that energy to the rest of Australia. We will do this through the second Bass Strait interconnector, Project Marinus. This will allow Tasmania to expand the amount of renewable energy provided to the national grid system, and enhance greater investment in other renewable technologies, such as our $250 million Granville Harbour wind development, which is currently under construction on our west coast.

The Morrison government has committed $56 million to fast-track Project Marinus, and that's important to the people in my electorate of Braddon. Marinus will enable more than 400 megawatts of existing dispatchable reliable generation to be transmitted to Victoria, power currently unavailable due to a limited Basslink interconnector capacity. This is good news for Victorians as well, because 400 megawatts is enough to power up to 400,000 homes. Subject to development of the business case and funding arrangements, it's expected that Marinus link will be able to supply electricity to the mainland from 2025. The construction of Marinus is expected to generate between 500 and 1,000 construction jobs in my region.

The Morrison government is also committed to working with the Tasmanian government to underwrite the first phase of Tasmania's Battery of the Nation project. The government is also providing $2.5 million to support Hydro Tasmania identifying a suitable Battery of the Nation project site. This represents the single biggest economic opportunity for our state. Importantly, for those that live on the north-west and west coasts, the three short-listed sites are in our backyard. By the end of next year we should know about the final site, and it's hoped that it will progress to being shovel-ready by 2021. Pumped hydro can deliver 24/7, round-the-clock, renewable, reliable power, and the Battery of the Nation is expected to deliver up to 2,500 megawatts of reliable renewable hydropower to Tasmania and Victoria, including 16 gigawatt hours of storage. Projects like Marinus, Battery of the Nation and Snowy 2.0 reinforce the investment that has already been made in renewable power across Australia, and it provides reliability that doesn't come at the cost of driving prices up and compromising energy security.
The Morrison government's $100 billion transport infrastructure investment across Australia is important. When my constituents are driving around the electorate of Braddon, they're not belting along a freeway, and we don't spend much time in traffic jams. However, this investment will ensure that everybody in my area can get home safely on country roads as well as town ones. This investment in our area will improve travel time, reliability and it will also make sure that our national highway, the Bass Highway, is safe for all road users. The Cooeo to Wynyard planning study is a great example of how the federal Liberal government is keeping its promise to Braddon. We said we'd pay for a study into the challenges on this stressed part of the highway to be undertaken, and the study has now been done; it's completed. During the election campaign, the Prime Minister visited Braddon and made a further commitment of $40 million to deliver the recommended improvements that were identified during that report, and I look forward to the Tasmanian Department of State Growth developing this program of work over the next few months.

The government's commitment of $60 million to upgrade 112 kilometres of the Bass Highway, between Wynyard and Marrawah, is another example of how vital works are progressing in our region. The works are wide ranging. They will include road widening, overtaking lanes, intersection improvements, road reconstruction and general road safety measures. Specifically, some of the projects identified include the Bass Highway through Brittons Swamp, south-west of Smithton, which is affected by significant undulations caused by road users, including school buses, agricultural vehicles and trucks. Sections of that highway will be rebuilt and strengthened. A new passing opportunity will be constructed between Wynyard and Smithton, as well as constructing courtesy stopping bays for slower traffic and agricultural traffic along our roads. And where the Bass Highway has been widened in the past at Rocky Cape, it is now dangerously close to a busy community facility. Rather than diverting the highway at that point, funds will be provided to rebuild this facility. Safer access will be provided for the Boat Harbour school, including a right turn facility on the Bass Highway. That's good news for those kids crossing the road. Engagement with the Waratah-Wynyard Council and Circular Head Council is important to ensure that these projects are conducted in a mutual, cohesive way along the 112-kilometre section of the Bass Highway between Wynyard and Marrawah.

As a heavy vehicle operator and as an agricultural contractor I've driven many of the roads in Braddon and I understand the difficulties that the precarious nature of our windy agricultural country roads provides to all road users. I also understand the amount of school traffic and tourist traffic that utilises our roads. It is important that these two road user types can work harmoniously and safely. This can only be done if we've got a good, safe, well planned road network. We can only provide that network if we've got funds in the bank. This is another classic example why, if we want something done, there's only one place to turn and that is a strong Liberal-National Coalition.

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (17:16): I rise to speak about trade, engagement with our Asia-Pacific region, and Darwin's and my electorate's role as a regional hub. I'm happy to speak to the re-introduced appropriation bills, but what I'm not happy about is the government's self-congratulation on economic issues over which it has no control. We saw it last week, when my parliamentary colleague, the member for Fairfax, could not help himself, trying to take credit for this year's record monthly trade surpluses. We all like to see a trade surplus, but inferring that they're somehow the work of the Liberal Party is a bit rich. These record trade surpluses, for the record, are due to a near doubling of the world price of iron ore, which is good news. It's risen from about US$69 a tonne to US$121 a tonne in the last six months. Like me, you've probably been to Karratha in Western Australia. All those iron ore ships are just queuing up there. It's great for our nation that that price is high, but the reason for the price being high and the trade surplus is more about Beijing's economic stimulus program and a dam bursting in Brazil. I hope neither of those have anything to do with the Liberal Party—rather, I hope that the dam bursting had nothing to do with the Liberal Party.

Australia is one of the world's great trading nations. We always have been a great trading nation, from when First Nations people in northern Australia were trading with other First Nations in our Asia-Pacific region right through to us supplying the British Empire with agricultural commodities. Of course, we benefited as a nation from the mining boom following the Second World War. We overcame challenges in the 1960s and 1970s, when our major trading partner at the time, the UK, started preferencing its European neighbours ahead of us, its loyal Commonwealth cousins. But there was good news again with the Labor Hawke and Keating governments. The deregulation of our economy opened our markets to the world. Today the Asian markets to our north are absolutely vital for us. Japan was our leading merchandise export destination until the extraordinary economic growth in China saw it claim the top spot 10 years ago. Fifty per cent of our entire merchandise exports go to China and Japan, largely in the form of those raw materials. Nearly a quarter of our merchandise imports come from China alone. Twelve of our largest 15 trading markets are in Asia, and the Asia-Pacific region accounts for over 70 per cent of our total trade value.

FEDERATION CHAMBER
As I told the House last week, Territorians pay close attention to trade. Our proximity to the growing Asian markets is one reason. Another is the deep and enduring links that we have with our neighbours to our north. These markets are vital for the economic development of the Northern Territory and Darwin in particular, long and rightly regarded as Australia's northern gateway to Asia. That's why I'm very pleased that the Leader of the Labor Party, Anthony Albanese, has appointed me to lead a trade task force for the Asia Pacific. In this role, I will be working closely with the shadow minister for trade, Madeleine King, and the shadow minister for northern Australia, Senator Murray Watt.

Labor has played a major role in advancing and advocating for an open global trading system, reducing trade barriers, which creates more competitive industries and generates high-skill, high-wage jobs for Australians. Our party has an equally long history of recognising and acting on the immense economic opportunities presented by Asia's rise to become the heart of global economic growth. We strongly support an open, rules-based, multilateral trading system under the auspices of the WTO, as well as trade and investment liberalisation through APEC.

High-quality global, regional and bilateral trade agreements which include major Asian economies have been a key driver of Australia's success story of consecutive economic growth over 20 years. But we must ensure that the agreements continue to be high-quality trade agreements. We mustn't assume that Australia can continue to benefit from Asia's economic growth without working harder to seize the opportunities which our region presents to Australian workers, consumers, businesses, exporters and investors. This is particularly important at a time when the rules and norms of the global and regional trading systems are more contested, politicised and securitised than ever in living memory.

Australia stands to gain from deepening its trading agreements, people-to-people and business-to-business links, outward and inbound foreign direct investment, and, importantly, the Asia literacy of Australian workers, businesses, students and exporters. Labor’s trade task force for the Asia Pacific will consult with everyone—unions, exporters, business councils. We will hold industry forums and report to the Leader of the Australian Labor Party and the shadow trade minister on what our nation needs to do to increase our trade engagement right across our region.

The task force will review existing policies and develop policies to deepen Australia's trading, investment, educational and people-to-people links with the region. It will also examine proposals developed by Australian and regional policy-makers, think tanks and academics to develop plans of action for Australia to lead efforts in promoting the multilateral trading system and potential reforms to the WTO. The task force will work with state and territory governments and councils to find potential synergies that could feed into a future federal Labor government's trade and investment engagement strategy with Asia.

The Northern Territory government is pursuing an ambitious international engagement, trade and investment strategy. We have huge trade opportunities in defence, agribusiness, energy, international education, minerals and tourism, to name just a few. We also have a huge competitive advantage with our proximity to Asia and our proximity to the equator. As it turns out, for space launches it's very handy to be close to the equator. We have ample land, water and mineral resources. We have local expertise. We have great people-to-people relations within our region. We are a young and culturally diverse population. Darwin truly is the gateway to Asia.

I will be working with the Northern Territory government, and with industry groups in the Northern Territory, in Western Australia and North Queensland, but also around the country. But this is clearly very important for northern Australia. It is a nationally significant region of our country that has great benefits for the rest of the nation. That's why I urge the federal government to make investments in the North: to bring forward the funding to rejuvenate Kakadu; to fund the ship lift; to start spending some of the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, or the NAIF; and to fund the City Deal for Darwin. These are nationally significant projects recognising the strategic and economic importance of northern Australia for the whole of Australia.

What we need to do now, and why I've chosen to speak on these topics during this debate on the appropriation bills, is we need to convince the Morrison government that this is a national priority. Labor went to the last election with a coherent and costed policy for Darwin and the Territory. For example, one specific proposal—building a ship lift—is of great value for both military and civilian use. Rather than ships going to Cairns or Singapore, they'll be able to stay in Darwin, where they're based, for routine maintenance and refits. This means jobs for Territorians and a significant improvement to our range of Defence infrastructure in the north. A ship lift in Darwin Harbour or in the Top End will create a whole marine services industry around it. The present Defence facility at HMAS Coonawarra is actually not big enough to lift the future offshore patrol vessels, so it is due to be decommissioned in the next couple of years. So I'll continue to take every opportunity to urge the Morrison government to take up the proposal and to build the ship lift. I think, in these last couple of sitting weeks, I have already mentioned the ship lift quite a few times, and I will continue to advocate for it.
I see the trade task force as also being, like the ship lift, nationally important, because trading with our region is the future of our country. I want to continue to build relationships in the region, and I have a fair bit of personal experience in doing that. Many years ago now I set up a small Australian charity in Timor-Leste to improve maternal health outcomes and to build schools in remote areas. Through my work in Timor-Leste and Indonesia out of the Top End, I met people like my friend Colin McDonald QC, who has long fostered Australia-Indonesia friendships through the Bali artist camps. But it's not just Asia; it's the Pacific as well. We will focus our attention on our friends in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands as well. I want to commend the Prime Minister for travelling into the Pacific on his first overseas trip. There is no doubt that targeted and sensitive aid engagement with our near neighbours is incredibly important. It's an important means of building positive relationships, and clearly this is a matter of strategic importance, as well as it being important for us to be good neighbours.

Another area that intersects our strategic and economic interest is building a disaster response and emergency management capacity from Darwin into our region. We all know that the region to the north of Australia can be quite unstable geologically, and there have been some political changes to the north that we've been able to respond to, one being the East Timor process of self-determination. We were able to respond to that out well of Darwin. So Darwin is crucial. I'm very proud to represent Darwin and Palmerston here in the federal parliament. The weather is heaps better than down here, and people tend to get sick less often!

Finally, I want to invite all members to attend our Facing North function on 9 September here in Parliament House. It's the first sitting day of the next sitting period, on 9 September, a Monday night. My fellow Territorians will once again be showcasing to everyone down here in this place our talents as Territorians and our potential for the nation. Please put it in your diary—9 September—and come and learn a bit more about Australia's northern gateway to Asia.

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (17:31): I rise after a nationwide investigation into the performance of ASQA's monitoring and regulating of the training sector. They regulate TAFE and small training organisations all around the country, and all but two states have handed over their powers to ASQA. This government, and I assume the entire parliament, would like to see a flourishing diverse and high-quality training system in Australia, one where brand Australia is known as a great place to educate, train and employ. In that role, ASQA has an incredibly important role—supporting training across a geographically diverse country like Australia, dealing with our significant international student caseload, which has its own unique requirements, and, of course, helping our employed citizens of tomorrow acquire, in a relatively short time frame, the skills that we know are going to be needed in the future. With those changing requirements, we need an agile sector. We need people after a career of service to the nation to then say, 'I will serve by being a trainer.' And we need to have an enhanced system that is obviously monitored and kept at high quality. ASQA began in 2011 and has been responsible for just over 2,200 organisations in this country. But, on my investigation in every state and territory, talking to remote training providers in Aboriginal communities and speaking in the outer suburbs of Sydney, where the hope of a career or a future can be dashed so easily by the absence of a place where one can train somewhere in your neighbourhood for a job one can dream of, I know that for these trainers and providers there are enormous concerns about the shortcomings of ASQA.

I want to just start with a quote. It's a quote from ASQA. By ASQA's estimation you are liable for the possible maximum penalty of 600 units for each of the 89 VET statements of attainment alleged to be issued outside its scope of registration. The total maximum penalty on that calculation—sharpen your pencil—is $11,214,000 were ASQA to refer this matter for civil penalty proceedings in the Federal Court. However, your client may be able to dispense with the possibility of facing that heavy penalty if it were to agree to pay one-tenth of the maximum penalty pursuant to an infringement notice. You'll be very relieved to know, Member for Bennelong, that would be a liability amount of just $1,121,400. 'If your client is amenable to paying that reduced that sum, I advise without instruction that ASQA may be amenable to conciliated on the bases that the cancellation decision is set aside and a conditional grant of registration is reinstated. Please advise on your client's position.'

Now, no-one would want to see a dodgy provider getting away with blue murder, and we've seen plenty of that in 2013, 2014 and 2015. Every provider I spoke to said that, if there were to be another provider engaged in fraud, mismanagement and irresponsible training practises, of course they should be driven from the sector. That is the common clarion call from every group I've spoken to. But they don't appear to be the stories that I have before me. Some of the highest thinkers in this relevant area of law in the three major cities all have the same view as barristers representing many of these RTOs just hoping to survive the ASQA audit. It appears to me ASQA is increasingly using the AAT as a vehicle for extinguishing RTOs simply by legal cost, reputational damage and delay.
One would hope that all authorities with the difficult jobs ASQA has would demonstrate a form of model litigant conduct, meaning that it would not deliberately engage in legal tactics designed to damage the respondent rather than just arriving at some form of clarity. But, increasingly, that is not how RTOs feel. From the highest levels, those who monitor the sector say it has become increasingly difficult to establish any form of rapport with ASQA. This stands in complete contrast to RTO relationships with New Zealand's regulator and Canada's regulator. They give us an example of the two-phased approach of both regulation and capacity building that need to be done by regulator concurrently at the appropriate time. By capacity building, I don't mean putting on a forum in a capital city once every few months, where you simply tell people what you're doing but don't answer their questions. ASQA, I'm told, give the impression it is willing to wield the big stick and keep pressing the same points. Its time management is terrible. What should be a day's audit stretches out to three.

An Indigenous community organisation I have been talking to with a flawless record in Western Australia audited for the first time by ASQA in April was sent the bill for 25 audit hours and ordered to pay $22,000 for the privilege of being shut down—for a single audit visit! This is money that isn't delivered to the front-line for training young Aboriginal youth. No-one wants a bad trainer out there but one would want to know why a RTO could be winning a state award for the highest quality of training and then be told to walk the plank by ASQA a few months following. There is no consistency if the auditors themselves can visit an RTO, raise minor administrivia then leave the building and, within a few months, the RTO gets a letter explaining ASQA intends to shut it down. There is no resemblance to the initial audit visit.

That lack of consistency between auditors must be of enormous concern. Remember TAFE is under the same regulations. You hope that TAFE plays by those same rules. But TAFE is a big gorilla; it can afford cop a few rough audit reports because it can just shuffle things between units, close a module down and shift students across to something else. A small RTO, a tailored niche RTO which is the only training provider to, say, main roads can't do that. Staff working on building better roads for Victoria don't want to travel an hour and a half to TAFE and that's why you have a flourishing private RTO sector. It is why state governments tend to private RTOs. Snuffing out an RTO by simply telling it, 'If you want to take on this decision, there's the door to AAT, and lawyer up,' is not the conduct of a regulator that is building confidence in our sector.

This is not just a domestic issue; this is about brand Australia. We sit within a peloton of developed English-speaking nations that offer training. We don't have to do much to molest and damage our training sector for those students to go to Canada. They're quite happy to and capable of getting a Canadian degree and, in turn, form relationships with Canada and be added to their skilled workforce at Australia's expense. It's not in our interest to nickel and dime every RTO on minutia. Of course RTOs will run into problems. Name me a GPS school or a top-tier university that hasn't, at some time, fallen short on administrative requirements. They need to be given a helping hand and that's what we set this regulator up to do.

There is such inconsistency now that these experiences are completely unpredictable. We find now that nearly half all of these matters that ASQA gives no alternative and no internal independent review are simply forwarded to AAT. Many of these don't stand up at AAT at all. I would expect that the regulator, acting as a model litigant, confident in the cases they send off to Federal Court, should win most of them. The fact that they win potentially less than half of them indicates that they're sending off to the AAT more for the purposes of legal expense and reputational damage and delay. As long as an RTO is suspended there are no more enrolments. The agents put a line through the RTO's name. The damage done is enormous. I just want to make sure that the damage is proportional to the issues found by that auditor when they visited. I hate to think that this kind of thing could happen to an RTO when there hasn't even been an auditor visit the premises, but it does happen purely on desktop and paperwork checks.

This aggressive and adversarial conduct is an enormous concern to me. We respect the absolute independence of these regulators and we wish them well in their job, but I'm absolutely compelled to report what I hear from the RTOs as well. I'm not in a position to substantiate a lot of these matters, and that's why I don't go into absolute specifics. I respect that in many cases ASQA does an incredibly hard job, but I just ask for a small Indigenous RTO working in remote Australia to be given a second hearing and to have a second visit from the auditor after they have been given a chance to address some of these concerns. But this broadly overhearing and focus on overcompliance has now almost gained ASQA an affectionate term for an absolute focus on administrative trivia.

No-one deny the critical breaches that should stop an RTO immediately, but too often we're simply seeing them referred to schedules and items and not given any suggestion on how to meet them. ASQA is not meeting halfway to have a discussion about the level of administrative performance they want to see from RTOs. No—what they say is, 'We are a regulator, not a consultant.' So they have bred a new industry of former ASQA auditors who leave only to become consultants to help RTOs get through the very ASQA process they were once part of. They
start their advice with, 'I can't guarantee you that we can even succeed in this process, because we can't even tell you how ASQA will respond to our own efforts to heal the situation and respond to their concerns.'

Example: working with RTOs that encountered issues like non-compliant marketing material, because they claimed on the website that they're centrally located and close to transport. ASQA took issue with that, saying they weren't near a train station. I don't want to hear that the colour of a logo was different on the website than it is on their letterhead and may lead to some confusion. I respect absolutely that ASQA should be able to reach out to students and ask for feedback on satisfaction, knowing that an RTO can't possibly keep every student happy if they're in the business of passing and failing, but, with respect, I think we need to make sure that we don't have a regulator that actively goes and cultivates student complaints for the mere purpose of further frustrating and creating additional legal thicketts around that organisation being able to continue to do its job.

There have been RTOs that have had issues with trainer verification—trainers working in the industry who have been there for a lifetime but didn't have sufficient content on their professional develop log and therefore were considered unsuitable to be a trainer. I appreciate that ASQA says there they're zeroing in on the bad guys, but there's a big difference between risk and poor quality. We want risk addressed in many cases if it's affecting student quality, but there's a significant risk in simply providing training services across a diverse nation like Australia in multiple states under different arrangements and various distances from metro areas. The second rectification period should be available, and if isn't in the legislation, in the NVETR Act, we should look at this very matter.

There's provision for independent internal review, but only for decisions made by a delegate. Increasingly, where decisions are wrapped up with most of the commissioners involved in the decision, it's impossible to get any form of independent internal review under the current design of the legislation. That's just keeping the AAT busy. After migration, which occupies the AAT probably more than it should, I don't want to see ASQA as number two. I don't want to see our training sector sending more work to the AAT than the rest of the entire private economy of this nation. That's not where it should be heading. What I'm worried about is a cultural change over time. Two or three years ago the sense was that if a small RTO applied for a stay, it was more than likely going to be granted. Stays play a very important legal role in allowing the respondent the time to assemble their case. But increasingly it looks like when ASQA feels that more damage is created by giving one less time, less time is what you get. Where it suits ASQA to delay the process because of the reputational damage and cost, it appears that's the decision that the RTO cops. I'm disturbed that virtually every application for a stay may now be refused for no good reason that I can see. A stay is very important legal option that should be available and should be offered by a model litigant—in this case, ASQA.

The default position between cancellation and suspension is also very important. What typically happens, as described by RTOs, is that the audit occurs, the audit panel returns and a letter comes back bearing no relationship to the vibe that was experienced when the auditor visited. A lot of the stuff was minor, so they asked, 'Can we see your indemnity, please?' They show that their indemnity is up to date and they walk out satisfied. But then a letter comes back saying, 'You didn't give us your detailed indemnity document for us to read; therefore, you are noncompliant because you provided us with nothing.' But they'd provided the auditor for what they asked for and the auditor walked out happy. We could go through too many examples.

I'm worried about Australia's reputation as a place for high-quality training, as ASQA is, but I suspect at the moment the culture has shifted too far in one direction. I am worried about damaged reputations. I'm worried about families putting all of their livelihood and the resources of extended family to build an RTO to meet specific niche needs in our community that TAFE can't meet. I don't expect kids from Punchbowl to sit on a train for 50 minutes to go to TAFE if there's an RTO solution in the suburb that's available. That's being closed down. It's a privilege to be a regulator. Those regulators are well paid. They're generously resourced. It's not about the number of RTOs in this country; it's about their quality. I think we need to make sure that we don't have a regulator that actively goes and cultivates student complaints for the mere purpose of further frustrating and creating additional legal thicketts around that organisation being able to continue to do its job.

Mr HILL (Bruce) (17:46): The election result is terribly disappointing for many Australians—not all, but many. Not so much for us on this side of the House, but for the millions of people who voted for Labor and who share the values we represent. There are millions out there who desperately wanted and still want a change in government in this country. Those people are completely forgotten, ignored by the government and indeed laughed at during question time, like the people in my electorate of Bruce.

I'm not aware of one single election commitment that the government made for my electorate—not one. Not one thing was promised in the City of Greater Dandenong, which is the second most disadvantaged municipality in Victoria—not one. There are 190,000 people who live in my electorate. Nearly half of these people have an annual income under $41,600. They don't get a tax cut. Maybe they get a few hundred bucks at best, compared to the $11,000 tax cut that I get and everyone in this parliament gets because of this government's priorities. Around
7,000 people in my electorate rely on Newstart to try to get by. They don't get a cent. Twenty thousand pensioners in my electorate are rightly worried that this government will again try and cut their energy supplement and reduce their pension. Pensioners right now are angry at the Liberals' too-little too-late change to deeming rates, which continues to sneakily reduce the pension for millions of Australians.

There are desperate people, thousands of people, in my electorate who've been waiting for years for this government to simply process their claim for asylum. They're now hungry and vulnerable to appalling workplace exploitation and sexual exploitation. Homelessness is increasing. Deputy Speaker, you should see the queues in the soup kitchens and the food banks every day in my electorate because this government took away the $247 payment which was all they had to survive on. It was all they had, and it's gone. The most vulnerable people in Australia, the people who need the government most of all to survive, do not feature in this government's priorities—not one bit.

One need look no further than the NDIS. The Liberals built their flimsy surplus on the back of cuts to disability and a $1.6 billion underspend. It should be a source of shame. You rabbit on, government, about quiet Australians, but the truth is that's just political waffle. It's cover for the cruelty and the lack of care you inflict on the people who most need help. For me, the most important quiet Australians—the ones that matter most—are the people with no voice and with no political power; not those who choose to stay silent and get rewarded for their trouble.

Speaking in support of Labor's NDIS bill in 2012, the now minister stated: We all know we need a new system of support based on need rather than state based rationing. The individual must be at the centre of this … able to pick the supports, aids, equipment and service providers of their choice.

Well, right now in my community that's not the experience of far too many people. Most people who approach my office now would be delighted to continue under the state based support they had previously from Victoria. It's the Commonwealth's rationing now that has them living in fear. The NDIS has been starved of resources. Tens of thousands of Australians are missing out each year. The average recipient now is being short-changed by $13,000 a year. On average, participants are using only 50 per cent of their plans, because they can't access the services.

But it's not just about money. The NDIS is being undermined by the Liberals' ideological obsession with attacking, cutting and privatising—the P word—public services. Take the NDIA's staffing. When established, it was projected to have a peak staffing level of 10,595 permanent public servants by last year, a professional, capable staff to help Australians with a disability to access the support they deserve. But that was dashed by the Liberals in 2016. The Prime Minister, when he was 'Treasurer, decided that 3,000 staff would be enough: 'That will be plenty.' So how, people may ask, is the work getting done? Are 3,000 people actually able to do the work of 10,595 people? Funnily enough, no. The Liberals' insidious staffing-level caps—the ASL caps as they're known—don't save money. What they do is force the agencies to privatise—to outsource—and to waste money on expensive temporary labour hire workers instead of skilled ongoing, cheaper public servants. We have desperate families waiting up to a year for a plan, and as long again for a review when its gone wrong because their initial plan didn't provide the right support. You should get it right the first time. It's cheaper. Plans are now shuffled between and glued together by five different, inexperienced labour-hire workers for over a year.

What the government is doing to cut and outsource the NDIS is bad, but it's not unique. It's all part of the Liberals' ideological escalating attack on public services. It's an irrational agenda of privatisation and cuts. In my first speech—I'll quote myself, as the ministers love to do in question time—I said:

… great societies have great public services, which require excellent public servants …

The Australian Public Service is one of our nation's most critically important institutions. It's responsible to the government but also to the parliament and the people for service delivery and policy advice. A responsible government should see itself as a steward of the APS, nurturing its capability and its knowledge, which has been built up by taxpayers over decades. It's capital, if you like. But in the first five years after coming to office in 2013 the Liberals cut the number of public servants by nearly 15,000. That represents a cut of nearly 10 per cent of the entire Australian Public Service just in the first five years of this mean little government. No wonder people can't get through to Centrelink or get their disability plan done or get a visa for a family member to visit or have their citizenship application processed. No wonder the Liberals consulting and corporate mates are growing so rapidly in Canberra, and no wonder the rorting private labour-hire firms grow ever larger, feeding expensive casual workers to agencies simply unable to employ staff to get the job done.

Of course, no-one even knows the true picture, because the Liberals are addicted to secrecy. They avoid answering questions. They won't tell the truth about the extent of labour hire and privatisation. Apparently no-one knows. No bureaucrats know and no ministers know. It just happens. What's the government's rationale for these cuts? There is none. Literally, the only reason the government has given is that they thought it would be a good idea when they got elected to return the public service to the size it was when John Howard left office in 2007.
Since 2007, Australia's population has grown by four million people, or nearly 20 per cent—and their response was to cut the Public Service by 15 per cent. Aside from the growth of the population, the demand for public services has grown even more rapidly because of our ageing population. The challenges we face as a nation are immense, requiring complex policy responses, but the Liberals' brain-dead, moronic response is just to keep cutting, privatising things to their private sector and consulting mates to make a profit on.

These cuts are not necessary to balance the budget—far from it. They sometimes pretend they are, but the truth is that APS salaries now comprise less than four per cent of the Commonwealth budget. Cutting the Public Service again and again is not structural or fiscal reform, and it doesn't save money. The Liberals are wasting taxpayers' money with this obsession with privatisation and outsourcing. We learnt last year through the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit that the staffing caps have driven a shocking blowout in expenditure on private consultants and contractors. This is not political spin. I'm going to give you two quotes. In its submission to the inquiry the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet noted:

With the implementation of staffing caps in the Australian Public Service, agencies have more frequently needed to engage external contractor and consultancy services to fill key roles. Through removing ASL caps—

the government could do that—

agencies may have greater flexibility to recruit specialist staff at a reduced cost.

And the ABS put figures around it, as they do. They told the inquiry that contracted ICT staff are twice as expensive, and non-ICT staff are 125 to 150 per cent more expensive, than public servants to employ. These figures, which do not even include the recruitment fees—you know, those spotter's fees you pay to the agencies—

make clear that:

This higher human capital cost therefore has a significant impact on ABS costs and budgets.

This is not an academic debate. It's not 'a bubble debate', as the Prime Minister would say. The Liberals' agenda of cuts and privatisation is hurting every Australian who relies on quality public services. It's not just the NDIA. Take Centrelink for example. Right now, Centrelink is being privatised piece by piece. It started in the 2017 budget when the government cut 250 Centrelink jobs, and since then another 2,750 call centre jobs have been privatised. Thousands of labour hire employees are replacing the public servants. They're sitting there in the department. They're paying overheads to these dodgy private firms to do the same job because the government's so ideologically obsessed with privatisation and cuts.

Over the last two years official figures show that DHS—apparently they've now changed their name to Services Australia; they reckon that might improve things!—spent more than $880 million on labour hire contractors to staff their privatised compliance function, that's robo-debt, and their privatised call centres, that's the one no-one can get through to. Privatisation hasn't improved things for age pensioners, the unemployed or families needing support. More than 46 million calls to Centrelink went unanswered last year. For 5.3 million of those calls, people just gave up. They were abandoned and they hung up. Centrelink pretend that the standard processing time for an age pension is about 49 days, but everyone knows, when you dig into the stats, that most of them take far longer. Then there's the immoral, possibly illegal, robo-debt extortion of the most vulnerable Australians—the debts they cannot disprove but do not owe.

But the worst is yet to come. Things are going to get worse because, unbelievably, the Liberals are now hell-bent on privatising Australia's visa and citizenship processing system. There is a $1 billion tender out right now—the tenders are with the government—which would see thousands of jobs cut from the Department of Home Affairs and for-profit contracts given to Liberal mates. If there's one thing that should be done by public servants, surely it's the assessment and the processing of visa and citizenship applications—people who come to our country. Who can stay? It's extremely private information.

The government will tell us solemnly that we have to privatisé it as it will deliver better service at a lower cost. It's absolutely true that we need better service. The Department of Home Affairs is a complete mess. It's a broken department. The most common problem every day in my electorate, and I know the member for Calwell's electorate, because we've spoken about it, is people who are frustrated and crying for help with the visa system or their citizenship application. The government has cut so many staff and so much funding over the last few years—they cut $180 million in the 2016-17 budget—that the system's in crisis. The backlog of visas grows, and there are now over 200,000 people in Australia just hanging out on bridging visas. Their lives are in limbo. They're on bridging visas because they're desperately waiting for years for their partner visas, business visas, student visas and, even now, dependent child visas to be processed. I have Australian citizens who've fallen in love, got married overseas and had kids for a few years come into my office, and their kids are sitting at home on the couch playing Xbox, and have been for a year, because they're literally too terrified to leave the house. They can't start school in a public school until they have their permanent resident visa, or their parents have to pay astronomical fees. Their
parents can’t afford the medical insurance, and they’re not covered by Medicare, so the kids are literally playing Xbox waiting for their visa to be processed.

This approach is straight out of the failed conservative playbook overseas. It goes like this—we’ve seen this movie—first, they cut the services to create a crisis. Then they tell us the only answer is privatisation. This is my prediction: the private operator, a government mate, soon introduces two fee scales—higher fees for premium services that rich people can pay, and other fees for most Australians, like people in my electorate, who will be told by the Liberals to just suck it up and wait. Second, over time—one the capability of the public sector is being destroyed, just like has happened in the UK—the tenderers raise the prices. The successful tenderer establishes a monopoly. It will be hard to the point of impossible for anyone to compete. Then there’ll be up-front costs for government to later insure the function, like has happened in the UK, and the taxpayer gets royally screwed for decades. And third, the private operators donate generously to the Liberal Party.

The evidence for this is right out there in public, in the tender documents. It was reported that in industry briefings for the tenderers, the department noted ‘the potential for offsetting the cost of building a new online platform by providing premium services’. Now, that’s public service speak for a two-class system based on how much people are going to cough up for their visa. A private operator will chase more profits through higher visa service fees. This undermines the integrity of the program and creates a two-class system, which Australians should roundly reject. It’s un-Australian. Just have a look at Britain, at what a mess the mass privatisation of core public services has been. It has higher costs; it has worse services. Then there are the contractors who go broke and are bailed out by the taxpayer to the tune of billions because they’re ‘too big to fail’. That happens. Look at the Carillion disaster. The government have to abandon their plans to privatise visa and citizenship processing, and, in particular, abandon their plan to privatise it to Scott Briggs, a close Liberal Party mate of the Prime Minister’s.

Finally, I’d just observe that this is not the end. Two days before the election, when the government thought no-one was listening, they announced another $1.5 billion of sneaky little cuts to the Public Service to pay for some of their election promises. It’s called an ‘efficiency dividend’ because they’re too dishonest to tell us what else they will cut. They’ve hidden the impact. Their cuts and privatisation agenda are fast approaching a national crisis. Members of this House should call them out forcefully and daily, because Australians do not want their services privatised. I challenge any of the opposition members to go into their electorates and ask their voters: ‘Do you want Centrelink privatised? Do you want the department of immigration privatised? Do you want Medicare processing privatised?’ You know the answer is no.

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (18:01): The previous speaker, the member for Bruce, is in a gloomy mood, I suspect!

The Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2019-20 and cognate bills are about the government getting the finance to meet its commitments, and it is about those commitments, particularly in my electorate of Grey, that I want to speak to today. Having been the member for Grey for almost 12 years now, I believe that the commitment that we have from the current government to my electorate is virtually unsurpassed, and I’m very, very pleased. This is largely swinging off the back of the $100 billion that we’ve committed to major infrastructure over the 10-year period, which has enabled us to lift that level of expenditure in infrastructure right across the board.

In Grey, the Joy Baluch AM Bridge at Port Augusta is being duplicated. This is a $160 million commitment from the federal government. Another $72 million will be spent on building dual lanes and a flyover to the north of Port Wakefield, which is one of the great bottlenecks in South Australia, particularly on holiday weekends where traffic can be backed up for hours. Those tenders have actually gone public in the last week. We talk about these projects for so long, and I know the public gets frustrated, but this is happening. These are going out to tender at the moment. Those projects, like all the others, will be topped up by a 20 per cent contribution from the state. These are major programs.

In the budget period, prior to the election, we actually committed $44 million for the Horrocks Highway. I don’t know whether you’ve ever been to South Australia, Madam Deputy Speaker Claydon; if you do go, I suggest you visit the beautiful Clare Valley in the electorate of Grey. To do so, you will have to travel up the Horrocks Highway, but at the moment I’d have to say that’s not a pleasant experience. But we’re going to fix that. We’ve also allocated $50 million for similar works on the Barrier Highway, which leads to Broken Hill. Broken Hill has a unique and special affiliation with South Australia. In fact, it runs on South Australian time. Sometimes I wonder why we run on South Australian time, half an hour out of sync, but Broken Hill chooses to go with us, and that’s a good thing. A lot of people in Broken Hill have family in Adelaide, and their children will attend South Australian schools for their education. Broken Hill has even supplied the current captain of the Adelaide Crows, which we are grateful for.
There is $100 million committed in the budget to road works west of Port Augusta, including $25.6 million for the Eyre Peninsula. That funding program is to address the closure of the isolated—and, when I say 'isolated', I mean it's not connected to the national network—narrow-gauge rail network that is over 100 years old and which has become, basically, not fit for purpose any more. Once upon a time, this railway delivered the goods and services into the hinterland. In fact, the railway was built before the land was cleared. It enabled goods and services, water and supplies to be taken up the railway line as the settlers cleared the scrub off and started farming the lands.

Things have changed. In those days, if farmers were delivering grain to port or back to the railhead, it may have been a two- or five-tonne trailer pulled by horses. In the sixties, of course, we went to bulk handling, and a truck was eight tonne. Now a truck can pull into your paddock and take out 80 tonnes in one hit. Things have changed. Fertiliser is no longer delivered on the train. Perishable goods are no longer delivered on the train. The world has moved on, and we have to move on with it. The last user of the railway couldn't reach a final agreement with the operators, so that will go all road transport, and we have to deal with that in a government sense. I often say that the road users pay fuel tax, which goes towards the building of roads. The railways do not. They build their own roads, as it were. And so that money is coming back onto the Eyre Peninsula now. It will be met, once again, by a 20 per cent contribution from the states, who have committed $32 million to upgrading the Todd Highway, building some passing lanes on the Lincoln Highway and possibly building a haul corridor into Port Lincoln.

And there are things changing on the Eyre Peninsula at the moment. We are expecting a barge operation port to open up for harvest this year, which will change the flow of grain anyhow, and there are two proposals to build a deep-sea port on the Eyre Peninsula. So we're up for the game, and this government is investing in meeting that challenge.

During the electoral contest—so this is an electoral commitment—we committed a further $64 million to begin the duplication of the Augusta Highway, which runs north of Port Wakefield, which I've already mentioned, for 200 kilometres. Now, $64 million will not do the whole duplication of the highway, but it's a start and it's a very solid start. I don't know exactly how far it'll go and I've got some ideas on how to make a cheaper road, rather than a more expensive road, that will meet the same purposes, but I'll be talking that through with the South Australian government over the next couple of years. As an electoral commitment, the main thing is that we actually get the finance and the commitment in the works in this electoral period, so we've got three years to make that happen and are really looking forward to it.

More than that, we are continuing the re-railing of the Adelaide-Tarcoola railway line. That's 600 kilometres or 1,200 kilometres of single rail. It's being made in Whyalla at the Liberty OneSteel Whyalla Steelworks. It's being welded together in triple length in Port Augusta. There are about 40 people working on the welding facility there. We are also producing and welding rail for the building of Inland Rail in New South Wales. Already one component has gone out, and there are more orders in the system. The Australian Rail Track Corporation, as a government-owned enterprise, has always bought its steel for rail from Whyalla, and we will continue down that path. So that is producing jobs in Whyalla and helping to make sure that industry is a success going into the future.

We've got some trouble in the north of the state. It's pretty badly in drought at the moment, it must be said, but the ability to run sheep in South Australia has been enabled for over 100 years by the Dog Fence. It's the longest fence in the world—5½ thousand kilometres. In South Australia we have 2,200 kilometres of that Dog Fence. Sixteen hundred kilometres of it is 100 years old and in a corresponding state, it must be said. It's leaking dogs. We've had a period of drought. There's been a high number of dogs to the north of the fence. There's been a high number of kangaroos, which have virtually been in plague proportion, completely out of kilter with the environment as it was intended, which have been leaning on the fence. When camels and other things hit the fence, the wire has become so brittle now that it breaks and the dogs come through.

I was talking to a station owner pastoralist up near Marree when I was up there only a few weeks ago. He estimates he's lost 1,700 sheep in the last 12 months. Sheep at the moment are probably worth between $200 to $300 a head. That is an enormous loss. That is just one operator. The dogs are coming further and further south. We've seen them up to 350 to 400 kilometres south of the fence. They are on the bottom side and they are breeding. Once we get the fence fixed up, we can set about eradicating the dogs inside the fence again. This is an investment for generations. It will actually provide hundreds of millions of dollars of income to South Australia over the next 60, 70, 80, 90 years. I am looking forward to that getting on.

I was speaking earlier in the main chamber about mental health issues. Since we've come to government we have three new headspace units in the electorate of Grey. We had one in Port Augusta; we now have a headspace in Whyalla; we are committed to one in Port Lincoln and we have another one operating which is calling the flying headspace running out of Port Augusta with the Royal Flying Doctor, servicing the communities of Maree
and Oodnadatta. That is up and running. I'm very pleased with that, and we'll see where that can perhaps go in the future.

Mobile phones are the No. 1 source of complaints I get from my constituents. I am at pains to tell them that the technology is such that it will never get behind every rock and every tree and up every valley. But as we continue to invest through the government's Mobile Black Spot Program—something that the other side of politics had never invested any money in—in Grey we have either built, under construction or have the commitment for 39 new mobile phone towers. We've got two new rounds of funding coming up, $60 million each. I intend to see and make sure that some more of those mobile phone towers go into the electorate of Grey. Not only do they provide that safety provision; it's certainly a great advantage to the tourism industry, because there are a lot of people now who, when they lose their mobile phone connections, get lost because their maps don't work any more. It is an unfamiliar thing for a lot of people now to go where there is no mobile phone reception. There is also the fact that agriculture is increasingly relying on connectivity to drive our wonderfully technologically advanced agricultural industries.

For the local councils, we've lifted the Roads to Recovery funding by 25 per cent. It's worth remarking that local councils are a creation of state governments, which provide lots of regulations for local councils to comply with but very little funding. The federal government is one of their major funders. Through the Roads to Recovery program—obviously the FAGS grants stay in place—for the South Australian councils that had leaned very hard on myself and the member for Barker, there is a continuation of the special local road funding component, which is a recognition from the federal government, which has existed for the best part of 16 years now, that the current formula is a disadvantage to South Australia because of the way the numbers were drawn up in the original process. I'm very pleased that that is going. Roads to Recovery has paid for the sealing of roads like the Port Clinton to Ardrossan road, the Bulumbah to Kinnard road and the Kyanutta to Mount Wedge road, which I had the great privilege of snipping the ribbon on a few months ago.

Since the coalition came to office in 2013 the Building Better Regions Fund has put more than $40 million back into the electorate of Grey. We have some new rounds coming up. They are great programs—building new wharves, a fish unloader in Ceduna, waste water plants, sporting facilities. There has been a lot of investment in sporting facilities, either new ones or revamping old ones. Flood mitigation, tourism development and telecommunications. We got a substantial amount of money under the Building Better Regions Fund to link Elliston, a coastal town on the Eyre Peninsula, to the main phone network, because there had been a radio connection before, which was totally overloaded and getting to the point where mobile phones and fixed phones were dropping out on a regular basis. To be able to get that town rewired, because we have a government that has a program that is interested in building the infrastructure of rural Australia, has been a great advantage to us, and I am thankful for it.

I will just touch on drought now. Certainly the drought of eastern Australia has been affecting South Australia. I must say, it's patchy. Even last year there were parts of my electorate that had the best season they'd ever had. There were others that were constantly drifting for the whole 12 months. I took the former minister, Senator Bridget McKenzie, to the Cowell, Arno Bay and Cleve area last year. She said she'd never seen anything like it. We were looking at roads that were drifted over half a metre deep, and farmers that couldn't afford to shift the sand off the roads; technically it's their job to get it off the road and put it back in their paddock. She was able to extend the Drought Communities Program through to my electorate and through to South Australia, it must be said. Consequently, after three different rounds now, I have 19 district councils that have received a million dollars to undertake works within their council region. All the works are good for the community, but the very good thing about it is that predominantly they focus on using local tradesmen and local workers because droughts don't just affect farmers; they affect the towns, the communities and the people that work within them.

We've had a very wide range of programs. One I like to wax on about a little is in my home town of Kimba, where they used a lot of the money to build a plastic water run to make the water run much more efficiently—it probably shifted from about 10 per cent efficiency to 100 per cent efficiency—to put water in the town dams so we could water the town ovals. It has a 50-year guarantee on the plastic. That will reward the community for 50 years. It will save money for water for 50 years. Peterborough airstrip got a million dollars, as did Uni Hub up at Upper Spencer Gulf. We're really kicking goals. I'm very thankful to the government for the attention they show.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (18:16): I rise in support of the appropriation bills and wish to take the opportunity to speak to a range of community priorities and concerns across my electorate of Mayo on which, naturally, as the member, I am seeking to work with government to address.

A south-eastern freeway project of great urgency to my community is the Verdun interchange. It has long been a source of exasperation to my community that it is a one-way interchange. The result is that commuter traffic, buses and freight transport are all funnelled into the main street of the historic Hahndorf community. It's one of
the most popular tourist destinations in Mayo. I recall one constituent telling me about a pregnant woman parking in the main street and having her driver's side door ripped off by a truck as she opened it. That's simply because we have a one-way freeway interchange right next to it. Upgrading the Verdun interchange will allow traffic to enter the freeway when heading away from Adelaide and to leave the freeway when heading towards Adelaide, and it will significantly improve traffic flow. It would also allow easier access for tourists seeking to visit Hahndorf and the wider Adelaide Hills region. I've advocated for the upgrading of the Verdun interchange since obtaining office in 2016. Recently, at one of my 21 community forums in Mayo, residents raised the issue of the interchange again. They were so motivated, they instigated their own residents' petition, and I've been advised they've collected nearly 500 signatures to date. The Turnbull government honoured a 2018 by-election promise to fund a $1 million traffic study into the movements around Hahndorf and nearby Verdun. I would expect this study will soon be close to completion. However, the results are yet to be made public. The community will tell you that we do not need a study to tell us what needs to be done. We need it to be a two-way freeway interchange. I've been advised that the upgrade will cost an estimated $15 million. This will be money well spent, and I will continue to do all I can to lobby government to make sure this project is an infrastructure priority for Mayo.

There is also the Victor Harbor Road. Sadly, Mayo roads are over-represented in South Australia's road crash statistics. This week my community is grieving the news of two more single-vehicle fatalities: one at Normanville and one at the notorious Victor Harbor Road at Mount Jagged. I've long campaigned for the duplication of the Victor Harbor Road, and the federal government's last budget announcement of $73 million to complete the duplication of the South Road to McLaren Vale was welcomed. However, work on this road is really needed at the other end, and what has been promised won't start until 2022 and isn't expected to be finished until 2027. It also, as I said, doesn't address the real problem and that's the lack of overtaking lanes at the other end of Victor Harbor, a windy, incredibly busy highway. The South Australian government has promised to build an overtaking lane between Crows Nest Road intersection and the roundabout near the wildlife park, but we need to do more and we need to do this quickly. The Victor Harbor Goolwa region is one of the fastest growing urban areas in South Australia and on the Fleurieu, and it is the most visited day trip destination outside the metropolitan area. When I'm home, I drive down the Victor Harbor Road several times a week, and I know how dangerous it has become. RAA statistics show that 43 people were killed or seriously injured on a 48-kilometre stretch of Victor Harbor Road between 2012 and 2016, making it a high priority for the RAA. Victor Harbor Road is a high priority for me, and I will continue to advocate for all levels of government to make the Mount Compass to Victor Harbor section of the road safer. We need urgent funding for more overtaking lanes and, for as long as I'm in this place, I'll be working hard to deliver that.

The Murray research institute: the Murray River and its tributaries are the lifeblood of our communities, between the Lower Lakes and the Coorong. From Langhorne Creek to Goolwa and every community in between, we rely on the environmental health of the Murray for our economic, environmental and social wellbeing. Yet, because we are at the bottom of the river, we are the most vulnerable communities, and climate change is putting added pressure upon a river system that is already under enormous strain from the upstream mismanagement of large corporate irrigators and their political servants. In recognition of our vulnerability, in the lead-up to the 2018 Mayo by-election I called upon the federal and South Australian governments to set up the South Australian Murray River research institute. The vision was, and is, for the establishment of an institute based in Goolwa, dedicated to research on how to make our part of the river more resilient to the ebbs and flows of upstream conditions, to find new solutions for the management of salinity, water, wetlands, ecosystems and nutrient levels, to provide real-time summaries on the ecological condition of the river and to monitor and report on the socio-economic benefits for stakeholders during ebb and flow events. A well-resourced South Australian Murray-Darling research institute would plug an important gap in scientific expertise, and I will continue to advocate for it to benefit our South Australian river communities.

Aside from ensuring that we have a research institute, we really do need a regional engagement officer in Goolwa. An urgent and complementary measure to the research institute will be for us to have a permanent presence on the Lower Lakes and in the Goolwa region, ideally in Goolwa. Having a regional engagement officer able to engage with the community would not only help to build trust in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan but would provide an important avenue for our communities to voice our concerns directly to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority about the ongoing management of the river. We desperately need to salvage a workable plan, and having direct community access to the MDBA will help us achieve that.

A very beautiful part of my electorate is Yankalilla. The Yankalilla District Council was one of the first councils in South Australia to ban single-use plastics earlier this year, and I was pleased to attend the ceremony that officially recognised our council of Yankalilla as a Refugee Welcome Zone. Yankalilla may be a small town on the Fleurieu coast but its size belies a strong, vibrant and inclusive community. Following the closure of the
library at the local area school, much of the community-driven advocacy has taken place in a space known as 'the centre', but the centre is bursting at the seams, and Yankalilla council is eager to expand the community library to ensure that it's able to meet the needs of our growing community.

Relatively minor upgrades, like a change to the layout and refurbishment of tired facilities, will ensure that our library is able to ramp up their already successful programs and branch out into new additional programs too. Even modest technological upgrades will enable the library to further develop basic IT support services. Such an initiative would offer residents young and old the opportunity to learn new skills as they connect with the world in a safe and responsible manner. While these plans may have been temporarily deferred due to budgetary constraints, I am strongly committed to working with the District Council of Yankalilla to deliver a good outcome for the library.

Something that's very near and dear to my heart is the Amy Gillett Bikeway. For the past decade the Santos Tour Down Under has kicked off the international pro cycling calendar, and many of the stages wind through the beautiful scenery of my community of Mayo. Consequently, cycling is now a very popular recreational activity in Mayo. In fact, cycling has become such an attraction that, in 2010, the then state Labor government heeded the persistent lobbying of the Adelaide Hills rail trail group and the local council and built the first four-kilometre stage of the Amy Gillett Bikeway from Woodside to Oakbank.

Named in honour of elite cyclist Amy Gillett, who was tragically killed in 2005 during a training ride with the Australian women's cycling team, the bikeway follows the abandoned corridor of the old railway line to Mount Pleasant. I know Amy's mother, Mary Safe, and along with the work of the Amy Gillett Foundation to improve road safety and awareness of cyclists, Mary is very proud of the bikeway as a legacy to her daughter. Stage 1 was followed by the six-kilometre stage 2 to Charleston. Then, after considerable public pressure and much time, we eventually got the seven-kilometre stage 3 to Mount Torrens, which was opened in 2014.

Since then, the vision for completing the bikeway to Mount Pleasant via Birdwood has stalled. Thousands use the bikeway, and it is a huge tourism drawcard for my electorate. My community can see the enormous social and economic potential to finish this project. The state government has clearly indicated that it feels it has contributed their fair share, and other tiers of government now need to step in. The local Adelaide Hills Council has limited resources, but it is committed to the project. As am I. I've advocated for the Amy Gillett Bikeway again since obtaining office, and I will continue to lobby the federal government to contribute to what would be a very small, modest investment to an enormously worthwhile project.

Another bike trail that is particularly exciting in my community is the flat to vale trail. It is a high priority project in the McLaren Vale wine region. It's my pleasure to join in advocating for this much-needed project, alongside the flat to vale trail community group, the coast to vines bicycle user group, the McLaren Vale Grape, Wine & Tourism Association, and the Onkaparinga council. This proposed shared pathway between McLaren Vale and McLaren Flat would link the highly successful Coast to Vines Rail Trail in the heart of the McLaren Vale region, providing an off-road link between the townships and tourist destinations where currently there is none. The proposed pathway offers opportunities for the Santos Tour Down Under and would connect with other tourism and cycling trails, including the sports park link trail, the Coast Park Trail and even a future Onkaparinga River trail.

Surf lifesaving, I think, is important to many members in this place, and the Aldinga Bay Surf Life Saving Club is a great example of the community spirit that is alive and well in Mayo. The club suffered a devastating loss after the demolition of their clubrooms due to severe storm damage last year. The irrepressible club volunteers have been out on patrol and training for over a year now, where they were based out of sheds and shipping containers until the recent completion of their operation centre. Yet, this setback has not and will not slow them down. The club has a vision on how they can serve their community and plan to extend their patrolling commitments by having satellite patrols at other locations in our community, including nearby Port Willunga.

At the same time, they continue to focus on their budding lifesavers, the Nippers, who, with the correct training skills, will be patrolling the beach of Aldinga and perform one of the estimated 12,500 rescues that are done each year at beaches across Australia. I look forward to working with the club over the next few months to ensure that the volunteers have the equipment they need to serve our community in the upcoming summer.

One of the greatest concerns in my community is bushfire risk. Mayo has some of the highest bushfire risk zones in the nation, and yet many across our region also have very poor telecommunications and internet. Mayo has 130 identified mobile black spots but has only managed to secure five funding sites under the Mobile Black Spot Program, many of which were announced prior to me entering as the member. One of the sites is the Montague/Cherryville, and it has been abandoned. I have advocated for the money for this site to stay in Mayo and, after discussions with the Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government, I
understand there is a good chance that will be negotiated. This is great news, because our list of black spots remains very long.

One area that has slipped through the gaps is Cherry Gardens in the Mount Lofty Ranges. Steep terrain and tall trees mean the area has a great deal of difficulty with mobile phone reception and can only access satellite NBN. A number of retail service providers are now starting to disconnect their ADSL services. My office has received numerous complaints about poor telecommunications in Cherry Gardens, and these complaints were recently aired at a well-attended community meeting. After discussions with the industry, I have advised an efficient cost effective solution is for us to install 4G infrastructure on the NBN tower recently built at the Blackwood golf course, and I have had positive discussions with the state Liberal member for Davenport, Steve Murray, about the South Australian government potentially also supporting a regional digital connectivity project for Cherry Gardens. I think that's what the community wants to see: all levels of government working together.

I'll continue to advocate and use what I can—my powers of persuasion in this place. However, we do need the telecommunications industry to also get on board. There are many black spots in Mayo, and I will continue to advocate very strongly for all of them. We need to have safe connectivity right across our community. Thank you.

Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (18:31): I rise to support the Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2019-2020 and related bills, and I am delighted to be standing here as part of the new Morrison government and having given my first speech yesterday.

Our government wants to enable opportunities for all Australians to live their best lives, and I'm delighted that the NDIS, which is one of the largest and most important social institutional reforms that the government has undertaken in a generation, seeks to do just that. We are committed to providing individual choice and control to people with significant and permanent disability, to create opportunity so they can achieve their goals and contribute to the vibrant social and economic life in our community. The target for this scheme is to serve half a million participants in the next five years, and this is a very big agenda that we're talking about. So in order to deliver this, it's very important to continue to monitor progress, and progress to date has been significant and promising, ensuring that the systems in place are robust and fully-funded, because we are an economically responsible government.

The scale and complexity of the program's rollout has been unprecedented, and we will be able to reach more Australians with a disability than ever before. Eighteen of the 122 service delivery sites have been newly opened within the last six months. As at 31 March 2019, there are more than 277,000 participants benefitting from the NDIS around Australia, including more than 11,000 children in the Early Childhood Early Intervention program. We all know families with young children who are struggling with disabilities, and this is very welcome.

These statistics represent a 13 per cent increase over the prior quarter. More than 85,000 are receiving this NDIS support for the very first time in their life. But we do continue to seek to improve the NDIS through continued evaluation and monitoring of progress. The data on participant outcomes shows improvements across various domains including children's development, community participation, personal relationships and choice and control for people with disability since the NDIS began. However, the data equally reveals the opportunities and challenges ahead of us, and more work needs to be done with respect to these. On this matter, I'm delighted that the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Stuart Robert, has been elevated to the cabinet, indicating Scott Morrison, our Prime Minister, has significant support for this program that will benefit people immensely.

There are many opportunities going forward, but there are three particular priorities. The first is tackling the longer-than-ideal wait times for children. Mr Robert has indicated that the government will work with key early childhood early intervention partners to secure additional resources for children's access to early childhood supports in a timelier manner. Second, Minister Robert has indicated we will work towards ensuring that plans are tailored and individualised for every single child. The NDIA will provide a standardised interim plan for six months for children who are experiencing significant waiting periods for a plan, where the time between an access decision and getting a plan is greater than 50 days. It is important that these children don't wait for unnecessarily long periods of time. Interim plans to be replaced by a full NDIS plan will be issued within six months.

Third, we will compensate new participants with a six-month standardised interim plan with a package value of $10,000 in the event that they are not categorised as complex or for those who are not transferring from an existing Commonwealth, state or territory disability program. If they are transferring, their interim NDIS plan and package will reflect their existing support levels. This amount will never be below our commitment to this minimum threshold of the $10,000 standardised interim plan. These initiatives deeply reflect our commitment to participants with complex support needs. We want to ensure participants will be immediately streamed to an...
NDIA early childhood specialist to develop their plan and appropriate funding package to ensure those with disabilities receive the support they deserve. I know the families of Australia will be delighted.

To support these initiatives, the NDIA will increase the capacity of its national access team. It will continue to closely monitor the progress and timeliness of access decisions, and Minister Robert has taken a personal interest in ensuring that this does occur. The NDIA will also provide additional support to ECEI partners in areas experiencing delays by redirecting available partners to assist with planning activities. This recovery plan forms part of a larger plan to deliver the final 20 per cent of the NDIS.

Significant improvements in planning pathways for participants who have a two- to three-year plan include expanding the NDIS community connectors program to support and assist hard-to-reach communities, which include Indigenous Australians, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and ageing parents of children with disability. We all know someone who is an older Australian who has a disability and there are many parents who worry about the future of their children as they themselves age.

It is only by building a stronger economy that the government can deliver and guarantee the essential services that people with disabilities, their families and their carers rely on, and deliver them the outcomes that they need. So, too, do we need a strong economy to deliver for our local communities. I'm proud that the Morrison government has made significant commitments to the health, wellbeing and prosperity of the people of Higgins. As I mentioned in my first speech yesterday, Higgins is a geographically small electorate compared to some of the other electorates in Australia but we do extend from Chapel Street to Chadstone. We are demographically a younger electorate than the average electorate, with many people who are university students wanting to start their working lives. The biggest employers are health, education and professional services.

I'm delighted that the commitments the Morrison government has made to the people of Higgins include an important number of initiatives. The first of those is in the area of health and wellbeing. There are significant investments made into a number of important local institutes. The first of those is Very Special Kids, which is based in Malvern within my electorate. Very Special Kids is a wonderful place to see caring people looking after children who have difficulties and hospice care. This initiative aims to build world-class facilities for kids and their families at very vulnerable periods of their life.

There's also a significant investment into the Institute of Cancer at Cabrini Hospital, Malvern. I myself have been on the board of Cabrini and I am delighted with the significant investment. This will improve the capacity for researchers and clinicians to work towards life-saving breakthroughs. It will also provide outreach for palliative care in the south.

We have significant investments into residential centres for treating eating disorders, an incredibly important and growing problem in Australia. This will be established through the South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network, which covers the Higgins electorate. There's also an investment into a new headspace centre in Glen Iris. We know that youth mental health is so incredibly important to address, and I welcome the significant investment in 30 new headspace centres around Australia. It's particularly important in Higgins, since we have a very large and thriving LGBTI community. Unfortunately, people in the LGBTI community have higher rates of difficulties that need to access these important mental health services. So I'm delighted that there will be a headspace in Glen Iris.

There will also be significant investment in sporting and community facilities locally. The Yarra bike trail has been a wonderful place for people to go and ride their bikes along the Yarra for many years. It's actually an extensive network along the Yarra and its tributaries, including Gardens Creek. The Yarra bike trail promotes bike riding, which is great for kids, great for families and great for our community. We're investing in ensuring that key sections are made safer for all cyclists. That will improve both access to and use of this important keeping fit part of our life.

We are also going to upgrade the Murrumbeena Park, which is great to ensure that there are gender-appropriate change rooms. We know that across Higgins and across Australia there's been an explosion in sports for women. That has been on the back of the AFLW, which is a wonderful initiative, with more women participating in AFL football. But we are also seeing a flow-on effect to other sports that women are participating in, including netball and other sorts of sports. So I'm delighted that the Murrumbeena Park will ensure that we have gender-appropriate change rooms in our local area.

Higgins is one of those places that has a very small area of open spaces, so we need to treat those open spaces with a great deal of thought and consideration. We are also investing in an upgrade to St Mary's Salesian Football Club, again to help promote women and girls in sport, with upgraded female facilities. And finally with regard to sporting and community facilities, we have some capital investment in the Riversdale Soccer Club to cater for growing demand.
We have also improved measures for public safety and congestion. I'm delighted that a Morrison government will remove the Glenferrie Road level crossing at Kooyong station. This has many outcomes. Firstly, it will bust congestion, but it will also help to make safe one of the most unsafe level crossings in Victoria. It's a level crossing that has been on VicRoads' watchlist since 2013 and has not been responded to by the Daniel Andrews state government. It is the only level crossing that has rail, road, tram and pedestrians. It needs to be removed. We have also funded a business case to provide a master plan to look across the Glen Waverley line to ensure that a number of different level crossings are more effectively assessed in order to come up with the best solution to remove them. We've funded CCTV and lighting in Poath Road, Hughesdale, to improve safety and help local shoppers and traders.

We are also providing investments into some alternative forms of housing in Higgins. This is important as rising rent problems in Higgins occurs, because we have a number of older Australians who are on the age pension. These people, who are living in the community and have been there for a long period of time, don't want to move out of their community. With the increasing costs of rents in inner-city Higgins, it's very important that we provide opportunities for people who are on age pension to ensure that they can continue to live in their community. So we've made an investment into the Glenloch aged-care facility in Prahran to enhance support for those facing disadvantage. We're also providing funding to The Craig Family Centre in Ashburton to deliver special programs to reduce social isolation and develop confidence diminished as a result of family violence. I'm delighted that a Morrison government is delivering on its agenda to help Australians to have a go and to get a go. I'm delighted to support this appropriation bill.

Mr DICK (Oxley) (18:45): I'm not sure what planet the member for Higgins is living on if she wants to be congratulated for the NDIS and says that age pensioners will be looked after under this government when we have the minister responsible saying that pensioners in this country have a generous support from the government. I don't know what pensioners she's talking to. I can tell you that pensioners do not have a generous amount to live on. They simply are making ends meet. That is how out of touch the member for Higgins is. She's got absolutely no idea.

I want to talk tonight about the government's neglect of the NDIS. Whatever fantasy alternative world the member for Higgins is living in, I spoke on a motion whereby the government wanted to be congratulated for implementing a stop-gap measure to fix a mess that they themselves had created. The government wanted to be congratulated for the so-called big announcement by the minister referred to by the industry and the actual sector as a stop-gap measure. What an absolute joke.

Whilst no doubt the NDIS has been a landmark initiative for the country, developed and introduced by a Labor government, sadly, it's been neglected by three successive coalition governments, who among the other things that they have done—and I note the member for Higgins is leaving the chamber now—have played political football with the NDIA funding, placed a stifling staff cap restricting the ability of the NDIS to serve Australians and, most recently, underspent on the NDIS, claiming a lack of demand. Now, I know when I speak to local residents that they have had horrific experiences with the NDIA. I was with a mother at Jindalee in their lounge room about three weeks ago, and the tragedy that that mother had regarding her two children in dealing with the local NDIA office, dealing with all of the complexities that the failed scheme is offering that family, broke my heart. Yet this government wants to be congratulated this week for the work that they're doing.

One of the first things I did after being re-elected was to hold a roundtable at the Goodna Salvation Army centre with the shadow minister, the Hon. Bill Shorten, to talk to carers, residents and front-line workers that are feeling the full brunt of the government's mismanagement of the NDIS. Now, the government's track record of supporting people who are doing it tough is appalling. I wrote to the minister, Stuart Robert, and I hope his office is monitoring this or someone in the government is listening, because, if a member of parliament can write to a relevant minister six weeks ago and not even have an acknowledgment, what hope does a resident, community group or someone dealing with the NDIA have on offer when this minister simply refuses to meet anyone, refuses to take the time to listen to the concerns? I once again say to the government: if you're serious about fixing the problems, listen to the sector. Listen to the community that is trying to deal with a system that is completely and utterly failing them.

We know the government's track record of supporting people who are doing it tough is appalling, and there's no other word for it. I just want to touch briefly on the issue of Newstart. This government expects people to live on $39.83 a day. At the moment, that's all they're willing to give people without a job to survive on. And today they conveniently released figures showing that some people on Newstart missed jobactive appointments. I'll tell you why: it is because those living on Newstart often have to choose between putting food on the table for children or going to a job interview—choosing whether to turn the heater on at night or whether they can afford petrol. They get $39 a day. Maybe those opposite cannot appreciate just how tough it is and what this means for each and every
recipient. The Prime Minister has said over and over again—we hear it day in, day out—those who want a go will get a go. I say to the government again tonight: start giving a go to those people on Newstart. Why not give them the opportunity to get ahead rather than confine them to a life of poverty? It's good enough for former Prime Minister John Howard and people like Senator Dean Smith and Senator Arthur Sinodinos, people who understand that the issue of Newstart payment rates cannot continue.

Through the debate on the bills today I want to make sure we have a close look at the government's finances. I can tell you it's not good enough under this government. As much as the government would have you believe otherwise, the economy is tanking. We're navigating dangerous choppy waters. When it comes to the budget, remember that net debt has more than doubled under the government's watch and gross debt is now well over half a trillion dollars. That's a record high. The LNP went to the 2013 election claiming that there was a debt emergency. We all remember the debt trucks spiralling across the country. Since that election we've seen a debt and deficit disaster. Both kinds of debt are growing at a faster pace on the government's watch than under any previous Labor government, including that which had to deal with the GFC. This week we've seen media reports and research from across sectors and industries that proves this is the case. The new report by the Household Income and Labor Dynamics in Australia survey, also known as HILDA, has found that living standards have stagnated since the global financial crisis and that poverty is on the rise. The report is sombre reading and is something that I would hope all members of the government are having a good look at, because something needs to be done before it's too late.

I will go through some of the economic facts, which I think are sobering. I hope the government will hear this message. The report says that household incomes are stagnating after years of weak growth and that they are now worth less than they were a decade ago. The average household income is actually $542 less than it was in 2009. Let's be crystal clear, living standards are going backwards under this government. I'll say it again: living standards are going backwards under this government. As the shadow Treasurer said, this is what happens when a third-term government has a political strategy to distract from its failures but not an economic policy to boost growth, wages and living standards. It's proof of what people I'm hearing across the community have been telling me—that wages and living standards have been going backwards and that it's becoming harder and harder to put food on the table and send kids to school under this government. Poverty has started rising in the last two years. The HILDA report author, Professor Wilkins, said that improved living standards among the poor 'had not been maintained'. He said:

We certainly hope it is a temporary blip, but it certainly does sound an alarm bell as to whether that does reflect a more sustained trend...

From where I'm sitting and from the residents that I've been speaking to—I know where hundreds and hundreds of thousands of Australians are sitting—I don't believe the government has heard these alarm bells. The government comes into question time, day in, day out, telling us how strong the economy is, how they're delivering for all Australians, whose side they're on and who's getting a go or should have a go, as if you should have to tell people that you're on their side. I don't understand why anyone in government would want to have to reassure people. You would hope that the government of this country was on everyone's side and that there was not a choice to be made, but, nonetheless, I'll leave that for government members to explain. We recently found out that consumer confidence has fallen to a two-year low despite two RBA interest rate cuts and the passing of legislation for personal tax cuts. That is certainly not something I would describe as confidence in the economy.

Australians are crying out for this government to pull its socks up and actually take some meaningful and positive action to boost the national economy, but all the signs at the moment are showing that the government is not interested in doing that. I will go through some of those signs in the time I have tonight, because they show a clear and present danger. The Australian economy has slowed to its weakest level since the tail end of the GFC. Growth is just 0.4 per cent for the March quarter and 1.8 per cent for the year. Australia is still in a GDP per capita recession, with the measure having fallen for the last three quarters, for the first time since the 1982 recession. The national economy has gone from the eighth fastest-growing economy in the OECD in 2013 to the 20th. Wages are growing eight times slower than profits. Productivity has fallen for four consecutive quarters. Household spending is weak, and living standards are growing slower under the Liberals than under the previous Labor government.

These are not the signs of a strong economy, as I said. These are signs of an economy crying out for leadership and for some stimulus from a government which simply refuse to listen. They even refuse to listen to the Reserve Bank, economists and state coalition treasurers calling to bring forward infrastructure investment. We hear often about the so-called $100 billion infrastructure pipeline, but it's nothing but a pipedream, as we demonstrated last week with questions to the Deputy Prime Minister about very specific projects and very specific time lines, and he was unable to—or chose not to—provide the information.
The current Deputy Prime Minister is either not doing his job as Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development, or, as I suspect, the government has no real plans for the infrastructure pipeline and the projects that this country so desperately needs to begin construction. We hear the current Deputy Prime Minister bang on about water and dams, but the government doesn't build any. They bang on about the same projects, but they don't actually deliver on what they say they're going to do—all these types of projects which generate the stimulus and, more importantly, the jobs the economy needs.

I want to speak a little bit on unemployment tonight in my remarks, because I want the chamber to remember unemployment and underemployment remain too high under this government. The latest ABS statistics for the month of June show 711,500 Australians are unemployed and more than 1 million are underemployed. There are more than 1.8 million Australians looking for work, or more work, and are unable to find it. Under the current government, youth unemployment remains more than double the national average, having increased to 12 per cent. More than 266,300 young Australians are unemployed, and of particular concern is the underemployment which stubbornly remains at 8.2 per cent. Coupled with increasing insecure work, this is leaving too many Australians struggling to keep up with the cost of living. This hurts the economy that matters most to families around the kitchen table. Wages are stagnant, household consumption is weak, household saving is low and, as a result work, is insecure.

An honourable member: They got to keep $387 billion though.

Mr DICK: As I just heard from the interjection from those opposite, they aren't denying those figures. They know that to be the truth. There is the absence of wages growth and the cuts to penalty rates—and, let's remember, this government has delivered to workers in this country the largest pay cut since the Great Depression—and the most expensive electricity prices that our country has ever seen. And, of course, there are the spiralling costs of child care, with one-in-four families in the electorate of Oxley being worse off as a result of the government's changes.

More needs to be done to complement interest rate cuts to put more money back into people's pockets. The RBA has already made it clear that monetary policy can only do so much, and the elephant in the room here is that interest rates are already at an all-time record low—far, far below that of when Labor was dealing with the GFC—and the RBA are being left with a quickly diminishing space to move even further.

But, as I stated in my earlier remarks, I guess what really shook me last week was the demonstration of this government being so out-of-touch when the new Minister for Families and Social Services—who I had never heard of; I had to Google who Senator Anne Ruston was—said of the pension:

It is a generous amount of money that the Australian taxpayers make available to our older Australians.

I don't know about you, but when I visit pensioner groups, seniors, superannuants groups and Probus clubs and talk to them about the issues facing older Australians, not one single person comes up to me and goes, 'We have a generous amount of money.' That doesn't happen. I don't know why on earth the minister, who is responsible for that payment and who oversees policies to deal with senior Australians, thinks that's an acceptable way to treat older Australians. I don't think it is. These are Australians who have worked their entire lives. It could have been a slip of the tongue. All she needed to do is apologise for that and say, 'I got it wrong.' But she didn't do that. She simply said: 'Well, you know, in my opinion, let them eat cake! Pensioners have it too good.' I don't think that is the case, and certainly the pensioners in the Oxley electorate and, I reckon, all pensioners across Australia, don't think so either.

We know that when it comes to dealing with the economy, which is entering choppy waters, and when we're dealing with transfer payments Australians are relying on to make sure that they so-called get ahead, they can't rely on this government. We know that the Australian people deserve a government focused on them. I certainly hope today's debate provides that as well.

Mr JOYCE (New England) (19:00): I always love coming to the Federation Chamber. I think our ratings are somewhere between the test pattern and the shopping channel, but I think the shopping channel is a long way ahead. The good thing about it is it allows an honest expose on issues as you believe they should be.

Just because you read it, doesn't mean someone said it. I looked at the headline the other day in The Courier Mail. Although I thought, with all due respect, I gave an honest view, it wasn't a proper reflection. Why I say that in an appropriation discussion is because one of the major appropriations, of course, is Newstart and pensions. The reason this might be clever for the day but probably not clever in the long term is, quite obviously, I think I'm incredibly well paid. I think I'm incredibly fortunate, but I have a real empathy for those who are not. I want to make sure that we do whatever is within our power by getting the budget into a position where we can help pensioners and people on Newstart. No-one in their right mind is going to say a person can exist on 280 bucks a week. It's just not possible. The problem now is, of course—I say this to anyone who is listening, and that's
probably no-one, unless there's somebody up in the fourth estate watching—you take a person out as an advocate for you. You take a person out as a talking head for you because you can't validly hold an argument and support or promote a position because everybody just has a retrospective on what they believe you may have said, and it's beyond you. I hope there's another talking head that takes the spot and does the job, because it's vastly more difficult for me now to do it.

On to other issues. It is incredibly important that we develop this nation. One of the biggest fights I had when I was the Deputy Prime Minister was to make sure we had the appropriation—we might have had the promise, but we had to make sure we had the appropriation—for Inland Rail in excess of $10 billion. It was a mighty battle. It was a battle of the coalition. It was a battle to make sure that the National Party was heard and that we had delivery on that issue. It was something that had been a policy objective of the National Party for so many years but, to be quite frank, we hadn't gotten there. We hadn't gotten the money. There were a number of foolish people walking around carrying sleepers and knocking in spikes, but they didn't actually have the dosh behind it to build it, which is what you need. If you want to construct a railway line, you have to have the money to construct a railway line. Now we've got the money to construct a railway line and we've got to build it, because we've got to develop this nation off the coast. We've got to make sure that the trucks are not going through your electorate, Deputy Speaker Hogan, but are running on the railroad tracks down inland. You want your commuters, the people in the caravans with the kids, to not be in the same corridor as the haulage. That's why it's important. We've got to get this project built, and I think it should be front and centre of a real desire of our government—I'm sure it will be—to make sure it happens.

Likewise for our dam stocks. The dams of this nation are absolutely fit for purpose for about 1970, but they are not fit for purpose for a nation of 25 million, now racing towards 30 million. We have got to build more water storage. The reason we are running out of water is the droughts, but it's also because we've got so many people, and the people are utilising water. They expect to live in a modern Western democracy, and they expect to be able to wash their cars, water their lawns and have a shower. This requires an increased amount of water for an increased population, so we need increased storage. But we have all these impediments that have been put in place, a lot of them by state governments. There has to be a proper review on what these impediments are and a joint push at COAG to remove these impediments. If your priorities are frogs and pelicans over people, then we're never going to build another dam. It's just not going to happen. But, if your priority is people, then, after a logical assessment of the current situation, you'll know that we have to build further water storage and we have to start now. It has to go beyond studies. It has to go to yellow things pushing dirt up, to testing, to access roads, to getting it to happen. The people in Queensland have to talk to Jackie Trad—maybe if you're renting a house off her—and you have to talk to other people and say, 'You are just holding the whole show down.'

For my own election, I really understood how important delivery is in my own electorate. You have to be able to go to everything from the veranda at Urala to the Chaffey Dam extension and the APVMA and show people why you are relevant to them. Down here, about 90 per cent of what we do is politics—parochial, partisan, chest-beating politics—and that's it. We all carry on, get on Sky News, get on the ABC, and it's all that's partisan parochialism. But I can assure you that in your electorate it's 90 per cent delivery. It's 90 per cent being a public servant and maybe 10 per cent politics. In fact, in some instances, the less you talk about politics in your own electorate, the better you're going to go. They want to see the Chaffey Dam extension, because, without the Chaffey Dam extension, Tamworth will run out of water. They want to see decentralisation. That's why they say, 'The APVMA moving to Armidale: a great thing.' It shows that you don't just talk about it; you actually do it, you actually deliver.

Now we have to take the next step. There's a CRC. I'm trying to find Senator Bridget McKenzie so I can talk to her about how we can both lobby for an agri vet research centre for the period of time that it's allowed. We want to make sure that we make Armidale a centre of excellence for agri vet chemicals so that, if you want to know where the greatest collection of intelligence for agri vet issues in the world is, you go to Australia and you go to Armidale. Part of that plan in the past was the Regional Investment Corporation going to Orange so that, if you wanted to be in agri-finance and agri-investment, you'd go to Orange. We're trying to create these centres of excellence in our nation. We're trying to match up with the United States. When they developed Chicago for soft commodities, we wanted to develop Orange and Armidale for research. These are the sorts of things people want. They want this vision; they want a logical vision of where we're going.

All the time there are the basic necessities of a modern life. Communications is one of them—mobile phone towers. If you have a heart attack, you'll want to ring someone. You can't do smoke signals from the side of your car. You've got to be able to get on the phone. If you break down, or your partner breaks down, or your wife breaks down, or whoever, or if they have a flat tyre and they can't change it, they've got to be able to ring somebody. They've got to be able to connect to somebody. It gets a bit scary if you can't have a mobile phone. If a
pensioner falls over on her way to the tip trying to burn her rubbish and she hasn't got a phone, she hasn't got any connections so no-one will know about it and she'll just lie there. These are the things you've got to do.

These are the reasons that people have a government—to deliver those sorts of services. You've got to get the medical services into areas. In my area you've got to respect Aboriginal Australians. You've got to make sure you don't always come up with your parochial reasons of why not. You need to get down and meet them and find out why you can and how you can. We've got to make sure that we promote the social interaction of people, so supporting things like your local tennis club is important and not just for the sport; it gets people out. It gets people mixing. It gets people talking and it gets people who otherwise maybe don't have a reason to talk to another person talking. I'd like to make a big commendation to Ash Barty and the way she's conducted herself. We are proud of her and how she is presenting our nation.

One of the things the Prime Minister said, and I agree with him, is that we have to make sure with this investment, with these appropriations, that we get more from our standard units of production, and one of those is soil. We've got to invest in research into soils to understand how we get a better return from them because we have an obligation, and not only to Australia. Those opposite talk about a $100 billion ag industry. Well, you know, unless it's inflation, you're not going to get there unless you do something substantially different. One of those things is to increase irrigation. Invest in the Bradfield Scheme so you can irrigate the western districts of Queensland and New South Wales, and create reliable access to irrigation water to improve the production capacity of the soil itself. You need this sort of expertise. It's got to go from research, though, to delivery into the paddock.

We have scalded soils, but people now know you can get gypsum onto it to break it up and get better production. In the past, we understood the benefits of superphosphate. A lot of the country was phosphate deficient and phosphate would make a huge difference. We have big problems now. Zero till is incredibly important to Australia because it keeps the carbon content of the soil up. But now we are talking about banning glyphosate, which, for people who don't know, one of them is Roundup. If we ban Roundup, we have to go back to cultivation. If we go back to cultivation, it means we have to turn the soils over to kill the weeds.

An opposition member interjecting—

**Mr JOYCE:** You have to make a call whether you want to feed 10 billion people by 2050 or whether you want some of them to die. That's the call you've got to make. Stop living in this dream world where you can somehow feed the population that now exists in the world without the technology and the research to do it; it just won't happen. You won't see the people who starve to death in this nation but they'll exist in North Africa, they'll live in deprivation on the Pacific Islands and they will die in South America and other nations. In the general food stock, the people at the bottom will starve first but they don't live in Australia, so we don't care about them. Therefore, you've got to understand that if we have to work with Roundup then we have to work with Roundup because the alternative is somebody somewhere else—this becomes the zeitgeist we follow—dies.

If you want to see a great example, there is one near London. There is a trial plot where you see no Roundup, no chemicals, right up to proper management, all using the same form of wheat. The first hectare gets a tonne to the hectare. That's very poor for England but probably not too bad here. The best plot had 10 times what the plot with nothing had. We have to realise the calorific curve in the world now is bending down; we can't feed the people we've got. We have to take the next step—appropriations. Statements of the Prime Minister about soil science, glyphosates and how we actually make sure that we get the return off the land are about being realists, and not just for Australia. We must not go on our own little bender about what we want to do but actually reflect on where the globe actually is and what our moral job, our moral responsibility is in a global context.

The thing Australia can do is assist. It will never be the food basket of the world or South East Asia—impossible—but it must do more than its share in feeding and clothing people. That is one of our moral jobs. To do that, we are going to need the dams, we are going to need the science, and we are going to need to understand that we've got to hold our noses and continue to use glyphosates and the things that give a better yield. If we don't want to do it, we've got to come up with the alternative that takes its place. You can't say, 'I want the same from less'. It's not possible.

Mr Husic interjecting—

Mr JOYCE: I will take the interjection. He's just said glyphosates are the same as asbestos—or thereabouts. That is a ridiculous analogy. It is absolutely—

Mr Husic interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): The member for Chifley is warned.
Mr JOYCE: That is a ridiculous analogy. You can't possibly do that because, firstly, you are talking about a building product and, secondly, you are talking about how you feed people. They're completely and utterly different.

Mr JOYCE: It's a ridiculous analogy. You can't possibly do that, because with one you're talking about a building product; with the other you're talking about how you feed people. They're completely and utterly different.

In my electorate, sporting facilities, water facilities, road facilities; making sure we get the Kempsey to Wollombi road fixed up; making sure we get the CRC into Armidale; making sure we get the university presence into Tamworth; making sure we extend Dungowan Dam; making sure we build on the netball facilities at Glen Innes, the saleyards at Inverell, the saleyards at Scone, the equine centre at Scone—all these and more are part of how we build New England and build our nation. Bolivia Hill realignment; Scone bypass; in the future Tamworth bypass; Merriwa to Willow Tree road. Have a vision for your area as if it is its own little nation, which in itself gives a vision for the nation and how it becomes a better place.

Ms TEMPLEMAN (Macquarie) (19:15): Listening to the member for New England, it is very clear to me that he shares my view this is a government with very little vision. It needs more vision than it has, not just for New England but also for my electorate of Macquarie. It's been so clear in the week since the election that this government is visionless, directionless and very, very tired. It's all well and good to give an area attention in the few weeks leading up to an election, but it's what comes after that counts. It's the vision that you have for the area and how you deliver that vision that really matters. That comes from the conversations that you have with the people on the ground who make our local towns and villages tick: the people who work in our hospitals and our aged care facilities and who teach in our schools; the people who run small businesses and work in small businesses; the people who do the school run and fill up their cars with petrol at the local petrol station; the ones who scan your groceries as you go through the check-out or do the dishes in your local restaurant or drive the school bus or deliver your pizza on a Friday night.

What is really so obvious to me, as we stand here at the end of our first major sitting fortnight, is that the Morrison government's plan for these people is non-existent. They have a plan to attack the Labor Party, but a plan to attack the Labor Party for the next three years doesn't pay for the groceries or cover the electricity bill. A plan to attack Labor for the next three years doesn't make the commute to work any shorter or lower your childcare fees or give you a job. Attacking the opposition isn't being in government. I don't think this government has worked that out yet, after six long years.

My community has an absolute right to vote for who they want to represent them, but they also have a right to expect that a federal government, whatever federal government is elected, will support them to provide them with the services that they need, no matter who the local member is. So how about some vision for the Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains? I've got a few ideas where you could start. Let's start with infrastructure projects that need doing in the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury, which, quite frankly, could have been done any time in the last six years. Project idea No. 1: the Hawkesbury Heights bike and walking path. This is a crucial piece of human infrastructure because it's helping humans have a better life. It's about being able to walk or ride from Hawkesbury Heights to connect with Wminaale, where the shopping centre is and the schools are. Right now it is a major thoroughfare and people take their lives into their hands even when they walk on the side of this busy road. We want to give mums a safe place to walk with their prams. We want to give kids a safe place to ride with their bikes to school or after school. We want to give older people a safe place to get some exercise. The opportunity to do this was really evident after the 2013 bushfires, when that natural disaster had done a lot of the work of clearing the pathway. But of course there was a missed opportunity. This government missed an opportunity, as Liberals do. We committed $400,000 in the last election, as did state Labor. The government hasn't matched that, but the government could.

Project idea No. 2: safety upgrades to the notorious stretch of Great Western Highway at Faulconbridge. We made a $15 million commitment in the campaign that, had we won government, we would have delivered on this piece of really crucial Great Western Highway road. The government didn't bother matching it, yet this is a really busy stretch of road that anyone who uses it can see is a disaster waiting to happen. Cyclists in particular have been campaigners for this stretch of road to be upgraded because they do take their life in their hands every time they ride up or down that stretch. So there's another idea.

Project idea No. 3: Blaxland commuter car park. I heard the minister talking about a station car park upgrade in the neighbouring seat of Lindsay today. That's nice, and we welcome that, but one of the reasons mountains people drive down to Emu Plains station is that the parking is hopeless at Blaxland. How about upgrading Blaxland car park? We committed $2 million towards this project. It's a quick infrastructure project that would
improve the quality of life for people in that area, not just the people who park there but the residents who now face extra cars through their streets because the car park is overflowing by about 7:30 in the morning.

Project idea No. 4: let's build a third crossing of the Hawkesbury River, but let's do it properly—and how about we do it now? What we know through Senate estimates is that while this was an announcement, a $200 million commitment, that was made by both sides of politics in this election, there were a couple of key differences that are now beginning to emerge. One of them—one of the really big ones—is that the funding under the Liberals will trickle out over the next few years. Our funding commitment was to do it now and get it done. We will see only $5 million towards this bridge in the 2020-21 financial year, and there is only $30 million of an at least $200 million project in the forward estimates. That takes us to around 2022-23. That's—what?—four years away, and we're only seeing about $35 million of that funding. That tells me that we're not building a bridge, that there will be no bridge built in four years time. In fact, the extra roughly $165 million or $170 million is pushed out into the never-never. We don't actually know when this bridge is going to be built. Anyone with a baby now who's hoping that they're going to see an improvement in traffic by the time their kid starts school is going to be sadly disappointed. Anyone who's got a teenager in high school and is hoping that one day it won't be such a huge effort to negotiate the traffic as they take their child to and from school or across the bridge to sport also is going to be sadly disappointed. Their child's going to have their own licence by the time we get anywhere near to seeing this bridge. That is not good enough. It should be brought forward. The other troubling thing about this project is that the New South Wales government is calling it the Richmond bridge duplication. That's hardly a third crossing. But I welcome any Commonwealth expenditure to improve roads and bridges in my electorate. All the upgrades to the intersections and approaches to Richmond bridge in recent years were funded by the Commonwealth, actually, from allocations first made by Labor in 2011, which we announced in 2010. That's $20 million of work. That will actually be more than the investment this government makes over the next few years.

Those are a few roads projects that would significantly improve the quality of life. If this government had a vision for the people of the Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains they would grab those projects and throw themselves into getting them done fast.

This government could also have a vision for our athletes and our sports people. Yes, there's the Knapsack Park commitment we shared. I am looking forward to working with council on getting the best result for the soccer and cricket and other users of that oval, but Warrimoo Oval also needs upgrades. A $50,000 investment would make a huge difference to that football focused sporting community, as would Wilberforce's Woodlands Park lighting upgrade for that family based soccer community. All those things would show some sort of commitment to the people of Macquarie that this government really does care.

The other way that we could show that this government cares about the future of the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury would be by investing in education. How can you have a vision for the future of a well-educated population ready to face the challenges ahead without starting with early childhood education? Our Hawkesbury Community Outreach Services mobile playgroup would have been a great place to start with an upgrade of their van to travel—

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Federation Chamber adjourned at 19:25